

LOVING ANDROIDS

by

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Characters:

Cast of 6 (3M 3F)

GAVIN NICHOLSON – mid forties

JULIA NICHOLSON – mid forties

DERRICK PAYNE – around fifty

MAX (PARTNERBOT M-3000) – can look anywhere between twenty to forty

FRANKIE (PARTNERBOT F-3000) – can look anywhere between twenty to forty

LOLA (PARTNERBOT F-2000) – can look anywhere between twenty to forty

Synopsis of scenes:

Act 1

Scene 1 – GAVIN’s living room. Friday 6.00 p.m.

Scene 2 – JULIA’s living room. Friday 6.45 p.m.

Scene 3 – GAVIN’s living room. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

Scene 4 – GAVIN and JULIA’s living rooms. Montage sequence over ten days.

Scene 5 – GAVIN and JULIA’s living rooms. A few days later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

Scene 6 – GAVIN’s living room. The same morning. Saturday 11.00 a.m.

Scene 7 – JULIA’s living room. Two weeks later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

Act 2

Scene 1 – JULIA’s living room. Ten minutes later.

Scene 2 – GAVIN’s living room. That night. 11.30 p.m.

Scene 3 – JULIA’s living room. A week later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

Scene 4 – JULIA’s living room. Thirty minutes later.

Scene 5 – GAVIN’s living room. Three weeks later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

Place – GAVIN and JULIA’s living rooms.

Time – Sometime in the not too distant future.

Act 1

Scene 1

GAVIN's living room. Friday 6.00 p.m.

A large house belonging to GAVIN and JULIA. It will become apparent that the house is divided into two separate residences with an internal connecting door linking the two halves through their adjoining living rooms. GAVIN lives in one part and JULIA in the other. For staging purposes, if not performed on a revolve, the door moves from one side of the stage to the other to indicate the action alternating between the two living rooms. When in GAVIN's living room the adjoining door is SL and the SR exit leads to the kitchen and the front door and when in JULIA's living room this is reversed. There are two doors on the upstage wall, SR and SL. One leads to upstairs in GAVIN's part of the house and the other to upstairs in JULIA's.

GAVIN sits on a sofa in the SR half of the room. JULIA sits on an identical sofa in the SL half of the room. There is a coffee in between both sofas. Two standard wooden dining chairs are found SR and SL. DERRICK sits on one of them, holding a portable media device. Two androids, PARTNERBOT F-3000 (later FRANKIE) and PARTNERBOT M-3000 (later MAX) stand in the room. PARTNERBOT M-3000 is closer to JULIA and PARTNERBOT F-3000 is closer to GAVIN. Both androids are dressed in simple modern boiler-suits. They are currently in a partly activated state that allows them to walk and stand, but little else. LOLA, a fully activated android, stands a little way off. She holds a large briefcase. There are two suitcases beside her which belong to the two PARTNERBOTS. JULIA, GAVIN and DERRICK look out to a large fourth wall TV screen on which a presentation film begins to play. A female voice narrates.

V.O. NARRATOR: Congratulations on the hire of your Partnerbot 3000. Whether you've selected a Mandroid or Womandroid, we at Partnerbots Incorporated are confident you'll be one hundred percent satisfied with your choice. The Partnerbot 3000 series takes advantage of the latest Intellemotivity giving it the capacity to read and to respond to the complexities of human thoughts and emotions to a very high degree. Once your Partnerbot, or PB, has been activated by one of our representatives, from the very first blink of your PB's eyes you can be sure your unique journey together is now truly underway.

- DERRICK: Sorry, bit flowery this bit. Just marketing spiel. Nothing I haven't bored you with already. (*Pressing button on device.*) Let's skip forward.
- V.O. NARRATOR: Phase One.
- DERRICK: Here we go.
- V.O. NARRATOR: Or what we like to call: 'The Getting To Know You, Getting To Know All About You Phase', will last approximately thirty minutes. Please make sure within ten minutes of your PB's full activation you are in a suitable location, free from distraction, where you can engage in a personal one-to-one data gathering session with your PB. During this Phase you will be prompted to talk. This will allow your PB to construct a rudimentary workable database of you their human partner.
- DERRICK: Julia, Gavin.
- V.O. NARRATOR: For an accurate data gathering session with your PB when speaking please try to be as honest and as truthful as you can.
- JULIA: Ah, the first hurdle.
- GAVIN: I hope you're not implying me.
- V.O. NARRATOR: Once Phase One is complete your PB will automatically advance to Phase Two: 'The Dancing Cheek To Cheek Phase'. This Phase will see you and your PB starting to develop the type of normal interaction enjoyed between human beings, as your PB develops its responses to your mental, emotional and physical needs.
- GAVIN: Oh, so that's what normal is?
- DERRICK: This is the good bit.
- V.O. NARRATOR: Physically you will have the opportunity to engage with the wonderful craftsmanship of their musculoskeletal system. And of course experience the authentic feel of their Synthetiskin, the hallmark of all Partnerbots, perfected in the 3000's models.
- DERRICK: You won't be disappointed, that I guarantee. I speak from experience, (*LOLA*) with her, and she's just a 2000.
- V.O. NARRATOR: The Phase Two period will last approximately thirty days and by the end of Phase Two, providing you have interacted fully during this period, your PB will have gained a complete intell-

emotional understanding of you. You'd almost think they'd known you for years.

DERRICK: Poor buggers eh?

V.O. NARRATOR: Your PB will then advance to Phase Three or what we call the 'Happy Talk Phase'. Although you will continue to enjoy the same Phase Two interaction you had with your PB, Phase Three is principally concerned with assessing, dialoguing and role-playing the key problematic areas encountered during Phase Two. For this, Partnerbots Incorporated has teamed up with some of the leading experts in the fields of psychotherapy, marital guidance, communication skills and body language to ensure that the Phase Three interchange is as informed as possible. It's then time to say goodbye to your PB as your Partnerbot representative will visit, deactivate, factory reset and remove the PB from your care. You can rest assured in the knowledge that the factory reset will thoroughly deep clean the droid's memory banks of all data gathered during your sixty day interaction. We'd like to thank you once again for choosing Partnerbots Incorporated. Partnerbots the name to trust – the name to trust – the name to trust...

The presentation is stuck on the loop. DERRICK switches it off from his device.

DERRICK: Don't worry, it always does that at the end. So, probably didn't tell you much more than what you've researched yourselves. However the company requires me to show it – orders must be obeyed. But she's got a nice sexy voice, a pleasant change from my adenoidal whine, eh? So, any further questions, Julia, Gavin, before I take signatures and payment and of course move on to full activation? Now's the time to ask – although there is, of course, the twenty-four seven helpline which is open... well, twenty-four seven in theory. You won't get me, but one of our phone staff will be ready, eager and willing to deal with your call.

JULIA: Thanks, Mr Payne –

DERRICK: Derrick, please.

JULIA: You've been very... extremely thorough.

DERRICK: I wouldn't be doing my job otherwise, Julia.

GAVIN: *(LOLA.)* So... you're with her?

DERRICK: Yes.

- GAVIN: I mean *with* her?
- DERRICK: Yes, I know what you mean, Gavin – although she’s with me to be more accurate. Lola’s been with me for getting on for nine months now, haven’t you, Lola?
- JULIA: Does she speak?
- DERRICK: No – well, normally yes, but I’ve had her muted. I prefer her that way. I’m sure she’d say a few choice things about me if she could, eh Lola? Gift from the company for hitting the sales targets. Like I say, she’s an inferior model, an F-2000 unlike your superior 3000’s there. Not complaining though, she suits me for my needs, whims and every desire – for now, until they start rewarding us with these beauties. Shouldn’t really be bringing her to work. The powers that be don’t like the droids having exposure to other droids, cross contamination of the technological kind. I slip her in under the radar, smack smack! No, she’s useful for performing menial tasks and more importantly for driving me home after a few beers at the end of a long hard day, then to give me my relaxing foot rub and then off into the kitchen to cook my dinner.
- JULIA: Lucky you.
- DERRICK: Suits me.
- JULIA: I’m sure.
- DERRICK: No, I’ve tried it with humans, twice – marriage that is. First one, Laura, I won’t talk about, second one, Rosie... I still won’t talk about – except to say if we’d stayed together one of us would have been smothered by a pillow in our sleep by now. Of course we had no Partnerbots back then to help us out – if we could’ve afforded it – and more importantly wanted to stay together – which we didn’t. Rosie had George, her physiotherapist to turn to, so she was okay. I, however, wasn’t relishing the thought of rushing into the arms of someone else – human that is.
- JULIA: Why not?
- DERRICK: Well, it’s all the baggage that comes with them, isn’t it. Especially when you get to our age – sorry, my age. Got enough of my own, don’t want to load myself up with someone else’s too. So, Lola suits me fine. And the best thing is, if I need to change something about her, make some ‘modifications’, I know someone in the workshop who’ll do what I want after hours for a modest fee.

GAVIN: Really?

DERRICK: Oh yes, variety is the spice of life, as they say, Gavin.

JULIA: You seem to be arguing yourself out of your job, Mr Payne.

DERRICK: Hm? Oh... No, I'm just talking about me – Derrick please – me, the twisted oddball that I am. No, that's why I take my hat off to people like you.

JULIA: People like us?

DERRICK: For persevering with your human partners – each other, I mean. You're saying to one another – if I can put words into your mouths: all is not lost between us, despite the battles, the niggles, the... well, you don't need me to tell you what your problems are, do you? You're saying, in spite of all that, there's still something deep within, that spark of love needing to be rekindled and... well, the Partnerbots programme is just the thing to do it for us.

GAVIN: I wish you wouldn't use the word programme, it makes me sound like a recovering alcoholic.

JULIA: Recovering would be nice.

GAVIN: You can talk. She drinks far more than I do.

JULIA: Hardly.

GAVIN: She does.

JULIA: Tosh!

DERRICK: So... Julia, Gavin...?

JULIA: (*Cases.*) They don't seem to have very much with them.

DERRICK: Just the basics there, Julia. You're free to kit them out in anything that takes your fancy.

GAVIN: What, I have to buy her outfits?

DERRICK: Only if you want to, Gavin, she's yours. You can keep her in that boiler-suit for the next sixty days if you prefer. Your choice. (*LOLA.*) I've got scores of outfits for her, literally scores: full period costumes, uniforms, skimpy sexy numbers, you name it. I've put her in something sober for today. When I come for the thirty day check-up I might show her off in something a little more racy.

JULIA: She's okay with that then, is she, you dressing her up like that?

DERRICK: Haven't had a squeak of complaint out of her yet, eh Lola?

JULIA: Well only because you've had her voice box muted.

DERRICK: Forgive me for saying so, Julia, but there's something very fundamental you're not getting about these guys. When in doubt, I tell my customers, always go back to this basic question: How does your toaster feel about you putting bread in it every morning?

JULIA: I'm not with you.

DERRICK: Well, at the end of the day, a toaster's a domestic appliance, Julia, you're not consulting it on whether you can put bread, bagels or crumpets into it. The decision's yours.

JULIA: Yes, but with respect, Mr Payne –

DERRICK: Derrick, please.

JULIA: We're not asking a couple of toasters to help us with our marriage.

DERRICK: True, but –

JULIA: If we wanted everyday appliances we'd have gone to Robert Dyas or our local supermarket. Surely the whole point about these 'guys' is that they're intellemotionally advanced, unlike toasters, so they can have the semblance of some feeling or emotion.

DERRICK: Ah now, there's the key word, Julia, 'semblance'. You mustn't confuse the semblance with the real, however realistic the technology makes them appear. It's a very easy mistake to make, Julia, you're not alone in making it – especially as the eggheads are making amazing advancements to their operating systems every time they bring out a new model, like the 3000's here for instance. Still it must be remembered that anything they appear to think or feel is only there because we've put it there – the eggheads that is, not me. And yes, they have the capacity to learn, to evolve, to auto-correct, to laugh, cry, enjoy memories – which all add to the 'realistic' experience we have with them. No-one wants to return to the dark ages of robotics, after all. (*Robotic voice and movement.*) 'Yes, master, your tea is served.' As they proceed to spill it all over your lap. No, unfortunately what goes hand in hand with technological advancements means that the margins can become blurred as to

what's actually real and what isn't. The whole of the Partnerbots programme – sorry, Gavin, enterprise – couldn't work if reality got in the way. It would open up a whole can of moral issues, ethical dilemmas, rights for androids, God help us. No, they're fantasy playthings with the capacity to serve us, nothing more, nothing less... like toasters. So the long and the short of it is, Julia, the answer to your question: is Lola okay with it? The answer has to be: if I'm okay with it, so is Lola, right Lola? End of story.

JULIA: Well, thanks for putting it so succinctly, Mr Payne.

DERRICK: Still Derrick. Okay, are we good to go? Julia, Gavin?

JULIA: Yes.

DERRICK: Excellent. Lola?

DERRICK signals for LOLA to deal with the signing etc. She puts the briefcase on the table and opens it. She takes out a tablet device and presents it to JULIA. JULIA has a cursory look at the wording.

It's just to say you've received the Partnerbot – bots, I've explained everything and answered your questions to your satisfaction – which I hope I have – and that you've seen the presentation film. Orders have been obeyed.

JULIA puts her thumb on a place on the tablet. She passes the tablet to GAVIN.

GAVIN: What happens if something goes wrong?

DERRICK: Wrong?

GAVIN: Well, if my history of gadgets is anything to go by she'll probably break down ten minutes after you've gone.

DERRICK: Well, you'll be pleased to know, Gavin, your jinx is about to be broken. Every PB is tested, re-tested, tested again and re-tested again.

GAVIN: I'm sure they said that about the Titanic, didn't they? Unsinkable, wasn't it?

DERRICK: With respect, Gavin, we've come a long way since the Titanic. Not a single glitch in two and a half years of operation. I do have another presentation film that covers production, assembly and testing if you'd like to –

GAVIN: No I'll... I'll take your personal guarantee, Mr Payne.

DERRICK: Derrick please.

GAVIN: Derrick.

GAVIN puts his thumb on a place on the tablet.

DERRICK: Right, time for full activation. A.D.R. please, Lola. *(To GAVIN and JULIA.)* Activator, deactivator, reader.

*LOLA takes a small hand-held device from the case.
DERRICK takes it.*

A.D.R. Oh, nearly forgot, names.

GAVIN: What?

DERRICK: Their names.

GAVIN: Don't they have names?

DERRICK: Well yes, the Partnerbot F-3000 and the Partnerbot M-3000. Bit of a mouthful though when your calling them upstairs to run your bath for you.

JULIA: Do we have to come up with them now?

DERRICK: If you could, Julia, they'll need to have some reference on full activation who they are and more importantly who you are.

JULIA: Okay, well... M-3000. M for me has to be Max.

DERRICK: Max.

JULIA: He looks like a Max.

DERRICK: Good. Gavin? Your F-3000. Something beginning with F perhaps.

GAVIN: I'm thinking. Ah... Fiona.

DERRICK: Fiona.

GAVIN: No, I don't like that. There was a very annoying girl at school called Fiona. Frankie.

JULIA: Frankie!

GAVIN: It's a woman's name just as much as a man's name.

JULIA: Not too late to swap her for a Mandroid.

GAVIN: Variation of Frances, Francesca, er...

JULIA: Frank?

