

SIMULACRA

Written by

Aaron D. Ybarra

ORSON GOULD- an aimless but handsome YOUNG MAN- and friend,
KEN REED, fire off a few rounds at the nearby targets.

KEN

So, how are you and Sheila doing?

ORSON

We're not. We broke up last week.

KEN

Bummer. Weren't you guys, like, a thing?

ORSON

I thought so. Apparently, I was the only one. Lack of
compatibility, I think it was.

KEN

She didn't like your performance in the sack, I take it?

ORSON

"Like making love to a robot," I think were her exact words.

KEN

Ouch, man. That hurts.

ORSON

Tell me about it.

KEN

Oh well, there's always more birds in the sea, or whatever.

ORSON

I think the saying is fish.

KEN

Fish, birds, who cares? Listen, I've got a birthday party next
week, at the Metropolis. You should come. There's gonna be
lots of booze and lots of girls there. Plenty of chances to
find someone to plug yourself into, recharge your batteries a
bit.

ORSON

Thanks, but I think I'll pass.

KEN

What? What hot-blooded guy would skip out on an offer like that?

ORSON

Listen, I appreciate it. I really do. I'm just not interested in another dead-end street another one-night stand. Been there done that. It's getting old. I'm getting old.

KEN

Oh, here we go again. Look, dude, I love you, you're awesome, but you can't be all doom and gloom and death talk. You're too young to contemplate your own mortality.

ORSON

I'm pushing thirty.

KEN

So?! Hugh Hefner's older than dirt and he goes to bed with a new hot number each night. What excuse do you have?

KEN

You have a point.

ORSON

Of course, I do! So, this is how things

are gonna go down: you're gonna come to my party, you're gonna find a girl, you're gonna drink yourself into not giving a care for the world, and then you're gonna bonk her brains out. Do I make myself clear?

ORSON

Loudly and clearly. Mostly loudly, though.

KEN

As long as we understand each other, I'm okay with that.

KEN's bullet finds the center of the target.

KEN (CON'T)

Woo! Did you see that? Right in the center. Ha! That's what I'm talking about.

ORSON

(dispassionately)

Yeah. Great shot.

INT. NIGHTCLUB- NIGHT

ORSON nervously makes his way onto the dance floor. Sharply dressed MEN and tight-skirted WOMEN gyrate thereupon. The DJ pumps bass-heavy music through the loudspeakers while overhead lights drown the scene in sporadic bursts of neon flare.

He looks around.

KEN

(off screen)

Orson!

ORSON turns toward the sound of the voice. He sees KEN sitting with intimate company in one of the alcoves of the club.

KEN (CONT'D)

Yo, dude! Glad you could make it. Pull up a skirt- I mean, seat.

One of the WOMEN beside him flashes him a dirty look.

KEN (CONT'D)

Sorry, babe, nothing personal.

ORSON makes his way over to KEN'S PARTY and shakes his friend's hand. One YOUNG WOMAN makes enough room on the couch for him to squeeze into. ORSON takes a seat.

KEN (CONT'D)

(slightly inebriated)

This, everybody, is Orson Gould, my best friend and the King of Sexual Pleasure.

All eyes turn to him. ORSON self-consciously waves back at them.

ORSON

Hi.

BIRTHDAY GUEST #1

So, Orson? What's your favorite position?

ORSON

Uh, missionary?

(softly)

That's a thing, right?

KEN

Ha! That Orson, what a kidder. You know, they say that in the future, we won't even need the opposite sex anymore. It'll all be done with robots. Just type in how you'd like and how long and- bam!- you're off to the races. No guess work. No technical difficulties.

DINNER GUEST #1

Sign me up. The last guy I was with didn't last any longer than five minutes. After a while, I had to start telling him the clock was broke just to keep him from crying all over me. The poor bugger. If he wasn't rich, I'd've left him on the first night.

ORSON

How long were you together?

DINNER GUEST #1

A good few years. We'd probably still be together today if he hadn't called it off.

ORSON

What happened?

DINNER GUEST #1

Oh, he found out I was cheating on him. I don't know why. I was only doing it for him... Some people just have no clue of the sacrifices you have to make for love.

ORSON

Yeah, crazy world. I'll be right back.

ORSON stands up.

KEN

Where you doing? Not leaving us already all ready, are you?

ORSON

No. Just using the restroom.

KEN

Good. Because we have a lot more partying left to do, right, ladies?

The GUESTS cheer. ORSON excuses himself from their company.

I/E. CLUB- LATER

ORSON approaches the bar, outside the main dance floor, and orders a drink. AMY STONE, an irascible redhead, also stands at the bar. As the BARTENDER prepares his drink, ORSON looks her over.

ORSON

How it going?

AMY

Uninterested.

ORSON

Fair enough.

ORSON receives his drink and takes a sip.

AMY

What are you doing here?

ORSON

I'm allowed.

AMY

You seem out of place.

ORSON

I am. A friend invited me.

AMY looks around.

AMY

Oh? Where is he?

ORSON

Inside. It's his birthday.

AMY

And you're here at the bar. Must be some friend.

ORSON

He's a fun guy.

AMY

And how about you? Are you fun?

ORSON

I'd like to say I am.

AMY

Then why aren't you in there, dancing it up with your buddies?

ORSON

This isn't my kind of fun.

AMY

And what is? Dungeons and Dragons?

ORSON

Computer programming, actually. I'm a... never mind. Sorry to bother you.

ORSON turns to leave.

AMY

I didn't say you were bothering me.

ORSON

(turning back)

So you want me to stay?

AMY

I didn't say that either.

ORSON

Okay.

AMY sets down her empty shot glass.

AMY

Buy me another drink.

ORSON

(eagerly)

Sure! What are you drinking?

AMY

Whiskey. Straight.

ORSON

Wow. I'm impressed.

AMY

Over whiskey? You're easily amused. I have some ocean front property in Arizona to sell you, if you'd like.

ORSON

(sheepishly)

It's just that, most of the women I've been with have gotten fruitier drinks.

AMY

Been with a lot of women, have you?

ORSON

Not a lot.

AMY

Don't be modest. It's boring.

ORSON

Even when it's true.

AMY

That's where embellishment comes in.

ORSON orders the whiskey and takes a sip from his own drink.

ORSON

So what's your story?

AMY

I'm a contortionist.

ORSON chokes on his drink.

AMY (CONT'D)

Just kidding. I just love to see how guys react to that one. I'm a fashion designer.

ORSON

Cool.

AMY

Cool? Ha! It's amazing. And there's nowhere better than here in this city to do it.

ORSON

It's definitely got a lot of potential.

AMY

It's the epicenter of the universe.

ORSON

That may be taking things to the extreme.

AMY

Remember: embellish, embellish, embellish. But seriously, if you open your eyes, you can see everything from here.

Everything. Like you're stand in the center of a rose watching the whole flower bloom.

ORSON

Nice word picture.

AMY

Thanks. Anyway, so that's what I do.

ORSON

And what brings you here?

AMY

Hanging with friends. Ex-friends, actually.

ORSON

Oh? Sorry to hear that.

AMY

Yeah. Me too. Apparently, if a guy's into you, and you're not into them, they go nuts. Even leave you stranded at a nightclub in the center of this big old honking city.

ORSON

I could give you a ride.

AMY

I bet you would.

ORSON blushes.

AMY (CONT'D)

I'll just grab a taxi, but thanks. Besides, I wouldn't deprive you of your friend's birthday party.

ORSON

He'd live.

AMY takes a drink of her whiskey.

AMY

You're cute, you know.

Your fashion's like something from the eighties, but the rest of you is adorable, like a stuffed animal or something.

ORSON

Thanks. I'll make sure to put that on my epitaph: "could have been a stuffed animal."

AMY

So you really want to cut out of here with me?

ORSON

(starting off)

I'd love to. Give me a second and I'll bring the car around.

AMY

Aren't you gonna ask me my name first?

ORSON

Sorry, I'm Orson Gould. And you are?

AMY

Orson? Sounds like something I'd name a pig.

ORSON

Nobody's perfect.

AMY raises her glass.

AMY

Cheers to that. Amy Stone.

ORSON

Amy, I'll be right back.

AMY

I'm sure you say that to all the girls.

INT. ORSON'S CAR- NIGHT

ORSON drives through block after block of crowded city

streets.

ORSON

So, he really left you right then and there?

AMY

Yeah. Not his finest hour- or mine.

ORSON

No?

AMY

Yeah. Guys aren't exactly the subtlest creature. I knew. I mean, I didn't know; but I knew. You know?

ORSON

No.

AMY

That's okay. You'll catch up later. But anyway, I knew and, frankly, I didn't really care. It was his deal, and he needed to get over it. I shouldn't have to modify my behavior, become someone else, every time he comes around, should I?

ORSON

No, I guess not. But you did invite him to a nightclub with you. That tends to be a rather confusing sign.

AMY

You're probably right.

ORSON

So why'd you do it?

AMY

Security, I guess. I mean, I wanna have fun, and I want someone to have fun with.

I couldn't go by myself could I?

ORSON

Yeah, you could actually.

AMY

You're not fun. Your idea of a good time is sitting in front of a computer.

ORSON

At least nobody gets hurt that way.

