

P.A.

Characters

Lanai

A soon-to-be graduate and first-generation immigrant, working shifts at two different coffee shops when we first meet her. She has a genetic mutation where some of her fingers are missing fingertips.

Voice of Lanai

Though this is future-Lanai's voice, it's older, quicker to joke, and can look back with the benefit of hindsight.

Tim

A stereotypical software security specialist whose glasses make him look nerdier. Kind of guy who wears a T-shirt and jeans by default.

Mr. Colvale

A technical manager somewhere indeterminately in his mid thirties. Wears a button shirt and tie at all times.

Dr. Bonneville

An older man or woman, doesn't give a fuck but does fuck people over, potentially dangerous, modeled after John McAfee. CEO of the Alternative Computing Project, a large research initiative. Wears a flower-print / Hawaiian shirt to eschew formality, as only people at the C-level can.

<https://twitter.com/officialmcafee/status/865717709140578304>

Patricia, Dan, Boss

Co-workers of Tim

Rhonda

Dr. Bonneville's longtime assistant, sort of the classic familiar / imp sidekick to the main villain.

SCENE ONE: THE COFFEE SHOP

A small-ish coffee shop with one cashier, Lanai, and multiple customers: MAN WITH SUITCASE, WOMAN ON PHONE, and MAN ON PHONE. Customers all are using iPhones.

VOICE

This is where it all started. A perfectly ordinary coffee shop. It's the kind of place where customers could come, sit, and work on their laptops, but this is New York.

No one has time for that.

[door-mounted bell rings]

[beep of cash register buttons, followed by receipt printing noise]

[lights up]

LANAI

...and that's for here or to go?

WOMAN ON PHONE

Just a minute, just a minute dear... we need to have that delivery today right?

[BRIEFCASE MAN, next in line behind her, stops looking at his phone to pointedly look at his watch]

MAN ON PHONE

But we didn't know that about him, right? We couldn't have.

LANAI

Ma'am I have to put in your order now.

WOMAN ON PHONE

To go - and extra napkins - okay let's get this moving. You too.

LANAI

Yes, ma'am.

BRIEFCASE MAN

I would like an almond milk-

LANAI

I'm so sorry, but I'm the only one working today. I need to fill this order first.

BRIEFCASE MAN

But you just started her order.

LANAI

I'm sorry but I have been taking everyone's orders one by one.

[BRIEFCASE MAN storms out]

MAN ON PHONE

Oh good, I'll have-

LANAI

No please wait... I need to finish the previous order.

WOMAN ON PHONE

[to MAN ON PHONE] Can you believe this?

[Lanai stiffens / clenches fists for a moment, but works to complete the woman's order]

MAN ON PHONE

I agree, it was strange. We split a good two hundred dollars of sushi.

[Lanai hands the order to the WOMAN, who hangs up the phone and dashes to EXIT.]

MAN ON PHONE

Large coffee with a little almond milk

LANAI

Got it.

[Lanai works to complete the man's order]

MAN ON PHONE

One thing that we had was barracuda - did you even know that you could eat a barracuda? Right?

LANAI

Here you go.

MAN ON PHONE

Thanks, you're sweet.

[MAN walks to exit and waves - the door shuts with a loud bang]

[LANAI comes around the counter, picks up a metal teaspoon from the other side of the counter, and throws it at the wall.]

LANAI

Damn it!

[Satisfied, she returns to the cash register]

VOICE

For once in my life, being awkward is about to help me out.

[bell rings - TIM enters]

LANAI

You're late.

TIM

Excuse me. I mean, I'm late?

LANAI

Oh sorry.

[uncomfortable]

You're usually in with everyone 8:30, aren't you?

TIM

Sure..?

LANAI

Your usual?

TIM

Yes, that would be great. I don't think I am that late though...?

LANAI

It's past 10, so...

TIM

Oh shit, are you serious? Oh no.

LANAI

You OK?

TIM

I must have kept something or other on Kansas time.

LANAI

I'll get this ready for you quick. I'm sorry it didn't-

TIM

No problem... thanks for letting me know. I'll call them in a minute.

[LANAI goes to make this order]

TIM

So are you good at this sort of thing?

LANAI

It's a job.

TIM

No, I mean, times and dates. Meetings and remembering people.

LANAI

Hmmm.. I'd like to think so. Maybe yes.

TIM

I have been overwhelmed lately because my assistant left us a few months back. Have been late and unprepared for things ever since...

LANAI

You have a personal assistant? I mean, I didn't realize... hmm maybe because you pick up your own coffee maybe?

TIM

Oh no, I'm not a bigshot at the company, but there's enough going on that it makes sense to-

LANAI

What company is it? If you don't mind me asking.

[TIM retrieves a card from his pocket]

TIM

I have to hurry, but if you would be up for doing some work for us at Pokki Cyber then email us.

LANAI

OK, great.

TIM

I really do mean it. Let me know in the next day or two.

LANAI

Alright. Thank you.