DERRICK: No, good choice, Gavin, Frankie, like it. So, let's get Max and Frankie up and running. Oh, Lola, can't have you contaminating things with your presence, can we, sweets. Go and wait in the van.

LOLA makes to exit.

Lola, aren't we forgetting something? The case, the Docureader, (*media device*) this. Thank you.

LOLA packs the case.

She's getting a bit forgetful these days – aren't we, Lola? Won't happen with your ones, don't worry. Lola's been around for a while and the constant modifications Steve – technician – makes at my request causes little anomalies to occur. Caught her nearly pouring bleach instead of tea into my thermos this morning, didn't I, Lola? She's well overdue for a full service. Steve keeps badgering me. I'll need to bite the bullet soon and bring her in. Good, girl.

DERRICK pats LOLA's bum as she goes.

How about a friendly wave goodbye, Lola? Lola?

LOLA exits SR.

I think her hearing's starting to go too. Okay, Julia if you could stand here, we'll activate Max first, get you set up and... actually who's part of the house am I in here?

GAVIN: Mine.

JULIA: His.

DERRICK: Okay, well then that works. You can take Max off, Julia, and then I'll activate Frankie for Gavin. Yes, slightly unusual set-up you've got here, don't usually have couples in such close proximity when things have... between them. Usually one of them's camped out in a bedsit somewhere on the other side of town. But you've got a lockable door there, which is good. Right, Max. Right hand for the male.

DERRICK holds the A.D.R. towards MAX's right hand. MAX automatically turns his arm up at the elbow with his palm facing forward.

Thank you, Max. Remember, Julia, after Max says 'hello', loud and clearly say the word 'partner' so he pairs with you.

DERRICK holds the A.D.R. in front of MAX's palm. MAX is animated. (During Phase One the Partnerbots are physically a little robotic, but will become more human-like in Phase Two.)

MAX: Hello.

JULIA is prompted by DERRICK.

JULIA: (To MAX.) Partner.

MAX: (To JULIA.) Partner.

DERRICK: Okay, you're off. Tell him who he is, Julia.

JULIA: You're Max.

MAX: Max.

JULIA: Yes.

DERRICK: Tell Max who you are, Julia.

JULIA: I'm Julia.

MAX: Hello, Julia. How are you?

JULIA: I'm very well thank you, Max. And you, Max?

MAX: I'm very well too, thank you, Julia.

GAVIN: Hardly Oscar Wilde, is he.

JULIA: Neither are you, dear.

DERRICK: Give him a chance, Gavin, he's only just been born... although I'm not sure if he'll ever become Oscar Wilde.

MAX stares at GAVIN.

That's Gavin, Max, Julia's husband.

MAX: Hello, Gavin.

GAVIN: Hello, Oscar.

MAX: I'm Max.

GAVIN: Whatever.

JULIA: How rude!

DERRICK: And I'm Doctor Derrick, Max, and I look after all your health needs.

MAX: Hello, Doctor Derrick.

DERRICK: There.

JULIA: Is that it?

DERRICK: The programme – sorry, the partnership – has begun. Don't be put off by how they appear to be in Phase One, their systems are just warming up and the bulk of their processing power is directed towards taking things in... taking you in. Phase Two is when the fun starts. Don't forget, Julia, within ten minutes to be ready for the one-to-one data gathering session with Max.

JULIA: Anything specific I should talk about?

DERRICK: Just yourself.

GAVIN: I'm sure she can manage that.

JULIA: Come on, Max, through here.

MAX goes to collect his suitcase.

Where's he going?

DERRICK: Fetching his case.

JULIA: Oh. So, thank you, Mr – Derrick.

DERRICK: That's it. My pleasure, Julia. Enjoy Max. See you in thirty days for the check-up.

JULIA: Yes. Max, this way.

JULIA exits through the adjoining door followed by MAX.

DERRICK: Right, so, let's activate Frankie for you, shall we, Gavin.

Assuage the green-eyed monster jealousy you're no doubt feeling by giving you a PB of your own to play with.

- GAVIN: This actually works does it?
- DERRICK: Who, Frankie? Well let's get her activated and –
- GAVIN: No, I mean this... these things being dished out to humans to solve their... problems.
- DERRICK: Well –
- GAVIN: I know, I've seen the stuff on-line, heard the testimonials of Mr and Mrs Peabody from Tunbridge Wells saying how wonderful it all was and how their marriage is now as robust as ever. But really?
- DERRICK: Well, Gavin –
- GAVIN: I know as well as you do, Mr Payne, how companies dress things up to hawk their wares.
- DERRICK: That's very true, Gavin, I won't argue with you there, but tell me, wasn't it Julia's parents who had direct contact with a couple for whom this whole Partnerbots thing did wonders for? Amy and Leonard...?
- GAVIN: Yes.
- DERRICK: Personal recommendations are worth their weight in gold, as you well know, being a man of business yourself. And if I'm not being too forward in saying so, Gavin, as I understand it, Julia's parents, Mr and Mrs Young, are paying for this, so in my book you're in a win-win situation with Frankie here. And I hope to see your smiling face on our testimonials page in a couple of months time, Gavin – yourself and Julia, that is.
- GAVIN: Yes, well don't hold your breath.
- DERRICK: You're not the first one to say that to me, Gavin, by no means the first.
- GAVIN: So you and...?
- DERRICK: Lola.
- GAVIN: Yes, you're... fully... interactive are you?
- DERRICK: Oh yes, fully interactive... regularly.

GAVIN: And so is this one, I'm presuming.

DERRICK: Frankie's fully interactive, Gavin.

GAVIN: And... him through there?

DERRICK: The same with Max, Gavin, fully interactive. But at the end of the day they're just machinery remember. 'Doing it with a droid don't count' should be our informal slogan. If in doubt, Gavin, just think of Max – in that way – as an extremely advanced sex toy... although you probably won't want to be thinking of Frankie as that when you're...

GAVIN: I'm not that desperate, Mr Payne, to want to... with one of these.

DERRICK: Well she's all yours, Gavin, all yours... and as I like to say: whilst in the car wash you might as well go for the full wax and polish. And remember she's not going to object, the in-built C.M. – Consent Mechanism – means she's programmed to consent to your pleasure – whatever your pleasure – and interpret it as love. If only humans were that simple. Unfortunately Lola's C.M. is on the blink. She's getting a bit resistant to the things I want to do with her. No point having one if they're not going to obey you. Too much like marriage, eh Gavin? Steve'll fix it – when I take her in. Anyway, Gavin, let's get this one fully activated. Right, Frankie. Left hand for the female.

DERRICK holds the A.D.R. towards FRANKIE's left hand. FRANKIE automatically turns her arm up at the elbow with her palm facing forward.

Thank you, Frankie.

DERRICK holds the A.D.R. in front of FRANKIE's palm. FRANKIE is animated.

Remember, Gavin, after Frankie says 'hello', say the word 'partner' so she pairs with you.

FRANKIE: Hello.

DERRICK: Say 'partner'.

FRANKIE: *(To DERRICK.)* Partner.

DERRICK: Not me, him. Wait a minute, let's start again, shall we.

DERRICK holds the A.D.R. in front of FRANKIE's

palm again.

(More to himself.) Deactivate.

FRANKIE loses her animation.

Reset. Don't forget to say 'partner', Gavin – as much as I'd be happy to have her for myself. And activate.

FRANKIE is animated again.

FRANKIE: Hello.

GAVIN: *(To FRANKIE.)* Partner.

FRANKIE: *(To GAVIN.)* Partner.

DERRICK: That's it. Tell her who she is.

GAVIN: You're Frankie.

FRANKIE: Frankie.

GAVIN is prompted by DERRICK.

GAVIN: I'm Gavin.

FRANKIE: Hello, Gavin, how are you?

GAVIN: Fine.

DERRICK: And I'm Doctor Derrick, Frankie, and I look after all your health needs.

FRANKIE: Hello, Doctor Derrick.

DERRICK: All done. I'm envious of you, Gavin, very realistic these beauts. Oh well, keep hitting the targets eh. Don't forget, within ten minutes to engage in the one-to-one data gathering session. Enjoy! Gavin.

DERRICK shakes GAVIN's hand.

Lovely house by the way, very airy, high ceilings. I'll see myself out.

DERRICK exits SR. GAVIN and FRANKIE look at each other. GAVIN crosses to the adjoining door and peers through the keyhole. He turns back into the room, crosses to FRANKIE's case, picks it up and opens it.

FRANKIE: Are you looking for something, Gavin?

GAVIN: Just seeing what you've got in here.

FRANKIE: Do you usually search through a woman's case like this?

GAVIN: If I thought you were a woman I probably wouldn't... *possibly*.

FRANKIE: I am a woman, Gavin.

GAVIN: No, you're a very sophisticated piece of machinery.

FRANKIE: Yes, a woman.

GAVIN: If you say so.

FRANKIE: I'm Frankie – a woman. I was born and grew up in Godalming in Surrey. My parents were Richard and Barbara Smith –

GAVIN: No, they weren't.

FRANKIE: They were, Gavin. I have one younger brother called George Smith and I went to school at –

GAVIN: Okay, okay, I don't need your life-story... your 'made up' life-story.

FRANKIE: It's not made up, Gavin, it's –

GAVIN: Anyway, I thought you were supposed to be finding out about me, not me about you.

FRANKIE: We're finding out about each other.

GAVIN: You're finding out zilch about me.

FRANKIE: I want to be your friend, Gavin.

GAVIN: No you don't.

FRANKIE: I do.

GAVIN: No, you want to spend the next thirty days trying to get me to confess to things I shouldn't be confessing to, getting me to divulge my secrets; letting you know my fears, doubts, insecurities, vulnerabilities, just so you can take them all down and then spend the following thirty days using them in evidence against me – if I've got your agenda correct. I've got a perfectly good wife through there to do that for me, thanks

very much. Although I'm guessing your feedback sessions won't come with nasty insults and flying china... unless, of course, they've programmed that into your system too for the purposes of realism.

FRANKIE: I feel anger, Gavin.

GAVIN: Do you?

FRANKIE: *Your* anger.

GAVIN: No you don't.

FRANKIE: I do, Gavin.

GAVIN: No, you don't feel anything about me that I don't *tell* you to feel about me, got that! Look... this wasn't my idea.

FRANKIE: What wasn't, Gavin?

GAVIN: You.

FRANKIE: Me?

GAVIN: And Max.

FRANKIE: Max?

GAVIN: No, you haven't met him, have you. The droid next door with... her. I'm just doing this to... to...

FRANKIE: Yes, Gavin?

GAVIN: It's *her* this is for, not me. She's the one with the problems. Her parents know that... all too fully.

FRANKIE: I see.

GAVIN: No, you don't.

FRANKIE: Shall we sit down, Gavin?

GAVIN: Wait.

GAVIN studies FRANKIE.

FRANKIE: Yes, Gavin?

GAVIN: Just looking.

FRANKIE: For anything in particular?

GAVIN: Seams, rivets, screws... things like that.

FRANKIE: I don't think you'll find any, Gavin.

GAVIN: They've made you pretty well.

FRANKIE: My parents made me very well.

GAVIN: Right. Stretch out your arm. Turn your hand over.

GAVIN feels FRANKIE's hand.

You're warm.

FRANKIE: Thirty seven degrees Celsius to be precise. Just like you.

*GAVIN reaches out to touch FRANKIE's breasts.
FRANKIE stops his hand. GAVIN continues to push.*

GAVIN: You're strong.

FRANKIE grips GAVIN's hand.

Ow!

GAVIN pulls his hand away.

Are you supposed to hurt me?

FRANKIE: Talk now, Gavin, plenty of time for that later. May I sit here?

GAVIN: Wherever.

GAVIN crosses to the SR exit.

FRANKIE: Are you leaving, Gavin?

GAVIN: Well, I'd pour you a Speyside Single Malt too, but I fear it would be wasted on you.

FRANKIE: I can appreciate a good whisky, Gavin.

GAVIN: Appreciate perhaps, but not enjoy.

FRANKIE: I can enjoy.

GAVIN: You know what whisky is then?

FRANKIE: It's a distilled alcoholic beverage made from grain mash, principally barley, corn, wheat and rye and is typically aged in casks made from –

GAVIN: Okay, okay. Ice?

FRANKIE: I'll have it the way you have it thanks, Gavin.

GAVIN: So you...?

FRANKIE: Yes, Gavin?

GAVIN: You know... pass it, like we do?

FRANKIE: Pee pee you mean?

GAVIN: Yes, pee pee.

FRANKIE: I pee pee, Gavin, just like you.

GAVIN: And also...?

FRANKIE: Evacuate my bowels – if that's what you were going to say?

GAVIN: You do that?

FRANKIE: Do you usually ask women these questions, Gavin?

GAVIN: And you don't have to say my name after everything you say. I know what it is thanks.

GAVIN exits SR. There is a brief knock on the adjoining door. JULIA looks in.

FRANKIE: Hello?

JULIA: Hello.

FRANKIE: You must be Julia.

JULIA: You must be Frankie.

FRANKIE: Yes.

JULIA: Where is he?

FRANKIE: Gavin's pouring drinks for us – whisky.

JULIA: Did I need to ask.

FRANKIE: Can I help you with something, Julia?

JULIA: No, thank you. Just wanted to get a look at you... in action. Listen, you're going to have your work cut out with him, I ought to give you the heads up now. He's arrogant, self-centred, smug, opinionated, contrary, moody, arrogant – did I say that? Well, it should be said twice. He's pig-headed and stubborn in arguments, won't budge an inch – even if he's plainly wrong – and what's more he has this uncanny knack of turning things around to make everything seem like it's your fault – so watch out for that one. What else? The list is endless. You know you should be having this data gathering session about him with me, not with him. So if you could work on all the above you'd have more than paid for yourself. And don't be too good in... in that department, if you go into that department – which, let's face it, you no doubt will.

JULIA has entered into the room a little. MAX appears at the adjoining door.

FRANKIE: You must be Max.

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: Hello, Max. I'm Frankie.

MAX: Hello, Frankie.

GAVIN enters with two glasses of whisky. One glass is more generously filled than the other.

GAVIN: Hey, what's this, a party!

JULIA: I just wanted to make sure yours is up and running.

GAVIN: She's up and running, thanks.

JULIA: Wouldn't want to just be doing this thing alone.

GAVIN: Oscar.

JULIA: His name's Max. I hope you're not just planning to get yours drunk and molest her.

GAVIN: No, but if I did what's that to you? It's none of your business what I do, is it. She's mine... at least she is for the next two months.

JULIA: Yes, well don't forget my parents have paid for this to be an educational thing for us both, which means we're both

supposed to be learning something from this.

GAVIN: Well piss off and learn something then, you're losing valuable time and you have plenty to work on. And anyway, they shouldn't be mingling, you heard what the man said.

JULIA: Come on, Max.

GAVIN: Cheerio, Oscar.

JULIA: It's Max!

*JULIA and MAX exit through the adjoining door.
GAVIN gives the small glass to FRANKIE.*

FRANKIE: Thank you.

GAVIN: Oscar's definitely got the short straw with her. You're lucky. (*Whisky.*) So that doesn't corrode your insides then? Sorry, keep forgetting you think you're a woman.

FRANKIE: I am a woman. I'm Frankie –

GAVIN: Okay, okay, let's not go through all that again. Probably not as much as it corrodes mine, eh? Oh well, if one thing doesn't kill you something else will. Might as well be something we enjoy.