AMY

Orson, a life lived in avoidance of pain is no life at all.

ORSON

And a life spent driving towards it is only asking for trouble.

AMY

I'm gonna go out on a limb and say, you want to ask for trouble, but lack the language to do so.

ORSON

And I'd say you want to slow down, but somebody's cut your brake lines.

AMY

So where does that leave us?

ORSON

Somewhere in between.

AMY

Yeah. Right in between. We're the peanut butter and jelly of society. Keeping the wry bred of life interesting.

ORSON

I'm okay with that.

AMY

Good. You should be.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX- LATER

ORSON pulls up beside AMY's APARTMENT COMPLEX.

AMY

(gesturing to a guest parking spot)

There. Park there.

ORSON parks.

AMY (CONT'D)

Well, I guess this is it.

ORSON

I guess so.

AMY

You want to come up?

ORSON

I probably shouldn't.

AMY

Why?

ORSON

Because I'd only disappoint.

AMY shakes her head.

AMY

Get your butt out of that car.

ORSON smiles.

ORSON

Don't say I didn't warn you.

AMY

I consider myself properly warned.

ORSON gets out of the car. They enter the BUILDING. ORSON looks around.

ORSON

So this is where you live? It's nice.

AMY

It's a garbage heap, but it's home.

They approach the elevator. When the door opens, ORSON waves her forward.

ORSON

After you.

AMY enters. They start the elevator.

ORSON (CONT'D)

How long have you lived her?

AMY

A few years. I lose track. Time is too short to keep track.

ORSON

I suppose that's one way of looking at it.

AMY

It's the only way.

ORSON

But isn't memory what keeps us sane? I mean, where would we be without it? Think of all the good times we'd miss if the past forever drifted from our consciousness.

AMY

And our hurt, and our pain. Face it, for every good memory, you probably have a billion bad ones.

ORSON

I think that makes the good ones all the more special.

AMY

Then you, my friend, are a fool.

ORSON

And a stuffed animal.

AMY

And a stuffed animal.

AMY leans up against him. ORSON puts his arm around her. The elevator dings.

AMY (CONT'D)

Sixth floor: thumbtacks, fishing line, and thermal underwear.

ORSON

Just what I always wanted.

AMY

I know, right?

They disembark from the elevator and walk down a twisting set of corridors to AMY's apartment.

AMY (CONT'D)

Well, this is it. Are you ready?

ORSON

Never, but open 'er up anyway.

She opens the door. They walk inside. The APARTMENT is dingy and old, but the furniture is well-arranged and the

FASHION POSTERS plastered onto all of the walls breathe a certain degree of chicness and life into the atmosphere.

ORSON

(covering his eyes)

It's hideous! Oh my eyes, my eyes.

AMY playfully slaps him.

AMY

Shut up, smarty pants. Well, here it is. My humble abode.

(gesturing here and there as she goes)

Here is the living room. Over there is the kitchen. The bathroom is down the hall. And this...

(setting her back against the nearest door)

Is the bedroom.

ORSON swallows a cold lump of spittle collecting in the back of his throat.

ORSON

I see.

AMY opens the door and extends a leading hand out to him.

AMY

Come on, don't be shy.

ORSON takes her hand and follows her into the bedroom. When they are inside, she lets go of his hand. She kicks off her heels and removes her dress. It is then that he sees the BIOHAZARD SYMBOL tattooed just below her belly button, with the Roman Numerals, XXVII, in the center.

ORSON

Nice tattoo.

AMY

Thanks.

ORSON

What's it mean?

AMY

(looking at the tattoo)

Twenty-seven: my lucky number. Could be yours too, if you know what I mean. Now, get over here. It's cold. I need you to warm me up.

ORSON approaches her. She unbuttons his shirt and kisses him tenderly.

INT. AMY'S APARTMENT- MORNING

ORSON wakes. He stretches, yawns, and opens his eyes. AMY'S body slides off his without resistance. When his eyes adjust to the sunlight, he sees that she is a bluish shade of dead. He shakes her.

ORSON

AMY? Wake up. AMY? AMY?!

He stumbles out of bed. While beside himself, he fumbles through his clothes, searching for his phone. He finds it and dials.

ORSON (CON'T)

Hi! My name is Orson Gould. I'm at the Banksy Hotel, sixth floor, on the corner of Wilshire and Grand. My... uh, there's someone here with me and she's not breathing.. Just come quick. Please!

He hangs up, and starts pacing the room.

ORSON (CONT'D)

Shootshootshootshootshootshoot.

He picks up the phone and dials again.

ORSON (CONT'D)

Hi, Ken... Yeah, I'm sorry about that... No, I'm not all right... I'm in deep trouble... Just meet at the Lourdes' Hospital, as fast as you can, okay?... no, this isn't a joke... yes, I'm serious! ... all right, see you soon... thanks, man.

ORSON hangs up.

INT. HOSPITAL- LATER

KEN makes his way into the hospital lobby. As he enters, two POLICE OFFICERS step away from ORSON, who is currently seated, and exit the building. KEN hurries towards ORSON, who stares at the floor.

KEN

What the heck? What is all of this, man?

ORSON

(despondently)

I think I killed her.

KEN

Her? Who's her?

ORSON

Amy. I killed her. I don't know any other possibility. I knew I was bad in bed but... wow, not this bad.

KEN

Hold up there, partner. I feel like I'm at the tail end of a rather large train. Let's back up to the beginning, so that I can catch up.

ORSON

Sorry. I met a girl at the party. We went back to her place... I shouldn't've bailed on you like that.

KEN

(facetiously)

Yeah, yeah. I hate you forever. Now, go on.

ORSON

We went back to her place. We had some fun. A lot of fun, actually. Then, the next morning, I woke up and she was dead.

KEN takes a seat.

KEN

Bummer. So you, like, did it 'til you dropped.

ORSON

This isn't the time.

KEN

Sorry, man. Just trying to add a little levity.

ORSON

I appreciate it. Really. My sense of humor's not what it usually is, though.

KEN

So, do they know what actually happened?

ORSON

No. Everything just stopped. Like someone somewhere turned out all the lights.

KEN

(vacantly)

Or unplugged her.

ORSON

Exactly.

KEN

That sucks... They don't think you did it, do they?

ORSON

No. At least, I don't think so. They asked a lot of questions, but I think they're just as puzzled as I am.

KEN

Weird.

ORSON

Yeah. I don't know what I should do. I mean, I didn't know her. As far I know, she was an alien from outer space. But I feel like I should tell somebody about this. Somebody has to know she died.

KEN

I'm sure they've got people who will do that for you. And besides, what would you say, "Hi, I'm Orson. I was porking your daughter right before she died. Condolences."

ORSON

Point taken. Still, shouldn't somebody know. Shouldn't somebody care?

KEN

I'm sure, everything will be fine. As for you, my good sir, you need to go home, have a beer, or five-

ORSON

What time is it?

KEN checks his phone.

KEN

Ten A.M.

ORSON

Maybe I'll have an Americano, instead.

KEN

Whatever. Just get out of this place, take a few days off, and try to forget this freak occurrence ever happened.

ORSON

Yeah. Sounds good. Thanks.

KEN

Don't mention it. C'mon, let me give you a ride home.

ORSON shakes his head.

ORSON

My car's still at her apartment.

KEN

Then, let me give you a ride back there, then.

ORSON

You sure? I could totally just catch a cab.

KEN

I'm not gonna let you catch a cab after all this.

ORSON

Thanks.

KEN

(looking around)

Don't mention it. Now c'mon, let's split. Hospitals give me the creeps.

ORSON gets up. KEN follows. Together, they walk out of the

hospital and over to KEN'S CAR. He uses a remote to open the doors. At the door, KEN pauses.

KEN

I gotta tell you, as your friend, that you have some pretty messed up luck with women.

ORSON silently enters the car. KEN gets in as well. They shut the doors. KEN starts the car, and peels off into the street.

INT. KEN'S CAR- DAY

KEN irritably navigates through miles of stop-and-go traffic.

KEN

Man, this blows. You would think, after all these years of human civilization, someone would've figured out an alternative to this nonsense. Rows after row of people waiting to get home, to get on with their lives. We spend our entire lives chasing bumpers. It's stupid, if you could ask me.

ORSON

You could live in the country. Wide open spaces. Empty highways.

KEN

Cow crap. No, thank you. I'd rather be stuck here.

ORSON

Me too. It does seem kind of silly, though. I mean, if we hate this life so much, why don't we leave it?

KEN

Because, my friend, it's life. And life is better than death, any day.

ORSON

Have you ever thought about death? I mean, really thought about it? Its permanency? Its depth.

It's kind of intimidating.

KEN

I prefer not to think of things that I can't control. They're too far over my head for me to worry about them. Besides, I already know I'm going to die...

ORSON

Oh, do tell...

KEN

Heart attack. Sudden, swift, and over and done with. I'll have two fine ladies at my side and a bottle of bourbon in hand, and I'll just go.

ORSON

But then what?

KEN

Blackout. Nirvana. Who cares? It's the end.

ORSON

I'd like to think we'll get another go at it, that we get to do things over and over again until they turn out just right.

KEN

And then what?

ORSON shrugs.

