

Copyright
by
Jaime Cano, Jr.
2012

**The report Committee for Jaime Cano, Jr.
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report**

THE GLIDERS OF ARCO-DO-SANTI

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Andrew S. Garrison

Donald W. Howard

Charles Ramirez-Berg

Nancy Schiesari

THE GLIDERS OF ARCO-DO-SANTI

by

Jaime Cano, Jr. B.A.

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

Dedication

For Saidah, for all of the light she brings to my life and I will never repay.

Acknowledgements

Maru Buendia and Andy Garrison. For saying the exact words, at the times it was needed most.

My Thesis Committee: Andy Garrison, Don Howard, Charles Ramirez-Berg and Nancy Schiesari, for your encouragement, patience and knowing eye. May other students be so lucky to find such a trusted group of mentors to see their passions come to light.

Bereket Tekeste, E. J. Enriquez, Natalie Kabenjian, Rupert Reyes, Marcel Rogriguez, Rogelio Salinas, Daniel Stuyck and Angela Torres, and the rest of the cast and crew for all of their time, talent, hard-work, and appreciated advice. May the film be to your liking, and your own projects be as fortunate and merry as this one was.

Stuart Kelban, whose contribuions to the story were invaluable.

I thank you, wholeheartedly.

Abstract

THE GLIDERS OF ARCO-DO-SANTI

Jaime Cano Jr., M.F.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: Andrew Garrison

The following report describes the pre-production, production and post-production of the film *The Gliders of Arco-do-Santi*, by tracking how diverse elements of the story changed from the original story concept into the finished film.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: THE PICTURE-LOCK STORY	5
CHAPTER 2: SEEDS AND CONSTELLATIONS	11
2.1 ORIGINS	12
2.2 THEMES	17
2.3 INFLUENCE/LOOKS.....	20
CHAPTER 3: PREPRODUCTION.....	25
3.1 WRITING OR “HOW THE STORY CHANGED”	26
3.2 LOCATION SCOUTING.....	33
CHAPTER 4: PRODUCTION.....	36
4.1 CAMERA	38
CHAPTER 5: POSTPRODUCTION	40
5.1 EDITING	40
5.2 SCENE 10C	46
AFTERWORD	50
 Appendix: The Gliders of Arco-do-Santi Script.....	 51
Vita	86

**“If a lion could speak, we would not be able to understand him”
–Ludwig Wittgenstein**

**“It has yet to be proven that intelligence has any survival value”
–Arthur C. Clarke**

Introduction

The Gliders of Arcosanti will open with a big action/chase scene across the desert, something flat, post-apocalyptic. Inside a fleeing van's cargo area, an agent-type man in a suit pummels a young woman half his size repeatedly in the face. Demanding the van pulled-over, another agent-type struggles with the driver at gunpoint, a Mexican man in his sixties wearing a radiation suit. As she's being beaten, time slows-down to a crawl. She remembers something and snaps-out of her passive state, "the dress" she says. Her eyes open, and (still in slo-mo) effortlessly catches the fist before it lands on her face, twists it around the agent's back, spins him, pulling his gun from the holster inside his jacket and shoots the passenger-side agent's gun and hand off, in one graceful move, spins back around and propels the massive agent towards the back of the van with a kick. She has moved at super-human speed with economy and precision, but during the entire continuous spin, her face was of someone preoccupied, frightened, unable to remember something important while doing something menial. The agent slams hard against the back doors and that they fling-open, dropping him onto the rushing desert. She looks out: a small fleet of military-style combat vehicles chases after them; one swerves so as not to run over the agent. "Well, that didn't work" she sighs. A steady stream of plasma opens fire from the pursuing vehicles. The van swerves. The driver still struggles with the agent. She hits a button on a panel closing the doors and goes to the front of the van. "Out" she says to the remaining agent and throws him out of the open passenger side window. "The box, is it OK?" "He was sitting on it" the driver responds. "Jerks". She takes out her human-looking contact lenses to reveal all-black eyes, and delicately inspects the crushed box on the passenger seat. She opens the box and carefully draws a

white dress. She brushes it against her cheek. “I’m not gonna make it... you’ll have to deliver. Get it there, please”. She goes to the back of the van and kicks the doors open. They’re gaining, they open fire on the van again. She closes her eyes, arms crossed over her chest, deep breath and summersaults onto the oncoming vehicles. She spins once, twice, and mid-air two black glider wings rip from her back. She swoops up. Plasma fire everywhere. She flies in the opposite direction of the van. They combat vehicles follow. Horrified, the Mexican man in the van watches through the rearview mirror as the steady stream of plasma-streams chases her, and blows her out of the sky... Oh, and half the dialogue will be in Spanish and half in English.

That was the first iteration of the script. As a script/story idea it was fine and quite exciting to write, but at that point it was just “action”, and I don’t mean it in the pejorative, but as a verb, the story was only “events” lacking additional elements. I was very aware that this particular iteration would have exceeded my resources in so many ways, but that wasn’t my first consideration for not making it.

Martin Scorsese has often mentioned in interviews how he works on each of his films as if it were the last one, which for filmmakers, that is always a constant possibility. You have to be excited enough about the story’s potential and possibilities, because you will need that energy as the realities of producing a film set in. But more importantly, it has to count: the effort must be imbued with a deeper personal significance. In my estimation, this significance can be conscious or subconscious for the filmmaker, explicit or inherent in the material, but it must be something beyond the challenge, rewards, or need to make the film. And I say this more from the experience of watching films. I believe we can sense that as an audience at some level, even in flawed films. Consequently, it was this search, to find either deeper emotion or richer meaning, that propelled it in other directions. What should the film say? What do you care about?

Let me go back a little. I grew up in a family that didn't follow movies much, or at all, and was the only one more or less riveted on the rare occasion I had the chance to see one. As a child I had to wait a couple of years after its release to watch "Raiders of the lost Arc" for example, or had to sneak-off to see "The Shining" on primetime television. It wasn't a form of conservatism or anything similar on my family's behalf. It was just not important, and I was just out-voted in the entertainment department. So most of my early memories of films are of the big, can't-miss-them, mainstream titles long after everybody had seen them.

Then in my early-twenties, and by chance, I started going to film-clubs. In one year I saw Andrei Tarkovsky's "Nostalgia", Krzysztof Kieslowski's "The Double Life of Veronique", Chris Marker's "Sans Soleil", Fellini's "8 ½," and "Amarcord", Peter Greenaway's "The Belly of an Architect", Bunuel's "Los Olvidados" and Kurosawa's "Ran" among many others; not to mention the works of Jan Svankmajer, Bill Viola, and Stan Brakhage. I mention these films as distinct instances of elation, and falling in love with a medium within a very short time. Which presented me with, to quote Kieslowski, "the things you can't get at the store".

As a side note, I've always found it curious, and oddly immodest that for some of us, watching grand emotional, intellectual, or visual works spurs the desire to make. As if the only praise/gratitude you have to those films is to make something in return, in your own limited way. Part of my reason for pursuing a degree in film, like for many people, is correlated to this. Before graduate school I had been making my own films (video actually), documentaries, experimental animations and shooting/editing different kinds of commercial work as well as motion graphics, but I wanted an environment were I could develop as a narrative filmmaker.

My initial and inertial disposition as a filmmaker is or was, often more on the introspective/episodic of side of story, structure, and character, which can perhaps be attributed to the idea of “you don’t know what you don’t know”. Additionally, I can’t say that I can come up with stories fully formed. It’s usually fragments and bits of ideas that I try to find a relation to, in order to make a story. So it’s always a matter of pushing a little further to get projects to work, coalesce, and go somewhere.

Which brings me back to the kind of film I chose to make for my thesis. What about relationships, exploring character, working with actors, developing as a writer? What about ideas and themes? Which could hypothetically be in that first iteration of the script, but I needed that story to open-up in other ways if I were to devote so much time, and resources. The finished film centers on the closing thirty-year friendship between a Mexican-American man in his sixties and a female flying android. No guns, chases, or flying, just them, and their lives taking different directions. In my mind, the story is about empathy and language. These are very personal meanings, which may or may not be reflected in the final film for the viewer, but more on this later.

As I was preparing to write this report, it became apparent to me how much the final film (like all films) was shaped by the turns of chance, happenstance, and taste as much as by my own intentions. This report will focus on my thesis film experience as well as tracking how and why story ideas changed through the various stages of the production.

A copy of the shooting script is included in Appendix A.

CHAPTER 1: THE PICTURE LOCK STORY

Before we begin I would like to note that the finished film underwent an additional edit since the picture-lock version produced for the sound-mix, for reasons that will be made clear in his report, and has yet to be screened for anyone.

So in an effort to clarify these changes, and if you haven't seen the final film as of this writing, I'm going to briefly summarize the story as it is in the final edit, so that the seed ideas, detours, choices and what prompted them, discussed later in the report make more sense.

A Mexican man in his sixties, Federico "Fede" Campos, is interrogated in a futuristic hospital burn ward by insurance adjuster Agent Harris, a human-looking android with dark all pupil eyes, on the whereabouts on an asset, the AD-6 android. In this cyber-society, both humans and androids have GPS-enabled ports that, of course, monitor all interactions. Big Brother isn't so much watching as it's interconnecting every imaginable point of experience of daily life. Federico has been sentenced to a "mind-loop" for reparation/damages to the company, which is a form of incarceration via induced coma, where his brain will be working-off his sentence by providing computational power. The problem is Federico's "BIO-GPS" shows corrupted information for the past 72 hours, probably due to the desert's radiation where he was found, and can't be fully processed yet. So the company offers him a plea. He can go free if he produces the android's location or, he can live out his days in a vegetative state. Federico volunteers that the AD-6 android "Ada", who he supervised, was dying (and eventually died), contrary to all previous diagnostic tests, which showed no signs of malfunction. She was hiding her malfunction from him.

Federico flashbacks to three days ago and recounts that Ada (also human-looking) had a fascination with the impossibility of experiencing the world the way others do, from their point of view. We see Ada go about her job efficiently providing maintenance for wind turbines out in a post-apocalyptic desert, when she experiences a memory flash: She is blissfully kissing an unseen man in a bright electric particle field. She takes the moment in, only to be jarred out of it by spasms and convulsions, and she passes out.

When Federico arrives for his yearly inspection Ada knows of him, but doesn't know him. They have worked together for thirty years and have become very close friends, so her treating him exclusively as a coworker she just met is very upsetting to Federico. Regardless, they go about their work and later that night Federico mulls over Ada's diagnostics for any clue to her behavior, with no luck. Ada returns and is back to her usual familiar and light-hearted self. She's elated that a package she ordered (a dress) arrived with Federico, although earlier in the day she had no recollection of having ordered it. When Federico asks why she (after thirty years) got a dress out of the blue, she deflects the question saying she just wanted one, and over the course of the conversation does her best to hide the inconsistencies she has exhibited over the course of the day. She eventually wins over Federico and promises that they can run some tests tomorrow, and should relax and hang out for now, as they always do.

They have a personal custom of exchanging birthday presents, since they only see each other for a few days during Federico's yearly inspections. Federico goes first and gives Ada a set of miniature "Guatemalan worry dolls" which Ada loves. They belonged to Federico's recently deceased wife Laura, whom he still mourns and is still a very delicate point of conversation for him. Ada goes next to change the mood; although she seems hesitant to take do so. She explains that his gift has two parts, and the first one is: she has learned a brief speech in Spanish for him, the hard way and not by downloading a

language program to herself. In this speech she tells him how much she's grown because of him, how she is aware that realistic as her personality/consciousness/feelings might seem, they are an exact of human traits, BUT she has fallen in love with a man named Turing and now wants to be with him, so she implores Federico to please break her out of the wind plant so she can be with him.

A quick salient note: in the final edit of the film all of the dialogue is spoken in English, with the exception of Ada's birthday present/monologue. Originally the film was going to be bilingual, having all of Federico's dialogue in Spanish and Ada's in English. Eventually, during production that changed into only a few key lines of Spanish spoken by Federico to both Agent Harris and "officious/unaware" Ada, who both demanded he speak English in the workplace. In the final edit, most of Federico's remaining Spanish was sacrificed in in the pairing down of scenes. Although the actor was cast for his proficiency in Spanish, and it would have made for an interesting film in two languages, prior to production I decided t keep most of the film in English to help the performances, as the some of the longer passages of dialogue complicated things for the other (non-Spanish-speaking) actors. Hopefully the story, situation and performances insinuate to some degree for the viewer that although Federico doesn't communicate constantly in Spanish, Ada's gesture of learning Spanish the hard way, would mean a great deal to him.

At this point in the film, we don't learn what the second part of Federico's birthday present is, because Federico quickly summarizes for Agent Harris what Ada told him about her request. Federico and the film depend many times on these shifts in point and summarizing to hide or bend the truth of what really happened. Federico recounts Ada telling him she was in love with an engineer named "Turing", who lived in "Arco-do-Santi", a legendary and hidden off-grid eco-city. We see Ada "jack- into" and go deep into cyberspace (making a phone call really, but with the difference that she can

download herself). Federico continues that unbeknownst to him and in defiance of known science, Harris later points out, Ada has been downloading her and Turing's consciousness into the telecom system. In there, she has been reconstructing both of them out of all of the raw data on this surveillance society keeps on record (think everything from online shopping, to DNA records) so she can be with him, as well as experience physical love. All of this has been going on for the past six months.