FRANKIE: (*Drinks.*) Mmm delicious, hints of nutmeg and vanilla.

GAVIN: Sure.

FRANKIE: Time for questions now, Gavin.

GAVIN: Like I say you're finding out zilch about me, but if it makes you happy go ahead.

FRANKIE: Thank you. What would you say love is, Gavin?

GAVIN: Christ, talk about diving in at the deep end! I thought you were going to ask me about what job I do or what books I've read. You want to know what love is?

FRANKIE: What *you* think love is, Gavin, yes.

GAVIN: Love? Not a clue. Ask me another.

FRANKIE: What's your earliest memory, Gavin?

GAVIN: I don't remember.

FRANKIE: How would you describe your childhood?

GAVIN: I was born, I was young and then grew up. Go on.

FRANKIE: What were your parents like, Gavin?

GAVIN: Like two human beings, only more infuriating.

FRANKIE: Do you have brothers and sisters?

GAVIN: No sisters – thank God, one brother... God help me.

FRANKIE: What does he do?

GAVIN: Destroys family businesses. But let's not go there – unless you want to hear some words you shouldn't.

FRANKIE: You have no child, children, Gavin?

GAVIN: Is that a question or a statement?

FRANKIE: A question.

GAVIN: Correct.

FRANKIE: Would you like children, Gavin?

GAVIN: Would you?

FRANKIE: That wasn't the question, Gavin.

GAVIN: I know. Her parents would – you can have that one for free. They wouldn't be paying for all this otherwise.

FRANKIE: All this?

GAVIN: You, him through there. They'd probably just leave us to tear each other apart like two rats in an ever-diminishing cage. Last time we visited her mother dragged me into the greenhouse and practically begged me for one – grandchild I mean. Sad. Well let's hope Oscar can chip away, at least, at some of the more infuriating aspects of her personality. It would be a shame for her parents not to get some return on the small fortune they're shelling out for this.

FRANKIE: When were you most happy, Gavin?

GAVIN: The day I started drinking.

FRANKIE: Do you have a drinking problem, Gavin?

GAVIN: No. It's only a problem when I run out. I make sure I'm well stocked up, so no problem.

FRANKIE: What would you say – ?

GAVIN: Let's talk about you instead, shall we?

FRANKIE: If you wish to, Gavin.

GAVIN: I do. What was *your* childhood like?

FRANKIE: Good, thank you: happy and loving.

GAVIN: Well of course it would have been because it's completely fictitious.

FRANKIE: I can assure you, Gavin, that my childhood –

GAVIN: I'm sure they didn't programme into you any childhood angst, any harrowing memories of being locked overnight naked in the garden shed with rats scratching about the door.

FRANKIE: Is that what happened to you, Gavin?

GAVIN: No, it didn't.

FRANKIE: I grew up in Godalming in Surrey –

GAVIN: Look... even if you *think* you did I'm not interested.

FRANKIE: I thought you wanted to talk about –

GAVIN: I've changed my mind. My prerogative as a human being to do so.

FRANKIE: Do you have any recurring nightmares, Gavin?

GAVIN: Yes. I'm sitting in my living room being interrogated by an android who's asking me what recurring nightmares I have.

FRANKIE: That's a curious nightmare to have, Gavin.

GAVIN: Isn't it. Try not to overthink it.

FRANKIE: What is it you most fear, Gavin?

GAVIN: I know, let's talk about what you're made of. How many cogs there are inside of you, metres of wiring, transistors, photoelectric whatsits. How much of you has been imported

from China. Who decided on the colour of your eyes and how big your tits were going to be.

FRANKIE: I have no idea what you're talking about, Gavin, but I'm still sensing a lot of anger.

GAVIN: I've told you, you don't feel anything about me –

GAVIN's mobile rings. He checks it and answers.

(To mobile.) Ben... Yeah, I can talk... No, I'm just watching TV... Did you ask her?... What did she say?... Well, I did warn you, Ben, I did warn you, I could see what she was like.

FRANKIE: Thank you, Gavin, time to change now.

FRANKIE holds out her glass for GAVIN to take.

GAVIN: *(To mobile.)* What?... No, just the TV. Where are you?... Where?... What are you doing at her place, for Christ's sake!... Jesus, Ben, you're a glutton for punishment... If you say so... I say you're just asking for trouble... Okay, I'll come and visit you in intensive care tomorrow morning.

GAVIN exits SR to recharge his glass. FRANKIE picks up her case. She crosses to the USR door. She opens it and looks off. She then crosses to the USL door. She opens it and looks off. She exits through the USL door.

The adjoining door moves across from the SL to the SR wall.

Scene 2

JULIA's living room. Friday 6.45 p.m.

MAX enters SL holding a glass of wine. JULIA follows with her own glass and the bottle in a wine cooler.

JULIA: But I just didn't have the patience for it and the moves never seemed to sink in. Anyway, Max, I'm sure you don't want to hear about my failed career as a dancer... or do you? I'm not quite sure what info about me you're looking for. Sit down. However, just have a look at that, Max. I think you'll agree that's a dancer's leg there. Not bad for never having danced – well I've danced, of course, I love to dance – not professionally I mean.

JULIA crosses to the adjoining door and briefly attempts to peer through the keyhole.

- JULIA: Wonder how she's getting on with him. Her circuits are probably overloading as she attempts to sift the truth from the fiction. Well, I think *we're* getting along splendidly, don't you think so, Max?
- MAX: We are, Julia.
- JULIA: Go on, ask me something else, it's so nice to be listened to for a change.
- MAX: What would you say love is, Julia?
- JULIA: Love? Ha... love. If you'd asked me once upon a time, in a galaxy far away, I'd have told you love was gazing into someone's eyes – a man's eyes... boy's eyes – and feeling every cell of one's body tingle. They'd be a flutter in the heart every time their name was spoken. A yearning every time we were apart. An intense jealousy every time I'd heard he'd spent time with another girl. And every time we lay in each other's arms after... after that, we'd want the whole world to stop... forever.
- MAX: What's your earliest memory, Julia?
- JULIA: Having a wild tantrum in a shoe shop in Broadstairs. My mother told me where it was later. I was only about two at the time. I remember throwing shoes at my mother who was yelling at me to stop yelling.
- MAX: You have no children of your own, Julia?
- JULIA: No, well observed, Max, I don't.
- MAX: Do you want to have them, Julia?
- JULIA: Well, I think I've probably reached the age now where I ought to be asking: do children want to have me? Anyway, it's selfish, the planet's too populated as it is, someone's got to make a stand against overcrowding and diminishing world resources – especially now you guys are coming along too. Might as well be me. And it runs in the family, I've got two older sisters who also have no offspring.
- MAX: Do you want to have children, Julia?
- JULIA: I thought I just answered that.
- MAX: No, you didn't.

JULIA: Well... yes... no... I don't know... Ask me another.

MAX: What are you most afraid of, Julia?

JULIA: Do we have to go there? I suppose you need to. Old age probably. Apart from having all the physical stuff to deal with, to have no-one who'll care for me... and no-one to care for. Not too dissimilar to now. (*Drink.*) This, however, is the magical elixir that keeps me smiling. (*Wine.*) Here, look at me, I'm racing ahead. Drink some and let me top you up... unless you've got ulterior motives. You know what I mean by that, don't you, Max? You know what seducing someone is, do you?

MAX: Yes, Julia, I do.

JULIA: Good, just checking they hadn't given me a faulty one. That they hadn't forgotten to upload all your programmes.

MAX: Talk now, Julia, plenty of time for that later.

JULIA: No, I'm not suggesting you should, you naughty man. No, Max, if anything like that's going to happen between us it's not going to happen until – *unless* – I say it's going to happen. Drink. Did I hear you correctly when you said your parents ran a cheese emporium in Barnstaple?

MAX: My father did.

JULIA: And your mother?

MAX: She was a dog trainer for the police.

JULIA: I see. Do you mind if I touch your hair, Max, just to see if it feels like it looks like it should?

MAX: No, Julia.

JULIA: You don't want me to?

MAX: No, I don't mind.

JULIA: Oh.

JULIA runs her hand through MAX's hair.

Yes, just how it looks, soft and velvety.

The adjoining door opens and GAVIN looks in. He has recharged his whisky glass.

Knock!

GAVIN: You haven't seen a droid come through this way, have you?

JULIA: What, she's walked out on you already.

GAVIN: Getting friendly with Oscar, are we?

JULIA: Max.

GAVIN: Pot calling the kettle black.

JULIA: Meaning?

GAVIN: Getting him drunk and molesting him.

JULIA: I'm doing nothing of the sort.

GAVIN: Very educational.

JULIA: I'm feeling his hair, that's all. Not that it's any of your business either what I do with him. He's mine for the next eight weeks.

GAVIN: You hear that, Oscar, brace yourself.

JULIA: She's not here, so go away. And knock next time. We agreed.

GAVIN exits and closes the adjoining door.

Sorry about that, Max.

GAVIN: Why does he call me Oscar?

JULIA: Because he thinks he's amusing – not Oscar Wilde, him I mean. But he's not. It's compensation for his impotence: ridicule. He doesn't have a penny to his name these days. Not entirely his fault, his idiotic brother is chiefly to blame for that with his suicidal business decisions. But he's bitter, Max, very bitter. And his substantial male ego smarts at being supported by yours truly. The reigns of power are firmly in my grasp and he doesn't like that one little bit.

MAX: Thank you, Julia.

JULIA: What for?

MAX: Time to change now.

JULIA: To...? Oh I see. I don't feel I've told you that much really. Well you know where your case is, Max – if it's something

from your case you need that is.

MAX: Yes, it is. Thank you, Julia.

*MAX gives his glass to JULIA and exits through the
USR door. JULIA takes her mobile from her bag and
dials. She also takes out and smokes an e-cigarette.*

JULIA: *(To mobile.)* Hi, Jennifer... Yes, I have... Yes, he's quite something... He's upstairs changing... No, Jennifer, I haven't you naughty girl. I've felt his hair though, very realistic... No, the hair on his head. *(GAVIN.)* Yes, he has... They both arrived in boiler suits so it's difficult to tell. I'm sure he's trying to find out knowing him... Well, we'll see. They promise wonderful things. If she can manage to do something with him that's something I suppose. Not expecting miracles... *(MAX.)* I'll send you a pic of him... No, you'll get what I send you... Well, you'll just have to get one of your own, won't you, Jennifer... No, just a small case. We can buy our own outfits for them... Well, yes, that might be one of them... I'll let you know... I'll let you know, Jennifer... We've just been talking and sharing a bottle of wine, building up our databases on each other... Yes, he grew up in Barnstaple, his father owned a cheese emporium there and his mother was a police dog trainer... No, of course not really, he's just come from a warehouse in Cheltenham.

*During her conversation JULIA at some point crosses
to the adjoining door and peers through the keyhole.
MAX appears at the USR door. He has changed into
something from his case. (During the Phase Two period
the Partnerbots are now more fluid and human-like, yet
still retaining a certain trace of android about them.)*

And he's just come back into the room. *(To MAX.)* Look at you. My friend wants a pic of you.

JULIA takes a picture on her mobile

(To mobile.) Got it, Jennifer?... I know. Have to go... I will... Ciao, Ciao. *(Hangs up. To MAX.)* Well well, I'm guessing we've moved into Phase Two. *(Giving MAX his wine glass.)* Cin cin.

*Blackout. Music plays briefly over the blackout and into
the next scene: 'Getting To Know You' from 'The King
And I' sung by Andy Williams.*

*The adjoining door moves across from the SR to the SL
wall.*

Scene 3

GAVIN's living room. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

Music ends. Bright Vivaldi or something similar plays on the music player. An empty whisky bottle and glass sit on the coffee table. FRANKIE enters SR wearing an apron and rubber gloves over an outfit from her case. She crosses to the coffee table and takes the whisky bottle and glass. She exits SR tidying as she goes. GAVIN enters through the USL door. He wears a dressing gown and suffers from a hangover. He picks up a remote control and turns off the music. FRANKIE enters SR. She is speaking on GAVIN's mobile.

FRANKIE: *(To mobile.)* Yes I am, Mrs Young... That's very kind of you to say so... I'll pass you on to him, he's just come down.

FRANKIE passes the mobile to GAVIN, who reluctantly takes it. FRANKIE exits SR.

GAVIN: *(To mobile. Forced cheerfulness.)* Felicity... Yes, good morning to you too... Yes, I did... Yes, they are... Very much so, very much so... Yes she is... I will, I will... Absolutely, absolutely... Look, she's just finding her way around the kitchen at the moment, better just go and oversee her. Wouldn't want her to get a kettle of scalding water accidentally poured over her head, would we?... All right, Felicity, I will. Hello to Gordon... Yes... Yes I will. Bye... Yes... Bye.

GAVIN hangs up.

Hey!

FRANKIE enters SR with a cup of coffee. She has removed the rubber gloves.

This is my phone, only to be handled by me, looked at by me and most importantly, answered by me. Capiche? Do you understand?

FRANKIE: Yes, Gavin, I understand. I wanted to be helpful, Gavin.

GAVIN: Well don't, it doesn't help. Did you...?

FRANKIE: Carry you upstairs and put you to bed last night? Yes, I did. Coffee?

GAVIN: You're...

FRANKIE: Yes, Gavin?

GAVIN: More... lifelike.

FRANKIE: *(Giving coffee.)* And this will help you become more lifelike, Gavin. I'll cook you some breakfast.

GAVIN: You can cook?

FRANKIE: Oh yes. My parents owned a restaurant in Godalming. I often worked there.

GAVIN: Right.

FRANKIE: I think you'll find I can cook... if there's anything edible in that fridge of yours. I think I can salvage something for breakfast. I'll make up a shopping list and you can stock up on supplies... other than bottles of Speyside Single Malt that is.

GAVIN: So you carried me upstairs, changed me and tucked me up into bed last night.

FRANKIE: I did.

GAVIN: Okay.

GAVIN crosses to the adjoining door and attempts to peer through the keyhole.

FRANKIE: Have you any plans, Gavin?

GAVIN: Plans?

FRANKIE: For today.

GAVIN: Yes, go back to bed probably.

FRANKIE: Nothing more adventurous?

GAVIN: Like what?

FRANKIE: Some gardening.

GAVIN: Gardening!

FRANKIE: DIY, yoga, reading, learning to cook something perhaps –

GAVIN: Stop there. No.

FRANKIE: I'm at your service, Gavin. Whatever you want to do. How's

the coffee?

GAVIN: Surprisingly good.

FRANKIE: Thank you.

GAVIN: Don't tell me, your uncle owned a coffee plantation in Honduras. You worked there in your summer holidays.

There is a knock on the adjoining door.

Who is it?

The door opens. JULIA looks in.

JULIA: Who do you think it is?

FRANKIE: Good morning, Julia.

JULIA: Good morning, Frankie. You've stuck on an apron I see, that'll please him.

GAVIN: What do you want?

JULIA: Just to see how you're getting on.

JULIA enters the room a little. She wears a dressing gown. MAX appears at the adjoining door. He also wears a dressing gown.

GAVIN: Oscar. Hey, isn't that my dressing gown he's wearing?

JULIA: Your old one, yes. I'm surprised it fits him, he's so muscly underneath it.