[TIM leaves, Lanai's expression is complex, but she pockets the card]

**SCENE TWO: POKKI CYBER - OFFICE CUBICLE
FARM**

TIM and his co-workers: BOSS, PATRICIA, DAN, and extras meet in a circle.

BOSS

Morning standup meeting!

PATRICIA

A client had me working all day on a security issue which turned out to be their fault; turns out they gave permission they shouldn't have.

TIM

I found a new assistant who will handle my meetings and some of my off-site work.

PATRICIA

Are you doing that again?

DAN

And who is she?

TIM

She was working at the coffee shop and - can you not make it weird? You are the one making it weird.

DAN

None of us have a personal assistant. It's not something we do in the company. Even the boss doesn't have one.

BOSS

True.

TIM

Things all ran a little smoother when I had an assistant handling my calendar. And you know about my side projects, my open source work.
If you have any problems with her work performance, then please let me know.

PATRICIA

So the P.A. is a girl, huh?

TIM

She called and asked if she could work here. She's had good internships in the past, all that checks out.

PATRICIA

Was just asking. When is she starting?

TIM

Later today, I asked her to come in and get acquainted.
Greg downstairs has agreed to give her an access pass.

BOSS

[hands over ears] I didn't hear that

[laughter]

TIM

Thanks in advance.

DAN

Moving right along, can I poach an assistant from you if that's alright?

[laughter]

SCENE THREE: LUNCH AT KATSU PLACE

PATRICIA, TIM, and LANAI are eating lunch outside.

VOICE

It was a few days in, over lunch at this perfect Japanese katsu place, when I was starting to feel like part of the team, weird personal assistant setup or not.

LANAI

--all in all, just a great day now that everyone's agreed to the new meeting times.

PATRICIA

Oh, sorry I just noticed and have to ask. Did something happen to your finger?

TIM

What, are you okay?

LANAI

It's been that way since I was born. Look, no fingertip here or here.

[she holds up her hands]

PATRICIA

On both hands... so it's genetic?

LANAI

Yes, my grandmother back home has the same thing.

TIM

Oh, I didn't realize.

LANAI

Not everyone notices!

TIM

You know if you need, um, any kind of disability accommodation-

PATRICIA

Tim! Let the girl handle it.

LANAI

I don't even think of it as a disability. The pointer fingers are a bit shorter and these other ones curl a little if I loosen my grip.

TIM

And you can do typing OK?

LANAI

I can do it just fine! I've been doing it all day, if you didn't notice.

PATRICIA

Tim, learn how to keep it in.

TIM

You're the one who asked!

PATRICIA

So you did notice!

LANAI

Christ, don't argue about it. I'll let you know if something comes up.

TIM

Sorry.

PATRICIA

Yeah, sorry.

**SCENE FOUR: POKKI CYBER - OFFICE CUBICLE
FARM**

BOSS, PATRICIA, DAN, and possibly other colleagues
are gathered around LANAI's waffle maker station.

VOICE

It was a month or two later that I first heard that name:
Doctor Bonneville.

DAN

Oh you don't know it? It's something that Doctor
Bonneville says.

LANAI

Who?

DAN

This crazy tech genius, with a YouTube channel now,
it's completely unhinged but every now and then it's
like... is this person on something, or onto something?

LANAI

[pouring another waffle, and closing it] Well I think that name sounds like “Bond villain.”

BOSS

[laughing] Oh, that’s amazing. So fitting.

DAN

You should tell Tim that, when he gets in. He hates Bonneville. And I mean really, Tim’s a nice guy, but he can have a vendetta.

PATRICIA

Tim doesn’t hate him nearly as much as you’re obsessed with him.

BOSS

Oh, that is true. Where is Tim?

LANAI

I must have sent you an email, he’s speaking at a conference today? But even with traffic, he will be here in time for the user testing meeting, which I’ve moved to the end of the day. That’s a promise.

PATRICIA

He’s always doing something like that! And now we are in sync. That’s why he hired a personal assistant.

DAN

Mmm yeah.

BOSS

Remember the agreement!

DAN

Just saying...

LANAI

What's the agreement?

BOSS

We agreed to be professional and mostly ignore this... unusual situation with Tim hiring an assistant.

LANAI

In case any of you are wondering... there's nothing going on between us.

BOSS

I don't think that I'm allowed to ask, but thanks for that.

DAN

I know that I *wanted* to ask.

LANAI

To be honest... okay can I do a little gossip thing?

BOSS

I am the manager of this office and I insist on a little gossip while Tim is out.

LANAI

Well it's not like that exactly, but... okay, so sometimes he asks me to book movie tickets.

PATRICIA

Like how many tickets?

LANAI

Two.

PATRICIA

Do you think it's for a special someone?

LANAI

He always has me forward it to... do you know this guy?
A Mr. Colvale.

DAN

Well that settles one thing.

LANAI

We don't know if it's like that at all. And he wants to see movies at unusual themes and times. Like an art movie that's about to close.