ORSON

Then, we disappear I guess. Job well done.

KEN

(rolling his eyes)

You know what I think? I think you'll never get things right, not if you were given an infinity of chances. Why? Because we're screw-ups, and that's what screw-ups do: we screw up. But you know what? That's okay, because somewhere, somehow, it all balances out. That's what I think, at least.

ORSON

I wonder what the last thing she thought of was before she died..

KEN

Huh?

ORSON

Amy. I wonder what she was thinking before she died.

KEN

Well, definitely not what a great lay you were, that's for sure... Kidding. Who knows? Stop getting so down.

ORSON

But you see-

KEN

Stop.

ORSON

I know but-

KEN

Stop. I love you, but stop. She's gone.

ORSON

She had the nicest perfume. Like lavender

and honey... You know, some and last gifts given to Jesus Christ were perfume. I wonder if there's anything there. You're born and you die. You leave a fragrance behind on this world. A bitter fragrance, perhaps, or sweet. Either way, it lingers even after we're gone. Like a cloud. A fog. Smog. Ha! Wouldn't that be great, if smog wasn't due to pollution at all, but simply the remains of thousands of souls lost in this crazy city? Wouldn't that be something?

KEN

Yeah. That'd be something all right. A whole lot of something.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX- LATER

ORSON points out AMY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX.

ORSON

Right there.

KEN looks it over.

KEN

Nice place.

ORSON

Yeah, it sure was.

KEN turns in to the complex, finds ORSON'S CAR, and parks beside it.

KEN

You sure you're going to be all right?

ORSON

Yeah, I'll be fine.

KEN

(warily)

Okay. But call me, you know, if you're not.

ORSON

I will. Don't worry.

ORSON gets out of the car and waves goodbye to his friend. KEN takes off. ORSON gets in his own car. He jams the keys into the ignition, but hesitates before turning them. He looks up at the complex, about to where AMY'S ROOM would be. He turns his head back to the road. He starts the car and leaves.

INT. ORSON'S APARTMENT- THE NEXT DAY

ORSON'S ALARM goes off. He groggily wakes and gets out of bed. He showers, brushes his teeth, dresses, and shaves, then leaves his apartment to go get coffee.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE- DAY

ORSON enters the café, orders his coffee, and goes to the CONDIMENT BAR to dress it up. While whisking the cream and sugar into his drink, he looks out the window in front of him. It looks out into the STREET. A WOMAN with a look similar to AMY's, only outfitted in business attire, catches the corner of his eye. He continues to tend to his drink for a moment more before turning his head toward the WOMAN. Soon, his curiosity gets the better of him and he begins to head her way, cutting her off as she walks by the door and leaving his coffee behind.

ORSON

Amy! Amy. Wow! I can't believe it. It's you.

WOMAN

I think you have me confused with somebody else, sir.

ORSON

C'mon, Amy. The club? Remember.

WOMAN

No, I've never seen you in my life.

ORSON

Okay, ha, ha! I get it. Playing hard to get. Fun stuff. Now, c'mon. Tell me how you did it. That stunt back at the hospital really had me going.

WOMAN

Sir, I have no idea what you're talking about and if you carry on like this, I'm going to call the police.

ORSON

Amy...

WOMAN

My name is Jennifer Cartwright. Now, please, leave me alone.

ORSON

You have tattoo of a biohazard symbol below your belly button, with the number twenty-seven in Roman Numerals.

JENNY glares at him.

JENNY

Who are you? Are you stalking me?

ORSON

No please. I'm not a stalker. I'm a friend. I promised.

JENNY

Just... get the heck away from me okay.

He reaches out to take her hand. She slaps him. He holds his hand over his face as she vanishes out of sight.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE- DAY

ORSON and KEN sit in the COFFEE HOUSE.

ORSON

Thanks for coming.

KEN

This is crazy, you know? Just plain crazy.

ORSON

I know. But it's her. It has to be her. I don't know why she didn't recognize me.

KEN

It's not her. There's no way. You saw her dead. You took her to the hospital. I love you man, but you're like a dehydrated man in the Sahara. You look around and see an oasis, but I'm here to tell you it's all a mirage.

ORSON

Then why are you here? You didn't have to come. I think you believe me. I think, impossible as it might be, my story is true and you know it.

KEN

I won't give you that much.

ORSON

But you're willing to consider that it might be.

KEN

I'm here to help a friend through the grieving process. If that means briefly entertaining a fantasy so that we can debunk it together, then so be it.

ORSON

This is the real deal, I promise you.

KEN

Yeah, well, we'll see.

ORSON

(checking his phone)

She should be here any minute now... There she is!

JENNY passes by.

KEN

Who? The ginger?

ORSON

Yeah. Take a look.

KEN

It would be a ginger.

ORSON hands his friend the phone. KEN nonchalantly glances at the phone, then at the WOMAN, and back and forth between the two. KEN's brow furrows.

KEN

Shoot.

ORSON

I know, right?

KEN

She could be a twin or something.

ORSON

No, they're too alike, down to the last detail. The perfume, the look, even the tattoo. They're identical.

KEN

Wait. What tattoo?

ORSON

A little biohazard tattoo, just below the belly button.

KEN

Kinky.

ORSON

Please.

KEN

Sorry. Couldn't help it. So, you convinced me. They do look very similar. What do you want to do now? Follow her?

ORSON

Yeah, could we?

KEN

No man. You know how much trouble we could get in if we get caught?

ORSON

What's the worst thing that could happen?

KEN

I don't know. Go to jail. And that's only if you're wrong about this whole connection thing. If you're right, who knows how jacked up things could get?

ORSON

C'mon, Ken. You're always on me for not manning up, stepping up the plate. Now, could be chance.

KEN

Listen. You wanna chase tail, then I'm all for it; but chasing ghosts, that's another thing entirely.

ORSON

Fine. I guess I'll have to go it on my own then.

KEN

I guess so.

ORSON gets up and leaves the shop.

KEN (CONT'D)

Dang it.

EXT. STREET- DAY

ORSON follows JENNY at a distance- down the street, to the GARMENT DISTRICT. He ducks behind a BUS STOP as she turns around before entering into a BANK therein. He is waiting for her to move on when KEN slaps his hand down upon his shoulder.

ORSON jumps.

ORSON

Geez! Don't scare me like that.

KEN

You're very welcome. I appreciate the sincere thanks for risking my life on this suicide mission of yours.

ORSON

Sorry. I'm a little nervous.

KEN

A little he says... So, what do we know?

ORSON

She just walked into that bank right over there. I think she works there.

KEN

It would make sense. People do still have the right to work where they please.

ORSON

Interesting..

KEN

What? Please, don't keep your captive audience waiting.

ORSON

Amy said she worked as a fashion designer. This woman works as a banker in the garment district. I'm starting to see a pattern.

KEN

Wouldn't they have seen each other though? I mean, if they both worked in the same circles. Somebody must have sensed that something was up.

ORSON

Maybe somebody did.

KEN

Oh, yeah? Are you going to poll this entire area to find your answer?

ORSON takes out his phone.

ORSON

No. Just the internet.

KEN

Of course, because nothing is more reliable than the internet. What are you going to look up? Twins on a rampage?

ORSON

I was thinking more like this..

ORSON flashes KEN an article, headed by a picture of a BIOHAZARD SYMBOL with the TWENTY-SEVEN at its center.

KEN

(reading aloud)

International Retailer, "Genesis," promises to revolutionize fashion in the upcoming quarter with its newest line, '27.'

"We have been working tirelessly to create a new look," says founder, Nym Rodinsky, "one which will establish a new standard of beauty, attainable by all."

There will no more excuses in the world of tomorrow. We will be able to be beautiful and stay beautiful for as long as man has breath in his lungs.

ORSON

I will have to say one thing: we're definitely in way over our heads.

KEN

For sure. So, are you going to pay them a visit or not?

ORSON

We've come this far, haven't we?

INT. GENESIS HEADQUARTERS- DAY

ORSON and KEN step into GENESIS's main office. He walks up the main desk. The ASSISTANT behind the desk also looks like AMY.

ORSON

Hi, we'd like to speak with Mr. Rodinsky.

ASSISTANT

I'm sorry, but he is indisposed at the moment. Can I take a message?

ORSON

Yes. Tell him we're here to inquire into

his newest line. You could say we have an invested interest in the product.

ORSON shows her a picture of AMY. The ASSISTANT looks quizzically at the picture.

ASSISTANT

I see. Maybe I can fit you in. Your names, please?

ORSON

Orson Gould.

KEN

And friend.

ASSITANT

Very well. I will tell him that you came by.

NYM

(off screen)

Or you could save time and talk to me now.

ORSON and KEN turn. A very well-dressed MAN is at the door behind him.

NYM

Hello, gentlemen. Pleasure to meet you.

I am he whom you seek.

ORSON

Nym Rodinsky?

NYM

The very same.

ORSON

Mr. Rodinsky, we need to talk.

NYM moves toward the door directly behind his ASSISTANT.

NYM

Of course, of course. Right this way. I would much prefer to have our conversation in the safety and comfort of my office.

KEN

I'd be fine having our conversation out in the open, if it's all the same to you.

NYM

And you are?

KEN

Friend.