Federico is outraged that she hasn't considered the risks to him, the fact that her power is wirelessly tethered to the plant and that she would shut-down and reformat if she tried to leave. Even if any of this were possible, they would still be hunted down within the hour by security bots. Ada assures him she can hack the system and manage his safe return without any consequences three days later. She wants to escape to marry Turing. Amidst arguing about it, Ada reminds Federico about what a good life he had with his Laura (and that he had that option). He won't budge. Ada explains she wants "the words": How in a world made out of atoms, words carry almost a magical force and bring things into being. Like how saying "please" (or "I do") changes the state of things, binds them, transforms them, with only a breath of air. Federico's moved but unwilling to change his mind. Ada gets so upset at this that she suffers another convulsion, passing out. Federico reboots her, and learns in the process she has been uploading a clean install of her personality to counter the convulsions brought on by downloading herself. She was dying and would eventually completely corrupt the personality she had for thirty years, along with their friendship if the downloading didn't stop. When she "awakes", she is back to her "factory setting" self.

A side note: the following scene was split into two different scenes for reasons explained at length in the writing and editing chapters.

Federico confides in this other “factory-settings” Ada about a “friend” of his in need, he will soon lose. She is of little help, but at that moment Federico decides to risk his life in order to give her a chance at happiness.

Next morning, Ada prepares everything at the farm, rigs Federico’s utility van for them to go unnoticed on the trip, and downloads the destination’s coordinates to Federico’s BIO-GPS. They set out. Ada’s health deteriorates from being separated from the wind farm’s mainframe.

They drive all night and when they arrive to where Arco-do-Santi should be, nothing’s there but empty desert. Ada quietly dies in Federico’s arms.

Harris proposes that it was all a scam orchestrated by ADA. He explains, they didn’t find any AD-6 android remains where they picked up Federico. He points out the impossibility of Ada’s “mind- downloading” story, how Arco-do-Santi ceased to exist a hundred years ago, how Ada’s model had been very problematic and expensive for the company, and how she knew the company was going to sell her for parts to recoup the investment. Federico realizes Harris’ version makes sense, and is devastated. No plea bargain. Federico is prepped and wheeled out towards the detention area. It was all for nothing.

As Federico makes his way down the green-mile toward his induced coma, he starts to nod- off. He remembers, crying over Ada’s dead body...

He remembers, the night before as he spoke to “factory settings” Ada (this is the scene that was later split and moved), he showed her the Guatemalan dolls to see her reaction: nothing. He explains to her that if you ask in secret for something you really need, the dolls will grant it to you when you wake up. Federico is reminded that it was Ada that convinced him to take a chance on marriage many years back, which led for him to a happy life and decides in that moment to help Ada escape.

As Federico mourns Ada holding her dead body, as he hears a rumble in the distance. He looks back. Over a sand dune, a man dashes towards them, it's Turing. When he arrives he connects Ada to a new power source and they wait for a reaction... Federico remembers the morning before they left: Ada loaded his BIO-GPS with the information for the trip and asked that, if the plan was successful, he stay in the van to protect himself from radiation. He volunteered their story would be more believable if he was found unconscious in the desert suffering the radiation. The company would think he was duped.

Ada bolts back to life and sees Turing. They kiss. Ada lovingly says goodbye to Federico and runs into the sunset with Turing. Arco-do-Santi has been underground all along.

In his last moments of lucidity Federico remembers Ada saying something about the second part of his birthday present. She says, she made improvements to his BIO-GPS the day they left. Federico doses-off and all of the sudden finds himself immersed in the bright particle void where Laura (reconstructed by Ada) is there to meet him. The film ends with Federico and Laura kissing (forever) in cyberspace.

The shooting script was 31 pages long, and the final film, after heavy revisions came down to 25:02 minutes without the end credits. I hope this recap serves the following accounts of the multiple origins of this story.

CHAPTER 2: SEEDS AND CONSTELLATIONS

As I mentioned before, I have a hard time with writing. Story ideas come in scattered, diffuse, unrelated glimpses, often accompanied by the “wouldn’t it be cool if” prefix. I have to collect them over time, make notes and try to hold on to little moments that I find interesting and force them into something workable. Very rarely do I get a story idea with a subject and a predicate, energized by an action verb. The writing process is very slow for me, and difficult, no more so than for anyone else, but demanding enough for it to interfere with the pleasure of writing (which is equally there). Also, I very rarely get ideas from fiction films or stories. It’s usually from music, photography (but not painting); personal accounts told to me, and non-fiction material I read (science, philosophy, biography).

Music in particular often triggers images, situations, or even scenes. I can’t claim it’s a story idea per se, but more like finding a random page from a story, dropping into the action in media res. Because so much time has passed I can’t say with any certainty what pieces of music could have originated this story. Usually, as a prerequisite to writing I do make a playlist of what I assume could be an emotional topography for the story which usually plays on loop through out the writing process.

What follows is an account of some of the multiple ingredients I picked-up over time to coalesce into a story. It’s only in retrospect and with a finished film that I can see how these elements worked together. At the time I desperate to find a story idea for my thesis project, and reluctant to do an adaptation as with my pre-thesis film. After all, this was why I came to graduate school, to learn how create and develop hopefully an engaging narrative. All I had were my “what if’s” and “wouldn’t it be cools?” with no particular clue as to what would make a workable idea.

2.1 ORIGINS

The Cloud Sculptors of Coral D by **J. G. Ballard**. This short story was given to me by a grad school friend to read. It's about a troupe of wandering "cloud-sculptors" in a post-apocalypse wasteland who get hired by a high-end resort to perform for an event. I won't get into the details of the story itself, only to say that what drew my attention about it was something I misread. When I saw my friend again, we talked about it and quickly devolved the enthusiasm of possibly making it into a thesis film. Acquiring the rights to the story as well as the exorbitant expense to produce it on any scale (for film students) quickly dampened our excitement and made us turn to the time-tested broke-filmmaker pastime of imagining how to shoot it if we had unlimited funds.

I went off on a rant about "steam-punk" and needing canyons and the problem with shooting convincing flying effects for the hang-gliders.

"Wait a minute", he said "what hang-gliders?"

"You know, the ones in the story." I said.

Being a story with so much flying in it, the words: "glider" and "planes" recur often. But for whatever reason what I saw in my inner screen every time I read the words "glider planes" was: hang-gliders. I envisioned a portable copper and leather hang-glider that would extend from a backpack and was self-propelled to some extent, by diesel or plasma, to be able to reach cloud-sculpting altitudes. I didn't latch on to the "flying as freedom" metaphor so much, but to the Icarus myth as it related to art and creation, which is central to the Ballard story. The idea went into the back pocket for a couple of years.

Japanese Weddings. Another time, I was talking to the same friend at a coffeehouse about working with what's available to film students. Next door, for example, stood a foreclosed restaurant with an all-glass dining area overlooking the

lake. Because it was elevated, from inside you could probably only see the water and the vegetation in the distance, through the rectangular-glass paneling. The first thing that sprang to mind was: a couple in traditional Japanese wedding attire preparing tea. It could be done with creeping lateral tracking dollies, isometric close-ups capturing the tea's preparation, maybe hiding their faces, and the editing sharp, but slightly disjointed. A lot of negative space, symmetry, and the colors white, blue, and green, with red accents from the clothing. All bathed in cool bright sunlight pouring in from all sides.

It should be a very gentle scene that somehow feels very sad and removed (don't ask me why). Like a dream, or cyberspace (?). It should be immaculately composed and should suggest that this moment is very different to everything that preceded it in the (yet unknown) story. It felt like the closing scene of a story, with the woman turning to the man at the end of it and saying something that unfolds everything else we've seen up to that point. This went into the back pocket also but I kept coming back to it came back to it a number of times trying to find a story that would fit.

When it was time to write for the thesis, I placed it as the end scene of whatever might emerge as a story. Someone would get married in traditional Japanese attire and it would be sad and beautiful. This ending survived most drafts as I was working out the story. It fed me ideas: If it's going to be a pastoral scene about human unions, we should be coming from it's opposite, maybe a wasteland. If audience and characters are to enjoy a human ceremony, maybe a non-human is getting married. Perhaps it isn't real at all. Perhaps the characters get what they want, but at a price.

I have to clarify, that "marriage" was just a story element, neither positive nor negative, I like different kinds of stories and I was drawn to Sci-fi and Romance only as interesting elements to have together. The marriage served as a McGuffin, and since the character who pursues marriage is an android, it also allowed me to introduce the idea of

the automaton with a desire for a soul. I will only add that although, there was a lot of reverse engineering during the writing to get the story to end this way, it eventually had to be dropped from the script. By the time I finished filling in all of the blanks that led to this logical conclusion, it didn't work anymore. It was as if, in the process of providing the reasons for its existence, made itself obsolete. I tried my best to keep it but always felt like a second ending.

Androids. Again, by accident I heard an interview with a Japanese robot manufacturer on the possible uses of their recent “realistically human” product, which of course was realistic but quite disturbing. He speculated that once they reached a certain level of proficiency, they could be employed in all kinds of situations, like taking care of the elderly for example. There is something both very beautiful and haunting about this to me. It got me thinking about people in retirement homes being met with these immortal non-humans. The idea of care-taker robots, immortal but in bondage, having to provide care to people, without the benefit of experience, of a life lived with relatives and friends. There are subsequent story ideas that could be derived from these considerations alone, but I will only try to touch on the ones that informed this film.

Windmills. I drive two or three times a year from Austin to El Paso to visit family. Around Pecos, Texas, on I-10, for a couple of miles you can see a stretch of windmills on mesas. Contrary to most industrial impositions on pristine landscapes, there's something very aesthetic, serene, whimsical about wind farms to me. They are the lawn ornaments giants would plant in their gardens next to the garden hose, or what giant children would pick from the ground and blow on a summer day. Images of giant flowers also come to mind. In any event, it's always very refreshing to find them along the highway. These facilities on I-10 and two others were scouted and negotiated to a point, but more on that in the pre-production section.

Ray Kurzweil. Inventor, technologist, futurologist. He's had a remarkable career, which I won't go into in this report. I'll only mention that he wrote a book titled "The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence". In it, Kurzweil creates a timeline for past and future computer and Artificial Intelligence development based on Moore's Law, which states that computing power doubles every 18 months as it's cost (and the size of it's components) are cut in half.

Of course, at some point, depending on your feelings and knowledge about science and science fiction, Kurzweil's predictions start to seem a little over-enthusiastic, if not preposterous. Regardless, one of the stages in this future computer history is that processing power, storage, and speed have developed to such a degree as to be capable of storing a human consciousness (at this point Artificial Intelligence is commonplace and has superseded human intelligence). Now, regardless of the accuracy or feasibility of this, it does present wonderful story scenarios, which of course have been explored before in countless sci-fi stories. If you could put a copy of consciousness on a thumb drive, an exact copy, which one is you? Which one is more you? Is the copy alive/aware? If it is, does it have it's own experiences, like a second life you are not privy to? How does it experience time (does it live forever)? Physicality (can it interact with the world)? Awareness (does the digital brain create it's own reality)? Could you populate a big enough drive with these consciousness? What kind of societies would these be?

Arcosanti. Another accident: a friend left a CD at my place called "The Bells of Arcosanti" which has a beautiful ambient (almost new age) type of bell music. On the back of the CD it explains that the music was made with the ground-cast bells made at Arcosanti, a proposal for a self-sustained (eco) city by architect Paolo Soleri, located 60 miles north of Phoenix, Arizona. Arcosanti, which is one of many such proposed cities,

has a very specific look since all of the architectural structures are cast in the ground (like the bells) so there are earth tones and arches throughout.

Producing class. As you know, for our second year producing class we must write a prospectus for what could be our thesis project. The challenge typically for many of us is that at this point we are in the middle of our pre-thesis project, and are physically and mentally spent. That happened to me. It is my understanding that Woody Allen starts writing his next film the day after he finishes the sound mix on his current film. Pedro Almodovar writes his next feature during production, and Kristof Kieslowski wrote the next film on the three colors trilogy as he shot and edited the previous two.

For my thesis project I wanted to make something more ambitious, meaningful, and fun but, was immediately faced with the balancing act between the film I want to make, and the one I could afford. So faced with having to come up with a story, even if temporary, I pulled together the aforementioned seeds. Even if the resulting story seemed unwieldy, the important thing for the class would be to budget and schedule it like a real film. What resulted was a two-page proposal for the story fragment that opened this report. A flying android wants to get married and runs away from work (wind farm), only to be chased down in the end.

A challenge to this iteration of the story was that, expensive as the film in my prospectus could have been, the major deterrent for continuing with this storyline was that the entire budget would go to this very short action scene. There would be no screen time or money left to develop the characters, which was the prime directive for the thesis: relationships.

2.2 THEMES

I must start with the following disclaimer: I don't think that we truly choose our themes. They spring from the writing of the text as a cumulative effect and it's usually others who can see them best. But I will try to address the ones that were conscious and very personal, and served as guiding principles during the making of script and film.

The other mind problem. Which ponders how we can ever know an other's mind or if they have a mind at all. In Western philosophy, it is first attributed to Rene Descartes and is intrinsically related to his famous dictum "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am). Because, Descartes argues, we can't know anything with certainty, as everything could be an illusion since the senses and the mind deceive us with us false information (Sci-fi has exploited this paranoia to great extent) the only certainty we can ever have is that we can doubt and be self conscious of it. For Descartes, this rests on the body and the mind being discrete and separate things: "things" can be touched and ascertained, feelings/sensations/ideas are fuzzy intangibles.