BOSS

Maybe he and the Colvale guy are film buffs. I don't really like watching a movie with a crowd either.

LANAI

Well if you haven't seen him, maybe they are just friends.

PATRICIA

If it seems like something you need to know, you could always ask.

LANAI

I feel like part of being a P.A. is just not knowing... but it feels like it'd be interesting to know the backstory is all.

SCENE FIVE: TIM'S APARTMENT

There are some noises as Lanai tries a few different keys on the door. Then it opens. She is burdened with bags.

VOICE

After lunch, I had been shooed away on a new assignment: wait in the apartment for the cable guy. It was small, maybe trivial, but I felt that I could make the most of it.

[LANAI takes groceries from the bags and prepares bread dough]

LANAI

And still not a peep from the Comcast guy? That's alright.

[LANAI places the bread into the oven, and begins exploring the apartment, looking at photos and books. She falls asleep uneasily on the couch]

[knocking on the door]

TIM

Are you there? Lanai? Your phone didn't pick up.

LANAI

What... oh shit. Oh just a minute.
[she stretches]

TIM

Oh good, you're okay.

[LANAI opens the door for him]

LANAI

Oh I have something in the oven, too, shit.

TIM

It does smell good.

LANAI

Ayayay, let's make sure it hasn't burnt... where are the oven mitts?

TIM

I don't have any. Hold on, that's my fault, I'll use a dish cloth.

[TIM finds a couple of dish clothes and folds them over.
LANAI opens the oven]

LANAI

Be careful!

[TIM reaches in, places the finished bread on top of the stove, and puts his fingers in his mouth to cool them]

You okay?

TIM

I'll be fine. Looks like your bread isn't burnt at all, either.
Are you a pro at this?

LANAI

I used to cook a lot with my ex. Or like we'd both try something and I would bake something new.

TIM

This is cinnamon bread?

LANAI

Yes, one of my favorites. Sort of my specialty. Have some!

TIM

This is so kind of you. You must have been working on it a long time since you're still here.

LANAI

Oh... what time is it?

[LANAI checks phone]

Oh I was asleep so long! I'm so sorry, I didn't even hear the Comcast guy at all.

TIM

Don't worry, I'll call them to find out what's the matter.

[LANAI slices the bread and TIM takes plates from a cabinet so that they can both eat. TIM can't wait and eats the first piece he gets]

Your ex must be so sorry to lose this cinnamon bread.

LANAI

[laughs ruefully] He was calling up randoms on Craigslist.

TIM

Shit.

LANAI

He logged into my computer with his email once, so I thought it would be okay to peek, and even when I told him to stop, he kept doing it!

TIM

That makes sense that you'd break up with him.

[they eat more bread]

LANAI

There was also this thing with... with my mutant fingers, you know.

TIM

That's not fair, to say something about you.

LANAI

No, he.. he was curious about it, just... sort of perverse? He would tell me...

TIM

[realizing the conversation is taking a turn] Oh... oh um

LANAI

He would sort of make me touch myself... oh! I know this is too personal. Just being complete and honest so you don't think...

TIM

That's awful, and no, I mean... with the Craigslist thing, you need someone to be faithful.

LANAI

And honest.

TIM

Honesty isn't... I mean honesty isn't the word I'd use. If someone does you wrong, does it help to know?

LANAI

The dishonest person always thinks that they've fooled everyone. They don't have a code or standards. An honest person knows that they can't get away with any of that.

TIM

[raising a bite of bread] To honesty.

LANAI

[nodding] To honesty. And abrupt good-byes, as I should be going home.
Keep the rest of the bread.

TIM

Thanks again... and don't be afraid to reach out.

SCENE SIX: POKKI CYBER OFFICE CUBICLE FARM

It's a late night. LANAI and PATRICIA are finishing up work, DAN has packed up to leave.

DAN

Good night!

[exits]

LANAI and PATRICIA

Good night!

LANAI

I just don't know what to do sometimes, like, for example... did the last P.A. do anything for Tim's birthday? I don't know if I'm expected to prepare something or not.

PATRICIA

The company usually gets a cake for birthdays. Someone downstairs in HR handles it.

LANAI

Oh...

PATRICIA

Julia did get him something last year though, something separate from the party.

LANAI

Here at work?

PATRICIA

Yes, um, yes it was a kind of Japanese candy, I think? She heard that he liked it, from somewhere.

LANAI

She sounds so thoughtful. I wish that I could be more like her.

PATRICIA

[laughs] You don't even know her! You can be your own person. I think that you've gotten to know everyone in the office here, a lot better than she did.

[they continue fluttering through papers for a minute]

Isn't it time for you to go home?

LANAI

I just have to ask her about what candy it was. Unless you can remember?

PATRICIA

I can't remember it at all! Really good hard candy. I tried a piece.

[LANAI goes to sit at the computer]

LANAI

[to self] Where are you, Julia?