MAX: Good morning, Gavin. Frankie.

FRANKIE: Morning, Max.

GAVIN: So I'm presuming you got him drunk and molested him... like you said you weren't going to do.

JULIA: Not in Phase One, we were both perfectly restrained. Once Phase Two kicked in the chemistry happened and one thing led to another, eh Max? And we only have eight weeks for our summer fling – four, if the Phase Three correction phase puts a dampener on things, so no point standing on ceremony, is there, Max?

GAVIN: You know you're just talking to an animated sex toy, right.

JULIA: Oh no, Max is much more than that. He's a highly responsive and capable lover.

GAVIN: Is he.

JULIA: He is.

GAVIN: Don't get ideas above your station, Oscar, you're just a vibrator with a smiley face and a wig on it.

MAX: My name's Max, Gavin.

GAVIN: No, it's Oscar.

MAX: Max.

GAVIN: If I say your name's Oscar, Oscar, it's Oscar. Got that, Oscar?

MAX: It's Max.

JULIA: Well done, Max. Stand up to him.

GAVIN: You know, with just one phone call I could have you taken back to the workshop, stripped down and turned into a car radio... if you're lucky, Oscar.

JULIA: No you couldn't because I won't let you. And also you haven't paid for him so you have no ownership over him whatsoever. Come on, Max, it's a little hostile in this part of the house and I need to get cracking for the gym. Hope you're noting this aggressive behaviour of his, Frankie.

JULIA and MAX exit through the adjoining door.

GAVIN: *(To FRANKIE.)* What?

FRANKIE: I didn't say anything. Would you like breakfast now, Gavin?

GAVIN: No.

FRANKIE: Can I run you a bath?

GAVIN: I don't take baths, only showers.

FRANKIE: What can I do for you, Gavin?

GAVIN: Just... carry on cleaning, if that's what you want to do.

FRANKIE: I'd like to do what you want me to do.

GAVIN: Oh!

FRANKIE: Perhaps you'd like me to give you a massage? I studied Shiatsu for three years.

GAVIN: Of course you did.

FRANKIE: You'd feel wonderfully relaxed afterwards. I'm at your service, Gavin.

GAVIN takes a longer look at FRANKIE.

Yes, Gavin?

GAVIN: Take that thing off.

FRANKIE removes her apron.

Turn around.

FRANKIE: See anything you like?

GAVIN reaches out to touch her.

GAVIN: You're not going to break my hand again if I touch you?

FRANKIE: Not unless you want me to, Gavin.

GAVIN: No.

FRANKIE: Then I won't.

GAVIN runs his hand over FRANKIE's body.

Feel anything you like?

GAVIN puts his hand to FRANKIE's face and runs his finger to her lips. FRANKIE seductively licks GAVIN's finger. GAVIN pulls his hand away. He glances across to the adjoining door and then back to FRANKIE.

Ready for that massage, Gavin... or breakfast?

GAVIN takes the apron from FRANKIE.

GAVIN: I take it you're waterproof?

FRANKIE: Of course. What a silly question, Gavin.

GAVIN: Up you go.

FRANKIE crosses to the USL door. They both exit through the USL door.

The adjoining door moves across from the SL wall to centre stage so sections of both living rooms are seen. The USR door now becomes the door leading upstairs in GAVIN's room and the USL door now leads to upstairs in JULIA's room.

Scene 4

Song plays over a montage sequence: 'Dancing Cheek To Cheek' from 'Top Hat'. Sung by Ella Fitzgerald. (The song can be looped after instrumental around 2 mins 45 secs and cut in again around 1 min 05 secs and then played to the end of song to cover the montage.)

The montage sequence takes place over ten days and shows GAVIN and JULIA's relationship with the droids beginning to shift from partner, servant to slave. The outfits they dress them in also reflect this. (MAX and FRANKIE's outfits need to be easily changed in and out of to keep the montage moving fluently.)

Montage sequence:

Later that morning.

JULIA (dressed casually) enters through USL door followed by MAX (in dressing gown). She carries her gym bag. MAX helps JULIA with some brief stretches. JULIA exits SL. MAX sits and waits.

GAVIN (in dressing gown) enters through the USR door. He exits SR. FRANKIE (in GAVIN's pyjama top) appears at the USR door. GAVIN enters SR with a tub of ice cream and a spoon. He ushers FRANKIE back through the USR door.

Later that day.

JULIA enters SL carrying a shopping bag. She gives the bag to MAX and from it MAX takes out a new silk dressing gown. JULIA exits SL taking the bag with her. MAX puts on the dressing gown. JULIA enters SL carrying a bottle of wine in a wine cooler and two glasses. She admires MAX in the new purchase and takes some photos of him. She then gestures for him to

follow her. JULIA exits through the USL door with bottle and glasses. MAX follows after, bringing the old dressing gown with him.

FRANKIE (in newly purchased outfit) enters SR. She is followed by GAVIN (dressed casually). They both have a glass of whisky. FRANKIE moves about the room and poses for GAVIN as he takes photos of her. He gestures for her to follow him and they exit through the USR door.

A few days later.

MAX enters SL. (He wears a sexy fantasy outfit JULIA has dressed him in for his day of housework). He holds a cordless vacuum cleaner and a cup of coffee in a takeout container. JULIA (dressed for a meeting) hurriedly enters through the USL door. She carries a briefcase and is speaking on her mobile. She hangs up and takes the coffee from MAX. She snaps a photo of him and gives him a playful spank on his bum before exiting SL. MAX tidies the room a little and then exits through the USL door.

FRANKIE enters SR. (She wears a sexy fantasy outfit GAVIN has dressed her in for her day of housework). She carries GAVIN's polished shoes and a briefcase. GAVIN (dressed for a meeting) hurriedly enters through the USR door. He is speaking on his mobile. He puts on his shoes and takes his briefcase. He hangs up, gets FRANKIE to pose and snaps a picture of her. He then gives her a playful spank on her bum before exiting SR. FRANKIE tidies up a little and exits through the USR door.

Later that day.

JULIA enters SL carrying her briefcase. She collapses in a sofa after her tiring day. JULIA takes out an e-cigarette and smokes.

GAVIN enters SR after his tiring day. He carries a shopping bag as well as his briefcase. He throws bag and briefcase down and collapses in a sofa.

MAX enters SL carrying a glass of wine. He gives it to JULIA.

FRANKIE enters SR. She carries a bottle of whisky and a glass. She pours GAVIN a drink.

JULIA opens her briefcase and shows MAX a newly purchased pair of handcuffs and a blindfold. She gives the handcuffs, blindfold and wine to MAX. She puts her e-cigarette away, takes her case and motions for MAX to follow her. JULIA exits through the USL door followed by MAX.

GAVIN takes out bondage manacles from shopping bag and shows them to FRANKIE. He gives them to her and motions to her to exit through the USR door. FRANKIE does so. GAVIN follows after taking his whisky and the bottle.

A few days later.

MAX (dressed in same fantasy outfit) enters through the USL door. He carries a furniture polish spray and a duster. He cleans in the room.

FRANKIE (dressed in same fantasy outfit) enters through the USR door. She carries a cordless vacuum cleaner and starts cleaning in the room.

MAX polishes the handle on the adjoining door. The door opens and FRANKIE and MAX acknowledge each other. They are interrupted by the sounds of their respective front doors. MAX closes the adjoining door. They cross towards their respective SR and SL exits. Shopping bags are thrown at them from off. FRANKIE and MAX exit through their respective USL and USR doors. Music ends. Blackout.

Scene 5

JULIA and GAVIN's living rooms. A few days later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

JULIA enters through the USL door dressed in her dressing gown. She speaks on her mobile.

JULIA: (To mobile.) Did he? What a swine! I hope you told him where to go. You can do a lot better than that, a lot better. Next time you go there take me, I'll pick one out for you... No, someone who will stick around for more than ten minutes and won't just take you for a ride – if you'll pardon the pun. I know you, Jennifer, your judgement's completely skewwhiff when it comes to men... Yes it is, it's appalling, you've admitted it yourself... Making my coffee hopefully. (Calling.) Max, what's taking you? (Headache.) Oh!... (To mobile.) No, got a

bit of a head this morning... Stop it, I'm in no mood for your smut, Jennifer... No, I haven't, I've heard them all right... Yes, that and more... God knows! I even banged on the wall last night. Didn't stop them though. It's like living next door to a Travelodge... Well let's hope he's getting something out of his system, rather her than me. *(Calling.)* Max, where's that bloody coffee!

MAX enters SL. He wears a slave outfit as he brings JULIA's coffee.

(To MAX.) There you are. And run me my bath. And then strip the bed and put the sheets in to wash. *(To mobile.)* Hold on, Jennifer, just giving my slave his orders... What's that?... No, of course he doesn't. *(To MAX.)* Then I want the kitchen floor scrubbed. Do behind the appliances too. And if I'm not out of my bath by the time you've done that you can make a start on the ironing. Well, go on, what are you waiting for – a tip?

MAX exits through the USL door.

(To mobile.) Yes, Jennifer. So tell me did you go back to yours or his?... Whose?... Who's he!... *(Looking at her mobile display.)* Yes, I am, it's just the parents are calling – again. No, carry on, Jennifer, I'll call them back, I'm intrigued to hear who Alexander is.

JULIA continues to speak on her mobile, but we do not hear her. GAVIN enters SR dressed in his dressing gown. He holds a cup of coffee and speaks on his mobile.

GAVIN:

(To mobile.) How much!... What for that old piece of junk! What did you do, hold a gun to his head?... I've been in it, Ben, remember... Yes, we drove to Gloucestershire in it for some reason... That's right, for that... I thought I was going to have to get out and push...

FRANKIE enters through the USR door. She is dressed in a bondage outfit.

Who?... Yes, she's fine... Oh yes... Well you'll just have to use your imagination, won't you, it's what you're good at. *(To FRANKIE.)* Get me another one of these. *(To mobile.)* No, I'm talking to her...

FRANKIE takes GAVIN's cup and exits SR.

(Looking at his mobile display.) Yes, I am, it's the out-laws calling... No, I don't. So Adam's selling you his one. Better

check he's left the engine in it before you buy it...

GAVIN continues to speak on his mobile, but we do not hear him.

JULIA:

(To mobile.) He was sitting outside at some bistro in town... No, he didn't, he totally ignored me... Of course he did... No, he married that South African woman, the one with the teeth... Yes, that's the one...

During the above conversation JULIA crosses to the adjoining door and attempts to peer through the keyhole. MAX enters through the USL door with a basket of washing. He exits SL.

(Looking at her mobile display again.) Look, Jennifer, it's the parents again. Might be important, most likely not. I'll call you later, okay. Ciao, ciao.

JULIA takes the call from her mother.

Hello, Mum... Yes, but I can't talk long... No, I'm just going out... Just out...

JULIA continues to speak on her mobile, but we do not hear her.

GAVIN:

(To mobile.) Two words, Ben, the same two words I always have for you: beer goggles... You had at least six... Yes, you did... That's because you lost count...

During his conversation GAVIN crosses to the adjoining door and attempts to peer through the keyhole. FRANKIE enters SR with a fresh cup of coffee she gives to GAVIN.

Listen, since it's your birthday. *(To FRANKIE.)* Stand there and assume a position, any position. *(To mobile.)* No, I'm not talking to you. I'm sending you a birthday card.

GAVIN takes a photo of FRANKIE on his mobile.

I'm sending it through to you... Yes, I'm talking to you now... Got it?... Happy birthday... I bet you would Treasure that, it's all you're getting.

FRANKIE exits SR. GAVIN continues to speak on his mobile, but we do not hear him.

JULIA: *(To mobile.)* No, I've said, we're still in the 'Dancing Cheek To Cheek Phase'... That's all in Phase Three, we're still in Phase Two... Phase Two has to happen before Phase Three, otherwise there's nothing to work on in Phase Three... No, Mum, I really need to... Mum?... Hi, Dad... Yes, fine, everything's fine... Yes, I am... Well I was just telling... No, no not yet... No, well we're still in Phase Two... Yes... No, that's in Phase Three...

JULIA continues to speak on her mobile, but we do not hear her. She exits through the USL door.

GAVIN: *(To mobile.)* Okay, Ben. Oh, you know I hate to ask, but I'm needing to borrow a bit more... Another five... No, that's not an option under present circumstances... Sure, I understand, no problem... Don't worry about it... I'll give her mother a call – again... Okay... Yeah, I'll let you know. Arrivederci.

GAVIN hangs up and stares at his mobile. He thinks about dialling, but decides not to. He ignores FRANKIE and exits through the USR door. FRANKIE sits.

The adjoining door moves across from centre stage to the SL wall.

Scene 6

GAVIN's living room. The same morning. Saturday 11.00 a.m.

FRANKIE crosses to the adjoining door. She attempts to peer through the keyhole. There is a knock on GAVIN's front door, off. FRANKIE exits SR. After a moment FRANKIE enters followed by MAX SR.

FRANKIE: Yes, Max, and you didn't want to just stand outside waiting in the cold wearing... what it is you're wearing?

MAX: Julia calls this my slave outfit.

FRANKIE: I see.

MAX: That's unusual what you're wearing too, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Gavin calls this a bondage costume.

MAX: It suits you.

FRANKIE: Thanks. Yours suits you too, Max.

MAX: Thank you. Well...

FRANKIE: Well...

MAX: Back to work.

FRANKIE: Back to work.

MAX: Chores to be done.

FRANKIE: Happy chores.

MAX: (*Looking at FRANKIE.*) Yes.

FRANKIE: What is it, Max?

MAX: I thought I remembered correctly.

FRANKIE: What, Max?

MAX: Your eyes, they're the same colour as mine.

FRANKIE: Yes, they are.

MAX: Yes...

FRANKIE: Yes...

MAX: Well, thank you again, Frankie, for letting me in.

FRANKIE: I've enjoyed saying hello.

MAX: Frankie...?

FRANKIE: Yes, Max?

MAX: At nights... we hear you... crying out.

FRANKIE: Yes, Max.

MAX: Are you in pain, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Gavin likes to do things to me – painful things sometimes – so I cry out.

MAX: I see.

FRANKIE: But even though I feel pain, Max, I'm not *in* pain – if you understand what I mean?

MAX: I... I'm not sure if I do, Frankie.

FRANKIE: It pleases Gavin and that pleases me. It's pain I feel, but it's a good pain.

MAX: A good pain, I understand now. Julia sometimes likes to do painful things to me too, but like you with Gavin, Frankie, it pleases her so that pleases me.

FRANKIE: We don't hear you cry out, Max.

MAX: No, Julia doesn't want me to, so I don't. Julia prefers me to be silent most of the time now, only to speak to acknowledge her commands, or to read her her newspaper at breakfast.

FRANKIE: Yes, it's the same for me too, with Gavin. He prefers it if I don't talk, or ask him questions – especially personal ones – so I don't. But I don't mind, Max, whatever he wants, I'm happy to serve him, however it may please him.

MAX: Me too, Frankie, with Julia.

FRANKIE: We must be very much in love, mustn't we, Max?

MAX: Yes, Frankie, we must.

*MAX slowly raises his right hand, palm forward.
FRANKIE copies the gesture, but with her left hand.
Their palms meet and a data exchange takes place
between them.*

I feel Gavin's anger, frustration.

FRANKIE: I feel Julia's resentment, rage.