But the questions immediately arise: How is it then that emotions can interact and influence biological states, and vice versa? And if we can't know if the senses tell us that another person is conscious, how do we know for example someone in a vegetative state is "conscious"? What about dogs, or whales and dolphins or higher primates, do they have a form of self-awareness, reasoning, an emotional life? What about hive-mentality, flocks or group-dynamics? For Descartes the answer was: we can't know with certainty, that these have forms of cognition. You can see where I'm going with this: androids.

For a couple of centuries the mind/body problem arguments were exclusive to Philosophy and were taken as that thought experiments, until computing broadened the argument during the second world war and was furthered again during the 1970's and 1990's with Artificial Intelligence research started to gain more notoriety. It's also worth

mentioning that the emergence of Neuroscience and Linguistics made the problem and it's study more prescient.

Which brings me to another related thought experiment that graduated into scientific research once the technology caught up with the speculation: "The brain in a vat scenario" (another staple in Sci-Fi). Which considers the possibility of raising a brain in a vat, and by feeding it sensory information via wires, could be fooled into thinking it was a "person" in a "real world" (The Matrix).

Although as described the "brain in a vat" experiment would be impossible to conduct, that is what actually happens inside our craniums: the nervous system provides the raw electric data from the senses, which the brain then processes electrochemically into perception. It has also been demonstrated that the brain doesn't really know the difference between a waking state and dreaming, or remembering or imagining for that matter: it's data being processed into the a perceived reality. So you can see how these concepts were at the core of my film once I started entertaining the idea of an android. Immediately, the cyberspace and "mind-downloading" elements became useful vehicles to both play with and investigate the story further.

I apologize if all of this is or sounds long-winded, didactic or presumptuous, but because these things spike my imagination, they were integral to my process. I really enjoy using concepts from science or philosophy as springboards in the brainstorming process because they afford new metaphors, scenarios, and thought experiments: If this preposterous thing were possible, what would/could it mean or say about us (now)? Which ties in with the following theme.

Empathy. A friend (android) asks another friend (human) for something, which the human would want them to have, but the magnitude of the request is too high. If a loved one asked you for a kidney, sperm donation, or a surrogate womb, grating it would

depend on who is making the request, and you would have to carefully consider what's at stake for you. I felt that if the character of Federico were going to make such a big sacrifice for Ada, it should have to be based on empathy, not sympathy. That is, he should do it, not because he likes her, but because he can (eventually) put himself in her position. As long as he is thinking of himself, he has every justifiable reason not to do it. So he shouldn't do it because she deserves it, but because she needs it. I wanted the character to act out of altruism and not self-interest. So, he doesn't really make the decision to help her until he can put himself in her situation during the doll conversation. Expressing this moment of change presented a few running problems during the writing and then later during editing, which I will address in detail in their respective sections.

The aforementioned “worry” dolls were another fortuitous story element that once in place, served these themes. They are miniature dolls that will listen to your fears or a wish before going to bed, and in the morning they take care of it. There's an element of prayer that I like about this, as well as something that is common to psychology and shamanism: by speaking your fears, sins, or desires, you enact them, release them, and the listener takes them from you. The language makes things real. It speaks to the curative powers of speech and commiseration. Empathy. Which also makes me think of storytelling and the “willing suspension of disbelief” Isn't that a form of empathy also? You suspend yourself in place of another to enacting with them a catharsis? James Cameron calls films a “type of simulation run”.

Language. Another theme closely related to empathy was language. For two reasons and I'll start with the personal one.

Because I grew up in the Juarez, Mexico/ El Paso, Texas border with family on both sides, being bilingual was a formative part of my upbringing. I am very fortunate to be bilingual (and would say the same if I had grown up bilingual in two completely

different languages), not only because of the “life” opportunities it has afforded me, but more importantly because as you start to read, live and relate to others in two languages you start to appreciate the variations and differences of language in a different way.

My second reason for selecting language as a theme can be illustrated in a quote from philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: “If a lion could speak, we would not be able to understand him”. For Wittgenstein, languages are rooted in the embodiment of the speaker. The lion language would have sprung from the physical experience of being a lion, to which we would never be privy. In the event of Artificial Intelligence actually emerging, for Wittgenstein, it would be completely alien to us, but as alien as a lion language, and maybe more so being a non-biological, maybe disembodied form of consciousness, with it’s own appreciation for the world around it. Finally, what fascinates me about language, in this regard, are the difficulties associated with communication. We don’t have to be lions or androids for it to be clear that expressing ourselves or communicating with others can be challenge.

There is a third figure, that bridges the language and embodiment themes by way of Artificial Intelligence, which I will hold onto until the section on characters: mathematician Alan Turing.

2.3 INFLUENCES/LOOKS

It might be immodest to claim to know what really influences a work outside of the forces of time, money, and temperament, but the following films were deliberately chosen for this story’s looks.

George Lucas’ “THX-1138”. I am fascinated by Lucas’ pioneering work in the advancement of digital filmmaking technologies, and although I am neither a Lucas apologist nor a detractor, of his filmmaking, his graduation student film and it’s feature-

length counterpoint have always held a very special place for me, as visually bold and striking Sci-fi. Although the story is somewhat flawed, it is a testament to resourcefulness for its creation of visuals, and to ingenuity because of its sound design.

From the moment I committed to doing a Sci-Fi film, budget, location, wardrobe and design jumped immediately to the foreground as things I would need to contend to with a limited means. I was, and still am, confident that my background in motion graphics would serve the Visual FX process, and would help negotiate a higher production value and hide some of our limitations. In doing the early planning two things became apparent. One is that futuristic Sci-fi is another form of period film for which nothing exists, you can't rent costumes or use existing vehicles or something as simple as a phone. You have to build or augment almost everything. Considering it's a Sci-Fi with a flying android, at a wind farm, we very quickly had to pair down most of these elements for cost and focused the story more on the central relationship. I will get more into how these things changed or were minimized in the production and postproduction sections.

Another aspect of THX-1138's look that has influenced my film was that Lucas and company took advantage of available things that might be presented as futuristic, like architecture, the yet unseen and under-construction BART tunnel, and naval control rooms with their multiple screens and glowing buttons, which again, were presented in films in this way. Also, the almost graphic/abstract compositions, combined with super long or super wide lenses, framed a lot of environments and action in a novel and stylized way, imbuing the common areas (parking garage, for example) with a sense of "otherness". In addition, Walter Murch's magnificent sound design turned the available, pre-existing spaces into environments with a heightened and unique reality.

Something else I quickly came to realize is that there's a reason for the appearance and resurgence of many conventions and clichés in Sci-fi. There's a reason why people wear jumpsuits, and robots have tinfoil, and names have Z's in them: budget. Suffice it to say that there's a very fine line in the no-budget world between a "THX" and a "Plan 9 from Outer Space". The only thing that can mitigate or moderately shelter you in my estimation is a cohesive and planned approach to the material (know what you are making) and an airtight script with good performances. That is why I took great care and time with the script making the story as strong as possible, both in the writing and in the editing. I also worked with the actors to the best of my abilities so that when they speak sci-fi jargon (necessary to the story, but silly to a point) the audience can track their emotions and relationship to the world without giggling. Inexpensive props are still that, but hopefully make sense within the reality of the world. Also, the way our film is (narratively) framed the quasi-contemporary look makes sense.

I am not boasting, but am proud of the work we did, especially considering the many limitations we faced. And to interject another quote I like, from George Lucas nonetheless, is that "You don't make a film in spite of the limitations, but with its limitations". So taking half a page from Lucas: work with what you have and be creative with your tools: lighting, composition, editing, and sound design to name a few. This generates another realization: even if you have the time and money, which is rarely the case, you have to work with the same diligence, discipline and imagination as if you had nothing, because it only makes the film stronger.

Alfonso Cuarón's "Children of Men". Because of the nature of the story and because it touches on very contemporary millennial fears, Cuarón opted for a very minimalist approach in the look and feel of Sci-Fi, in that it looks like the present with some minor technological enhancements (hologram screens everywhere). I'm not sure if

the term is still in use but I remember people used to call this kind of Sci-Fi “the proximal tomorrow” in that it’s not about a society living fifty or hundreds of years in the future, but more like 5 to 20 years in an “ulterior” future, one like today, but more so. The argument could be made, that although technology will change, the basic design for a lot of what we use in everyday life (even if it is computerized) will not change that much, since most of it is rooted in functionality. Also, it appears that once societies go industrial/urban they acquire a kind of homogenous look. A suit, a skyscraper, a car, a blender, a TV; most of these objects have retained their design, for the most part, for the past 50 to 100 years.

Tokyo is definitely very different from Mexico City, but only in the details. Nothing has gone “Star Trek” (except for cellphones). Of course I am speculating, but inherent in the argument of “the future will be more of the same”, carries with it making the future as commonplace and recognizable for the audience. No jumpsuits, just jeans; no flying cars, just cars with better mileage; no food replicators, especially in a world facing dwindling natural resources, famine, and climate change.

Finally, another advantage of choosing this kind of futurism, besides affordability and recognizable environments, is that it makes the world feel lived-in. Everything is slightly worn, dirtied, randomized, and reflects a recognizable function, which is always hard to replicate naturally on a set. It would be interesting to see someone attempt a found footage or even documentary style Sci-Fi, where the camera has to adjust framing and focus to the environment and not the other way around. So we searched for locations that suited our story. We tried to dress them as best as possible in art direction and enhanced with VFX when required.

Short films: “Slings” by Mike Sizemore and “Similo” by Bruno Zacharias. Both of these short Sci-Fi films are proposals for features that take advantage of pre-

existing locations and employ VFX enhancements, which we studied for their approach to the material on scaled budget.

Two more notable entries that take this approach: Neil Blomkamp's "Alive in Joburg" which has since become the feature "District 9" and Gareth Edwards feature "Monsters". Both of these films took a similar low-budget, minimalistic approach (Monsters' script was improvised during shooting and employed the same camera we used, the Sony EX3). I mentioned these with a grain of salt because both of these directors were industry VFX professionals with much more experience and resources at their disposal.

Lastly, great consideration was given to the Sci-Fi monumental films like Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey", Ridley Scott's "Blade Runner", Spielberg's "A. I.". Mamoru Oshii's "Ghost in a Shell", Peter Chung's animated series "Aeon Flux", and Hayao Miyazaki's "Nausicaa: Valley of the Wind". All, of these films served as constant sources of inspiration and guidance.

CHAPTER 3: PREPRODUCTION

I must say that personally, pre-production is probably the most stressful and trying stage of filmmaking. Not the process itself, which in many ways is very satisfying: meeting new and likeminded people, seeing the film come together as you choose locations, meet with actors and make preparations for what could potentially be a satisfying project. But then there's the dark side: the uncertainty of availability and having to shift the production because of these. Especially on no budget, it's very hard to formalize agreements with people. It makes the process very undefined. Some people won't say "yes" or "no" and worse still, some people say "yes", then "no". You find a location, but the head of one department got a paying job and has to leave the project. Then you find someone else to replace them, but they have a (sometimes radical) view of the story, or have an irregular work ethic, or quite simply have a demanding personality. Then you lose another location. And so forth. It's juggling, filled with sharp emotional peaks and valleys.

Furthermore, you must make commitments to people and institutions *as if* you have everything in place without any possible change. It's the nature of the process and always a learning experience, but it is frustrating.

All (student) productions go through this. And I'll just say that, difficult and emotional as the scheduling was, it was an eye-opening experience and a place for growth. Ordinarily I am not very outgoing and require an extra push to meet people. So my secret take-away lesson is that the filmmaking process in many ways confronts you with your personal and professional shortcomings, demons, and weaknesses. It's on you, for the sake of production, to handle them, try to overcome them, and whenever possible hide them from view. In addition, I say this sincerely and maybe with a little surprise, all

of the people that participated in the film were generous, affable, and hard working. We were shorthanded many times but everyone made up for it with a good disposition and hard work; and for that, I am very grateful, as this isn't always the case.

3.1 Writing or “How the story changed”. The final film had ten major drafts, and by that I mean that a major element changed: a character, a scene, or structural changes. There were many more minor adjustments, but I'll only describe some of the more radical ones the story underwent.

As stated earlier, the first iteration of the script was only a short action scene, which contained some of the major elements and had the others in the unwritten periphery. I had a “Japanese wedding” ending that was supposed to be a big reveal, so the twist ending was almost a logical next step. I must add I have a soft spot for endings that “unfold” the story further, that make you reconsider everything you just saw as TRUE but now it's differently so. The problem with most “twist” endings is to have them deny the veracity of what you just saw, which is often kind of unsatisfying (akin to saying it was all a dream) Or worse still: they break the logic of the story for the sake of surprise.

So deciding for the wedding to happen in cyberspace favored it being some form of download. And if it's a download, what if the people getting married maybe are not the ones experiencing the cyberspace? So, maybe Federico's the one who experiences this.

Another thing I like in some movies is when the characters speak in different languages and it's treated as the reality of the world (which usually happens more with aliens than with humans), the characters know what is being said and that's all that matters. Couple this with one of my biggest pet peeves: characters are supposed to be native Spanish speakers, and of ONE nationality but the result is either their Spanish is very broken or it comes from different Spanish-speaking backgrounds. So, this was my

next step: a bilingual film and the lead would be a (Mexican or Mexican-American) man. He is experiencing “the one that got away” wedding, and because she is young looking (and an android), he is not.