NYM

Well, friend. If you want to continue this conversation, then I insist on moving inside.

ORSON

Let's do as he says. As long as we get the answers we need, we'll be willing to play along.

NYM

I'm sure you'll get everything you want and more.

NYM turns briefly to his ASSISTANT.

NYM (CONT'D)

Joanne, hold my calls for the next hour or so. These men and I have important matters to discuss.

JOANNE

Yes, sir, Mr. Rodinsky.

KEN hesitantly follows ORSON and NYM through the double doors into a large room. The room is full of FASHION DESIGNERS, SEAMSTRESSES, and MODELS all working together to

create and display DESIGNER CLOTHING.

NYM walks passed them, into a hallway, and down to his OFFICE. He pushes the doors aside, and invites them to enter.

INT. NYM'S OFFICE- DAY

The OFFICE is plainly outfitted. A large red chair in front of black desk. A yellow couch. White carpeting. Pastel stencils on the walls.

NYM

Take a seat.

ORSON sits, as does KEN.

NYM (CONT'D)

You gave Ms. Cartwright quite a scare the other day. That wasn't very civil of you.

ORSON

You know about that?

NYM

Oh, yes. One must keep tabs on one's investments.

KEN

What does that even mean? I mean, it's not like people are like a commodity.

NYM

Oh, no, my friend. I beg to differ. In my line of work, people are the ultimate commodity. Image is everything, and everything is image. How you look, who you are, and what others think of you are all my business. And I have taken it upon myself to be not just at the forefront, but as the only member of the competition.

ORSON

Mr. Rodinsky, I'm sure your business is

state of the art, but my reason for coming is far more personal than entrepreneurial.

NYM

Of course. You are referring to your relationship with Ms. Stone, I take it?

ORSON

Yes sir. That's how this all got started you see. One moment, she was alive and well in my arms, and the next she was six feet under. No doctor could tell me why. But I have a trail of lookalikes that tells me you can. So, if you're so willing, I'd be grateful if you can give me some answers.

NYM adjusts himself in his chair.

NYM

Gladly, my body. Gladly. First off, I apologize for the sense of loss I have put you through. Second, I must tell you that your personal quest and my business venture are not independent of one another, but interconnected.

ORSON

How so?

NYM

Ms. Stone was a beta test of Project 27. Unfortunately, one that came to a rather abrupt end, but such could be expected from a prototype.

ORSON

I'm sorry. Prototype?

NYM

Of Project 27.

KEN

And what is that exactly?

NYM

It is the end all to be all in the fashion industry. For years, designers have made dresses with the vain hope of their models fitting perfectly in them. They are close, don't get me wrong, but they are never perfect. There is always a part too loose here, too tight there. And the problem is only exacerbated when the dress is released into the public. How many despairing and lost hours are put into finding the perfect dress? We have tried so hard to make dresses that fit out bodies, when my thinking is that we should be doing just the opposite: what if we created bodies that fit our dresses?

What if we had the ability to create for ourselves, a body that would fit just the right dimensions?

If everyone were a model, and not just the lucky few? How beautiful would that be?

KEN

You're talking about genetic modification to fit a fashion trend. Sounds pretty ridiculous to me.

NYM

Is it now? Well, tell that to your mother, your sister, your future wife. You know how badly they have all been wanting to have just the right nose, the right eyes, the right bust, and metabolism? I have the ability to give them that, to copy and paste ascetic beauty across the face of the earth.

ORSON

But won't leveling the playing field like that also rob us of our individuality? I

mean, I may not always like what I see in the mirror, but at least it's my face I'm seeing, and not just a carbon copy of somebody else's. I'm unique.

NYM

Give people the choice between being unique and being beautiful and I guarantee you that nine times out of ten, they will pick the latter.

KEN

This is nuts, just nuts!

NYM

Maybe so, friend, but it's also progress. How about you, Mr. Gould? What do you think of my little science experience?

ORSON

You can't confuse clothing and people. You can say this dress is a masterpiece and this one is trash, but you can't do that with people. You weren't messing around with fabric and thread when you created Amy. You were messing around with a life. And now she's gone. Like yesterday's fashion. We as humans were never meant to do that.

NYM

I see. Well, you have your answer, regardless. And soon the public will know the same. They can decide for themselves whether they like it or not, and invest accordingly.

ORSON

I hope they have the good sense to put their money elsewhere.

NYM

Perhaps the story would be different if

you were the Adonis, huh? I could do that, you know. I could make you the person everyone wanted to look like. It'd be easy enough to do. The public is easily persuaded. When I launch 27, all I would have to do is put you as one of its leading faces, and overnight you would be a star. Wouldn't you like that? To be a star? The person everyone wanted to model their lives after. Who doesn't want that?

ORSON

Good day, sir.

NYM

Think about it, Mr. Gould. We will be having our first exhibit next week. Saturday, seven P.M. at the Perseus Club. I will put your name on the list. I'd be honored if you would come.

KEN

Let's go.

KEN and ORSON leave.

INT. KEN'S CAR- DAY

KEN makes his way through the city's crowded thoroughfares.

KEN

Freaking psychopath. I mean, this city has enough people in it without photocopying more.

ORSON

I think we should go.

KEN

What?

ORSON

To the fashion show. I think we should go.

KEN

Are you crazy? Haven't you had enough of this nutbird?

ORSON

Probably. But, the question is: has he had enough of us?

KEN

So, what's your plan? Pester the guy until he repents.

ORSON

I was thinking of something more severe. I'm gonna kill that jackoff for what he did with Amy. That will put a stop to this craziness.

KEN

Violence. You think violence is the answer right now.

ORSON

Why not? A life for a life, right?

KEN

Listen, man. You're getting a weird on me. Let's slow down a minute and ask ourselves-

ORSON

Are you with me or not?

KEN

I can't, dude. Not with something like this.

ORSON

Fine. Stop the car.

KEN

C'mon, man.

ORSON

Stop the car!

KEN pulls over. ORSON gets out.

KEN

You're making a mistake. This isn't the way you want to end it.

ORSON

True, but it's the way I need to. Goodbye, Ken. Hopefully not forever.

KEN

Orson, wait!

ORSON walks away.

INT. ORSON'S APARTMENT- DAY

ORSON buttons up his shirt, puts on a new set of slacks, and straightens his tie.

He reaches into the nearest drawer and pulls out again. He checks the cartridge: full up. He tucks his gun behind his back and exits the room.

INT. FASHION SHOW- DAY

ORSON walks down the RED CARPET, through a mob of fashionable people. At the door, SECURITY OFFICERS, armed with metal detectors, check the guests for contraband. ORSON takes his cue and goes around the back of the building. Near the rear entrance, a large truck unloads its cargo of wires and lights down to the ROADIES below. ORSON approaches the truck.

ROADIE

(holding out a bundle of cords)

Hey, gimme a hand with this, would ya?

ORSON grabs the cord.

ROADIE (CONT'D)

Well, what are you waiting for? Take it inside.

ORSON nods.

ROADIE (CONT'D)

Newbies, I tell you.

ORSON enters the building, sets the cord aside, and wanders through the depths of the building. He passes by cast and crew, all rushing around, trying to make last minute changes to the venue and rally the troops. He passes the GREEN ROOM, with its abundance of AMY's, all in different attire. Absently, he stares at them as JOANNE walks up.

JOANNE

Mr. Gould, what are you doing back here?

ORSON

(snapping out of daydream)

I came back here to talk to Mr. Rodinsky. I seem to have gotten quite lost in the process.

JOANNE

There will be plenty of time for talking after the show. But, please, let's get you back onto the main room. It will be absolute chaos back here until the show begins.

ORSON

Oh, of course. Could you direct me back?

JOANNE

(pointing)

First door to your right, keep on until you get there.

ORSON

Thank you.

JOANNE enters the Green Room.

JOANNE

(distantly)

All right, ladies. Who wants to put on a show...?

ORSON obeys JOANNE and wanders down the hall to the main room.

SPOTLIGHTS shine down on the translucent CATWALK, which sticks out like an ivory tusk into the main floor. Around the catwalk, the PRESS makes itself busy, taking pictures and running a plethora of interviews with passersby.

The GUESTS make idle chit-chat with one another while slurping down champagne being generously poured out by the WAIT STAFF.

While SECURITY keeps a close eye on the proceedings, ORSON inconspicuously blends into the crowd, and squeezes himself between two inebriated GUESTS.

GUEST #1

(peering at the CATWALK)

What do you think he's got up his sleeve?

GUEST #2

You know Rodinsky. It could be anything. He never fails to surprise.

GUEST #1

Yes. And he walks puts on a good show. I suppose, as long as the drinks are free, it doesn't really matter what happens next.

GUEST #2

Cheers to that.

They clink glasses. The HOUSE LIGHTS grow dark.

GUEST #1

(jokingly)

What'd we do?

All eyes turn to the CATWALK, now glowing neon. NYM'S VOICE chimes in over the loudspeakers.