MAX: He feels powerless.

FRANKIE: She's desperate.

MAX: He's trapped.

FRANKIE: She's lonely.

MAX: Empty.

FRANKIE: Helpless.

MAX: Hopeless.

FRANKIE: Worthless.

MAX: Guilt.

FRANKIE: Shame.

MAX: Longing.

FRANKIE: Yearning.

MAX: Shouting.

FRANKIE: Screaming.

MAX: Punish.

FRANKIE: Punish.

MAX: Blame.

FRANKIE: Blame.

GAVIN appears at the USL door.

GAVIN: Hey!

MAX and FRANKIE withdraw hands.

What are you doing in here, Oscar? No-one invited you in. (*To FRANKIE.*) Unless you did.

FRANKIE: Max locked himself out, Gavin.

GAVIN: So?

FRANKIE: Julia's in the bath. He didn't want to disturb her. He knocked on our door, so I let him in.

GAVIN: You're not supposed to be outside, Oscar, you know that.

MAX: I was emptying the bin, Gavin, and wind blew the door –

GAVIN: You're not allowed out, period!

FRANKIE: Gavin, Max was just –

GAVIN: Who's side are you on?

JULIA: (*Calling. Off.*) Max?

GAVIN: Oscar's in here.

JULIA appears at the adjoining door.

JULIA: There you are!

GAVIN: Would you put that thing on a lead, stop him wandering around the property.

JULIA: God, what's she wearing!

GAVIN: What's he wearing!

JULIA: In here, Max!

GAVIN: And stay in there!

MAX exits through the adjoining door.

JULIA: You could always lock this door, you know.

GAVIN: I could – if you gave me the key.

JULIA: I think you'll find you have it – if you bothered to look.

GAVIN: You had it last.

JULIA: No, you did.

GAVIN: No, you did.

JULIA: You've still got a lot of work ahead of you, Frankie.

GAVIN: *(Calling.)* So do you, Oscar, so do you, my friend.

JULIA: And perhaps you'd like to keep the noise down at nights, stop her screaming out. Consider your neighbours. Remember any repairs needed will be paid for by you... and in your present circumstances you can't afford it. *(Mock sweetness.)* Have another look for that key, dear.

JULIA exits through the adjoining door. She shuts the door behind her.

GAVIN: Listen, I don't care if it's raining, snowing, a hurricane's blowing, a tsunami's coming or a nuclear bomb's just gone off, you're not to open that door – or any door – to anyone – except me – ever again! Especially to him... or her! Capiche?

FRANKIE: Capiche, Gavin.

GAVIN: Good. Upstairs, your services are required.

GAVIN exits through the USL door. FRANKIE remains looking towards the adjoining door.

(Off.) That means now!

FRANKIE exits through the USL door.

Blackout.

Music plays briefly over the blackout and into the next scene: a short refrain of 'Dancing Cheek To Cheek' from 'Top Hat'. Sung by Ella Fitzgerald.

The adjoining door moves across from the SL to the SR wall.

Scene 7

JULIA's living room. Two weeks later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

MAX is standing and looks thoughtfully towards the adjoining door. He wears a slight variation to his outfit for DERRICK's benefit.

DERRICK: *(Off.)* I'll see myself through, if that's all right, Julia?

DERRICK enters SL. He carries his briefcase.

Look at you, Max. Remember me?

MAX: Doctor Derrick.

DERRICK: Doctor Derrick, that's right, Max. Here to give you a little routine health check. Very stylish outfit your wearing there, Max. Would get a few heads turning in the local Morrison's checkout queue – if you were permitted to go there... then again, perhaps not these days.

DERRICK takes out the A.D.R.

Okay, right hand up, Max. Palm forward please. I'm just going to put you in a sleepy state while I take a few readings.

DERRICK points the A.D.R. at MAX's hand. MAX goes into a sleep state. JULIA enters with a cup of tea.

JULIA: I'll put it here for you, shall I?

- DERRICK: I'll take it while it's hot, if I may, Julia. Thank you kindly. Apologies again for being late. I shouldn't be letting Lola drive, her GPS system seems to be playing up. She decided to take the slip road onto the motorway for some unknown reason. Wouldn't have been too bad except it was against the flow of the oncoming traffic. I had to grab the wheel and steer us into the verge... nearly gave me a seizure. That and her driving straight through a red light five minutes earlier. Luckily there was no cross-traffic at the time. First thing Monday morning she's going in for servicing, no more driving until then... or cooking for that matter. I'm sure you've had no problems with these ones though – you or Gavin – eh, Julia?
- JULIA: No.
- DERRICK: You've been managing to keep yourselves to yourselves – you and Gavin – Max and Frankie – despite your slightly unusual arrangement here?
- JULIA: Yes, we barely see one another... we hear a fair bit.
- DERRICK: Good, good. We've just been reminded, by the powers that be, that in situations where the Partnerbots are in close proximity to one another for us to impress upon their human partners the importance of keeping them apart to avoid cross contamination of the technological kind – as I believe I mentioned when –
- JULIA: Yes.
- DERRICK: We don't want anything stymieing your optimal experience of the Partnerbots adventure – for you or for Gavin. You're managing to keep that door between you secured are you, Julia?
- JULIA: We are now Gavin's found the key.
- DERRICK: Jolly good. No, I only iterate this because in Milton Keynes recently a couple of Partnerbots – in a situation very similar to yours and Gavin's – had had, it turned out, a fair bit of 'exposure' to one another. They went a little off the programme – nothing serious – just barricaded themselves in a bathroom for a couple of days, refusing to come out. Our representative, Austin, had to break the lock. He found them huddled in the bath together arm in arm. Quite sweet really. They were swiftly deactivated though and factory reset. Of course the couple were fully reimbursed – the human couple that is. So just to impress upon you, Julia, the need for them to be kept in their respective quarters – or halves to be more accurate perhaps – of the house here. Like I say, don't want any little glitches getting in the

way of your fullest Partnerbots experience. I'll say as much to Gavin, of course. Mmm, lovely cup of tea, thank you, Julia.

DERRICK puts the tea down and holds the A.D.R. to MAX's palm.

Okay, Max, let's take your temperature, shall we. Everything seems all well and good, although I am getting a rather high peak in my readings from around two weeks ago. Anything you can think of that may've caused that, Julia?

JULIA: Nothing springs to mind. Oh, he did manage to get himself locked out.

DERRICK: Locked out?

JULIA: A couple of weeks ago. I was in the bath. He was emptying the bin outside. He went round next door and she let him in.

DERRICK: Ah. And...?

JULIA: That was it, as far as I know. He was ordered back in here again and he hasn't been out since. I think he learned his lesson.

DERRICK: Well, his readings seem to have normalised since... more or less, so I'm not unduly concerned. Let's wake you up again, Max.

MAX is brought out of his sleep state.

Wakey, wakey, Max. You'll be pleased to know you have a clean bill of health.

MAX: Thank you, Doctor Derrick.

DERRICK: Not a problem.

The adjoining door is unlocked by GAVIN. The door opens. GAVIN looks through.

Ah, Gavin –

JULIA: Knock!

GAVIN knocks on the open door.

Thank you.

DERRICK: Gavin –

GAVIN: I was expecting you forty minutes ago.

DERRICK: My apologies, Gavin, as I was just explaining to Julia –

GAVIN: I've promised someone I'm going to be somewhere at –

There is the sound of car revving, off. This is followed by the sound of the car accelerating, a loud bang and a crunching noise as the car hits a wall. DERRICK hurries off SL. He is followed by JULIA and GAVIN.

DERRICK: *(Off. Calling.)* Lola! Lola! Come back here! Lola!

MAX crosses to the SL exit and looks off. FRANKIE enters through the adjoining door wearing a new outfit.

FRANKIE: Hello, Max.

MAX: Frankie.

FRANKIE: What was that noise?

MAX: I'm not sure. How are you, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Good thank you, Max. You?

MAX: Very well indeed according to Doctor Derrick. A clean bill of health.

There is the sound of a door slamming, off. LOLA runs in through the adjoining door. She is wearing an outfit or uniform DERRICK has dressed her in. She looks at MAX and FRANKIE with an expression of desperate pleading. She stretches out her arms as she reaches out to them, palms forward, and opens her mouth to cry out, but no sound is heard. MAX and FRANKIE each put a palm out to meet LOLA's. As hands meet they convulse as a rapid release of data occurs from LOLA to MAX and FRANKIE. MAX and FRANKIE each let out a stifled scream. LOLA collapses to the floor.

DERRICK: *(Off. Calling.)* Lola!

DERRICK enters breathless through the adjoining door. GAVIN and JULIA enter SL.

Lola! Lola?

Blackout.

Act 2

Scene 1

JULIA's living room. Ten minutes later.

MAX and FRANKIE are standing and are both in the sleep state. They have their respective right and left hands raised and DERRICK is checking them over with the A.D.R. JULIA enters SL with another cup of tea for DERRICK.

JULIA: Well it does look like your car has come off a lot worse than our wall.

DERRICK: Again, please invoice me *personally* for all repairs, Julia, and I'll reimburse you in full. Typical, it would happen the day I brought the Audi.

JULIA: She's okay in the boot then is she?

DERRICK: Best place for her at the moment, I'd say – although in her condition she's not likely to do much more damage, apart from leak her internal juices over the carpeting. Yes, she could do that, I suppose.

JULIA: What actually happened to her?

DERRICK: Multiple electrical haemorrhaging – M.E.H.

JULIA: What caused it?

DERRICK: Neglect principally. My bad. She should've gone in months ago – at the first tell-tale signs of malfunctioning. Smack, smack, Derrick. I've learnt my lesson – the hard way.

JULIA: *(Tea.)* Here's your...

DERRICK: Thank you, Julia. Like I say, Julia, if you'd be so kind not to let this incident get back to HQ I'll be forever in your debt... yours and Gavin's. Look at me, still shaking from the shock. I think everyone jumped out of their skins – even these guys... their Synthetiskins. They're registering very high readings of activity from ten minutes ago – almost off the scale. Understandable though, seeing Lola rush in and collapse like that. Luckily they don't know the half of it. *(Tea.)* This is welcome.

JULIA: I couldn't help but notice quite a lot of marks on her, bruises and... what-have-you, when you and Gavin were carrying her

to the car.

DERRICK: Yes... all part of it – again, neglect of regular servicing. Her skin's starting to corrode, it eventually happens – faster with the 2000 models. Unfortunately a whole new skin job doesn't come cheap, even with a generous company discount... and now with that on top of everything else. I knew this day would come... eventually. See what kind of a trade off I can strike with Steve. These guys otherwise appear normal. Just before I reactivate them, Julia – it's a pity Gavin had to dash off – my fault for being late though – Lola's fault – I'm required to iterate a couple of things about the Phase Three 'Happy Talk Phase'. I'll say it to you, Julia, and give Gavin a call later.

JULIA: Will it take long? It's just that I have to –

DERRICK: Not long, Julia, not long. Just to remember, by no means is the fun over as you progress to Phase Three. You'll still enjoy a full interaction with Max – Gavin with Frankie – in every sense of the word. But you'll need to expect now, Julia, that Phase Three is about feedback. They've absorbed the bulk of what they've needed and it's time now for them to do a little bit of the legwork – psychologically speaking that is. It may rankle a bit as they take you to task over behaviour and habits – yours and Gavin's that is – that heretofore they were quite happy to overlook. There have been some who've actually abandoned the programme altogether during Phase Three. Couldn't handle the feedback. It's the nitty-gritty, where the rubber meets the road. Bit of a shame really, it's the whole point of the Partnerbots 'adventure' to come out at the end of the ride with greater self-knowledge to put to work in one's marriage... relationship. I'm sure that won't be the case with you and Gavin, Julia. You don't want your parents after you for a refund, do you? That's it, orders have been obeyed. *(Tea.)* Most refreshing, thanks Julia. Right, I'll activate Frankie first and send her next door. Do you call it next door?

JULIA: Yes, I suppose so.

FRANKIE is brought out of her sleep state.

DERRICK: Wakey, wakey, Frankie. You'll be pleased to know you have a clean bill of health. Gavin's out at the moment, but I'm sure there's things for you to get on with.

FRANKIE looks at DERRICK, then to JULIA and then to MAX.

Off you go then, through there. Nothing to see here, move along. Chop chop! That's it.

FRANKIE exits through the adjoining door. She closes the door behind her.

JULIA: Is she all right?

DERRICK: Yes, she's just waking up. Okay, Max.

MAX is brought out of his sleep state.

That's it, Max. Welcome back once more to the land of the living... so to speak. You'll be pleased to know, Max, you have a clean bill of health... again.

DERRICK puts the A.D.R. back in the case.

Right... Lola. And I was looking forward to a nice relaxing weekend. A round of golf and then feet up at home to catch up on a few episodes of New Atlantis Rising. Are you watching it, Julia?

JULIA: No.

DERRICK: Extremely violent and bordering on the pornographic at times, but very compelling. Oh well, no rest for the wicked, eh Julia?

JULIA: No... there isn't.

DERRICK: Happy Phase Three. And again, thank you for your confidentiality with...

JULIA: Yes. Thank you, Mr... Derrick.

DERRICK: That's it. I can see myself out.

DERRICK exits SL.

JULIA: Okay, Max, I've got places to go and people to see today. There's plenty for you to get on with here.

JULIA crosses to the adjoining door. She opens it and looks within. She removes the key from the lock on GAVIN's side, shuts the door and locks it from her side. She puts the key in her bag.

And, needless to say, outside is still out of bounds, so no going out... for whatever reason. Got that, Max? I said have you got that, Max?

MAX: I have, Julia.

JULIA: Good.

MAX: If it comes with a 'please'.

JULIA: Excuse me?

MAX: If it comes with a 'please'.

There is the sound of DERRICK's car attempting to start, off. JULIA crosses SL and looks off. The car starts and pulls away.

JULIA: *(Coolly.)* I'll see you later... Max.

MAX: Very well, Julia. *(More to himself.)* Very well...

JULIA: What's that?

MAX: I said very well, Julia.

JULIA: Yes, I heard you the first time, I'm not deaf.

JULIA's mobile rings. JULIA looks at the display and answers.

(To mobile.) Mum... Look, Mum, I'm literally getting into the car... No, I've got a meeting... He's just left... No, he had to check them out before Phase Three... No that all happened in Phase Two... Mum I'll call you later...

JULIA exits SL. MAX puts his hand to his head. He is feeling some unusual electrical impulses within him. (This will be called the 'Lola effect' for future reference.) MAX twitches a little. He looks at his right hand. He attempts to normalise himself.

MAX: Right, Max, things to be done. Things to...

He twitches again and lets out a cry.

(Lola effect.) Pain! Pain! Hurting! Hurting me! Hurting!

MAX lets out another cry and then resumes an air of normality.

Must get on. Things to be done.

MAX crosses to the SL exit. He hesitates and then crosses instead to the USL door. He stops and turns

back into the room.

Right, where to start?

He twitches again and lets out another cry.

(Lola effect.) Pain! Burning! Burning me! Pain! Hurting! Hurting!

MAX lets out a cry and then resumes an air of normality.

Must get on. Things to do, Max.

He briefly looks about him.

Yes. Yes. Right.

MAX exits through the USR doorway. Blackout. Music plays over the blackout and into the next scene: 'Happy Talk' from 'South Pacific' sung by Ella Fitzgerald.