[LANAI writes a phone number on a paper, adds it on top of a stack of books, and carries the whole stack from the office]

[we see her now exiting and going outside of the office.
She dials the number on her phone, we see her
silhouette in the window]
[ringing]

WOMAN ON PHONE

Hello?

LANAI

Good afternoon, am I speaking to Julia?

WOMAN ON PHONE

Excuse me, can you tell me who this is?

LANAI

I have this number on file for Julia Abirri, and I wanted to
ask her about something from work, I have her old desk
now, and-

WOMAN ON PHONE

Oh my god, I am so sorry. Did you find something of
hers?

LANAI

No, but I wanted to ask her a question, can you give me
her new number?

WOMAN ON PHONE

I don't know what to say... She's gone.

LANAI

If she left the city, I can take down her new number or-

WOMAN ON PHONE

I'm sorry, she's dead. If you found something... please let us know-

[LANAI in shock]

Are you there?

**SCENE SEVEN: POKKI CYBER OFFICE CUBICLE
FARM, NEXT MORNING**

[LANAI is waiting nervously at the desk. She hasn't unpacked her things or started work]

VOICE

It didn't make any sense. He had lied, and that alone was suspicious, or wrong, or at least not quite right. I had to confront him the next day.

[TIM arrives for the morning]

LANAI

Tim, can we talk in private for a moment?

[DAN chuckles from the next cubicle]

TIM

We can talk at the end of the day, if that's alright? All I can think about in the middle of this project is this callbacks issue we've been sending back to-

LANAI

It should be just a minute, I think.

TIM

Dan, is the conference room available?

DAN

For the next twenty minutes. But we have stand-up in ten.

TIM

OK, let's go.

[they step into the room. LANAI closes the door, they both sit down]

LANAI

I ran into a paperwork issue at work yesterday, and wanted to ask Julia what she did about it.

TIM

Hmm.. what was the paperwork for?

LANAI

That's beside the point. Anyway, um-

TIM

[with a new, angry tone] Any questions like this, you know that you should just bring directly to me. Then you can get better at solving them over time, that's a normal part of you you being a new assistant.

[LANAI is shocked]

And Julia, she doesn't work for us so you shouldn't be making her do work for-

LANAI

You are being so awful right now! And I don't know why!

TIM

What do you mean?

LANAI

You know! You know... that she's *dead*.

TIM

I would appreciate you handling this delicately-

LANAI

How can you talk like this?

TIM

Well, why don't you tell me your real question?

LANAI

So there are two problems. One is that she died, and that you act like nothing happened. That's actually two problems, so total is three.

TIM

It's a private matter which we thought would-

LANAI

Oh, don't you say 'we' ! Unless your whole office is in on it..? Would you tell them?

And not just normal, car-accident dead, but got blown up somehow? On a sidewalk in Sunnyside Queens?

TIM

I was told that it was very sensitive. You know, the police are looking into it.

LANAI

I should walk out right now. Walk right out, tell the whole office, and go home, because you didn't mention any of this, whatever this is, and here I am letting you go on.

TIM

You would go out there, and tell everyone who adored her, that she's dead?

LANAI

Yes, because that's what happened!

TIM

I thought it would be easier for everyone, that first day when I came back from seeing her family shocked and confused and grieving. It was so senseless, so I told everyone that she had left, and it metastasized from there.

LANAI

This is just unreal.

TIM

So you could go out there and humiliate me, but if this is something that you can't get past, I would rather you just leave. You will have a positive reference if you ever need it.

LANAI

Are you threatening my reference over this?

TIM

Leave now. Take the day off, and let me know when you're ready to come back to work.

LANAI

You must be upset about this, too, I know it, you don't need to-

TIM

You should stay out of personal matters.

LANAI

I'm going now.

[LANAI turns off the lights and shuts the conference room door]

TIM

Shit.

SCENE EIGHT: ART MOVIE NIGHT

VOICE

I knew something was happening again, when they called me to see an obscure art movie on a Tuesday afternoon. Maybe now it would make sense.

COLVALE

Are you Miss Lanai?

LANAI

Yes. Are you with Tim?

COLVALE

Yes. Nice to meet you. Around here people call me Colvale.

LANAI

Are we going to watch the movie?

COLVALE

Not really... as you can see, no one else is here. If Tim and the others get here, and it's still empty, we can talk business up in the balcony seats.

LANAI

I can't listen to him anymore. Honesty means everything to me. I want to know what happened to Julia.

COLVALE

Tim, Julia, and I were working on a project, outside of work obviously. It was more dangerous than expected.

TIM

There you are. Thanks for coming, Lanai.

LANAI

You... you knew something you did... something happened with Julia?!

TIM

Don't listen to Colvale. My god. I've been trying to think of a way to explain it all to you and this guy comes in...

COLVALE

Are you going to tell her the truth, or what?

LANAI

I better be getting the truth.

COLVALE

And there's no risk of her calling the cops. She trusted you up until this came up.

LANAI

I just need to know.