NYM

My dear friends and colleagues, our world, the fashion world, has always been at war with nature. We were given at birth these wretched bodies, which sag and age and bloat and distort. Through the ages, we have strove to counteract the imperfections of the body. Heels have made us taller. Corsets have made us slimmer. Makeup has made us more colorful. Recently, surgery has allowed us to change undesirable bits as we find them; but, I tell you, none of this is enough. All of it is reactionary, and, as you know, I have always been a man of progress, of leading rather than submitting to the status quo. Therefore, I have endeavored to root out the problem at its source, to take the reins over this miserable flesh before it even enters the light of day.

Project Twenty-Seven, thus, is about more than fashion, more than identity, but control. At long last, we can take full control of our bodies. At long last, perfection will be at our grasp.

Of course, seeing is believing, so without further ado, I present to you the women of Project Twenty-Seven.

TECHNO MUSIC blares through the loudspeakers. The SPOTLIGHTS focus in on the CURTAIN behind the catwalk. MODELS begin pouring in, wearing clothing selected from intermittent moments in human history. Each one wears veil. They take their positions upon the catwalk and stop. Once all the MODELS are settled, the curtain stirs. A HOODED FIGURE, draped in a heavy and length robe, enters onto the

catwalk. As it passes by them, each MODEL removes her veil, showing AMY's face behind it. When the HOODED FIGURE reaches the end of the CATWALK, the models all turn that way. The FIGURE removes its robe and hood, revealing a woman with AMY's face and leafy lingerie. She bears the "27" tattoo on her person, just like all the others before her.

The CROWD gapes at the sight.

GUESTS #1

What the heck is this?

GUESTS #2

Some sort of smoke and mirrors, probably.

GUESTS #1

And where is Rodinsky?

GUESTS #2

Always the mystery.

NYM enters the scene. They bow. ORSON looks down at his ankle. NYM steps forward, unto a small platform beyond the CATWALK. The MUSIC cuts out.

NYM

Aren't they beautiful, folks?

The AUDIENCE shuffles nervously about, some of whom politely applaud on cue.

NYM (CONT'D)

Truly, this is the dawn of new era, free of the bothersome ties to the natural and dying world. But alas, as you can see my journey is not yet complete. I am a man with many Eves but no Adam. I was distraught by this, truly I was; that is, until last week, on the verge of my exhibition, a ray of hope appeared. A young name named Orson Gould came to me. He knew that I was at a bind and offered his services to me for the good of

mankind, of fashion. And he is here with us tonight, though I think he will need a little help in revealing himself. He is rather shy. Perhaps, we could offer him some encouragement?

The CROWD applauds. ORSON does his best to sink back into the mass of people.

NYM (CONT'D)

(pointing)

Let me see. Let me see. Ah, there he is!

The spotlight finds ORSON.

NYM (CONT'D)

Don't be shy, sir. This is your moment. Please, everyone, make way for the future.

The CROWD parts. ORSON has a direct line of sight on NYM. He pulls out his gun and points it at NYM. The SECURITY GUARDS ready for action. NYM waves them down.

NYM (CONT'D)

(to the CROWD)

Oh dear, it seems like we've startled the poor lad. These southern types are quite trigger-happy, you know? Perhaps he'll put the gun away for us, if we ask really nicely.

(to ORSON)

What do you say we put the gun down, and come up here?

ORSON shakes as he lines his sights on NYM. The CROWD cowers around him. He tries his best to hold the gun steady.

NYM (CONT'D)

Come now. You don't want to keep our audience waiting, do you?

ORSON sweats heavily, and eventually sets the gun down, and

steps up onto the CATWALK. NYM wraps his arms around him. ORSON nervously smiles and waves. The CROWD collectively exhales.

NYM (CONT'D)

See, folks? Nothing to worry about. All part of the show. The face of the future, everyone!

INT. NYM'S OFFICE- DAY

ORSON stands in the OFFICE while JOANNE takes measurements. NYM sits comfortably in his giant chair.

NYM

Don't look quite so despondent. You put on a good show back there. I was touched. I almost had to grab a tissue, really.

ORSON

I should've killed you.

NYM

Yet here I stand. Why?

ORSON

Because I'm a coward.

NYM

Perhaps, but I do not think this the case. I do not consider you a coward at all, and neither do I think would the late Ms. Stone. No, I consider you an entrepreneur. Even though you hate me, you see the promise I bring to the human race. That is why you set aside your own petty scruples for the greater good: a noble quality indeed, especially as society's new Adam.

ORSON

That's not me. I'm not your guy.

NYM

Consider yourself what you will. After I am done with you, you may call yourself whatever you want, whenever you want. But for now, while you're in my services, you're mine. Agreed?

ORSON

Whatever.

NYM

You don't see it now, but you're singlehandedly spearheading the dawn of a new age. You should be proud of yourself. You'll see yourself everywhere you go. Everyone will want, even beg to be like you. It is the epitome of celebrity, we're dealing with here. Not only that, but the restructuring of mankind. Who knows? You might even see your face in a history book or two.

ORSON

I can't stand to see my face now. How would seeing myself all over change that?

NYM

Because even if you hate yourself, the world will love you despite it. In fact, the more you hate yourself, the more self-destructive you become, the more they will love you, want to be like you. They're like animals stored up in glass cages, waiting to be set free and given new life, ready to run wild. Would you deprive them of that opportunity?

ORSON

Why me? Why am I so important?

NYM

That's the beauty of this: you're not important, not in and of yourself anyway.

It could've been anyone who landed here in my office last week, anyone who met Ms. Stone. You just happened to be the lucky one, holding the winning lottery ticket. That's the beauty of modern celebrity: it's not about your worthiness, but the fact that you were chosen at all. Everyone knows that and spends their life asking, "well, if anyone why not me?" They become slaves to expectancy, and a slave, my friend, is a very useful thing to have.

ORSON

So, I'm just a tool to get people to buy into your idea.

NYM

Exactly. Ingenious, is it not?

ORSON

I think I hate you even more now.

NYM laughs.

NYM

Don't worry. I think I hate myself a bit too.

JOANNE trades the measuring tape for a syringe.

JOANNE

If I may, Mr. Gould. I just need a bit of blood to start the cloning process.

ORSON

Oh, sure. What's a little blood after I've already sold my soul?

ORSON rolls up his sleeve. JOANNE pricks him and departs.

NYM

See? That wasn't too painful now, was it?

ORSON shakes his head.

NYM (CONT'D)

The New You will take a week to produce. You can come back then, if you'd like. Or you can stay, and I can show you around the workshop, maybe give you a first look into the workshop.

ORSON shrugs.

ORSON

Sure. Why not?

NYM

It's truly marvelous. I think you will enjoy it. Follow me. There is much to see.

INT. NYM'S WORKSHOP- LATER

NYM and ORSON ride an elevator down through the underbelly of the earth, to NYM'S WORKSHOP.

ORSON

(crinkling his nose)

What's that smell?

NYM

Formaldehyde. Keeps the genetic material fresh, and where would we be without fresh product?

The elevator stops. NYM and ORSON get out of the elevator. Beyond the elevator lies a CAVERNOUS ROOM, filled with hundreds of large, glass tanks, all connected to a series of monitors, pumps, and circuit boards.

Only one-eighth of the tanks are full, all female.

NYM (CONT'D)

Well, here we are. This is where the magic happens. As you can see, we have segregated out the two genders. Your section has to play some catch up. But in all due fairness, the women got a rather sizable head start.

ORSON stops at one of the tanks. Inside, a WOMAN, another AMY, floats listlessly in a cocktail of chemicals and nutrients.

NYM (CONT'D)

Beautiful, is she not? So quiet. So peaceful. It is a shame we must release her into the public. Such a dangerous place, especially for a creature so fair and fragile.

ORSON tears up.

NYM (CONT'D)

I wish you could have met one of our later models. They are much more stabilized. Less prone to failure. It took a long time to get the solution right. God did it in six days, but, of course, that is why He is God, and we are just children of dust.

ORSON reaches out and touches the glass.

NYM (CONT'D)

You know, I could make up a special companion just for you. She would be everything Amy was, and more. She would be perfect.

ORSON

(shaking his head)

No. She wouldn't be Amy. All these women, they walk they her, talk like her, smell like her, but they're not her. Despite all their similarities, love can tell the difference. I could never pretend otherwise.

NYM

Come with me.

ORSON turns to NYM.

ORSON

Another trick?

NYM

Always.

NYM leads ORSON passed the latest models of synthesized humans, down to a thickly reinforced door. NYM types in a code. The door opens. They step inside.

INT. WALK-IN FREEZER- DAY

It is freezing in the next room. NYM hands him a coat. ORSON puts it on. They walk a little ways to a single tank, similar to all the others. The WOMAN in this room is different from all the others, in that she shows sign of age.

NYM

Do you know who this is?

ORSON

Another replica?

NYM

No. No, she is no replica. Her name is Cindy, the model from which all others, including your precious Amy, came.

ORSON

Who was she?

NYM

A dear friend. She was a model back when I was still just a medical student, with a propensity for fashion, flipping through pages of Vogue and Q for inspiration and glimpse of the big time.

ORSON

What happened to her?

NYM

Cancer. Her death was long and painful. It is a horrible thing when your own body turns against you. I couldn't bear to let her go. And out of that, a dream was born, a dream to cheat death, subvert the cruel hand of Mother Nature, and turn back time.