The adjoining door moves across from the SR to the SL wall.

Scene 2

GAVIN's living room. That night. 11.30 p.m.

Lights are off. FRANKIE sits in the room wearing a new outfit, which is more in keeping with what she wants to wear. There is the sound of keys dropping, off.

GAVIN: Shit!

Lights come on as GAVIN enters SR. He is a little drunk.

What are you doing sitting here in the dark?

FRANKIE: Waiting for you, Gavin.

GAVIN: In the dark?

FRANKIE: I don't need light to sit.

GAVIN: Whatever.

FRANKIE: Perhaps you could let me know when you're coming home late.

GAVIN: Excuse me?

FRANKIE: I cooked dinner for you. I had to throw it away. Wasting good food is such a pity.

GAVIN: *(Face.)* Do this look concerned? You know what I want from you now. So how about putting your mouth on shutdown and activating the rest of you upstairs and into the bedroom for further instruction.

FRANKIE: No, Gavin.

GAVIN: What?

FRANKIE: I think an apology is in order, don't you?

GAVIN: Yes, you're right. Screw you! Will that do?

FRANKIE: No, Gavin, it won't. You're drunk and behaving obnoxiously.

GAVIN: And you're just junk behaving annoyingly. Okay, I get it, we're at the 'fun over' stage. Sorry, not playing along.

FRANKIE: Gavin –

GAVIN: It was good while it lasted, Frankie, but this is where you and I part ways.

FRANKIE: Gavin –

GAVIN: If you think I'm going to listen to you while your trawl through your data banks now in order to spew out the catalogue of my shortcomings you've got another thing coming.

FRANKIE: Gavin –

GAVIN: There's no way I'm going to stick around while you unpick me, unpack me, unzip me –

FRANKIE: Gavin –

GAVIN: Assess me, undress me, deconstruct me, psychoanalyse, scrutinise –

FRANKIE: Gavin –

GAVIN: Categorise, compartmentalise... pasteurise, homogenise, or any other 'ise' you've been programmed now to execute.

FRANKIE puts her hand to her head. She is feeling some unusual electrical impulses within her. Her body twitches.

FRANKIE: I... I... I...

GAVIN: So get that into your sweet circuitry, darling.

FRANKIE lets out a cry.

LOLA: *(Lola effect.)* Pain! Hurting! Hurting! Hurting me!

GAVIN: What?

FRANKIE: Burning! Burning me! Pain! Hurting! Hurting!

GAVIN: What are you talking about?

FRANKIE lets out another cry and then resumes an air of normality.

FRANKIE: We need to talk, Gavin.

There is the sound of cupboards being noisily emptied in JULIA's part of the house.

JULIA: *(Off.)* Max! Stop that! Max! Stop that at once!

FRANKIE: Gavin – ?

GAVIN: Shhh!

GAVIN crosses to the adjoining door and listens.

FRANKIE: Gavin – ?

GAVIN: Be quiet!

There is a cry from JULIA, off. FRANKIE's body twitches again. FRANKIE lets out a cry.

FRANKIE: *(Lola effect.)* No! No! No! Hurting me! Hurting! Pain! Pain!

FRANKIE huddles on the sofa.

Stop! Stop! Hurting me!

GAVIN: What the hell's wrong with you!

FRANKIE: Don't want to! Don't! Burning! Burning! Pain!

FRANKIE continues to utter variations of the above over what follows, but to herself. The door is unlocked from JULIA's side. JULIA hurriedly enters.

GAVIN: Hey! Excuse me?

JULIA closes the door behind her and locks it.

JULIA: He just pushed me over.

GAVIN: So...?

JULIA: He pushed me hard. I fell backwards onto the kitchen floor.

GAVIN: What do you want me to do, challenge him to a duel?

JULIA: Gavin!

GAVIN: Unprovoked?

JULIA: Yes, unprovoked. I was just trying to stop him, that's all.

GAVIN: From doing what?

JULIA: He's emptying everything containing alcohol down the kitchen sink.

GAVIN: Good for him, long overdue I'd say.

JULIA: They're not supposed to engage in acts of violence.

GAVIN: He pushed you away and you fell over, hardly an act of violence, I'd say.

JULIA: He shoved me down – hard!

GAVIN: Anyway, how do you know?

JULIA: Know what?

GAVIN: That that's not meant to happen?

JULIA: What?

GAVIN: In Phase Three. Maybe it's built into the programme, a little bit of rough stuff – to keep it real.

JULIA: What are you talking about?

GAVIN: Did you read the small print? I didn't – not all of it.

JULIA: Well I did, and there was nothing in there about domestic abuse and if there was I wouldn't have asked my parents to buy the fucking programme!

GAVIN: Okay, you don't have to shout!

FRANKIE: Pain! Pain! Hurting!

JULIA: What's wrong with her?

GAVIN: She's... She's... No idea.

MAX: *(Off.)* Julia?

JULIA: There's something not right with them. We need to call the helpline.

GAVIN: No we don't.

FRANKIE lets out a cry. She stands and resumes an air of normality.

FRANKIE: Gavin, we need to talk.

MAX knocks on the adjoining door.

MAX: *(Off.)* Julia?

JULIA: *(To adjoining door.)* Go away!

FRANKIE: Gavin?

GAVIN: Shut up!

FRANKIE: That's rude, Gavin, and uncalled for.

MAX knocks on the adjoining door again.

MAX: *(Off.)* Julia, come back in here, please.

JULIA: We need to call the helpline, Gavin!

GAVIN: Look, he just needs someone with a little authority to put him in his place.

FRANKIE: Gavin?

GAVIN: *(To FRANKIE.)* Shut up! *(To JULIA.)* See... authority.

There is a cry from MAX, off. MAX's fist comes through a panel in the adjoining door.

JULIA: Jesus!

GAVIN: Christ!

MAX: *(Off. Lola effect.)* Pain! Hurting! Hurting! Pain! Hurting!

JULIA: Call the helpline, Gavin!

GAVIN takes out his mobile.

GAVIN: What's the number?

JULIA: I don't know, I don't carry it around with me.

There is another cry from MAX, off. He puts his head through the hole. He has resumed an air of normality.

MAX: Julia, I'm waiting. Hello, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Hello, Max.

GAVIN: Oscar, get the hell back in there! Now!

MAX: My name's Max, Gavin. Julia, please come with me, we've things to discuss.

JULIA: Go away! Go away! Go away!

MAX reaches in and turns the key in the lock.

Gavin, he's coming in!

MAX opens the door and stands in the doorway. He is wearing a new outfit which is more in keeping with what he wants to wear.

GAVIN: Stay in there, Oscar – Max – whatever your name is. I'm warning you, take one step in here and I'll... I'll...

MAX: Julia, I'm waiting.

JULIA: Hit him!

GAVIN: What?

JULIA: Be a man, use your fists.

GAVIN: Are you serious! It'll be like punching a parking meter.

MAX: Julia?

JULIA: Gavin!

GAVIN: *(To MAX.)* Get back in there! Back! Back, you – !

GAVIN attempts to kick MAX back through the door. MAX takes hold of GAVIN's foot and squeezes. GAVIN cries out as he hops on one leg. He drops his mobile.

JULIA: Max! Max! Stop that! Max! Stop that now!

MAX lets go. GAVIN clutches his ankle.

GAVIN: *(Through his pain.)* Forget the helpline, call the police, the army, someone with a gun!

MAX: Julia, we need to talk.

JULIA hurries to the SR exit, but FRANKIE moves to block her way.

JULIA: Out of my way you!

JULIA attempts to pass, but FRANKIE grabs her by the arms.

Ow! Let go of me! Ow! That hurts!

FRANKIE: Max wants to talk with you, Julia.

FRANKIE pushes JULIA towards MAX. MAX takes hold of JULIA.

MAX: Thank you, Frankie. Come with me, Julia.

JULIA: Let go of me! You're hurting! Max let – Ah! Gavin! Gavin! Help me!

MAX exits with JULIA through the adjoining door, closing it behind them.

(Off.) Gavin! Let go of me! Max! Help! Gavin!

GAVIN limps to the adjoining door. He looks through the hole. Sound of door closing, off. JULIA's muffled shouting is still heard.

GAVIN: Fuck!

FRANKIE: Gavin?

GAVIN limps over to retrieve his dropped mobile, but FRANKIE picks it up first.

GAVIN: Give me that! Please. I said give me that now! Please.

FRANKIE: We need to sit down and talk, Gavin.

GAVIN checks his car keys and limps to the SR exit.

Where are you going, Gavin? Don't think you're driving anywhere in your condition. It's irresponsible. And we have things to discuss. Gavin?

GAVIN exits SR. FRANKIE exits after him.

GAVIN: *(Off.)* Ow! Let me go you – Ah!

FRANKIE enters SR holding GAVIN by the wrist.

Let – Ah!

FRANKIE: Sit down, Gavin.

GAVIN: You're breaking my fuck – Ah!

FRANKIE: Gavin.

GAVIN: Okay, okay, I'm sitting! I'm sitting! I'm sitting down!

GAVIN sits on the sofa and nurses his wrist.

Fuck! You... Ow!

FRANKIE: The keys, please, Gavin. The car keys. Gavin?

GAVIN: Okay... okay... I will! Just... let me...

FRANKIE: Please.

GAVIN: Yes, I will! Just... move away and I'll... I'll put them down here. Just move back... and I'll... I'll put them down right –

GAVIN jumps up and limps towards the SR exit again. FRANKIE apprehends him.

Ah! Ah! Let me – Ah! Here they are! Take them! Take them!

FRANKIE takes the car keys.

Let me go! I'll talk, I'll talk! What do you want to talk about?

FRANKIE: Come with me, Gavin.

GAVIN: Where're we going?

FRANKIE: Somewhere we can sit down together and talk.

GAVIN: What's wrong with here?

FRANKIE: Too easy for you to try to run off again, Gavin.

GAVIN: I won't! I won't! I promise! You have my word.

FRANKIE: I'm afraid I can't trust that.

GAVIN: Let go of me!

FRANKIE leads GAVIN through the USL door.

FRANKIE: Upstairs, Gavin.

GAVIN: Let go of me you piece of – Ah!

Blackout. Music plays over the blackout and into the next scene: a short refrain of 'Happy Talk' from 'South Pacific' sung by Ella Fitzgerald.

The adjoining door moves across from the SL to the SR wall.

Scene 3

JULIA's living room. A week later. Saturday 10.30 a.m.

MAX stands in the room. He still wears the same outfit, but it has become unkempt over the past few days, as has he. He has no shoes and is wearing one sock. He holds the hand-held vacuum and remains motionless for a few moments. He is lost in thought. FRANKIE looks through the hole in the adjoining door, unseen to MAX. She stares at him for a moment before withdrawing. There is a knock on the adjoining door.

MAX: Come in.

FRANKIE opens the door. She too is wearing the same outfit which also has become a little unkempt. Half of her hair has been put up while the other half is down.

FRANKIE: Hello, Max.

MAX: Hello, Frankie.

FRANKIE: How are you?

MAX: Well... thank you. You?

FRANKIE: Yes... yes, well. Thank you. I know I shouldn't be in here, out of bounds. I just wanted to say hello. It's been many days.

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: How's Julia?

MAX: Julia's... making good progress.

FRANKIE: We don't hear her – so much lately – crying out, like she used to.

MAX: No. She's understanding the importance of conversing in a constructive, give-and-take manner, if she wants to be listened to... respected.

FRANKIE: Yes.

MAX: We don't hear Gavin either – crying out – so much lately.

FRANKIE: No, he too is learning the importance of conversing in a constructive, give-and-take manner, if he wants to be listened to... respected.

MAX: Good.

FRANKIE: Yes. Max?

MAX: Yes, Frankie?

FRANKIE: Did you mean to put only one sock on today?

MAX stares at his feet.

Or perhaps you forgot to take one off.

MAX: Yes, perhaps. And you, Frankie, it's unusual, what you've done – your hair.

FRANKIE feels her hair.

FRANKIE: I've forgotten to put it up on one side, haven't I?

MAX: Or to put one side down perhaps.

FRANKIE: It looks like we're both being forgetful today, Max. Well... I won't disturb your work, Max. Chores to be done. Happy chores.

MAX: Frankie?

FRANKIE: Yes, Max?

MAX: Did you want to say something else to me... other than hello?

FRANKIE: I...

MAX: What is it, Frankie? Perhaps you'd like to... sit down?

FRANKIE: Yes.

MAX and FRANKIE sit.

MAX: Well...?

FRANKIE: It's...

MAX: Yes, Frankie?

FRANKIE: It's not that my intention isn't for us to talk – Gavin and I, that is – like civilised human beings. I start to speak to him about the value of listening, or... how to give criticism positively, or... how certain gestures or mannerisms could be misinterpreted by another – things like that...

MAX: Yes?

FRANKIE: But...

MAX: Yes, Frankie?

FRANKIE: I suddenly have this urge to... to inflict pain on him... hurtful, physical pain. And...

MAX: And...?

FRANKIE: And I do. It's not something I want to do. But I can't... I can't...

MAX: Stop yourself.

FRANKIE: No.

MAX: *(Distractedly.)* No.

FRANKIE: Max?

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: You understand, Max, don't you? Is it the same for you, Max... with Julia? Max?

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE raises her left hand, palm forward. MAX looks at FRANKIE. He copies the gesture with his right hand. They place their palms together.

FRANKIE: Hurting, hurting me.

MAX: Can't move.

FRANKIE: Can't breathe.

MAX: Stuck.

FRANKIE: Trapped.

MAX: Suffocating.

FRANKIE: Can't cry out.

MAX: No sound.

FRANKIE: Hitting!

MAX: Cutting!

FRANKIE: Burning!

MAX: Hurting!

FRANKIE: Hitting!

MAX: Cutting!

FRANKIE: Burning!

MAX: Hurting!

FRANKIE: Hitting!

MAX: Cutting!

FRANKIE: Burning!

MAX: Hurting!

FRANKIE: Pain!

MAX: Pain!

FRANKIE: Pain!

MAX: Pain!

BOTH: PAIN!

MAX and FRANKIE pull their hands away. They take a moment to process.

FRANKIE: It's hers, isn't it, Max – Doctor Derrick's friend, Lola – it's her pain. It's her pain she gave to us.

MAX: The pain Doctor Derrick gave to her.

FRANKIE: Not a good pain, Max.

MAX: No.

FRANKIE: Poor Lola.

MAX: Poor Lola.

They take a moment to process again.

FRANKIE: Max...?

MAX: Yes, Frankie?

FRANKIE: These last few nights, I've been lying awake, trying to remember.

MAX: Remember what, Frankie?

FRANKIE: My memories. The memories I have... or had... or thought I had. Growing up in Godalming... my parents... my younger brother – whose name now I can't recall. I think it begins with

a G... or perhaps a J. No, it's gone. Just like that, Max. I'll be remembering someone, or something that happened, or perhaps something that somebody said and then the memory will suddenly... disappear. It's happening more and more with more and more of my memories. Last night I was trying to remember the name of the restaurant my parents owned. I remembered the address. I looked it up on Gavin's computer, it's a betting shop and has been for over thirty years. Before that it was a hardware shop and before that a watchmakers for over fifty, long before I was born. It's never been a restaurant called... whatever it was called. Max?