TIM

There's a project that we were all working on. It's dangerous, and not just because of the chemicals... the explosives I mean. There's going to be people who don't want us to do this. There's got to be absolute secrecy. And I understand, totally and completely, if you never want to be part of this or talk with me again. We're taking a risk today.

LANAI

I took a risk today coming here.

TIM

Please believe me, Lanai, there's a program, the Alternative Computing Project. Colvale and I have been trying to learn more about it. Conferences, follow-ups

with their college interns, former employees, reading their mail sometimes.

COLVALE

Have you ever heard of Dr. Bonneville?

LANAI

I remember hearing, and saying... sounds like 'Bond villain'.

[TIM and COLVALE grimace]

COLVALE

I could say a lot about Bonneville. Made smartphone viruses and got rich selling anti-virus software, drug runner, murdered a neighbor over a parking dispute in some third-world country, made the mayor throw a parade exonerating...

LANAI

Are you serious?

TIM

This is a really bad person.

LANAI

You can't just kill someone for being a bad person, that's vigilante justice and it never works or stops at the right time...

TIM

Dr. Bonneville is going to make the first practical-scale, Turing-complete quantum computer.

LANAI

I don't see how it makes a difference...

COLVALE

Imagine a complete sociopath in charge of a machine that can break every encryption algorithm. And the government is going to fund the lab that does it.

LANAI

What did you say it was?

[the movie is starting to be loud now]

COLVALE

We can send you more information about what the computer can and can't do. But we don't know for sure. It's difficult to know what's happening inside because everyone is afraid of corporate espionage. They have no idea that we're acting for freedom.

LANAI

For freedom?

TIM

The way Colvale and I, and the other guys you will see in a minute... I think they are afraid to come in while you

are still undecided, Lanai. This is really scary stuff. We need to keep this computer from being built. It is about freedom.

LANAI

What are you going to do?

COLVALE

We find a way to infiltrate and destroy the lab. Safely, not a soul harmed. Explain why we did it, so it becomes a national debate.

TIM

We're shutting it down without hurting anyone.

LANAI

Except Julia is dead.

TIM

I know, we know... everything changed after that.

LANAI

How do I know that any of this is real?

COLVALE

Tim was distraught for weeks... we didn't see him here for a while. I was going to have to find a new Tim.

TIM

I need to be here. And Lanai, you are welcome to be here tonight. And then we need an answer.

[the other members come in and sit in seats next to them]

SCENE NINE: COFFEE SHOP

LANAI returns to the coffee shop one morning to watch her replacement at work.

VOICE

It was the strangest moment of my life, the first time I had been trusted with a secret that wasn't just personal, but life and death and good and evil altogether.

[coffee shop sounds]

VOICE

There was a point to

CASHIER

Can I help you?

LANAI

No thanks... I just needed a minute.

[she exits and dials her phone]

I want to see you all again. Soon.

SCENE TEN: ART MOVIE NIGHT

[LANAI hugs TIM, and the rest all shake hands with LANAI as she moves down the line and takes a seat, the movie plays triumphant music]

SCENE ELEVEN: DIM SUM

LANAI walks into the restaurant. COLVALE is already seated at a booth table with linen tablecloth and napkins, a steaming tea pot, a small candle, and a stack of dim sum menus.

VOICE

It was my first networking meeting. I wasn't sure where Colvale worked, but Tim always referenced him with a certain reverence. I suggested that we meet at a favorite dim sum place in Chinatown.

COLVALE

Lanai! You made it!

LANAI

Yes indeed. I love this place.

[they hug and sit across from each other]

LANAI

Did you order any of this yet?

COLVALE

No, I supposed that you could be my dim-sum expert.

[they both look over the print menus]

LANAI

You have to get some of the shu mai, and some of these pork buns of course.

COLVALE

What about this - on the other side- the bacon roll?

LANAI

[laughing] That isn't authentic Chinese at all!

COLVALE

I didn't think so.

LANAI

They must have that here for the curious *Americans*.

COLVALE

Well they totally trapped me, then. I have to try it. You order those other things, too.

[COLVALE waves for the waitress, and LANAI gives the completed order]

LANAI

So I am starting to get the hang of my real-world job with Tim's cybersecurity team. Can I ask what your job is, then?

COLVALE

I suppose I could tell you a little bit...? I was the one who went searching for connections, all the ups and downs, ins and outs.

Tim doesn't know everything about this operation, you know.

LANAI

Oh, I meant more like, what you do in real life? At your company.

COLVALE

I'm a consultant. I manage coders for a number of corporations which can't hire someone full-time.

[Lanai takes out her phone]

Oh, we need to make sure that phone isn't recording...

LANAI

I'm just going to take notes. I can put it on airplane mode.

COLVALE

I don't know if it's good to have notes.

LANAI

Well as time goes on, I mean, looking forward to my own future after this job, both parts of it really. I want to know more about what you do.

COLVALE

You're a very smart and conscientious girl - you know conscientious right? - to be thinking about this.

LANAI

Thanks.