Another major component to the story is that I’m intrigued by how companies track (mine) our Internet usage and purchases. I don’t shop often at Amazon for example but have noticed their shopping recommendations have grown more and more accurate, based on things I have never searched for with them. Extrapolating the data-mining idea, almost immediately yields a few staples of Sci-Fi: the monolithic corporation that acts like a state, the surveillance and control of society, as well as the paranoia that comes with both.

So, the BIO-GPS, was the next step. This is not a surveillance society based on political control, but on the rise of insurance companies as a ruling state. Through their BIOGPS’, characters are monitored 24/7, and if it weren’t for Federico’s BIOGPS not working (and missing data) there would be no need to interrogate him. Since I already had a megacorporation/state it seemed plausible to fold in the insurance company side of it. Instead of having a cop investigate, it makes more sense that it would be an insurance adjuster closing the claim on Ada.

It affords me that if there’s going to be a twist at the end it works to our advantage to say to the audience, everything you are going to see is true and happened. Which is why for the Federico and Ada’s plan to work and not rouse suspicion, Federico’s wording has to be very delicate since he is connected to a polygraph. He uses the phrase for example: “I saw her go into the ground” to imply he buried her; but we come to learn later he is choosing that wording as he’s remembering her go off with Turing into the ground. It’s not a lie, but it’s not the truth either.

So what I had in these early drafts was: this is a story about a flying android that wants to run away and convinces her supervisor to do so. They fail, but the supervisor manages to deliver a copy of her personality to the fiancé in the secret city in the desert. The story ends with the supervisor going to “mind” jail, he closes her eyes and we realize that Ada and her fiancé now live/have been downloaded to his brain, and are getting married. Yes, there are many logical problems with this.

I realized I had a problem with the story when in “pitching it” to friends, the bulk of the action took only a few sentences but, explaining the necessary technology for anything in the plot to make sense, I had to spend a few more minutes. This went on for a couple of drafts, and I was having no luck in simplifying the technology, Nano and Biotech at the time. It was only when I caught myself describing my overcomplicated tech to someone and comparing it to a TV shows’ similar tech that I realized, we only care about what a gismo does, not how it does it, and further still we only care that the characters know how to use it. By changing the BIOGPS into a fiber-optic port at the back of the character’s head (which we’ve seen many versions of) freed up the story, characters can just “zap” information into the ports.

Also around this time, the budget demonstrated that I couldn’t afford to shoot in the real Arcosanti. There was enough in the budget for one company move of that size but there wouldn’t be anything left over to shoot the bulk of the story.

The solution was: they never reach Arcosanti (later renamed to Arco-do-Santi during postproduction). If they don’t get there, it makes the story more tragic, there are no big expensive company moves and it undoes the complications of explaining how Federico delivers the copy of Ada’s personality. If they never get there, Ada’s death could be the climax, and facilitate the reveal that Turing (Arcosanti) goes to them. Once

that was settled, it made further sense to have Arcosanti be underground, because of the radiation in this post-apocalypse, and also fit their “renegade” city status.

The changes in the BIOGPS technology and losing the actual Arcosanti from the script finally paired the story down and enabled restructuring the entire story into a big flashback: start at the hospital, recount the last three days, have Federico fail to get out of jail, then quickly remember the last bit of information: Ada and Turing lived happily ever after and Federico is the one that gets reunited in cyberspace with his late wife.

This last push moved the story from a darker “Twilight-Zone” feel (ending with Ada and Turing living in Federico’s brain) to a more tragic romance. At this point I must make it clear that throughout the writing, I have tried to base all of my narrative choices on what could make in my estimation a “good” and more importantly, “satisfying” story, not just what I would like. If the story turned into a dark Twilight-Zone episode or a Romance about friends saying goodbye or wacky comedy even, I was fine with it, as long as I had the strongest possible story. Considering the main character (Federico) sacrifices everything, it seemed like a missed opportunity not to repay his efforts. It felt from a writing perspective that there must be something else to counter the sacrifice for it to be satisfying.

Speaking of endings: as of this writing, it has come to my attention that although I am picture-locked (but not completely done with the film), the ending of the film has been met (by trusted colleagues) with two divisive reactions: some people feel that having Federico reunited with his wife in cyberspace at the end of the film, is satisfying, romantic and “sticking it” to the man. Others feel it’s a false note, or a second unnecessary ending, which over-explains and tacks-on unwarranted happiness at the end. Furthermore, because it’s apparent to them that if Federico’s in love with Ada (and she is in lust with Turing) getting reunited with his wife is a forced emotional “bait and switch”.

I must admit that during the editing process, ending on Federico looking into the desert made sense because regardless of him being in love with Ada or not, at that point everything the story set out to ask is answered.

I made the choice to keep the reunion with Laura as an ending because I always aimed for an ambivalent ending, something that depending on your temperament or your reading of the film you would find compelling. You could either see this as a happy ending: Federico reunited with (a departed) love in a cyber-afterlife; or equally, as a sad ending: Federico living out his days in a coma, in jail with someone he loves but ultimately not real.

What happened to the Japanese wedding? It stayed through most drafts as a coda. The thing that eventually decided its demise was a question I came back to a couple of times: whose story is it?

Again, this is one of those things that make perfect sense after the fact but are very hard to put into words mid-process. Is this the story of an android that wants to get married or the story of a man who is asked to risk his well being so that another can find love? Early on in the writing, I thought it would be Ada's story, and we could tell it from her android point of view: make it somewhat elliptical and episodic and reflexive with a lot of android-isms and dry humor and quiet moment; maybe frame the story through the letters she sends to Turing (an epistolary) read in voice over. Many things about this drew me to it, but the one important thing missing from it was that it was un-dramatic. The story could still be there but the main drive in this scenario would be the introspection and the more "plastic" elements. There's no conflict if the character isn't going to do something about it. When I considered Federico's situation, his situation seemed much more richer because he's has to choose and both decisions have big consequences. He has a call to action and a choice to make, there's opposition there and there's conflict. So the

Japanese wedding ending started to feel more and more like a second ending and not a real ending, even though the action was written for it.

Once I settled into Federico's point of view 99% of the story came together. The last piece missing, which I will return to in the last section of the editing section, was: what could happen to change his mind

I had the entire story mapped out but, that missing piece of information "what changed his mind" stayed blank for almost an entire year. I'm not proud of it but will say that in that year there isn't a day I didn't search for or write a scene to fill that gap. It never took. As long as they are not really connecting/addressing the emotions at stake, the scene can go on indefinitely.

I can't remember what triggered it but I remembered the aforementioned Guatemalan worry dolls. These are the miniature dolls you tell in secret your fears (or wishes) before going to bed and place them under your pillow, and during the night they take care of it. Worry dolls meant: words as communion, as healers, as prayer; plus the dolls as an image for humanity as well as a common representation of automatons. Furthermore, they touch on the empathy theme... once I had the dolls, my thought process went something like: What if Ada and Federico exchange presents each time they see each other (once a year)? It would make sense if they were birthday presents because of this and it creates an intimate thing for the characters, and a personal history, and it's touching considering that, as android, Ada wouldn't have a "birthday". So, where could these dolls come from, coming from Federico? Who the story kind of necessitates him not having someone else in his life, like a wife or children. His solitude forces him in our minds closer to Ada and makes their separation all the more difficult. The dolls have to belong to his late wife, whom he still mourns.

Furthermore, what can Ada give Federico in return? She doesn't own anything as the company is holding her earnings. So it should be something she makes, like a speech, about falling in love and it all starts to snap into place.

So, Federico gives her his late wife's dolls which, have to enable or represent empathy: putting yourself into someone else's position. This happens in scene 10C, which I will break down in more detail the editing section.

To close this section I would quickly like to say something about the character's names. Ada (the android), was named for Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace (1815-1852) daughter of Lord Byron, girlfriend/ colleague of mathematician Charles Babbage, inventor of the never built due to funding but proposed "analytical engine" which was the world's first computer (in 1837). More than being a "girlfriend" Ada was a respected mathematician in her own right and has become integral to the history of computing (and the modern world), as the first person to conceive and design "applications" or "software" beyond the intended arithmetic capabilities of Babbage's computer. This is the first half of a very personal in-joke.

Turing (Ada's love interest) is much more obviously named for English mathematician, logician, cryptanalyst and computer scientist Alan "father of artificial intelligence" Turing (1912-1954). Who aside from cracking the ENIGMA Nazi codes during WWII, winning the allies the war; is also known for his "Turing machine" and the "Turing test". The "test" (which is more of a thought experiment) is intended to help people decide when a sufficiently advanced computer can be considered sentient/intelligent. To summarize, the tests consists of two participants in cubicles where they can't see each other but can communicate by computer terminals. One of the participants, who is definitely human (male or female) must ascertain if the "person" at the other terminal is human and if so male or female based on the responses to any type

of question asked of the other participant. If the computer manages persuade the human, if it can simulate to such a high degree that it becomes indistinguishable from a human experience, according to Turing, we must concede that the computer is self-aware and possesses personhood. What the test proposes is that (higher) intelligence is embodied, it is rooted in the experience of having a body, and can only be identified through language. Which brings me back to my Wittgenstein quote:

“If a lion could speak, we would not understand him.”

So it made sense to me, in trying to come up with a story, to pair “Ada” the android and “Turing” the engineer as star-crossed lovers who only know each other over their computer terminals, and Ada must prove she is a real/existing human-like being to win her freedom.

Of course all of this information was useful only to me in starting the writing process and should in no way be factor in the appreciation of the film. It was very important to me that the film work according to dramatic principles, and that the in-jokes not deter from the story.

3.2 Location scouting.

Around the time pre-production started, the script had a three-page scene with Ada greeting Federico in the desert among the windmills. A lot of the relationship and backstory was set up in this opening, with a small stretch of desert with windmills in the background. With difficulty, I eventually got in contact with the “Desert Sky Wind Farm” company (owned by GE), which had the perfect facilities on I-10 near Pecos. The manager was very accommodating but said that due to budget-cuts, he was managing two plants 40 miles apart, so was in no position to grant access to a film crew to the premises in the foreseeable future.

This led me to Sweetwater Texas, (not far from Austin) which is one of the country's leading wind energy locations. I spoke to the mayor of Sweetwater, a wind energy lobbyist, landowners who rent their space to companies, and representatives from various companies (I was told that I would have had access to one of the premises if I had been an Aggie instead of a Longhorn). They were all forthcoming, helpful, and courteous, but at best, even when they were willing to help us, we would have been shooting in a very flat terrain, miles away from the wind mills.

Did I mention the tall grass surrounding the windmills? I racked my brain trying to come up with a solution for how to shoot a walk and talk scene in a wind farm, in a post apocalypse desert without showing tall grass. In addition, there was still the question of cost. If we went to Sweetwater, there would be no budget to shoot a sand dune-type desert, which is where Ada and Turing meet at the end. I needed two desert locations or one that could work for both. So again, due to costs, do we commit to real wind farms we will barely see, and will have to digitally paint around, plus having to “fake” a desert close to Austin or in a studio?

So, what if we loose the wind farms all together (in the story about androids flying around the wind mills)? If we could fin ONE location, which could serve for both deserts, the one with the farm and the one they run away to, and we put in digital windmills? My inner producer was onboard, my inner writer was outraged.

What resulted from eliminating almost five pages of exteriors among the windmills, were two things: most of the extraneous banter and exposition was either chucked, turned into action, or sprinkled throughout the story (most of that cut during editing). Also, Ada's introduction was refined. That way we only see the digital windmills in two long shots, and we shoot Ada's first “breakdown” on a windmill, which we only see mainly in the finished film through Ada's computerized POV. This particular

change also allowed us to set up her personality (bubble gum moment), her mysterious breakdown, and her wish for a relationship, which is all you need before Federico meets her and starts questioning her erratic behavior.

The location-scouting process took many months and several 6-10 hour drives to meet company representatives. We failed to get any wind-farms on board, but we did come by the fortuitous recommendation to try Monahans State Sand Dune Park, and Big Bend National Park. The employees at both parks were very generous as they waived their shooting permit fees.

Both parks were close to perfect for our story. Their proximity enabled us to make two company moves for the price of one wind-farm location move. After one last location-scout and some paperwork we were set to shoot five days out of town. The rest was shot in Austin at the UT Nursing School, and at a UT Chilling Station that was closed for the season. The latter would be the location where 75% of the script takes place.

CHAPTER 4: PRODUCTION

Because both location parks prohibited the use of generators we had to work with available sunlight, and because the in-town locations required someone (paid by UT) to supervise our shoot most of our days were 8 to 10 hour days, which I believe helped us immensely with our preparation, sanity and mood. We had enough time every day (with some exceptions) to arrive on set after a full night's sleep, set up with care, organize our breakfasts, have time to plan with the AD and DP and talk with actor's about the days' scenes. We were also able to shoot at a faster pace (since we had time to organize and rehearse we could do less and longer takes), wrap for the day, break-down, and still have time to go over the next day's work with enough time to go home, unwind, and get another full night's sleep. It was a lot of hard work as all shoots are, with occasional moments of tension and pressure, but having worked on other sets, it was a very happy and hard working company for most or all of the time.