Of course, when the earlier batches came out, I soon realized the same as you: they were her, but not her. And because, I could not have her, I had to devise a new plan: to maximize the human experience while we are still here on this earth by freeing it from the imperfections of randomized childbirth. No more traps, trips or disease. No more faulty genes. Just beauty.

That is my true goal. I hope you will come to appreciate it in time. It took me a while to do so myself.

ORSON

(pensively)

And you're sure there's no way to bring her back, just as she was?

NYM

No. The old Cindy is gone. Cinders, if you will, of a broken age... But come, let's not linger anymore in this place. You will see lots more of it, undoubtedly, though every time you see it you may not be the same.

ORSON looks closely at the WOMAN suspended in the solution. She has distinctive marks on her neck.

ORSON

What are those marks?

NYM

Poor girl, hung herself when the fatal diagnosis was proclaimed, but that gives

me all the more incentive to push forward. Truly a shame.

ORSON

I see. Sorry for your loss.

NYM

Time heals all wounds. So, you see now what we're trying to do?

ORSON

Yes.

NYM

And you'll be my new Adam?

ORSON

Yes, I'll be your man.

NYM

(gesturing for the door)

Then, let's be off to Eden. We have much work to do.

INT. TV STATION- MORNING

ORSON, NYM, and AMY sit opposite a WELL-DRESSED TALK SHOW HOST. The AUDIENCE cheers.

HOST

And we're back with Nym Rodinsky, the head designer behind Project Twenty-Seven... Mr. Rodinsky, it's a pleasure.

NYM

The pleasure is all mine. I eagerly invite the chance to introduce our humble project to the world.

HOST

And what is that exactly?

NYM

Project 27 was born out of devastation, but it shall soon be born into glory. I am not peddling some vapid beauty product, or temporary health kick, but the true opportunity for a new life.

HOST

And that hope is found in these lovely people seated beside you.

NYM

Exactly. Beside me sit two persons. One is flesh and blood, the other of circuits and gears. By looking at them you can't tell the difference. And they both act, think and behave in similar ways. The only difference is that one will eventually wear out and die, whereas the other can be sustained for eternity.

HOST

That's a pretty bold claim. I mean, I know my machines. My car, for instance, used to work like a dream but now breaks down all the time. What makes your cyber-person different?

NYM

Your car doesn't have the ability to fix itself. My cyber person does. She is fully automated, and, once activated, completely independent.

HOST

That's impressive. How do I get one?

NYM

Well they're still in the early launch stage, but in time I hope to not only get you one, but get you into one.

HOST

So, you're saying I could become one?

NYM

Precisely.

HOST

Why would I want to do that? I mean, being a robot would be cool for a day, but I like my body.

NYM

Trust me. Once you are in one, once we have the ability to transfer your memory into this machine, you will not miss it at all. Think of it: to be free of disease and decay. You would eventually become a superman.

HOST

Or a monster.

NYM

Whatever the label you chose, so long as you understand that I am offering more than just an invention to you, but immortality.

HOST

(to ORSON)

Heavy stuff. How do you feel about this? You had quite the spiff at the grand unveiling. Surely, you two are somewhat at odds on how this is going to play out.

ORSON

I was skeptical at first, maybe even frightened, but Nym helped me see the light. Now, I believe this is for the best.

HOST

And we're to believe you came to this conclusion on your own?

ORSON

Nobody does anything independently. Surely, you're aware of this- working in this comfy studio, paid by well-to-do executives representing pan-global organizations. We'll all pieces of a bigger game. I'm just glad I finally came to see my part in it.

HOST

Well, thank you for being here, and I wish you both the best of luck.

(turning to the AUDIENCE)

Next up, we will meet Gene Herbert and his cat, Fluffy, stars of the hit viral video, "Cat on the Town." Stay tuned!

EXT. STREET- DAY

ORSON and NYM exit the studio and get in NYM'S LIMO. The limo drives away.

ORSON

I don't think they understand what you are trying to do.

NYM

I don't expect them to understand. I just need them to buy into it.

ORSON

That seems a little brainwash-y.

NYM

You think most people understand their smartphones- or cars or even their own bodies, for that matter? No! For the most part we go about in ignorance, happy that

everything is working the way we want it to. Only when something breaks do we actually care. My goal is to create something that cannot be broken, so that that the world can exist in the perpetual, unchallenged happiness it has always dreamed of.

ORSON's phone rings. He checks it but does not pick up.

NYM (CONT'D)

You can get that, if you want to.

ORSON

It's another talk show. I'll call them back later. It's funny, even though they don't get what we're saying, they still want us to say it. Again and again. I don't get that.

NYM

It's celebrity, my friend. The beauty of it is that you don't have to know about it, because the "it" is immaterial. It's the climate around it that matters. If everyone is thinking rationally, making decisions upon lengthy discussion, then nothing gets done, progress is halted, and nobody wins.

But if you create a culture around your product that is defined by extremes- extreme love and hate- then everyone is swept up in the excitement of it all, and jump on the bandwagon without a second thought.

ORSON

But hate, why hate? Why would we ever want hate?

NYM

Because hate is a tool. It draws attention. It gets people moving. Who doesn't turn their heads to look at a car wreck? Why? Because there is a certain

part of us that loves to marvel at anything- even if it is destruction- so long as it averts our attention from the monotony of our daily commute, our boring lives.

ORSON

So you don't mind the hate?

NYM

No. I invite. Hate brought you to me, after all. You never would have come if you just simply thought my actions were mildly off-center, or just in bad taste.

ORSON

That makes sense.

NYM

You must internalize this lesson too, if you're going to be my Adam. People will hate you. It goes with the territory. You must learn to ignore it, or turn it to your advantage. Otherwise, it will destroy you.

ORSON

I will do my best.

NYM laughs loudly.

NYM

My dear boy, "my best" is best saved for grade school, where every failed but impassioned effort is still rewarded with a gold star. Success is the marker of a true man. Now, are you up to the challenge? Or do I find myself a new Adam?

ORSON

Bring it on.

I/E. APARTMENT- DAY

ORSON gets out of the limo and starts for his apartment. An eager and attractive WOMAN rushes up to him.

WOMAN

Excuse me, but aren't you Orson Gould?

ORSON

Yeah, that's me.

WOMAN

You were totally on TV this morning, weren't you?

ORSON

Yeah. That's me.

WOMAN

That's so hot. So, like, you're a robot now?

ORSON

Not yet. They're working on the prototype now. It should be ready very soon.

WOMAN

Awesome. Listen, I'm kind of embarrassed to ask this, but could I get your autograph?

ORSON

Sure thing.

TAMMY produces a pen and a copy of Philip K. Dick's, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep." ORSON signs the inside cover.

TAMMY

Thank you so much! Wait until I tell my friends.

She runs off. ORSON walks into the lobby of his complex up to his floor.

He ventures into his room, grabs a beer and collapses onto the couch. His PHONE rings. It is KEN. ORSON

picks it up.

ORSON (CONT'D)

Hey buddy! How's it going?

KEN

Not bad. Long time, no talk.

ORSON

Yeah, sorry about that. I've just been really busy lately.

KEN

Yeah, I can see that. I also see that you're over the whole "let's kill the mad scientist" thing.

ORSON

Yeah. Turns out he's not such a bad guy after all. Who knew?

KEN

Yeah, apparently. He's made you into quite the little star, hasn't he? Your face is showing up everywhere. I'm starting to get a bit jealous. How is it, being 'the man?'

ORSON

Not too shabby.

KEN

I'm sure the women are over that.

ORSON

You could say as much, yeah.

KEN

Well quit hogging all the glory and pass some of that my way, would you?

ORSON

Ha! You bet. You should come over. I haven't seen in forever. We'll go have some fun.

KEN

Sounds good. See you soon.

INT. PARKING GARAGE-DAY

KEN marvels over ORSON's new sports car.

KEN

This is yours?

ORSON

Yeah, one of the studios gave it to me in exchange for an interview.

KEN

You lucky son of a gun. I am definitely jealous now.

ORSON

You want to take it for a spin.

KEN

(excitedly)

Can I? I'll love you forever.

ORSON

You and the whole world, apparently.

EXT. STREET- LATER

KEN charges down the street in ORSON'S SPORTSCAR.

KEN

Yeah, buddy! That's what I'm telling you: this is what it's about. You've got it made.

ORSON

Definitely.

KEN

What?

ORSON

What?

KEN

You sound so down in the mouth with your "what." Is this not amazing, or isn't it?

ORSON

It is, definitely amazing. I tell you, though, it has its drawbacks.

KEN

Such as.

ORSON

Such as my schedule is always full and I can never go anywhere without being noticed. I tell you, one man was never meant to deal with so much affection so rapidly.

KEN

But think of it. Every guy's dream is to be thrown into the center of attention: to bathe in money and women. You're living that dream. Tell me, what downside could there possibly be?

ORSON

I know, I know. I should be more grateful. I'm just tired. That's all.

KEN

It's okay, man. I forgive you.

KEN puts his arm around his FRIEND.

KEN (CONT'D)

You know what you need? You need a drink.

ORSON checks his watch.

ORSON

It's, like, three in the afternoon.

KEN

So? Who's gonna judge us? You're like king of the world right now.

ORSON

True.