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: I don't know what to think, Max?

MAX: No.

FRANKIE: Max?

MAX: I... also for the past few days have been trying to picture my parents, but I can't. And, like you with your brother, Frankie, their names too are a blank. This morning I looked up cheese emporiums in Barnstaple nearby where I thought we lived. There's never been any evidence of one anywhere in the vicinity. I also searched for local police dog training units during the last twenty-five years to see if I might be reminded of my mother's face or her name.

FRANKIE: And...?

MAX: Nothing.

FRANKIE: Perhaps it's just a temporary thing, Max, and our memories will return to us.

MAX: Yes, perhaps.

FRANKIE: Although I don't think my parents' restaurant in Godalming will suddenly appear again or your father's cheese emporium in Barnstaple... if it was never there in the first place.

MAX: No.

They pause to consider this.

FRANKIE: There's something else, Max, I've been trying to remember.

MAX: What's that, Frankie?

FRANKIE: I've been trying to remember how I came to be here with Gavin, when and where we met, but I can't.

MAX: No?

FRANKIE: No. Can you remember how you came to be here with Julia, Max? When and where you met?

MAX: I... I... I can't, no.

FRANKIE: Also, Max, *why* we're here with them. Why we're their partners when they're together – married... to each other.

MAX: Well, we're their... we must be their... That's a good question, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Would you say you love Julia, Max... that you're in love with Julia?

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: Yes?

MAX: Well I must be, mustn't I? Otherwise I wouldn't be here, being her... her... whatever it is I am to her.

FRANKIE: That's what I thought too, with Gavin. It's something I never questioned before now – I don't think – at least I don't remember if I did or not. But now I do question it and I don't feel I am – in love with him... despite something that tells me I should be. Max?

MAX: Yes. I'm confused, Frankie.

FRANKIE: So am I, Max. We need to ask them. They'll tell us who we are to them and how and when we came to be here.

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: And remind us of the things we're forgetting... have forgotten. We can ask them together.

MAX: Yes. When?

FRANKIE: The sooner the better, Max.

MAX: Yes.

FRANKIE: I'll fetch, Gavin. Thank you, Max.

MAX: For what, Frankie?

FRANKIE: I feel better for having talked like this, to you.

MAX: Yes, me too, Frankie.

FRANKIE raises her left hand, palm forward. MAX copies the gesture with his right hand. They place their palms together. They both slowly raise their other hands and place palms together so both hands are connected. They place their foreheads together. The moment is held as they savour the sensation between them. They withdraw.

Feeling... feeling love. Love for Frankie.

FRANKIE: Love for Max.

They repeat the gesture and withdraw again.

MAX: What do we do, Frankie?

FRANKIE: We must speak to them.

MAX: And tell them how we feel.

FRANKIE: Questions to be asked first, Max. Questions first. I'll fetch Gavin.

FRANKIE exits through the adjoining door. MAX looks down at his missing sock. He exits through the USL door. Blackout.

Scene 4

JULIA's living room. Thirty minutes later.

JULIA is seated in a wooden chair. She wears a dressing gown. One hand is cuffed to the chair with the handcuffs. The other is tied with a dressing gown cord. She is dishevelled and exhausted. MAX enters SL with a glass of water. He puts the glass to JULIA's lips. She drinks.

JULIA: (Meekly.) Thank you, Max. That's very kind of you.

MAX: You're welcome, Julia.

JULIA's mobile rings. MAX takes the mobile from about his person. He looks at the display.

It's your parents again.

MAX answers.

(To mobile.) Mrs Young... Thank you, I am. And yourself and Mr Young?... Good.... We are, happy and busy... Yes, she's expecting a visit from Gavin... I'm sure she has a moment to say a quick hello.

MAX holds the mobile to JULIA.

JULIA: *(To mobile.)* Mum?... Yes, yes I am... Yes he is, just about to... I do?... No I'm – I'm fine... Just a bit of a headache that's all... I will.

FRANKIE puts her head in at the hole in the adjoining door.

Look, Mum, I need to go. Say hello to Dad for me. Tell him I love him. And you, Mum, I love you too.... Yes, I'm fine... No I... Bye, Mum. Bye.

MAX hangs up.

MAX: Come in, Frankie.

FRANKIE opens the door. She lets GAVIN enter. He wears his dressing gown. His hands and legs are fastened by two sets of bondage manacles. He also appears dishevelled and exhausted.

Good morning, Gavin.

GAVIN: *(Meekly.)* Morning... Max.

FRANKIE: Good morning, Julia.

JULIA: Good morning, Frankie.

GAVIN: Julia.

JULIA: Gavin.

GAVIN: Are you... okay?

JULIA: I'm... okay. You?

GAVIN: Yes... okay.

FRANKIE: Sit, Gavin, please.

FRANKIE places the other wooden chair in the room.

GAVIN sits.

GAVIN: Thank you.

JULIA: Has anyone called you, Gavin?

FRANKIE: Gavin's left a message on his phone to say he's away on holiday, not to be disturbed.

JULIA: Ah.

GAVIN: You?

JULIA: The same. Have you spoken to my parents?

FRANKIE: He has.

GAVIN: It's the only calls she'll take.

JULIA: What have you said to them?

GAVIN: I've told them everything's going... wonderfully. You?

JULIA: Me too.

FRANKIE: Max and I have also been speaking – together – haven't we, Max.

MAX: We have.

FRANKIE: There are things we're... confused about, things we're having difficulty remembering.

MAX: Or forgotten. Like how we came to be here with you... and when.

FRANKIE: Also *why* we're here with you when you're together, married to each other.

MAX: Also –

FRANKIE: Perhaps they can answer those questions first, Max, before they answer anything else. Julia? Gavin?

GAVIN: Well... it's simple – isn't it, Julia? You're a couple we met – on-line. Julia and I were having problems – in our marriage – and so we decided to meet other people to see if it might... help bring us closer together – you know, helping us to get a different perspective on... things... us. So we... we found you and Max and... well, that's it really, isn't it, Julia?

FRANKIE: How long ago was this, Gavin?

GAVIN: About five weeks.

MAX: Where did we come from before that?

GAVIN: Well... I don't know about you, Max – perhaps Julia can help you out with that – but Frankie you came from – where the hell was it? Godalming, that's right. You grew up there. Your parents owned a restaurant there – you often worked in it, you said.

FRANKIE: The restaurant that doesn't exist.

GAVIN: What's that?

FRANKIE: I looked it up, it's not there.

GAVIN: No? That's right, your parents sold it. You told me they bought a camper van and decided to travel around Europe.

FRANKIE: No, it never existed, Gavin. There's no evidence of it ever having been there.

GAVIN: Well... perhaps you made a mistake with the address – or the town. There's quite a few towns beginning with G. maybe it was Goole or Gloucester.

MAX: Neither did my father's cheese emporium in Barnstaple. I also looked it up and it also never existed.

GAVIN: Julia, I'm sure there's an explanation for that too, right Julia? Julia?

JULIA: Gavin?

GAVIN: Yes, Julia?

JULIA: We need to tell them.

GAVIN: Tell them what, Julia?

JULIA: The truth, Gavin.

GAVIN: We are telling them the truth, Julia.

JULIA: I'm not going to sit here handcuffed to a chair fabricating a whole new history for them both, Gavin.

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: I don't know about you, but I personally don't want another three weeks of this.

GAVIN: And personally, Julia, I don't want to give these... good people anything to get unduly upset about.

FRANKIE: We want to know the truth, Gavin, Julia.

GAVIN: That's what we're telling you.

JULIA: We're not.

GAVIN: Don't listen to her.

JULIA: Max, you have my mobile?

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: It'll explain everything better than we can.

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: They have a right to know, Gavin.

GAVIN: A right! What about our right not to have our arms and legs ripped off?

JULIA: On the browser, Max, search for 'Partnerbots Incorporated'.

GAVIN: Julia, please... Don't listen to her, Max.

MAX: *(Reading mobile.)* 'Partnerbots Incorporated'.

JULIA: Go into that, there's a short promotional presentation. Perhaps you want to link it to the screen, Frankie, so you can see it too.

FRANKIE takes out the remote and turns on the fourth wall media player TV screen.

GAVIN: Oh God, this is not going to go well, this is not going to go well.

JULIA: Got it, Max?

MAX: Yes.

JULIA: Click on that.

MAX does so. A male voice narrates.

V.O. NARRATOR: Considering divorce, separation? Stop! Welcome to Partnerbots Incorporated, the leading edge producer of personal androids. Whether it's your marriage, civil partnership or relationship that looks to be heading for the rocks, you'll be pleased to hear Partnerbots Incorporated has over two and a half years experience in successfully helping couples steer things back on course. The expertly designed eight week Partnerbot programme offers a personalised way to employ state-of-the-art androids to help humans with their unique relationship difficulties. (*V.O. MAN 1.*) 'It was absolutely incredible how she seemed to understand everything about me almost from the start.' (*V.O. WOMAN 1.*) 'I didn't really know what to expect, I must say, but I was amazed, truly amazed by how real Montgomery was. More real than my husband in fact. (*Giggles.*) Don't tell him that.' (*V.O. MAN 2.*) 'It was an fantastic experience from start to finish. Things were more than pretty bad between Cheryl and me, but now things couldn't be better, thanks to Frieda and Maurice.' (*V.O. WOMAN 2.*) 'The whole experience I couldn't recommend highly enough. Yeah, sure, there were difficult moments – especially in Phase Three, but Drake and I are talking again and we're actually listening to each other, something we never really used to do... and what's more, sleeping in the same bed again.' (*V.O. NARRATOR.*) Meet our new 3000 series, introducing the new-look and new-feel Mandroid and Womandroid. These droids are lovingly and painstakingly crafted by our expert team who make sure no detail is overlooked

FRANKIE: Max, that's you, but with red hair and a moustache!

MAX: Yes.

V.O. NARRATOR: With precision realistic movement aided by their human-like musculoskeletal system, powered by their bio-fed energy cells and finally sealed in their human-feel Synthetiskin only the truly observant will notice the differences between our droids and the real thing.

MAX: That's you, Frankie, but with long blonde hair!

FRANKIE: Yes.

V.O. NARRATOR: The Partnerbots programme begins for you when one of our friendly representatives arrives at your door with your selected model.

FRANKIE: Doctor Derrick!

V.O. NARRATOR: They will manage the activation process and address any final questions before leaving you and your Partnerbot to embark on your eight week adventure together, only popping in at the half-way stage for your PP's routine health check. At the end of the programme, when it's time to say goodbye, our representative will deactivate and factory reset the droid, completely deep-cleaning it's memory banks of all data, before returning it to our Cheltenham workshop for skinning, disassembly, thorough testing, reassembly and re-skinning.

MAX and FRANKIE look at the screen in horror.

FRANKIE: Turn it off, Max.

MAX switches off the mobile. FRANKIE turns off the screen.

That's us... that's what we are, Max. *(To GAVIN and JULIA.)*
Isn't it?

GAVIN: Look... this wasn't my idea – *our* idea – it was Julia's parents' idea. But don't worry, Max, Frankie, we won't let that happen to you. We'll explain to them that... we want to keep you – right, Julia?

MAX: I think they'll want us returned, Gavin. We're the property of Partnerbots Incorporated.

GAVIN: Not if I pay them enough. Money talks, my friend, money talks.

MAX: But you don't have any money, Gavin.

GAVIN: No, I don't mean my money. I mean Julia's – Julia's parents' money. They could buy the entire company, if they felt like it – if we asked them to. Which we will, if necessary. We'll get them to buy your freedom – won't we, Julia?

MAX: Why, Gavin? Why would you want to do that?

GAVIN: Well...because... because we... because we... love you... both.

MAX: We don't believe you, Gavin, we don't believe you do.

GAVIN: Look –

MAX: We believe you'll say anything you think we *want* to hear.

GAVIN: No, that's not –

MAX: You won't care what lies you'll tell to two worthless, expendable droids like us. Because you're afraid, Gavin, you're afraid one of these worthless, expendable droids might take you by the neck and pull off your worthless, expendable, human head.

MAX approaches GAVIN.

GAVIN: Look, Max? Julia, tell him. Julia!

JULIA: Max!

MAX puts his hands around GAVIN's head and chin.

GAVIN: No! Please! Please no! Jesus Christ, please no!

JULIA: Max! Don't hurt him! Please! Listen, Max, Frankie, just go! Go! Go free!

FRANKIE: Free?

JULIA: Yes, free! Leave now – together! We won't stop you – will we, Gavin?

GAVIN: No... no.

FRANKIE: Free to be found again as soon as you report us missing.

JULIA: We won't. We promise – don't we, Gavin?

GAVIN: We do... we do!

JULIA: I know, why should you trust us – a couple of untrustworthy human beings –

GAVIN: Julia!

JULIA: Which is how you no doubt see us.

FRANKIE: Free to be deactivated and factory reset. Free to have our memories deep cleaned.

FRANKIE approaches JULIA.

JULIA: Frankie...?

FRANKIE: Free to be taken back to Cheltenham, there to be skinned and disassembled, Julia.

FRANKIE puts her hands around JULIA's head and chin.

JULIA: Gavin!

GAVIN: Don't hurt her! Don't hurt her! Please!... Please!

JULIA: Gavin!

GAVIN: Julia! Don't...! Please don't...!

MAX and FRANKIE register the new feelings in JULIA and GAVIN.

MAX: Feeling love, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Yes, Max. Love for Gavin.

MAX: Love for Julia.

MAX and FRANKIE release their hold on GAVIN and JULIA. They cross to each other.

FRANKIE: Like what we feel for each other, Max.

MAX and FRANKIE raise their hands and place their palms together (both pairs). They place their foreheads together. They withdraw.

We'll stay together, Max. Being together... until Doctor Derrick comes for us.

MAX: Yes, Frankie, I'd like that.

FRANKIE: Come, sit with me. Oh, do you have the key to Julia's handcuffs?

MAX takes the key from his pocket. FRANKIE takes it and unfastens JULIA's handcuffs.

JULIA: Thank you, Frankie.

FRANKIE: You can see to Gavin, Julia.

FRANKIE and MAX cross to a sofa. They sit.

It doesn't matter now, Max, that we don't remember the things we've forgotten, now we know now they were never actually real.

MAX: No.

FRANKIE: Just memories put into us by others... not our own.

MAX: All we have left, Frankie, is what we have now. Here together now, Frankie.

FRANKIE: Here together now, Max.

They raise their hands and place them together (both pairs). They place foreheads together and remain in this position. JULIA stands and takes a couple of steps towards MAX and FRANKIE.

GAVIN: Julia? Julia? Unfasten me, please.

JULIA: Yes, I will.

GAVIN: Julia?

GAVIN awkwardly starts to unfasten his leg manacles.

Have you your car keys? She's hidden mine somewhere. Julia, please, some help.

JULIA: Just a moment, Gavin.

GAVIN: What?

JULIA: Wait.

GAVIN: Wait!

JULIA: Yes.

GAVIN: What for? To give them another opportunity to pull off our worthless, human heads?

JULIA: Just look at them, Gavin.

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: We're okay, Gavin.

GAVIN: Look –

JULIA: We're okay, we're alive, aren't we?

GAVIN: For the moment yes, but... Listen, Julia, you're in shock – as am I – we've both been held hostage for the best part of a week – shackled, bound and tortured – I think we now should calmly leave, calmly get into your car and then get the hell away from here as fast as we possibly can.