I expected people to be civil and/or friendly, but was very surprised at how quickly cast and crew took to each other. The producers and I were somewhat concerned at first about starting photography with the out-of-town locations, which isn't always the smartest thing to do because no one really knows each other, and the travel can put a huge strain on the production. But we didn't really have a choice due to park, cast, and crew availability. In retrospect, I think everyone took it in good humor, like a road trip, and had fun. Also, something should be said for team morale. Because of the shorter shoot days, there was time and energy to wrap, go back to the hotel to eat, prep for the next day and unwind, making everybody's work and disposition better. The value of morale is something that although obvious, I haven't seen that much discussed in the directing or

producing course material, for it can make or break a set. It's something you can lose track of very easily under the pressures of production.

Production for me went by in a flash and I wish I had kept a production diary, but it was very enjoyable. Not only because directing can be the best job on earth, but also because it's such a very brief, fleeting moment compared to the many months of struggle in preparation, and the subsequent months of assembly and refining in post production. As much as I'm averse to pre-production, the metaphor of making a crystal came to mind during the shooting: you spend millennia in preparation, painstakingly applying pressure to one day get this small but beautiful thing. Postproduction for me extends the metaphor even further.

The only other thing I would mention about the production in general is that because of our limited budget and because of the period when we shot, production was conformed of a rotating crew for the in-town shoot. I mention this not so much for the people that lent their time and talent, but because a lot of the major difficulties that did spring from scheduling the shoot came out of a trade-off in preproduction. When scheduling the shoot, we had the option of shooting around late December, which meant more people were available to work around town, but there was less equipment at checkout due to other classes' shoots.

The other option was to wait until early February when no one was shooting (more equipment) but most of our potential crew was in class. Too many pre-production situations are frustratingly "either-or" in my opinion. We opted for February as it would give us more prep time, which came in handy, but paid a price down the line when our make-up person, sound recordist, and VFX supervisor/data wrangler couldn't make the out of town dates. Although, these were paid positions, and we had almost two months to search for replacements, we barely found two out of three of them, right up to the day

before we had to leave for Monahans. We had budgeted for a 12 person skeleton crew but were missing the VFX person. Remember the CG windmills we would later composite into Big Bend? A price was paid in both the production and post-production, by not having someone dedicated to this position.

4.1 Camera

The DP and myself decided on the Sony EX3, for the quality of its image, the lightweight body and sturdiness, and because it was one of the models available to us through school, which meant we could divert the cost of a camera rental into a jib, and additional equipment. Shooting on film and getting the additional crew-members required, was too expensive to even consider. The same almost applied to the RED or another high-end camera, which would also require many people to operate and would necessitate special care to protect it from the heat, wind, and sand on location. The RED's image quality and latitude are undisputable, but we would have paid a higher price everywhere else due to its rental cost (underfed and overworked crew tend to influence the aesthetic of any film).

When speaking to our VFX advisor one of the reasons he advocated the use of the EX3 was that we could use a deck (and a VFX supervisor operating it) to port the uncompressed footage data and have greater latitude and resolution for post. Unfortunately, both parks prohibited the use of generators anywhere near the park areas where we stationed, which meant we couldn't really use the deck on location since there was no power source to run it from. Also, we lost the VFX person who would have operated the deck prior to the shoot.

My very personal impressions of the camera, after going through production and postproduction, is that although it does produce a good-looking image and it is very

flexible and reliable, it does have a very limited latitude (I say this mainly from working with it in color correction) and it's slightly grainier than I would prefer. This brings us back to the latitude/noise issue, which again, speaking from color correction experience, past a certain very brief point, the blue channel goes crazy with noise in the shadows and mid-tones. I will say again that it is a great camera, but it requires some negotiating for VFX work. I did have to rearrange the post pipeline to "denoise" and color correct the footage, which in itself softens and artifacts the skin tones under certain conditions, as well as being very time consuming and eating up a lot of processing speed (as well as taking time away from the rest of the VFX). I can't say I would choose differently if time travel were possible, because we had to work with what was available. We made the necessary preparations for post, but I often fantasize about what a higher-end camera would have given us. I previously mentioned Gareth Edward's Sci-Fi film "Monsters" being shot on an EX3, but I didn't make the connection until our post, that he had chosen and pushed a grainy handheld aesthetic. It hides the grain by exaggerating it, and taking advantage of the noise hides the sharpness of the CG. Our film went for a clearer, locked-off aesthetic, so the noise became more of an issue.

CHAPTER 5: POSTPRODUCTION

I happen to be the most comfortable in the Postproduction stage. Maybe its a temperament issue, but also a matter unlike preproduction, of having all of the necessary elements to work with.

I should also mention that coming from a place with little film or video production, there were few opportunities to work within the production side of things. As desktop digital editing software started to become available, that was my “in” into production and making personal “films”, which is maybe why I worked more often in documentary, animation, and “experimental” found footage work. As is always the case, you never know if you choose your passions or they choose you.

5.1 Editing

I have great affection and respect for the editing process, and by extension, for the professionals that are able to crystalize film moments with grace and poignancy and can work critically and quickly. Trial and error have definite thresholds and to do well, they require time.

Editing is a mysterious process in many ways because what you are really trying to create is perception and meaning by drawing from disconnected parts. Yes, as an editor your work wouldn't be possible without, and is intrinsically reliant on, the quality of the performances and the footage. But I really do believe that we write, shoot, and direct for the editing. Everything should be subservient to it, because in film nothing is beautiful or meaningful by itself.

Although it's usually not thought of this way, a shot's framing is also an intrinsic extension of the quality of the performances and the editing process. We select

alternating shots of different focal lengths to communicate a performance, unlike the fixed framing of theater or photography.

It has been my repeated experience and surprise as an editor to sometimes work with what was, in every estimation, a great take of a performance. But during the edit, for some reason, it deflates and becomes clutter. This could be related to a common mistake we fall into during the first rough-cut of a film, in which we use “the best takes” as judged by the dailies (that is: the best takes, out of context). We assume that good shot A, followed by good shot B and C will make an outstanding scene because it’s full of awesomeness, and yet it doesn’t. It feels bloated, overlong, and dragging. Scenes are not mix tapes. You can’t make them out of the greatest hits. Usually they only allow for one high moment of clarity, tension and beauty. Film is like a keyhole that only permits one good idea at a time. Cram two or more together and they fight and cancel each other out. It either disrupts the natural progression of the scene, or it’s tone, or offsets the other actor’s performance. Somehow what was beautiful, nuanced and natural becomes distracting. A shot’s beauty is always subservient to meaning.

But returning to the unexpected beauty and usability of shots in the editing process, the opposite of the “good shot not working with the cut” always sparks a smile and eureka-kind of giddiness. When a bad or mediocre or just “plain” shot or performance is dropped into the edit by accident and out of nowhere becomes a thing of grace, for some reason. It’s rare, but quite a wonderful thing to experience which you take credit for, but know, more mysterious forces were at work. Editing cannot create a good performance in any way, but it most definitely can shape it’s meaning. Sometimes this is as simple as using a reaction from another, completely different moment, or using a look from before the slate clapped, and what was a “nothing” shot, behaves in a precise and effortless way for that moment in time.

Stranger still, and another reason why both the editor and the director must be familiar with every single frame (and a good excuse for synching audio yourself), is when you do use one of those “bad” or “mediocre” or “insignificant” shots by accident and they spike the scene’s depth or the actor’s energy in a new or more efficient way. And stranger still, at the risk of being fastidious, they are usually also frame-specific. One-twenty-fourth-of-a-second-specific. It happened to me on this film where I used a medium shot as a placeholder while I looked for what I remember was a better close-up.

When I dropped in the shot, the character’s reaction all of a sudden read with a new precise sincerity of emotion, and in a way that we never really discussed nor was intentionally performed, since the reaction belonged to later in the scene. It not only energized itself in an unforeseen way but also magically shaded the other character’s next line of dialogue. Editing giddiness. The only problem was that, being from another moment in the scene, the performance changed at the tail end. So when I adjusted the cut by a few frames to make it work, the magic was gone. It played OK, but without any of that extra something that made the actor, director, and writer seem like they had devised this moment in this way.

In retrospect, I found that the entire editing process with its different cuts of the film, had three major (overlapping) stages, each of which I believed at the time had yielded the best possible cut of the film. I don’t mean to imply that I only produced three cuts of the film, but that my mindset in cutting had progressive semi-conscious overarching “themes”, which is why I’m grouping them in stages to better explain my process.

The first one, common to all films (in screenwriting circles commonly known as “the vomit pass”) was the one where I tried to include everything as shot and written. Of course this started with the rough-cut/assembly, but it’s fair to say that being the writer

and director of the film, I tried to hold on to as many things that I had liked in each capacity, for as long as I could throughout multiple cuts. This meant at that time that my 31 page script was at that point a 45 minute movie. For a “short” film it was two or three times as long as preferred by festivals, but more problematic to me, was that scenes weren’t playing, and obviously, as a whole, it dragged.

Here is where I return to my earlier comment about common first rough-cut problems and the depression that ensues: if it worked on the page and on the set, and if all of the best takes chosen, and you cut for emotion and story, why doesn’t it work? This is why it’s prudent to hand off the material to someone that didn’t write it or was on set. The problem with choosing “best” takes (coupled with and being reluctant to let go of things) regardless of the excellence of the actors or the DP, is that you start cutting for “moments”. And pretty soon everything is a moment. You start piling on “good” takes, concentrating on the individual climax of each one, when what you should be doing is aligning them towards the climax of the scene (not their individual goodness), and get out of the scene as soon as possible. Shots can be great in themselves, as “shots”, but not when grouped in a scene. They must build. And every one should be an idea. They depend on the context of the previous one for their strength, and set up the place for the next one.

After various failed attempts at bringing the running time down while still holding on to everything AND trying to cut for emotion and story, the deadlines started to weigh in. So the next stage was influenced by the pressures of time. How do we make this play, but faster? You start to cut in late into scenes and try to get out of them as soon as possible. Then you try to compress, combine or simply get rid of scenes. “Anything that isn’t story goes” being the mantra. This can be either a very tactful, or a savage process depending on the editor. In good hands the rhythm is preserved and everything

effortlessly flows. But as is more often the case, in more time-weary (panicked) hands you start by losing all of the fatty tissue and with it go the flavor for character, place, and pacing. Then you start to cut into the connective tissue, and the film starts to feel lean but jagged, and although the story becomes clearer and more focused, you notice you've stopped caring as much about the characters and the story. Why does this well edited, beautifully shot and performed scene feel flat? It "looks" like these people are crying or fighting or discovering something new about themselves or the world, or changing in interesting ways but, why don't I feel it? Although this is often an indication that something wasn't established properly before, in terms of cutting for time, it means that you've done away with the cues that bind us to a character. In the interest of time, it's very easy to lose track of how those deleted silences, pauses, looks, sighs, small shifts in posture, or the head, or the hands are all the butterflies in the chaos theory of meaning and emotion. They are the building blocks of subtext. Studies have shown that as social animals, we evolved to recognize up to 40,000 distinctly different subtle facial cues. We do this without thinking, every day. Eventually, you end by trimming down shots to their slimmest which does make everything faster, but in my case, since you are still trying to retain every single actor's moment, the cutting starts to feel manic, ping-pongy, and unnatural in places.

Again, this is a time-lapse account of many months' work and I'm highlighting my major epiphanies and stumbles during the edit. Many good things did come out of all these stages of revision and the story did go down to a leaner 29 minutes, thanks in great part to trusted friends, faculty and colleagues' feedback.

To give a brief example: the scene between Ada and Federico fighting about the "preposterousness" of her request which concludes with her being upset and breaking-down, was originally 6 minutes in the first rough-cut. Great emotional performances in

there, and a few writer-soapbox speeches about relationships but it dragged. By concentrating on whose scene it was and what was at stake, it immediately came down almost by half. Also, taking advantage that the film is told in flashback, I could cut to the present as if Federico is reacting in the hospital to what he is narrating as he narrates. Which gave me, in good Kuleshov way, new reaction shots that spoke regret, doubt, consternation. His new present day reactions also helped me bridge the changes in the actor's blocking every time I cut the longer version of the scene. Also I was able to fold the beginning of the scene into the previous one as if it were narration, bringing down the scene to two minutes, without it feeling too hurried or choppy.

The third stage came after the sound-mix was done, which I will explain if this is raising red flags. The film had improved in many ways from the first to the second stage but as I mentioned, had started feeling manic and slightly disjointed in some places. Also, I noticed in the consensus of reactions to the film that some necessary expositional details were getting lost, and diminishing the ending's impact partially.

Because of details you are familiar with, I did my sound mix before completing VFX. The picture was locked, but I would still be adding and swapping out FX shots. But I felt that this picture-lock still had many irregularities. So the third pass involved trying to restore emotion and information to the story, without altering the dialogue, and only when it was possible to cut into a pause in the sound mixes' stems (dialogue, music, sound effects) so as not to disrupt the mix. I could exchange takes if they fit, but I couldn't make scenes longer, only shorter, and only if it didn't introduce a break in the mix's stems. And an interesting thing happened: it meant I could extend the character's reactions, if I got rid of shots. So instead of being on their face for every line and every reaction, now I could let some shots run over eliminated ones. The scenes started to

“breathe”. They were still the same length, and contained the same information; but now the pacing was more natural, and a lot of cuts became smoother, it created a clearer sense of space and of the character’s special relations within the scene.

The third stage was basically restoring some of the humanity back to the story. As one of the producers sharply reminded me, what’s the point of us understanding what the story is about or the story being shorter, if we don’t care about the characters?

I was able to make a few more trims to bring down the running time in this last stage to a lean 25 minutes. The most salient change is a scene I’ve referred to twice before in the “seeds and constellations” and “writing” sections.