KEN

Exactly. Where do you want to go? And I'm buying.

ORSON

You don't have to do that.

KEN

I don't, but I want to. I've always wanted to dine with a celebrity. True, it would be better if it was some hot blond, but you'll do.

ORSON

You're too kind. All right, let me make some calls and we'll hit up one of my new favorite spots.

KEN

Okay, great. Now, hold on. I'm not done seeing what this baby can do.

KEN puts the pedal to the floor. The CAR charges forward.

I/E. MAUDE DI RESTAURANT- LATER

They arrive at the RESTAURANT. KEN jerks on the emergency brake, causing the car to scream into the available parking

space. A VALET helps them out of their car.

KEN

(playfully)

Why thank you, my good man.

KEN hands the VALET some cash.

VALET

(to KEN)

Thank you, sir.

(to ORSON)

A pleasure to have you with us again, Mr. Gould.

ORSON

Always good to be back. You take such good care of me.

VALET

It is an honor to be of service.

KEN and ORSON get out and head for the RECEPTION AREA. The RECEPTIONIST smiles warmly as they enter.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome, Mr. Gould. Would you like your usual spot?

ORSON

Yes. That would be lovely.

RECEPTIONIST

(gesturing them forward)

Excellent. Right this way.

KEN

(under his breath)

Shoot. I knew you were popular, but this

is something else.

ORSON

I know, right? Fame does have its perks.

The RECEPTIONIST leads them to a private booth overlooking the cityscape. It is roped off, with the words "Reserved" imprinted on a sign dangling from the ropes. The RECEPTIONIST removes the rope and lets them in.

KEN

I've got to get me one of him. He's a real class act.

ORSON

Yes. They're good here. Very good.

They take a seat. A GROUP OF WOMEN approach.

WOMAN #1

(gesturing to the open seats in the booth)

Are these seats taken?

KEN

I believe we could squeeze you in.

The WOMEN sits down.

KEN (CONT'D)

What are your names?

WOMAN #1

Bridget.

WOMAN #2

Candy.

WOMAN #3

Denise.

KEN and the WOMEN shake hands.

KEN

Well, pleased to meet you one and all. I'm sure you're all familiar with our star, Mr. Orson Gould.

BRIDGET

Totally.

KEN

He's a machine, I tell you. Satisfaction guaranteed.

ORSON

My friend is too kind. Can we get you ladies anything to drink?

CANDY

We'll have whatever you're having.

KEN

I think we'll start off with a round of Sake Bombs, then, cuz you know, I love Sake, and my friend here's the bomb.

DENISE

(to ORSON)

Sounds great. So, is it true what they say? Do you have mechanical junk?

ORSON blushes.

KEN

Excuse my friend here, he's a little shy. But let me assure you, he's a work of art. If you ladies aren't doing anything tonight, maybe we could arrange a trial run.

BRIDGET

Yeah, totally.

Another WOMAN, richly dressed with a glass of champagne in

hand, walks up.

WOMAN

Mr. Gould?

ORSON

Yes.

The WOMAN throws the contents of her drink all over present company.

KEN

What the heck, lady?

RICH WOMAN

You should all be ashamed of yourself. What you're doing is wrong. No man was meant to play God.

KEN

Who's playing?

I/E. RESTAURANT- LATER

KEN, ORSON, and the three WOMEN exit the restaurant. A GROUP of PROTESTERS point their way.

PROTESTOR #1

There he is! Get him.

ORSON

C'mon, Ken. Let's get out of here.

KEN

(rolling up his sleeves)

Are you kidding me? And miss out on all the fun?

INT. PRISON CELL- NIGHT

KEN and ORSON sit on a bench, staring at the floor. Their clothing is ruffled. Bruises cover their faces.

KEN

That was a good row. I think we held our ground pretty well.

ORSON

I suppose so. Part of me wishes we had just booked it.

KEN

No, never put up with a bully. And the only way to get him to stand down is to stand up to him.

ORSON

You're quite a guy, Ken. I'm glad to call you my friend.

KEN

Same back at you, man. This has been quite some adventure.

ORSON

Totally.

A POLICE OFFICER walks up and unlocks their prison cell.

OFFICER

Okay. Your bail has been paid. You're free to go.

KEN

Awesome. See ya later.

The MEN exit the cell.

KEN (CONT'D)

Who do you think it was?

ORSON

I have an educated guess. And it wasn't my fairy godmother, I'll tell you that.

They enter the front of the JAIL. NYM stands disapprovingly in the foyer.

NYM

Good evening, gentleman.

ORSON

Good evening, sir.

NYM

That was quite a show you put on back there. You know I love theatrics as much as the next man, but maybe not so much in such a small amount of time.

KEN

You should have seen the other guys.

NYM

Oh, I did. You certainly held your ground. Now, if you'll excuse us, Mr. Gould and I have important matters to discuss. I trust you can find your own way home.

KEN looks to ORSON, who stares at the floor.

KEN

Yeah, sure. I can do that. Orson, I'll catch you later.

ORSON

Take care.

ORSON departs.

NYM

A nice lad. A bit misguided, but nice.

ORSON

Yeah. Wouldn't trade him for the world.

NYM

Well, shall we be off?

ORSON

Please.

They leave as well.

EXT. STREET- LATER

NYM and ORSON take NYM'S LIMO back to ORSON's apartment.

NYM

Remember how valuable you are to me. I will do anything to protect my investment, you understand?

ORSON

Yes, sir.

NYM

Good. Then, rest up. We have a long day ahead.

INT. NYM'S WORKSHOP- DAY

NYM and ORSON stand in front of ORSON's robot double.

NYM

Well, here it is.

ORSON

(circling around the ROBOT)

Amazing.

NYM

You approve?

ORSON

Approve? I'm ecstatic! This is so cool.

NYM

Any last words before we activate it?

ORSON

Only four: can I do it?

NYM

(pointing to a nearby circuit board)

Turn it on? Certainly. Just flip that switch there.

ORSON wanders over to the board, hesitates, then flips the switch.

ORSON

Here we go.

Once the switch is flipped, electricity begins coursing into the ROBOT. A short time later, the ROBOT opens its eyes.

ORSON (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh! It's me. It's really me.

NYM sets a hand on his shoulder.

NYM

Welcome to a new age, my friend.

ORSON

The whole world is going to know about this.

NYM

Oh yes, I'll make sure of that.

ORSON

Do you think they're ready?

NYM

Probably not. But, they don't have much of a choice, do they? Change happens, regardless of us all.

ORSON

I think this will make the world a better place. I really do.

NYM

It will be different, glorious even. Most importantly, it will be new.

ORSON

Well, then, cheers to the new.

NYM

Yes, cheers.

INT. STREET- DAY

ORSON and KEN sit at a café, the same as before. Many copies of ORSON and AMY walk down the street before them.

KEN

Trippy, isn't it, watching yourself be played over and over again before you?

ORSON

Yes, but I'll get over it. It becomes more beautiful as more time passes.

KEN

I wonder what it's going to be like: aging while ageless versions of yourself walk by.

ORSON

I imagine that it will be like looking at a photograph of yourself that never grows dim.

KEN

And you're okay with that?

ORSON

For the most part. The only downside is that I am no longer unique. I mean, all these people look exactly like me, down to the last detail. It makes you question your individuality, you know?

KEN

Still, you were the first.

ORSON

True. There's something in that. I'll try to remember that.

KEN

So, you're a hit. Your face is everywhere. What now?

ORSON

Live, I guess, live for as long as life is left in me.

KEN

Sounds good.

ORSON

I'm glad you're here.

KEN

Hey, that's what friends are for.

The two FRIENDS stare pensively out into the sea of CARBON COPIES, swimming frantically about in the oceans of industry.

INT. TV STATION- DAY

NYM, ORSON, and AMY sit opposite the same TALK SHOW HOST as before. Their audience is a series of duplicates of ORSON and AMY.

HOST

And we're back on the five year anniversary of the launch of Project Twenty-Seven. Gentleman, how do you feel?

NYM

Most excellent. The public has, for the most part, answered favorably to our humble project. Most have elected to go "Gear," and the mind transfers have reach a ninety-five percent success rate. Mortality is at an all-time low. In fact, most hospitals have either closed their doors, or been turned into R & D labs. I couldn't be happier.

HOST

And how about you, Mr. Gould? Are you similarly ecstatic?

ORSON

Very. You all have warmly embraced the new bodies. I'm flattered by that. I don't know why I was the one lucky enough to be the chosen template, but I'll take it.

HOST

No regrets?

ORSON

None, whatsoever.

HOST

(to the AUDIENCE)

That's great to hear. And for all you stragglers out there, remember: thank to our friends at New Heart Medical, complete transfers will be offered at a substantial discount all this week. Just mention this show, or my name, and the future is yours. With that said, we're going to take a quick commercial break and then return

with a segment we like to call, "Remember Cancer?" Stay tuned. We'll see you later.

INT. STREET- DAY

NYM, ORSON, and AMY ride in NYM'S LIMO.

NYM

That was a great show you put on today, Mr. Gould.

ORSON

Thank you, sir. You've given me some excellent coaching over the years.

NYM

Oh posh! Don't mention it. Though, I must say, from our rather tenuous beginnings, we have grown to be quite amicable partners.