COLVALE

Have you ever been to the Empire State Building? The very top?

LANAI

... no, not yet?

COLVALE

There's an antenna up there where we worked on the design. We came up with a new shape which lets us stream more communications lines.

LANAI

So you are doing electrical engineering?

COLVALE

No, not at all. I train a machine-learning model, then when the computer comes up with a better design than a human, we get paid.

LANAI

If I know a little coding from work, is there a way that I could get started in machine learning?

COLVALE

Have you really never been up to the top of the Empire State Building?

LANAI

No, not really?

COLVALE

That's where we should go next.

LANAI

Oh, I couldn't, I have a problem set to finish up tonight.

COLVALE

They can't tell you what to do. Live a little!

LANAI

This is my final year, and with the internship and... you know, I don't have time for anything fun.

COLVALE

Isn't this fun, though?

LANAI

I like getting dim sum, for sure.

COLVALE

I mean, the two of us. Getting some alone time.

[COLVALE is on the edge of his seat, twirling a spoon]

LANAI

I really appreciate it, so I can... I want to figure out what I can do after graduation.

[COLVALE slumps back in his chair]

What?

COLVALE

You taking notes, asking me to plan out your career... I don't believe this.

LANAI

Wait, wait, I don't... I don't understand. I hope that you don't think it's a waste of your time Mr. Colvale.

COLVALE

Forget it. I'm not letting you string me along like this.

[he gets up and puts money on the table]

Good luck finding someone. Freakish hands and all.

LANAI

What... what?

VOICE

In retrospect it was obvious. But I had trusted that things were different in the resistance.

I called the only person who knew us both.

SCENE TWELVE: BUSHWICK SITE

LANAI and TIM arrive at the padlocked gate to an abandoned lot surrounded by a high fence -- it is the assembly-place that TIM has told her about. It's impossible to see through the overgrowth sewn into the fence.

TIM

[shouts] Colvale!

LANAI

[in a hasty whisper] You don't need to-

TIM

I think that we should get an explanation or an apology, some decency.

LANAI

This is my battle and I don't see the point of you fighting it for me.

TIM

[knocking] Colvale, I know you are in there so... do you smell that?

LANAI

It's Bushwick, that could be anything.

TIM

I do have a keyring here; one of these ought to let us in the gate.

LANAI

What I guess I want to say is that it's possible for us to respect and support each other's work in a more collaborative way-

[TIM is trying keys in gate padlock, LANAI takes a breath, gestures grasping for thought]

There are only few of us in this thing, together, so I can look past it, so that...

TIM

We all should be supporting you as a mentor, just like I am, because the cause is more important.

LANAI

Just like you are, right...

[the lock clicks, and TIM gestures for LANAI to stay outside. TIM steps completely in and out of sight]

TIM

Colvale, oh shit!

LANAI

No, no, what's going on?

TIM

Stay outside, stay out there, oh, *come on* now.

LANAI

Are you okay?

TIM

Colvale is fucked. His whole arm is gone.

LANAI

WHAT? WHAT?

TIM

It's really gory. He must have had an accident and bled out.

LANAI

Oh no I didn't think that he would, that he would because of me, you know it's because of me and-

TIM

It's an accident. Lanai, don't move.

[TIM re-emerges from gate. LANAI hugs him, in tears]

We need to go!

LANAI

We need to go. Oh my god, what do we do?

[they let each other go and exit]

**SCENE THIRTEEN: THE LATE NIGHT RAMEN
PLACE**

TIM

We all know that these materials are dangerous. We aren't professionals. It's not you.

LANAI

But he could have been distracted. Distracted because the conversation... he was so mad...

TIM

No, he made a mistake. He made a mistake cornering you, also.

[in a quiet, shocked disgust] What the hell, Corvale.

LANAI

He's dead; we shouldn't talk about him like that.

TIM

I know... I know. I saw him like that and knew he should've been more careful.

LANAI

And... just like Julia.

TIM

Julia was a little different. It was in... it was a packet that she left in her backpack.

LANAI

Fuck.

TIM

At least for her it was out like a light.

LANAI

Can we not talk like this? I don't know what would be right, but not...

TIM

Well, we can't say anything to anyone about it. We were never there.

LANAI

But what happens now? You know a few other people in the project. You've got to tell them.

TIM

After this, they'll be skittish. They will want to change the plan to something cleaner and perfect. Perfect is the enemy of the good. We'll never make a move.

LANAI

Right.

TIM

There could also be more investigation this time around. Colvale worked with computers, he had a security clearance. It doesn't make sense for him to be there.

LANAI

You're saying not to wait, but to speed things up?

TIM

We have more. In storage.

LANAI

Bonneville knows you. You can't walk in there and chuck a block of explosives at him.

TIM

Well, yeah.

LANAI

You want me, then?

TIM

Come home with me.

LANAI

I need to think, I need to get-

TIM

I mean... you shouldn't be alone right now.

LANAI

Oh, I... I don't know what to think.