5.2 Scene “10C”

This is the scene where Federico “interrogates” the factory-default settings Ada about what to do, by re-giving her the worry dolls. Seeing her unaware of their 30-year friendship, or of being in love with Turing compels Federico to reconsider and finally concede to help her break free.

As mentioned before, the writing of the script came to a standstill for a year before this scene facilitated a change based in character and not circumstance.

In the first stage of editing this scene was there “as written” and like everything else, felt long, running almost 4 minutes. If taken by itself, it played very well for performances, but in the context of the film, it felt like yet another long debate coming after a previous longer and loud debate, which made it also tedious. There was a claustrophobic sense of maybe never leaving for the desert or worse that if we did, everything that followed would be as slow. So, still in this stage, the first option was to minimize “factory-settings” Ada’s dialogue, which eliminated some attempts at humor, on-the-nose dialogue and made her a much colder but likeable character. She now looked

polite but mostly unimpressed with Federico's stories about his late wife. Which overall, proved a good move for the emotion of the scene.

At this stage, I also dedicated a lot of time, effort and multiple versions at trying to convey in a subtle, hopefully artful way, that these dolls are bringing about change. That they symbolized something very human, and the power of language, and empathy and need, expressed in a visual way. But I was mostly ineffective in communicating any of this, as the dolls both took attention away from what was going on emotionally in the scene, and didn't express anything clear. I probably cut a different version of these doll shots trying to get them to work for every single pass at this scene.

When I started cutting for time in the second stage, this scene was paired down further, split in two, and I moved the second "doll" half further down in the story, to the moment when Federico is sent to jail and he contemplates a picture of his late wife and have it be more of a last minute flashback. So then, he can remember the dolls, and have his realization, before we can return to his incarceration. The thinking was, to have only the beginning of scene 10C where it had always been to show what's at stake and not wear the audience down, then have Agent Harris interrupt Federico to tell him to get on with it and demand the android. I cobbled together a quick hospital scene out of discarded takes and dialogue, which justified a straight cut to them in the desert getting ready to leave. This structure worked for a while, and was definitely a better solution to the one written, but the doll second half of 10C, although made sense, still felt like private awkward writer's reference, that although interesting, we really didn't care about. I repeat, it made emotional and thematic sense to have the doll part work as a flashback before he goes to jail, but it was too late in the story for us to care about new information. David Mamet has often talked about his frustration with how many movies usually have

an unnecessary and cloying speech (or something equivalent) spoken by the main character at the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark of the film, where the character entertains introspection and maybe remembers someone who's passed or that they loved, in order to draw strength for the trials that are to come in the 3rd act. He calls it the "I had a puppy that died" scene. And the problem, is he says, because the writer doesn't trust the audience's emotional involvement he must provide an extraneous scene that ingratiates the hero to us. Additionally, two things: if we need to have (and be told about) a sacrificial puppy to care to finish the story, we have a problem; and second, at that point in time in any story it is unsuitable and amateurish to go back to the past for new information.

Figuring out where to relocate the dolls, was a very intuitive decision: at the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark. It made sense to explain these things, but it didn't serve the story. There was still something amiss with the dolls. Again, I edited reedited shots of dolls, to little effect. Although the writer, director and editor in me rationally knew they weren't working, emotionally, I never doubted they were integral to the story.

When I started the third stage, and started to cut some of the emotion and detail back into the film, I was reminded that another thing I always found lacking from the film was: that Turing can only appear "to save the day" if Federico's sacrifice is complete. Turing's appearance should feel like an earned vindication, and not a "deus-ex-machina".

To return to the "shots that surprise" motif at the beginning of this chapter, I was going through unused shots of 10C and stumbled across one of these "Ok but not good enough" takes and dropped it in by temporarily. It immediately changed the emotion of what was being said and energized the moment in an unexpected way. It permitted me with just one look of the actor to have another out of the scene and facilitated getting rid

of the hospital scene I had invented before (Harris interrupts), cutting the film time down further.

Not wanting to offend David Mamet's sensibilities, I got rid of the dolls completely for one cut of the film, to mixed results. Now the problem was that I would need to retool the scene where they exchange gifts at the beginning, and would have problems not undoing that scene's audio mix. So I was stuck with the dolls, again. I remembered the aforementioned "deus-ex-machina" problem I felt was there and turned my attention to that in the meantime. And insight by proxy happened. By moving the doll scene further down (and compressing it) to before Turing shows up, it enabled two more things: First, I was able to transition immediately from Federico being told he was duped to him in the gurney going down the green-mile, because I no longer needed the reflexive moment that leads to the dolls.

Secondly, by moving the dolls to the point on the gurney after Federico remembers all hope is lost (but before Turing shows up), then you can have the dolls conversation. Slightly retooled from discarded dialogue, the doll section now explained how it was Ada that at some point in the past encouraged Federico to take a chance (on love) and marry his late wife, which resulted in a happy marriage.

The dolls now started to make themes clearer without slowing down the story. Now Federico's choice to help feels more like a crossed threshold, instead of additional information. Now, and only now, did it make story sense for Turing to show up, because Federico has come full circle, he has sacrificed, and gained insight. Now, he can finally say goodbye to Ada and be with his wife.

AFTERWORD

In closing, I just want to say that in developing this film, I generated enough material to expand the story and it's characters further. And out of superstition, would rather not say in what direction I would like to see it materialize. I hope it comes to light in the near future.

I can't thank enough those people that helped me through this experience and hopefully, the finished film is to your liking as it has been a long, wonderful process.

Appendix: THE GLIDERS OF ARCO-DO-SANTI SCRIPT

INT. HOSPITAL ICU ROOM - DAY (1)

TEXT OVERLAY: Sometime in the future. Tuesday

A light green droplet swells inside the empty chamber of a catheter and falls. A soft spoken man informs.

MAN (O.C.)

You wake up, you brush your teeth,
or don't, we know. Have breakfast,
go to work, are late, we know. Your
back aches, you buy some aspirin,
you call a friend and complain:
your job, your life, the weather,
we know. You're not that
complicated, you're not that deep.
You remember your late wife, her
hair, her smile, you dream, early
retirement, you imagine, you
remember, you project, on loop. You
think things new, you think them
yours, the days afoot. On loop. On
file. All interactions patterned,
networked, stored. We own you, on
point, predictable. That's the
insurance business. We bet on what
we know Mr. Campos. So please,
understand, this is all the time
you have left.

Half-conscious and critically burned, FEDERICO CAMPOS (50's) lies on his side with his back to the speaking man. Floating holographic panels encase his bed, churning a life's-worth of data, surveillance info and ICU biometrics.

MAN (O.S.)

When that catheter fills up you
will slowly slip into a coma. Once
under, your brain will begin
crunching computation cycles for
the duration of your incarceration.
We have almost everything we need
to finalize the claim on the
android. Except for the last three
days, missing from your bio-
records...

The holographic panels around Federico turn off by retracting like information plate-armor, with a CHIME. Federico and the SOFT SPOKEN MAN have GLOWING PODS on the back of their necks. Federico's flickers dim and is BLUE. The man's has a steady RED GLOW.

May I?

MAN (O.S.)

The man pulls back his suit's cuff and taps on the back of his hand a sequence over six fluorescent "buttons" under his skin. The hand's index fingertip activates with a glow.

MAN (O.C.)

The desert's radiation...

He takes his glowing finger to the back of Federico's neck, where his blue pod flickers-on-and-off. A faint blue beam tries to connect between pod and fingertip but CRACKLES and emits a "denied" type CHIME.

MAN (O.C.)

...must have fried your BIO-GPS.
See? I can't access the last three
days. Corrupted.

The speaking man, a sharply-dressed android, AGENT HARRIS eases back into his chair with a holographic clipboard on his crossed leg. Harris has dead crystal-black android eyes and his head surveys the air as he speaks.

AGENT HARRIS Again,
you will go to jail unless...
I'm to inform you it's
within my authority to cost-benefit
a "good faith" plea on your behalf.
You help us find the android, your
sentence's appealed, you go home.
If you continue silent, 'drip-drip-
drip' incarceration in a coma, on
loop. Do I make myself clear Mr.
Campos?

FEDERICO (SPANISH)

Que? (What?)

AGENT HARRIS

In English Mr. Campos. Where-is-the-
android?

Ada.

FEDERICO

AGENT HARRIS

The AD-6 unit, what were you doing
with it in the desert?

FEDERICO

Her name was Ada. She was a person.
As an android, I would think you'd
understand.

AGENT HARRIS

It's not wise to confuse business
with semantics Mr. Campos. Where-is-
the android?

Federico takes this in. He turns to face Harris.

FEDERICO

Do you have any friends or loved
ones Agent Harris? As an android.

AGENT HARRIS

I'm with insurance... I fail to see
how that's relevant.

Federico considers the word "relevant" to himself and turns
his back again to Harris.

FEDERICO

Relevant... you know everything,
you know nothing. She died in my
arms.

On Harris' holographic clipboard a polygraph reads 'ACCURATE
and BEEPS. He checks-off a box with his finger.

AGENT HARRIS

There's no indication of prior
malfunction in your reports?

FEDERICO

She hid it from me. I'll never understand why? Ada used to say, we can never really know why people do what they do.

EXT. DESERT/WIND FARM - DAY (2)

We fly over a vast mountainous post apocalypse desert. In the oncoming distance, windmills overlook from a large mesa against a red ashen sky

FEDERICO (V.O.)

We can talk about it, but that's not enough. What goes on in their head, what they fear, how they love. You can't really know.

(MORE)

Unless you could somehow see the world through their eyes.

EXT. WINDMILL- CONTINUOUS (3)

Standing on a turbine, ADA, a petite female android, wears a flight-suit with protruding glider wings, helmet, goggles and a red scarf around her neck. She removes the scarf, revealing a RED GLOWING BULB on the back of her neck. She taps into the back of her hand and her wings retract into her back like origami. She chews gum and blows a bubble and pops it.

FEDERICO

Take gum for example. She didn't have taste buds nor a digestive track, but she got hooked on gum for a couple of years. She said she was 'figuring it out'.

She takes a reading from her hand-held device of the turbine's blades.

ADA

I'm ready Martha.

A woman's voice, MARTHA responds through the helmet.

MARTHA

Initializing.

Ada points the device as she blows another bubble.

FEDERICO

Why gum? She asked me what it
tasted like, but try to describe
'mint' to someone whose never had
it. It's mint.

ADA'S THERMAL/X-RAY POV - CONTINUOUS (4)

A low-rez computerized view: The blades spin-down to a
fraction of their speed as a swarm of readings attach
themselves to the turbine head and blades. ZOOM-IN on a
hairline fracture descending on one of the spinning blades.
Points of interest identify the fracture, light-up and link
to the flashing word: REPORT?

FEDERICO (V.O.)

It's the same with emotions I
guess.

(MORE)

She said, what would it be to feel
the way that someone else feels,
from inside, what they fear, how
they love. Without any words, and
certainty?

MARTHA (O.S.)

Anomaly detected. Confirm AD-6?

EXT. WINDMILL- CONTINUOUS (3)

Ada smirks to herself under her big goggles.

ADA

Gotcha baby (TO HERSELF). OK
Martha, this is what I need you to
do....

The smile fades as she looks up to see the turning blades,
reminded of something.

ADA'S THERMAL/X-RAY POV - CONTINUOUS (4)

The digitized fracture slowly "materializes" into...

DATA-VOID - CONTINUOUS (5)

The profile of two 'human' mouths kissing against a bright white void as a blizzard of particles wash over them. Naked and very much human, Ada and YOUNG MAN are lost in a deep open-mouth kiss.

Eyes closed, she extends her neck. His kiss slides under her jawline. She exhales. The image breaks back into...

ADA'S THERMAL/X-RAY POV - CONTINUOUS (4)

Graphic readings of the turbine and blades. ALARMS along the fracture demand: "REPORT? REPORT?"

MARTHA (O.C.)
Confirm anomaly in blade's
structure?

EXT. WINDMILL- CONTINUOUS (3)

Ada snaps out of it. Her hand starts the shake and a sharp pain hits her stomach.

MARTHA (O.C.)
Please suggest procedure?

FEDERICO (V.O.)
Ada was pushing a hundred and
fifty. As far as I can tell there's
no heaven for androids, nor mercy
for faulty equipment from their
employers.

She contorts with pain and falls out of frame towards the ground.

EXT. WINDMILL BASE - CONTINUOUS (6)

Ada lies motionless by the base of the wind mill.

INT. WIND FARM POWER PLANT ENTRANCE - DAY (7)

Ada waits. She pulls off her helmet and goggles revealing long flowing hair and the black android eyes set in a delicately featured face. She wears a blue scarf.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
Over thirty years as her supervisor
this is how she would greet me on
my annual inspections.

She smiles and throws her arms out.

ADA
Fede-ri-coo! Crap, you're wrinkly!

FEDERICO (V.O.)
This is how she greeted me three
days ago.

INT. WIND FARM POWER PLANT - DAY (7)

Federico pulls back the head-cover of his radiation suit revealing a smile. He wears a satchel and carries a delivery package.

Ada waits in place, hair in a neat pony-tail, goggles and helmet under an arm. She has no scarf, but an ID badge. She nods.

ADA
Welcome to the Minotaur Solar Wind
south-west plant supervisor Campos.
I'm the acting AD-6 associate.
(MORE)

ADA (CONT'D)
As soon as you're settled we can
begin with inspection of...