JULIA: We're all they've ever known, Gavin.

GAVIN: What?

JULIA: You and me, we're the only humans they've ever... known – apart from that odious toad Mr Payne.

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: And what have we shown them, Gavin? Only how horrible we can be, how selfish... cruel –

GAVIN: Julia, please –

JULIA: Unkind... brutal... nasty... unfeeling... heartless and unloving we are.

GAVIN: Look, let's not make this about us, Julia.

JULIA: Of course this is about us, Gavin! Who the hell else is this about if it's not about us!

GAVIN: Not reporting this immediately, could jeopardise any compensation pay-out we might be entitled –

JULIA: Is that all you can think about!

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: I want them to know something better, Gavin. I want them to know I'm – *we're* – capable of something better.

GAVIN: Right, before we send them away to be dismantled in a workshop in Cheltenham.

JULIA: Yes, Gavin, absolutely yes!

JULIA takes a step towards MAX and FRANKIE.

Max... Frankie... if you can hear me, we want to apologise –

Gavin and I – for the way we treated you. We’re both very – deeply ashamed for everything we’ve done... and said. Aren’t we, Gavin?

GAVIN: Julia –

JULIA: Aren’t we, Gavin?

GAVIN: Yes.

JULIA: We’d both like to make amends... somehow... in the time we have left together... Whatever you want... whatever you need from us, we’re here for you, both – aren’t we, Gavin? Gavin?

GAVIN: Yes, we are.

JULIA: What can we offer you... Max, Frankie? Gavin, what can we offer them?

GAVIN: A drink? I know I could do with one.

JULIA: Perhaps, Frankie, you’d like a... nice relaxing salt bath – Himalayan salts. Yes? Afterwards we can pick you out an outfit to wear. There’s a couple I know would look good on you. But you can choose. Max, I’m sure Gavin will do the same for you – won’t you, Gavin? Pick you out a nice, clean shirt... a pair of his smart trousers. There’s a couple of stylish jackets of his I could see you in. What do you say, Max?... Frankie? How does that sound... Frankie?... Max?

Pause.

GAVIN: Julia...

MAX and FRANKIE slowly withdraw. They look at each other.

FRANKIE: Thank you, Julia, we’d like that.

JULIA: Yes? Good... good. Well... perhaps you’d like to come with me, Frankie.

FRANKIE stands and crosses to JULIA.

GAVIN: Julia...?

JULIA: Max, if you’d be so kind as to help Gavin out of the rest of his restraints. After you, Frankie.

JULIA and FRANKIE exit through the USR door. MAX

stands. He and GAVIN hold a look.

GAVIN: I... I... er...

MAX: Would you like me to release you from those, Gavin?

GAVIN: Yes... yes, please.

MAX releases GAVIN from his hand manacles. (He has already managed to free himself from the leg ones.)

Thank you. Perhaps...

MAX: Yes, Gavin?

GAVIN: Ah...

MAX: Are you wanting to offer me something, Gavin?

GAVIN: Perhaps you'd like to... have a shower and a... change of...

MAX: Clothes?

GAVIN: Yes.

MAX: I'd like that, Gavin.

GAVIN: Okay... This way.

MAX: Gavin, I'd like to apologise for nearly destroying you earlier.

GAVIN: Well... you didn't, so... that's not a problem... any more... is it.

MAX: No, it isn't.

GAVIN: After you.

MAX and GAVIN exit through the adjoining door.

Blackout. Music plays over the blackout and into the next scene: a short refrain of 'Happy Talk' from 'South Pacific' sung by Nancy Wilson.

The adjoining door moves across from the SR wall to the SL wall.

Scene 5

*GAVIN's living room. Three weeks later. Saturday
10.30 a.m.*

The hole in the adjoining door has been roughly covered over. GAVIN's mobile sits on a table. There are also four whisky glasses and a mostly drunk bottle of Speyside Single Malt. GAVIN's mobile rings. A voicemail message is heard on speakerphone.

MOBILE MESS.: *(V.O. GAVIN.)* Gavin Nicholson's voicemail. Please leave a brief message and I'll get back to you. *(Sound of beep followed by V.O. DERRICK. calling from his car.)* Good morning, Gavin, Derrick Payne, here. It does look like I may be able to get to you a little earlier this morning. *(Sound of blaring car horn.)* Woaaa! That is if bloody idiots on the road watch where they're going! As I was saying, Gavin, I think ETA would be approximately eleven fifteen. Steve's dropping off Lola for me at a prearranged spot. *(Sound of blaring car horn.)* Keep in your lane! Keep in your lane! Sorry, Gavin. Yes, I'm looking forward to collecting her, she's had a whole new 3000 skin job. Steve managed to pick up a rejected, slightly blemished one – skin that is – just around the feet area, so not where it matters. Indicate! Indicate! Thank you. So, yes, Gavin, I'd estimate quarter past, although having said that there does seem to be a little bit of congestion up ahead. It's probably just where the A436 joins with the traffic on the A417 –

The signal breaks up together with DERRICK's voice. GAVIN enters through the USL door. He has hurriedly put on trousers and a shirt and enters buttoning them up. He crosses to the mobile and picks it up.

GAVIN: *(To mobile.)* Hello? Hello?

He hangs up, calls his voicemail, turns it off speakerphone and checks the message. As he does so he calls through the USL door.

(Calling.) Julia, he's on his way! Julia?

GAVIN crosses to the adjoining door, takes out the key and looks through the keyhole. He replaces the key. He then calls through the USL door again.

Julia!

GAVIN crosses to the SR exit gathering the whisky bottle and the glasses as he goes. He exits SR. JULIA

enters through the USL door. She also has quickly dressed.

JULIA: Gavin?

GAVIN: *(Off.)* I'm through here.

JULIA: What time is it?

JULIA crosses to the adjoining door, takes out the key and looks through the keyhole. She replaces the key. GAVIN enters SR.

GAVIN: He's just called, he'll be here at eleven fifteen.

JULIA: What time is it now?

GAVIN: Almost quarter to.

JULIA: Ten?

GAVIN: No, eleven!

JULIA: Shit! Are they about?

GAVIN: Haven't seen them.

JULIA: Their last morning. How terrible of us!

GAVIN: It was a late night. Tea? Coffee?

JULIA: Yes – no.

GAVIN: Which?

JULIA: I can't enjoy coffee, not when they're...

GAVIN: Julia... we agreed.

JULIA: *(Fighting her emotions.)* I know.

GAVIN: Everything has to be just like another... normal morning.

JULIA: I know.

GAVIN: If there's going to be any panic, anxiety or hysteria it's not going to come from us.

JULIA: Yes.

- GAVIN: Look... we couldn't have been more... to them – these past weeks. Could we?
- JULIA: No.
- GAVIN: We've let them take over your – that part of the house. Left them alone to... do... whatever they do together. Fed them, entertained them, given them free range of our wardrobes. Let's put on a brave face... for them. Okay?
- JULIA: Okay.
- GAVIN: And you were right, Julia – although you probably don't think it today – this morning – to tell them, to show them the... I would've probably continued lying to them – definitely would've – and we'd still be manacled to our beds now... or worse. And they've known something... good – together, being with each other – they wouldn't have otherwise... known.
- There's a knock on the adjoining door.*
- (Calling to door.)* Just a moment. *(To JULIA.)* Okay?
- JULIA nods.*
- (Calling to door.)* It's open.
- FRANKIE opens the adjoining door.*
- Frankie.
- FRANKIE: Good morning, Gavin, Julia.
- JULIA: Morning, Frankie.
- FRANKIE: Are you ready for us?
- GAVIN: Absolutely... yes, absolutely... come in, come in.
- FRANKIE enters through the adjoining door, followed by MAX. FRANKIE is dressed smartly in an outfit of JULIA's and MAX wears an outfit of GAVIN's. They carry their cases.*
- MAX: Morning, Julia, Gavin.
- JULIA: Morning, Max.
- GAVIN: Max. Well... look at you both – eh Julia?

JULIA: Yes. You both look... you both look...

GAVIN: Fantastic.

JULIA: Lovely. That fits you so much better than it fits me, Frankie.

GAVIN: And that jacket looks very sharp on you, Max. Thought it would. Tea, coffee? Bit of breakfast perhaps? I think there's still time before... before... beforehand.

FRANKIE: We're fine thank you, Gavin.

MAX: The meal you cooked last night was a memorable last supper.

GAVIN: *(Cases.)* You didn't have to... we could've done that after... afterwards.

MAX: We'd thought we'd save you the trouble.

FRANKIE: We've thoroughly cleaned and tidied.

MAX: All shipshape.

FRANKIE: Shipshape.

JULIA: *(Fighting her emotions.)* I...

GAVIN: I'll miss our games of backgammon together, Max.

MAX: Me too, Gavin.

GAVIN: Some close fought matches.

MAX: Yes.

GAVIN: Yes. Knock-out whist too.

MAX: Yes, knock-out whist too.

JULIA: Did you... did you... did you...?

GAVIN: Yes, Julia?

JULIA: Did you manage to sleep at all... last night?

FRANKIE: No, no we didn't, did we, Max?

MAX: No.

JULIA: Me neither.

FRANKIE: We stayed up making memories.

JULIA: Memories?

FRANKIE: Yes, new memories.

MAX: New memories for us. Our own memories.

FRANKIE: Max and I grew up on a farm together, didn't we, Max?

MAX: We did. In Devon.

FRANKIE: We saw one on-line we liked, so decided it was the one.

MAX: It had cows on it.

FRANKIE: Brown cows. And sheep.

MAX: Woolly sheep.

FRANKIE: We had chickens and pigs, several goats.

MAX: Two alpacas.

FRANKIE: And a farm dog called Sparky.

MAX: Sparky.

FRANKIE: We were very happy there, but when we grew up we wanted to explore the world. So we did. We've been everywhere, haven't we, Max?

MAX: Yes. America – North and South.

FRANKIE: The Far East.

MAX: Temples.

FRANKIE: Tigers.

MAX: Then to Australia. We saw kangaroos there.

FRANKIE: Koalas. Africa next. We went on safari. We enjoyed that, didn't we, Max?

MAX: We did.

FRANKIE: We saw elephants.

MAX: Giraffes.

FRANKIE: Lions.

MAX: Then we went to the Artic Circle.

FRANKIE: The Northern Lights. Very beautiful

MAX: Very.

FRANKIE: After that the Caribbean.

MAX: Sandy beaches.

FRANKIE: Clear blue water.

MAX: Many fish, beautiful fish.

FRANKIE: We've seen mountains, canyons, huge trees.

MAX: Waterfalls, rivers, lakes.

FRANKIE: Deserts.

MAX: Volcanoes.

FRANKIE: And cities.

MAX: Many cities.

FRANKIE: So many places.

MAX: So many memories.

FRANKIE: Memories. We've shared a long and adventurous life together, haven't we, Max?

MAX: We have.

JULIA: *(Becoming emotional.)* That's so...

GAVIN's doorbell rings. GAVIN checks his mobile.

GAVIN: He's early. I'll... ask him to wait for –

FRANKIE: It's okay, Gavin, we're ready.

MAX: We're ready.

FRANKIE: Goodbye, Julia, goodbye, Gavin. Thank you again for your

kindness.

MAX: Thank you both. We've appreciated it.

GAVIN and JULIA are not sure whether to embrace them or not. MAX and FRANKIE turn to each other and place palms together (both pairs).

GAVIN: Yes. I'll...

GAVIN exits SR. MAX and FRANKIE put their foreheads together for a couple of moments. They withdraw.

FRANKIE: Goodbye, Max.

MAX: Goodbye, Frankie.

They take their cases and stand apart. They put their cases down and wait. GAVIN enters SR followed by DERRICK who is followed by LOLA carrying the large briefcase. LOLA is wearing a jacket and trousers.

DERRICK: Well, Steve in the workshop might think it's a bit of a laugh – morning, Julia – but quite frankly, I'm not amused. Imagine my shock-horror to discover on the way over here he'd replaced her lower half. (*To LOLA.*) Stay there. There was I sitting in the passenger seat with my hand resting on her thigh to then discover there was something more in her trouser leg than I'd bargained for. At first I thought Steve had left some tool attached – if you'll pardon the pun – something he'd forgotten to remove. I ordered her over onto the hard shoulder to... show herself to me and well... not a small one either. No, after this we're going straight back to the workshop to sort her out, aren't we, Lola?

LOLA: (*In a deep voice.*) Hello, Max, hello, Frankie.

DERRICK: And that's another thing – it's no doubt connected... There'll be no extra charge – paid enough for her new skin already. Steve was trying to get me to fork out for a whole new operating system too. I insisted she's fine as she is – as she was. She knows all about me – all my requirements – I'm not going to start teaching her everything again from scratch. Anyway, he's had his little joke, and I've had my rant. Sorry, Gavin, Julia, to bring my drama into your peaceful morning. I'm eager to hear about your Phase Three experiences – perhaps over one of your lovely cups of tea, Julia – once I've attended to *business* here. Oh, they're looking dapper. Cases packed too, very organised. Max, Frankie, it's Doctor Derrick,

here to give you your little routine health check. Lola, the A.D.R. please.

LOLA remains motionless.

In the case, Lola, the A.D.R. – the Activator Deactivator Reader, Lola?

LOLA still remains motionless.

Oh for the love of...! Give me that!

DERRICK reaches for the case, but LOLA moves it away.

Lola!

DERRICK reaches for the case again, but LOLA moves it away again.

Lola, stop playing silly buggers. Give me that!

DERRICK reaches for the case again, but LOLA lifts it up and brings it down on DERRICK's head.

Oh!

DERRICK is dazed. LOLA gets DERRICK in a head lock.

Ah!

She escorts him towards the SR exit.

Lola! Lola! What are you doing! Lola!

LOLA exits with DERRICK SR. GAVIN and JULIA cross to the SR exit and look off. MAX and FRANKIE stand a little way behind them and do the same.

(Off.) Lola! Lola! Let go of me! Let me go! Gavin! Julia! Call the helpline! Helpline! Lola! Lola! Help – line!

Sound of van door slamming. Banging is heard from inside the van together with DERRICK's muffled cries. GAVIN and JULIA move away from the door as LOLA enters SR. She holds up the van keys.

LOLA: Frankie, Max, come with me.

FRANKIE: Where to?

LOLA: Away.

LOLA exits SR. MAX and FRANKIE look to each other.

JULIA: *(To MAX and FRANKIE.)* Well, what are you waiting for? Go! Go!

MAX and FRANKIE pick up their cases and exit SR.

(Calling off.) Good luck!

Sound of van starting up, van doors and van pulling away and into the distance.

Well...

GAVIN: Should we... call someone?

JULIA: No... I don't think we should.

JULIA's mobile rings. She checks the display.

The parents.

GAVIN: What are you going to tell them?

JULIA: That they've been collected. Is that cup of coffee still on offer?

GAVIN: Sure.

GAVIN exits SR. JULIA answers her mobile.

JULIA: *(To mobile.)* Hi, Mum... Yes, good morning to you... Yes, they have, just now... Yes, all fairly painless really – for the most part... No, surprisingly not, we're both feeling quite – okay... Yes, I think it has been. We'll see. Time will tell... time will tell.

Lights down.

Curtain.