TIM

How about, me neither? I'll follow your lead. We can take this really slowly. Keep in mind what matters.

LANAI

Bonneville.

TIM

The future is what matters. Bonneville is part of it. But I want the future to be bright for you, me, all of us.

SCENE FOURTEEN: THE RESEARCH LAB

It's a slick, modern office. There is a clock on the wall which we can here during silences. RHONDA and any other employees are wearing formal clothes (men in ties, women in skirts). LANAI is dressed professionally for an interview - she has her hair up and carries a large purse.

RHONDA

He'll be in later today.

[another phone starts ringing]

Hold please, I will schedule you in then.

[she presses a button]

Uh-huh. Wendy, I can't comment on those rumors. We put out a press packet on it already.

VOICE

It looked like our office. A lot nicer, actually. It didn't seem like where I would need to be fighting for our future. I had said, show me the research. I had said, explain the math to me.

[elevator dings, LANAI steps out]

And then I said, let's do this.

LANAI

[exhausted] Oh, hello! I'm here for an interview.

RHONDA

We canceled all press for today, please take a packet
and go.

LANAI

Oh, I mean a job interview! I'm Lanai, I called earlier
about the technical writer position.

RHONDA

My mistake! Come in, sit down!

LANAI

Thanks!

RHONDA

Can I get you anything?

LANAI

A water, please.

[she sits down, and carefully sets down the purse]

RHONDA

That looks so heavy, dear, let me put it aside for you.

LANAI

I should hold onto it, it has my inhaler.

RHONDA

It has what?

LANAI

Inhaler. [she mimes using an inhaler]

RHONDA

Alright, I'll get you some water from the kitchen.

[RHONDA returns with water. There is a long quiet while LANAI sits and stares at the clock, drinking the water]

[there is an elevator ding, BONNEVILLE steps out and walks to RHONDA]

BONNEVILLE

Good morning, good morning! Fashionably late.

RHONDA

Good morning. We have a couple things for you to take care of first thing.

BONNEVILLE

What's that? And how are you, Miss?

LANAI

I'm Lanai... I'm doing alright, thank you.

[LANAI stands]

BONNEVILLE

Are you sure that the trains are running? It looks like you made this girl run up the stairs.

RHONDA

Well you can talk to her in a minute, she's our technical writer candidate, Lanai.

BONNEVILLE

Outstanding. Hold on a second, Miss Lanai, I'm guessing this other point is some crisis.

[LANAI sits]

RHONDA

The Senate committee on Science, Technology, and Policy would like you to testify. They called earlier and-

BONNEVILLE

Alright, alright, I'll puzzle that out in my office. I'll call in a moment when I'm ready for the interview.

[BONNEVILLE exits to his office]

RHONDA

Did I have you sign the NDA yet?

LANAI

Yes, I faxed that over to you yesterday.

RHONDA

Yes, that's right.

[there is another quiet minute while LANAI takes her pulse by touching fingers to her neck]

You sure you're okay?

LANAI

Yes, pulse rate is just normal. Normal for an interview anyway.

RHONDA

You'll do great in there! Just sign some forms when you're done.

[buzzer noise]

Looks like you're all set. Good luck!

SCENE FIFTEEN: DR. BONNEVILLE'S CEO OFFICE

This is an obvious rich-guy CEO office with a stack of packages and letters on the desk INBOX.

BONNEVILLE

Come in, come in.

[BONNEVILLE and LANAI shake hands, BONNEVILLE puts a hand on LANAI's shoulder]

You can leave your coat and things outside if you like.

LANAI

Aw no, my inhaler is in here. Gotta hold onto it.

[LANAI goes to sit on a couch, BONNEVILLE sits or leans on the desk for support while facing her]

BONNEVILLE

No need to be nervous. This is a straight-up checkmark thing. Once I saw you, I knew you would be perfect for the job.

LANAI

[faking flattery] Really?

BONNEVILLE

I have a sense about people, you know? A real sense.

[BONNEVILLE moves away from the desk and starts to pace]

We also need the technical writer to start right away. Like in the next few days, once the paperwork is all squared away. Can you do that? Say yes.

LANAI

Yes, I think that I could.

BONNEVILLE

Because, you know, the best thing has happened. The absolute most incredible thing. I couldn't believe when I heard what was happening.

LANAI

What's that?

BONNEVILLE

Some big dick in the Senate finally rubbed a few brain cells together and figured out that what we do here is a big deal. Something that I've been working on since Singapore or Belize, or you could say Puerto Rico, in a sense.

LANAI

The alternative computing project?

BONNEVILLE

Congratulations, you've done some research on me. But this is brand-new stuff that the lab hasn't published yet.

LANAI

About alternative computing?

BONNEVILLE

We're going to need the technical writer, that's you in this case, working full-time explaining what the fuck this thing is. Just one senator on board doesn't mean the check's in the mail, you know?