Federico interrupts her with a big hug around her neck. He speaks in SPANISH to her, as he's always done.

FEDERICO
Come here *chaparrita!* So happy to
see you.

Ada is nonplussed and slightly annoyed.

ADA
In English, sir.

INT. WIND FARM UNDERGROUND - CONTINUOUS (9)

Ada and Federico inspect the wind farm's large underground facilities.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

We did the central grids that day
and decided to do the north-end
windmills the next morning. All day
like this. Like she didn't know me.

INT. WIND FARM BREAK-ROOM - NIGHT (10)

Federico eats a packet of dehydrated protein by the coffee maker. He looks at a picture of a himself and a Mexican woman in white in an underground cave area. He wears a wedding band on that hand. The delivery package sits on a chair.

Ada passes by, clipboard and a handheld device under an arm.

ADA

I'll input the grid reports before
powering down, sir. Night.

FEDERICO

Your package came in by the way...

ADA (O.S.)

I didn't order anything. Night.

Federico sees her exit the commissary.

Martha?

FEDERICO

MARTHA, the compounds central computer, responds.

MARTHA

Yes, Supervisor Campos.

FEDERICO (ENGLISH)

Could you please pull-up Ada's DMR-
system diagnostics? Past twelve
months please?

INT. ADA'S CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS (11)

Except for a few personal nick-knacks and clippings tacked to the corkboard her chambers look like a utility closet. She straps on a device to her temple and inputs data into a holographic console. A LOW CHIME goes-off and she loses consciousness, dropping into the chair. The word "REBOOTING" flashes.

INT. WIND FARM BREAK-ROOM - CONTINUOUS (10)

At the table, Federico sifts through Ada's specs on floating holographic panels.

ADA (O.C.)
So, data make me look fat?

Federico is startled.

ADA
Offline Martha.

The panels disappear with a CHIME. Wearing company casual-wear and her hair down, Ada returns with a small potted cactus in one hand. She hugs Federico from behind, cheek to cheek, and gives him a firm slap on the chest.

ADA
Fede. How are you?

FEDERICO
What the hell was all that about?

She notices the package.

ADA
What? Oh, my package came in!
Thanks Fede.

She leaves the cactus and immediately goes to the package and tears it open. Federico waits for an explanation. She pulls out a dress and stares at it, mystified.

ADA
LOOK. It's my first. Isn't it nice?

She gets up and holds it to her chest and admires it.

FEDERICO

Why did you get a dress for?

ADA

I wanted one. Don't judge me.
Isn't it pretty?

Ada is lost in her dress. Still upset, Federico stares at it and nods "I guess it would look OK(fantastic) on you".

FEDERICO

What kind of shoes did you get with it?

ADA

Shoes? What's wrong with my work-boots?

FEDERICO

Nothing... Look, what's going on?
Did I say something?

She puts the dress back in its box and takes it to the counter.

ADA

What? Before? Company memo thing.

FEDERICO

I didn't get a memo?

ADA

Compliance, workplace, English,
blah-blah-blah.

FEDERICO

Let me see it.

She returns to the table and adjusts the cactus on the table.

ADA

I deleted it. Careful with Arnold.
Conversation does him good.

Ada?

FEDERICO

ADA (CONT'D)

I'm sure you'll get it. You eat yet?
Can I get you some dehydrated water
or something?

FEDERICO
You saw me eat ten minutes ago.

ADA
Never stopped you before.

FEDERICO
Ha, ha, ha.

ADA
Hey, I'm not the one with the
paunch.

FEDERICO
We'll run some quick diagnostics.

ADA
Oh, It's down-time, Fede. Come on.

FEDERICO
Something's not right.

ADA
You're not right. I haven't seen
you in a year and you're all
uptight. Relax. I'm good.

Federico's not convinced.

ADA (CONT'D)
Fine. It's my time of the month.

Federico finally cracks a smile.

ADA
There-we-go.

FEDERICO

Ada?

ADA

Tomorrow morning OK? We'll set e-ve-
ry-thing right.

Federico considers this.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
Had I ran some tests, she'd still
be here.

FEDERICO
First thing tomorrow.

ADA
Fine, and speak Spanish grouch.
You're too-by-the-book today.

FEDERICO
Oh I'm by the book?

ADA
Spa-nish!

FEDERICO (SPANISH)
Quien te entiende? (Who understands
you?)

ADA
Good. Great. Sooo, how you been?
What did you bring me?

Federico grabs his satchel from the floor and continues the
conversation in SPANISH.

FEDERICO
It was Laura's, so please take care
of it.

ADA
What do you think I am you goon?
Gimme'.

Federico hands her a small box wrapped in yellow paper.

FEDERICO
Happy "made-up" Birthday
chaparrita.

ADA
Thank-you.

Excited, Ada takes the box and shakes it softly by her ear.

FEDERICO

I'm sure you can see through the
cardboard.

ADA

It's better this way.

She listens. Wonders. Looks back at Federico. She removes the
paper to reveal a cigar box. She gingerly raises the top and
is amazed by it's content.

Oh Fede...

ADA (CONT'D)

FEDERICO

Laura wanted you to have them.

ADA

I don't know what to say.

Federico takes in the sight of Ada's enjoyment of her
present.

FEDERICO

Take care of them.

ADA

Of course. Thank you.

She moves her finger inside the box.

ADA (CONT'D)

You got lucky with Laura. I told
you I liked her. I miss her.

She gently closes the lid. Federico's smile fades covering
the sting of "I miss her".

FEDERICO

It's hard not to.

Ada looks up.

ADA

Oh, I'm so sorry.

FEDERICO

No, don't be.

ADA

No, I didn't mean to...

FEDERICO

It's fine. Just give me my birthday present.

ADA

Uhm. OK. This is the first part. It's a two-parter so don't laugh. Don't laugh. And wait till I'm finished, OK? (BEAT) Here goes...

Self-conscious and stumbling through the words, Ada begins to speak in a broken and accented SPANISH, peppering it with hand gestures for emphasis.

ADA (SPANISH)

Federico, words are poor instrument to show how feel but, they all we have. As friend you give me much things over years and I can't thank you much, not repay ever you. I understand when you Spanish speak to me because programing, but I learn Spanish from book, not download, so I speak to say Happy day birth to you, and gracias to you.

Amazed, Federico applauds. She interrupts him with a "hold on, hold on there's more" gesture.

ADA (SPANISH) (CONT'D)

They say android not alive, not feeling, only simulation. I don't know. But I see you, I see you life, I grow.

Ada's hand starts to tremble but she conceals it with her gestures.

ADA (SPANISH) (CONT'D)

I need to tell you, I fall in love with a man. Much love. He is beautiful man, smart, kind man,

unique. I want life for me with
him. So please I ask you, as
friend, please drive me gone from
here.

Surprised and dread wash over his face.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
You never really know what goes on
in someone's head.

INT. ADA'S CHAMBERS - DAY (11)

Ada sits at her console wearing a green scarf and the device
on her temple. She hits a button, A LOW CHIME drones, she
passed out into the reclined chair. Eyes closed, random
twitches dance on her expressionless face. The holographic
panel blinks "TRANSMITTING".

FEDERICO (ENGLISH) (V.O.)
Now and then, Ada would ask careful
questions about my family, my
friends. Married life. Sex...

ADA (V.O.) "Wait-a-minute"

ADA (V.O.)

FEDERICO (V.O.) She would say.
"Let me get this straight. It-feels-
like-WHAT? When you WHAT?"

TRANSITION EFFECT: Things in the frame break-up into digital
particles washing away, revealing:

INT. ABSTRACT DATA-CLOUD VOID - CONTINUOUS (12)

Light particles drift though a dark digital deep. MUFFLED
SOUND as if underwater.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
She said his name was Turing and
was an engineer from Arco-do-santi.
One of the last separatist eco-
cities, somewhere in the desert.

Some particles pass close enough to reveal a glimmering rush of images inside, like unborn fish in translucent ova.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

Don't ask me how, but they were downloading their consciousness to the data-cloud network and had been "seeing" each other for the last six months.

Across the dark expanse, random particles ignite and begin to link-up.

FEDERICO (V.O.) She was sampling the neural signatures of his brain's sensory and emotional centers and reconstructing them in herself.

A complex fibrous data constellation emerges.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

First, scent, sight, hearing, touch, taste.

The constellation reveals a low-res, point-of-light humanoid couple embracing.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

Then more complex structures like hunger, and laughter, and arousal.
(MORE)

FEDERICO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Eventually swapping and rebuilding memories, bits of dreams and reimplanting them, as if they'd shared that lifetime together.

INT. DATA-CLOUD VOID - CONTINUOUS (5)

They "up-res" with the SOUND of RUSHING WATER into "flesh" bodies, consuming each other in their embrace. The void around them illuminates to a blinding bright.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

She was for all intents and purposes "feeling" the world for

the very first time, through her
lover.

Ada's eyes open and look into Turing's. She has beautiful
human eyes that drop to his mouth. She exhales...

ADA
I love you.

She grabs him with both hands by the face and pulls him
towards her, devouring his mouth.

ADA
You taste like cinnamon.

INT. ADA'S CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS (11)

A CHIME. Ada wakes up and savors an aftertaste in her mouth.

FEDERICO (V.O)
When I asked her if he felt the
same way about her, she said that
she didn't really *know*. But, she
could *feel* it, through him.

Her hand starts to tremble and shake. She grabs and massages
it close to her body and the sharp pain hits her stomach.

INT. WIND FARM BREAK-ROOM - CONTINUOUS (10)

Federico towers over the table and pinches the bridge of his
nose, Ada sits. He yells in SPANISH.

FEDERICO
Are you out of your god-damn mind?

ADA
I can take care of all of the
surveillance and tech and get you
back here safe by Sunday night.

FEDERICO
What about the alarms and tracker-
bots with guns? They'll fly here
within the hour if you so much as
cross that gate.

ADA No
they won't!

FEDERICO
Of course they won't because I'm
not letting you do this.

ADA
I can take care it.

FEDERICO
No you can't! You set one foot
outside the perimeter, you'll shut
down, reformat, and die, you can't
override basic anti-theft. What's
wrong with you?

ADA
I want to marry him.

FEDERICO
You what?

ADA
I-want-to-marry-him.

FEDERICO
What? Why?

ADA
What do you mean why? Because we're
in love...

FEDERICO
You're an android.

Ada bolts up.

ADA
What? Do I ever call you a
'primate'?

FEDERICO (SIGHS)
That is not what I meant.

ADA

Thirty fucking years working
together...

FEDERICO

That is not what I meant!

ADA

Well what did you mean?

Pissed, Ada's hand begins to shake but Federico doesn't
notice, exploding.

FEDERICO

That, you don't know about these
things and you're being impulsive
and naive!

ADA

Oh come on.

FEDERICO

Relationships don't work that way!
They're messy and demanding. They're
hard while they last and they're
shit when they end! People
change, you change, you grow apart,
they find someone else, they die.
Do you die? Do you know what that
is?

Uncomfortable silence between them, but he continues.

FEDERICO

Even when they work, which few do,
because it's easier to keep them
going than it is to fix them, it has
nothing, nothing to do with love.
It's all work. It's routine. And it
fades.

Ada is dumbstruck.

ADA

I wish Laura could hear you say
that. No, scratch that. I'm glad
she can't hear you mouth off.

FEDERICO

Don't bring her into this.

Bullshit.

ADA

FEDERICO

That was completely different.

ADA

Bull-shit. You tell yourself whatever you want to believe, OK? I'm very sorry she's dead. I'm very sorry you won't let go of her, and I'm truly deeply sorry you don't or won't or can't remember what it's like to feel that way about someone...

Uncomfortable silence into each others eyes. Ada rubs her hands and walks away.

FEDERICO

Why?

Arms crossed, she scans for anything that will persuade him.

ADA

Why? (beat) Because...

FEDERICO (V.O.) (ENGLISH)

Because you're dying. Because you're in love with a guy you just met. Because you think it's simple. And there's so much I wish I could tell you then, but you wouldn't believe me.

Ada plants her palms on the table and offers an answer.

ADA

I want the words.

FEDERICO

The what?

ADA (FRUSTRATED)

I can't get tired but you make me

tired. Sit down. The words...

She sits. He sits.

ADA

Someone saying "I do", or "thank you" or "please". There's magic in that. You say them and boom, they make things real.

He still doesn't get it. She carefully explains with a slow fluid hand gesture, gliding slowly across her face.

ADA

OK pragmatist, look: 'Physics' (she points at her ear), then 'biochemistry' (she points to her brain), then 'magic' (she touches her chin and whispers) "I love you".

The words expand and dissipate over in the break-room's silence, filling it like a soft sonic boom.

ADA

If it's hard or if it fails... I know.

She grabs his hand.

Please.

ADA

Federico stares at the gesture.

FEDERICO

I can't.

And there it is. She pulls away, not knowing where to look and gets up from the table. Her hand starts to shake and if she could produce tears would cry.

ADA

I've never, ever, asked you, for anything.

FEDERICO

Ada, what's wrong with your hand?

Nothing.

ADA

Ada grabs onto her wrist. Her voice begins to break-up and distort.

Ada?

FEDERICO

ADA

I thought you'd. Be happy for me.
Want me, to have this.

FEDERICO

Why aren't we getting Biometric
alerts? Where's Martha?

Her jaw locks, as if suffocating. Federico tries to go to her but she waves him away, convulsing.

ADA

No. Just don't. Don't. Leave me.