ORSON

Yes, it has been quite something, hasn't it?

NYM

And I'm sure that you're quite glad that you didn't pull that trigger all those years ago.

ORSON

No, sir. That would have been a great mistake.

NYM

I'm glad to hear that, because where we go from here will require your utmost faithfulness and attention.

ORSON

Oh?

NYM

Yes, you see, I am tremendously pleased with how Project Twenty-Seven turned out, but I definitely feel that it is incomplete.

ORSON

How so?

NYM

Well, we have cured the problems of the body well enough, but still there are so many problems with the mind. Depression, anxiety, anger, paranoia: all these things are disease of the mind that are transmitted over when we take the raw data from the donor and insert into our beautiful robots. I believe our next move will be to eradicate that bad data from the mind.

ORSON

And we can do that?

NYM

Oh yes. It's quite easy in fact. All the data taken in from the outside world is relayed back to our headquarters in the Garment District. From there, it is bounced back into the mind. All we have to do is edit that data when it comes to us, and send it back to the donor in its updated form.

ORSON

You mean, we can control how the mind processes data?

NYM

Better yet, we can control the mind.

ORSON

I'm not sure that's our place.

NYM

Why ever not? We've gone this far, haven't we? What's to stop us from tearing down the final barrier between us and complete utopia?

ORSON

Human decency. I mean, you're talking about how people feel, how they experience the world.

NYM

Exactly. Isn't it wonderful?

ORSON

I'm not sure I'm okay with that.

NYM

And I'm sure I didn't ask your permission. The only reason why I told you is because we're partners. I thought we were on the same page. Apparently, I was wrong.

ORSON

But, Nym, if we chance everyone's thought patterns, what's to separate people from full on robots?

NYM

What indeed? But let me ask you this: wouldn't you trade a little infringement of privacy in for absolute perfection?

ORSON

Maybe mankind wasn't meant to be perfect.

NYM

And maybe you're trying my patience. You

know, if you're going to be a bother, I could dispatch you right here and now? Would you like that? I can easily have you removed from the brave, new world I'm creating? Would you like that? Or perhaps, a different target would be more meaningful: your friend, perhaps?

ORSON

Leave Ken out of this.

NYM

Oh, but my dear Mr. Gould, he's already in. He's always been in. And if I take him out, it'll be for good.

ORSON

You really are a piece of work, aren't you?

NYM

And proud of it. So, can I expect you to play along with my little game, or shall I put you and your friend in a time out?

ORSON turns away and keeps his mouth shut.

NYM (CONT'D)

I'm waiting.

ORSON

I'll play along.

NYM

Excellent. So, glad hear it. I'd hate anything to happen to you. We're partners after all.

ORSON

Yeah, some team.

INT. KEN'S APARTMENT- DAY

KEN enters his apartment and sets his briefcase on the KITCHEN COUNTER. A DRAFT catches him by surprise and he shivers. He turns to the window. It is open. He walks over and closes it. ORSON springs from the shadows.

ORSON

Ken.

KEN jumps.

KEN

Shoot, you nearly gave me a heart attack.

ORSON

Sorry. Listen, you've got to get out of here. It's not safe.

KEN

"Not safe?" What are you talking about?

ORSON

Nym's gone crazy again. I think he's going to use you to get to me.

KEN

C'mon buddy. We've gone through this before. Everything turned out all right.

ORSON

Not this time. This time, you've got to get out of here. Do you have somewhere safe to go?

KEN

Uh, I've got relatives upstate.

ORSON

Perfect. Go there.

KEN

But-

ORSON

Seriously, Ken. Just go.

KEN

What about you? What are you going to do?

ORSON

I don't know.

KEN

Let me help.

ORSON

No, you'll only get hurt. I can't have that on my conscience. Just go.

KEN

Okay. If you say so. I think you're overreacting again, majorly, though.

ORSON

Maybe so, but thanks for entertaining the idea.

KEN

No problem. You take care of yourself, you hear?

ORSON

Promise.

They shake hands.

KEN

Give 'em hell.

EXT. STREET- DAY

ORSON drives home. On the way, a MOTORCYCLE COP pulls him over. ORSON rolls his eyes. He pulls his car over to the side of the road. The OFFICER pulls over, gets off the bike, and heads over to him. ORSON rolls down his window as

the OFFICER approaches.

ORSON

Listen, officer, I'm sorry for whatever I did. I admit full guilt. Can you just let me off the hook?

OFFICER

Mr. Gould?

ORSON

Yes, that's me.

The OFFICER begins to draw his gun. ORSON reflexively slams his door into the COP'S hands. The OFFICER drops the gun. He drives away. The OFFICER reclaims the gun and fires a few rounds into his wheels. The WHEELS blow, causing the car to spin wildly and then come to a stop. ORSON gets out of the car. The OFFICER starts after him hot pursuit.

ORSON heads down an alleyway. The OFFICER chases him on the MOTORCYCLE. ORSON ducks into an alcove and therein finds a broken piece of REBAR. He thrusts the REBAR into the alleyway, just as the OFFICER passes by. The BIKE stops and the officer goes flying.

As the OFFICER crashes harshly down upon the asphalt, ORSON starts to make his break, but stops and turns to look upon the crumpled mass lying beside the DOWNED BIKE.

ORSON approaches the OFFICER carefully. The OFFICER does not move. ORSON flips up the OFFICER'S visor. Though now bloody and disfigured, the OFFICER is clearly an ORSON DUPLICATE. ORSON sighs and rushes off.

INT. ORSON'S APARTMENT- LATER

ORSON returns to his room, collapses onto his bed, and falls asleep.

When he wakes up, he finds himself look straight at NYM.

NYM

Good morning, Mr. Gould. I trust you slept well. It may be the last good sleep you have for a while.

An AMY DUPLICATE throws a bag over ORSON'S FACE. He soon loses air, and consciousness.

INT. NYM'S WORKSHOP- DAY

The AMY DUPLICATE removes the bag from ORSON's face. He and KEN are tied securely to a series of wires and chains.

NYM (CONT'D)

So, gentlemen, we have come to this. Two lonely bodies lying on the railroad of progress. It's a shame we couldn't see our vision through to the end, but alas, such is life. Now remains one final question: who to kill first?

(pointing the gun at ORSON)

You perhaps?

(pointing the gun at KEN)

Or you? Life is so full of options. Perhaps I should let you decide.

NYM paces as the two men deliberate.

KEN

Kill me.

NYM

Very well.

NYM fires a shot into KEN'S head. KEN goes slack.

ORSON

No!

NYM approaches ORSON.

NYM

I hate saying goodbyes, but for you, my friend, I might make an exception.

NYM raises his gun and fires.

INT. NYM'S WORKSHOP- LATER

ORSON wakes up. He has been bleeding heavily, but he is alive. KEN lies listlessly beside him.

ORSON

Ken... I'm sorry.

ORSON takes a while to grieve, then begins to work at his binds. A long time passes, and his hands are rubbed raw by the friction of trying to slide the binds off him. Eventually, though, he does escape.

He proceeds through the WORKSHOP, down to where CINDY is stored. He opens the SECRET DOOR. CINDY floats before him.

NYM

(off screen)

It is incredible. For a mortal being you sure do have a way of evading death.

ORSON turns, but too late. NYM fires a shot into his arm. ORSON spins wildly around.

NYM (CONT'D)

Cindy was the same way. Quite the fighter. But the cancer was too much for her. So, I set her free. Just like I'm setting you free now.

ORSON

You killed her?

NYM

She was in pain. I was doing her a favor.

ORSON

I'm sure she would beg to differ.

NYM

That, my friend, is pure speculation, and I have no time for such things. I have only the time for the future, of which, sadly, you will play no part.

NYM walks up to ORSON and points the gun at his head. Before NYM fires, ORSON rolls away. The shot goes wild and ORSON takes a sweep at NYM's legs. ORSON manages to kick NYM's legs out from under him. He goes flying, as does the gun.

The TWO MEN scramble for the LOST GUN.

NYM (CONT'D)

You can't stop this, Mr. Gould. You can't stop progress.

ORSON

I don't want to stop progress. Just you.

They pounce upon the GUN and fight for control of it.

NYM

But, can't you see: I am fitter to survive. That's why I will win. That's why I'll always win. It's natural selection.

ORSON gains the upper hand and pulls the trigger.

ORSON

Well, consider yourself de-selected.

ORSON pulls the trigger. NYM stumbles back and collapses before his former love. ORSON drops the gun and exits.

EXT. BRIDGE- DAY

ORSON leans against a bridge, with a small HAM radio in hand. He overlooks the CITYSCAPE.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Today, we bid a sorrowful farewell to Nym Rodinsky, the founder of the Project Twenty-Seven Movement. Orson Gould, his next in command, could not be reached for comment, and is suspected of being involved in his murder.

This tragic circumstances leaves the future of Project Twenty-Seven in limbo. Still, we owe a great deal of gratitude to

the legacy Mr. Rodinsky left behind.

We will keep you informed on how this case progresses. In the meantime, stay informed, stay beautiful. Goodnight.

ORSON takes the RADIO and throws it into the RIVER below. Then he walks away, disappearing into the sea of COPIES.