LANAI

[nods] mhmm

BONNEVILLE

It's an obvious idea once you get your head out of Mary Shelley's ass. Computers from brain cells, growing and repairing themselves the best way a billion of years of evolution knows how. If you fan out the wires on a USB port you can talk to it.

LANAI

I didn't know that the biological part of the project had gotten that far. I thought that you would be using-

BONNEVILLE

Not even that, though. We've found one more thing that brains have, that silicon doesn't.

LANAI

[nervous] And what's that?

BONNEVILLE

I had a few teams of scientists messing around with different cell cultures, to see if they could make a smarter computer out of different regions of the brain.

And it turns out that the kangaroo rat has a keen, very keen sense of smell.
So we grow a sick tumor of brain cells and nose nerves.
Can you imagine, it was this big?
[mimes holding a basketball]

LANAI

[repulsed] I can't picture it.

BONNEVILLE

Only God knows, I suppose we will need to encase it in plastic to keep people from being sick. Anyway the thing is - thankfully we have bulletproof NDAs on everyone who knows - this ball is the best computer around. Eventually they come back to me with some old theories, some nut scientists have been going around for years claiming that smell works using subatomic effects.

And do you know what else uses subatomic effects?

[BONNEVILLE returns to sit on the desk]

LANAI

Quantum computers.

BONNEVILLE

The first reliable quantum computer this side of 200 Kelvin, in my lab. Brilliant, right?

LANAI

You would do all this to get a quantum computer?

BONNEVILLE

Some people would do anything.

[BONNEVILLE points to LANAI]

I'm glad that you heard of quantum computers before, Miss Lanai, because it will make the next part of this easier.

LANAI

There's a book that I've been reading on quantum computers. May I show you?

BONNEVILLE

Of course.

[LANAI reaches into her bag and withdraws a medium-sized book. It's *Quantum Computers since Democritus*]

[BONNEVILLE takes it]

I'll never understand the motivation of some people to discover something mathematically, write it down, tell the world their secrets. Only a few people can connect all of their pieces of work on this kangaroo rat computer. If I wrote it down anywhere, I'd be an idiot.

[LANAI reaches into her bag again]

You have a whole bag of props?

LANAI

Just my inhaler.

[LANAI takes out a normal-sized inhaler from the box, sucks in the air from it and coughs]

BONNEVILLE

My son has asthma, too.

LANAI

[raspy] Oh.

BONNEVILLE

Yeah... I think so.

[LANAI sucks in air from the inhaler again, and withdraws a large cube of foam from the box]

What?

LANAI

Look!

[Lanai throws the cube to BONNEVILLE, then dives behind the couch, and in covering her head, deliberately smacks her hairclip]

[There is a loud, smoky detonation, shattering glass. In the dark, we hear BONNEVILLE choking. LANAI has a small cough, but uses the inhaler again. Fire alarm begins sounding]

RHONDA

What's happening?!

LANAI

Call an ambulance!

[Rhonda opens the door - it provides the only light on the scene, smoke billows out]

RHONDA

Can you stand? Come to me, get out!
[coughing]

[LANAI pockets the inhaler, jumps up and runs to her]

RHONDA

Doctor?

LANAI

[coughing] ...package on his desk!

RHONDA

[turning back to the office] Get out, everyone evacuate now!

Doctor Bonneville!

[looking back into the office] The girl can't call 911, she can barely breathe. Go downstairs, honey. Tommy, you call them... Jane, you call the desk downstairs.

VOICE

There aren't many people who can say that they got away with murder.

When I first met with the police, they told me that Bonneville had been getting hate mail for years, for growing brain cell cultures. Not God's plan, they said. The second time, they asked me if anyone had come after me, their witness. Then I didn't hear anything.

It was six months before I could really believe it. I was free.

And it was the most exhilarating high.

SCENE SIXTEEN: POKKI CYBER CUBICLE FARM

LANAI, BOSS, DAN, PATRICIA, and others meet, standing in a circle.

BOSS

Please welcome back Lanai, our new junior programmer!

[ALL clap]

DAN

We heard that you've recovered nicely from your time with the other company!

BOSS

Now Dan...

LANAI

Clearly it wasn't meant for me to work there. My mistake!

BOSS

Where is Tim, right now?

LANAI

Oh man... he ran into someone on the subway who he'd seen in an article in *Wired* magazine.

PATRICIA

He isn't jumping ship, is he?

LANAI

No, just someone he was excited to meet the guy in real life.

PATRICIA

We do really want both of you working here. It won't be awkward, I don't think?

LANAI

Not at all!

BOSS

Any updates for your first day?

LANAI

I want to get all of the software set up on my laptop, and push some code in without messing up anything too badly.

Tim told me his update as best as he could, basically look out for an email later today about upgrading everyone's TLS requirements.

DAN

Finally! Sounds good to me.

BOSS

Adjourned!

[The group splits up. LANAI's cell phone rings - she picks up]

LANAI

Yes?

[pause]

Did he say what kind of cells?

[pause]

I think we have some in the kitchen cabinet, under the sink.

[pause]

Love you.