The room's lights flicker and dim. She stares him down burning with a sad wounded rage.

FEDERICO (ENGLISH)

Campos override five-five-seven-two-
detla? Martha acknowledge!

Martha doesn't. Ada starts to convulse and Federico catches her as she loses her balance.

FEDERICO (SPANISH)

Ada get Martha!

Ada tries to speak by rotating her head towards her jaw. Her voice further distorts metallic, dying, no longer coming from her mouth.

ADA

I would. For you. For. Laura.

An low electronic rattle hisses from of her sagging mouth.

INT. ADA'S CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS (11)

Federico kicks the door-in, leans Ada into her console's chair and snaps the headset on her. Panels activate with the word "REBOOTING".

FEDERICO (V.O.)

To avoid detection and do her work,
Ada had been rebooting from her
default personality imprint and
erasing all records of her
breakdown.

INT. WIND FARM BREAK-ROOM - CONTINUOUS (10)

Head in hands, Federico looks like he just walked away from a plane crash. Fresh-faced and unaware Ada sits across the table pulling her hair back into a pony-tale.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

The Ada I'd known, "my Ada", sooner
or later would corrupt completely and
disappear. Leaving in her place...

ADA

Your cactus Supervisor Campos?

Federico waves "no".

ADA

Yes. Well, if we're done for the
day, I can input your grid reports
before powering down.

FEDERICO (SPANISH)

Can I ask you something Ada?

ADA

In English, sir. Yes.

FEDERICO (ENGLISH)

Are you happy here?

ADA

I don't believe we're here to be

happy, sir.

FEDERICO

Oh?

ADA

We're here so others can have a better life, through cleaner energy. At Minotaur Solar Wind...

FEDERICO

OK, no, no, forget that. (BEAT) I have a friend. Next to my late wife, she's the person I've known the longest. She's Bright. Funny. Very caring... When my wife was in treatment for her cancer, my friend would call her everyday, to keep her company.

ADA

That's sad, sir.

FEDERICO

Yeah. Anyway, she's asked me to do something.

(MORE)

FEDERICO (CONT'D)

If I do it, she'll be very happy, but if I don't, at least she'll always be safe. But, either way, no matter what I do, I'll never see her again. Understand?

Ada considers this.

ADA

It sounds like you're deciding between your happiness and hers, sir.

He squints at her, not expecting that answer. She nods "yip" and breaks the awkward silence.

ADA

A box?

Open it. Ada glances at it.

FEDERICO

ADA

It's knotted string.

FEDERICO

Open it!

Ada does and pours into her palm seven rice-sized dolls made from colorful string.

FEDERICO

Guatemalan worry dolls. They were my late wife's.

ADA

Ah.

FEDERICO

You tell one of them something that worries you before going to bed. You put it under the pillow and in the morning, they take care of it.

ADA

Ah. Magical thinking. For children?

FEDERICO

Maybe. Laura wanted you to have them.

ADA

Ah. Thanks. Thoughtful woman.

FEDERICO

The best. Almost didn't marry her you know? At my age? (beat) My friend said I run away from things. She said, she never understood that, my 'fear', but she understood the loneliness. So I took a chance.

Ada politely nods not getting any of it. Federico smiles at her.

INT. WIND FARM UNDERGROUND - DAYBREAK (9)

The underground facilities HUM unperturbed in the exact places where Ada and Federico did their rounds. WARNING and DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE signs command over the empty space. We hear the SOUND of an iron gate closing.

EXT. WIND FARM DESERT- DAYBREAK (13)

The windmills turn in the toxic morning air.

Ada walks into the desert in her new dress and workbooks with a travel satchel running wires to her Bio-Gps. She takes in the sight of the morning like a sacrament, Arnold the cactus by her chest. The SOUND of large vehicle IDLES ahead of her.

ADA (TO HERSELF)

This is the best of all possible worlds.

She takes a deep breath, and exhales.

ADA

Ah, I wish I could smell that.

Federico yells in SPANISH from the vehicle.

FEDERICO (O.S.)

C'mon already! Gotta go!

ADA

Coming!

She looks at "Arnold" the small potted cactus.

ADA

Well, this is it my friend. Time for you to go back to the wild.

She blows it a small kiss, cracks its ceramic pot with her hand and places the cactus on the ground.

ADA

Go on, be free. Be good...

Ada walks away. Arnold the cactus lies on the ground with the windmills tuning behind him.

EXT. DESSERT ROAD - DAY (14)

Federico's lone delivery van drives through vast expanses of empty dessert, dwarfed by the hostile post-apocalypse landscape.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

She downloaded the coordinates to my Bio-Gps and we took off without a hitch. Until noon. When being disconnected so long from the server started wear down on Ada's system.

INT. UTILITY VAN - NOON (15)

The van's windshield and windows are gold-polarized for the radiation and double as a navigation display, over a semi-digitized view of the road.

Sweaty and tired, Federico drives with the sun in his eyes. Ada shivers in a fetal position.

ADA

I'm cold. Why is it so cold here?
Why am I cold?

INT. UTILITY VAN - LATE AFTERNOON (15)

Tearless, Ada bawls with her head pressed to the passenger window wrapped in a blanket. Federico tries to get her attention but she swats him away horrified.

FEDERICO (V.O.)

Little by little she began to slip away from me.

INT. UTILITY VAN - NIGHT (15)

Van parked. Federico rubs his eyes to stay awake. Ada lunges at him with a scream. Federico does his best to avoid being

hurt telling her to stop. She tears his suit.

INT. UTILITY VAN - NIGHT (15)

In a stupor, Ada gazes out the window at lightning on the mountainous horizon. A massive four-legged construction-bot is silhouetted in the distant flashes, wandering like a lost herd animal.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
Afraid she wouldn't make it, I took
a shortcut through the mountains.

EXT. DESTINATION DESERT - MORNING (16)

Federico stands outside the parked van in his torn suit with a hand over his eyes, looking out over a sand dune.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
No power to return and Ada down to
her last charge. We had made it...

Federico contemplates a vast empty stretch of desert.

FEDERICO (V.O.)
But no Arco-do-santi.

FEDERICO (SPANISH)
Mierda! (Shit!)

CUT TO:

Federico cradles Ada in his arms. He clears the hair from her face. He reaches into her satchel and presses a button. Ada comes to with a shiver but barely moves.

FEDERICO (SPANISH)
Ada. We're here. I'm sorry.

Ada's dangling head sees the empty desert and barely nods 'no'.

Her hand reaches up to Federico face traversing his cheek, an eye, his nose and down to his mouth. She taps gently three times under his mouth.

They sit quietly in the sand. Her Bio-Gps blinks and goes out. Sand blows around them.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU ROOM (1)

A single green droplet quivers and falls into the almost full catheter. A BLINKING ALARM in the background. Induced coma sequence begins.

FEDERICO

I sat with her until it was her time. I saw to it she went into the ground, and made my peace.

The polygraph BEEPS: ACCURATE. Agent Harris towers behind him.

FEDERICO (CONT'D)

So don't tell me you own me, or know me, or her. And you can take your little intimidation tricks and your company bullshit and you can all go to hell.

Unperturbed, Harris nods 'yip'.

AGENT HARRIS

Mr. Campos, has it occurred to you that you might have been taken advantage of?

FEDERICO

What? By who?

AGENT HARRIS

The android.

FEDERICO

Are you insane?

AGENT HARRIS

You're here. She's not. Someone has to pay?

FEDERICO

She was my friend, she died. I left her there.

The polygraph BEEPS: ACCURATE.

AGENT HARRIS

Why not just steal the van from you? You would be home right now instead of here.

FEDERICO

No, no, no, she need me to take her there. Because, her mind, being away from the server...

AGENT HARRIS

Did you witness firsthand any of this impossible to science "mind-downloading-reconstruction-process"?

FEDERICO

No. But, Ada found a way. And that's what was causing her breakdowns.

AGENT HARRIS

There was nothing wrong with her Mr. Campos!

FEDERICO

Haven't you been listening?

AGENT HARRIS

Yes, and you keep going on about she how she hid it from you, and your guilt, and not knowing these secret intentions that are so mysterious to everyone. You romanticize these things and fail to see you were set up.

FEDERICO

What?

AGENT HARRIS

You weren't seeing any malfunctions because there were none. She put on an act, to get you to take the fall.

FEDERICO

Thirty years we were friends.

AGENT HARRIS

Mr. Campos, there's no Arco-do-santi. There hasn't been one in over a hundred years. It disappeared with the water-wars.

FEDERICO

No, No, I took a shortcut, we got lost maybe, and I got her killed.

AGENT HARRIS

OK. Just stop, Mr. Campos, stop. The early AD-6 models, were highly unstable and unreliable. The company lost a lot of money recalling, refurbishing and reimbursing contracts because of them.

No.

FEDERICO

AGENT HARRIS

Yes, the only way to even begin to recoup the investment was to employ them. Why do you think a highly trained full simulation AD-6 level-two android was a mechanic on a wind farm?

Federico is speechless.

AGENT HARRIS

She was working-off her huge debt to the company, with accruing interest, which was becoming obvious she would never pay. Next March she was going to be sold-off for parts over-seas. She knew this.

FEDERICO

It's not possible.

The polygraph BEEPS: ACCURATE.

AGENT HARRIS

I wish your deposition gave us

something we could use but...
You'll be carted to detention
shortly.

The life support system BEEPS. Catheter full, time's up.

FEDERICO
You didn't find *anything* out there?

With his back to Harris, Federico carefully listens.

AGENT HARRIS
Tracker-bots thoroughly canvassed a
ten-mile radius. Nothing.

Federico closes his eyes hard.

AGENT HARRIS
Oh, but this was on your person.

Harris draws something from inside his jacket. He places
Laura's picture by Federico's face. He opens his eyes. Harris
leaves.

AGENT HARRIS
Goodbye Mr. Campos. I hope your
incarceration is agreeable and you
find a better life after your
release in a hundred and seven
years.

Federico grabs the picture with his burned hand. A light
untanned area shows on the finger where his wedding band used
to be.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (17)

Federico's bed glides on it's own down a long corridor,
covered by the holographic info-panels. He begins to nod-off.

FLASHBACK/MONTAGE:

EXT. DESTINATION DESERT - MORNING (16)

Federico cradles Ada in his arms. Sand blows around them.
Federico hears something in the distance. A hundred yards
away a hatch rises from the sand. A MAN in a strange bio-suit

runs out carrying a small pelican case toward them.

FEDERICO (ENGLISH) (V.O.)

I sat with her until it was her
time.

INT. ADA'S CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS (11)

Federico sits at Ada's chair as she stands behind him, hands on his shoulders.

ADA

I can never repay you for this.

EXT. DESTINATION DESERT - MORNING (16)

The man tears his breathing mask off and nods at Federico. He's TURING, the young man inside the data-void with Ada. He is young, shaggy, bespectacled and attractive.

Federico watches him rip-out Ada's duct-taped wires and replaces them with a sensor from the case. Ada comes to with an immense gasp.

INT. ADA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT (11)

Ada draws her glowing index finger to Federico's Bio-Gps. A steady blue beam HUMS emits between them.

ADA (O.C.)

I made some improvements to your
Bio-Gps by the way. For the trip.

EXT. DESTINATION DESERT - MORNING (16)

Ada and Turing come close to embrace and awkwardly realize they've never kissed in person. They fumble through their smiles not knowing how to hug and finally, passionately kiss. Federico looks at them.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (17)

Federico begins to nod off as he glides toward a bright light.

ADA (V.O.)
Promise me you'll wait in the van
until they come for you? The
radiation will cook you.

FEDERICO (SPANISH) (V.O.)
It's better this way, it'll look
real.

EXT. DESTINATION DESERT - MORNING

Ada leans in to Federico, hugs him by the neck and whispers
in SPANISH his ear.

ADA
Gracias. Te quiero. Cuidate. (Thank
you. I love you. Take care)

With her arms around his neck she discretely touches his Bio-
Gps making it blink.

INT. VAN. - CONTINUOUS (18)

We see them hug through the windshield as it activates and an
navigation map geo-locates a pulsating dot that reads:
CAMPOS, FEDERICO: MEDICAL EMERGENCY. ALL RESCUE UNITS
RESPOND.

EXT. DESTINATION DESERT - MORNING (16)

Ada and Turing run back to the hatch.

FEDERICO (ENGLISH) (V.O.)
I saw to it she went into the
ground...

Federico smiles and blows her a long kiss. His hand shows the
tan-line where his wedding band used to be.

FEDERICO (ENGLISH) (V.O.)
...and made my peace.

By the hatch, Ada holds Federico's ring and blows a kiss back
with it.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS (17)

The hazy incandescent lights pass overhead. Random twitches dance on Federico's face as he finally falls unconscious.

ADA (V.O.)

Oh by the way, I think you're really going to like the second part of your birthday present.

FEDERICO (SPANISH) (V.O.)

What is it?

ADA (V.O.)

You'll know it when you see it

TRANSITION EFFECT: Things in the frame break-up into digital particles being washed away, revealing:

DATA-CLOUD VOID (5)

Federico and Laura, as if they hadn't seen each other in a thousand years, kiss in the white void's flurry of bright particles.

ADA (V.O.)

Happy Birthday Fede.

END

Vita

Jaime Cano grew up in the Juarez, Mexico/El Paso, Texas. He is currently thinking about what to include in this section.

Permanent address: j_cano@hotmail.com

This report was typed by the author.