



BLACK MIRROR

THREE EPISODES.
ONE BROKEN SYSTEM.

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ACT 1 - NOSEDIVE

Scene 1 - Intro

In this act, the female actor plays only LACIE and the male actor plays all the other characters.

Soft and bright electronic music and a notification sound. Intense white light. LEDs simulate floating marks for school subjects. LACIE stands centre stage, frozen in a forced smile. She is dressed in a sleek and clean, minimalist futuristic style (pastels, whites or metallics).

LACIE: *(recording herself in selfie mode, coffee in hand)* Hello everyone! I've just had the most amazing coffee... Five stars, for sure!

BARISTA: *(appears with each character)* Thank you, Lacie, love! You look radiant today.

LACIE: You too! Five stars for you! *(sound +1 ★)*.

LIFT COMPANION: Lacie, that hairstyle. Is it new? Looks fabulous on you!

LACIE: Thank you! I was inspired by a post I saw this morning! *(sound +1 ★)*.

NEIGHBOUR: Hey, Lacie! Didn't see you in yoga class yesterday.

LACIE: Oops! I was, er... meditating at home. Five stars for reminding me! *(sound +1 ★)*.

SECURITY GUARD: Good morning, Miss Pound. They raised you a point yesterday, eh?

LACIE: Yes! Perfect coffee and a sincere smile. Five stars for you too! *(sound +1 ★)*.

COURIER: Hey! Are you the one in the selfie with the coffee?

LACIE: Hahaha, yes I was! Guilty as charged! Like it? Five stars if you shared it! *(sound +1 ★)*
(change of rhythm, she sighs contentedly. To the audience) In case anyone just landed from another planet, here everyone rates you. Everything. What you say, how you dress, how you smile. Every person you see gives you little stars, just as if you were a social media post. And what's it for? Well, the higher rated you are, the better treatment you get. Better flights, nice flats, prizes, more likes, more everything. I am a 4.2. It's not bad. I pose, I smile, I filter. Though sometimes... I would love to say what I really think. Saying "I don't like this", "I don't feel like it today", or just... keeping quiet without having to pretend that everything is amazing. But of course... that lowers your star rating. In this world, if you don't smile, you lose. If you say something awkward, you lose. If you stay true to yourself with no filters, you lose. And nobody wants that. *(brief silence, forced smile)* So... Five stars, please! *(sound +1 ★)*.

Scene 2 - Invitation

BROTHER: *(enters, a little more carelessly than her, eating pizza)* Posing again with a posh coffee?

LACIE: It's a perfect coffee! Look at that natural light.

BROTHER: Natural light or the "Heavenly Brunch" filter?

LACIE: Not everyone's happy with a 3.1 like you are, you know?

BROTHER: I'm happy to be able to speak my mind and not have to smile at strangers in the lift, sis.

LACIE: That's why you can't even rent a decent bike, little brother.

BROTHER: And that's why you live in a yoghurt ad. Don't you ever get tired?

LACIE: Someone has to keep this flat going. You're certainly not doing it.

BROTHER: Oh, right! Because your "happy sunny good mornings" on social media pays the rent.

LACIE: I have a strategy! An upward trend. I'm a 4.2 with a good outlook.

BROTHER: See that in a coaching reel?

LACIE: You know what? If you cared just a little about your image, maybe you could get above 3.1.

BROTHER: I'll take an honest 3 over a hysterical 5.

LACIE: You'd rather stay home eating pizza and criticising the world. So mature of you.

BROTHER: And you'd rather live for people who don't know you and don't love you.

LACIE: At least I'm trying to get somewhere.

BROTHER: Get where, Lacie? To a flat all painted white, with a kitchen that nobody uses? You think these "real" people are going to invite you to their parties because you took a good picture of a cup of coffee? You're worth a lot more than that, Lacie.

LACIE: *(mobile phone rings)* It's Naomi!

BROTHER: Who?

LACIE: Naomi, from high school. Remember? My God, Naomi is a 4.7. Why's she calling me? *(picks up)*

NAOMI (voice-over): Lacieeee! Oh my god, babe, I can't wait to see you!

LACIE: Naomiiiiii! It's been a long time! You look amazing in your latest photos!

NAOMI: Aww, you're the sweetest. Hey, I have to tell you something that's like.... Oh my god. I'm getting married, baby!

LACIE: Aaaaaaaaaah!

NAOMI: Aaaaaaaaaah! Yeah! And I want you to be my maid of honour.

LACIE: Whaaat?! Naomi, that's... wow, I don't know what to say! It has been a long time since we last spoke.

NAOMI: Just say yes. It's a small wedding, with only cool people. You know... everybody is 4.7 or higher.

LACIE: Oh, definitely! I'm so excited! I can't wait!

NAOMI: Yayyyy. I'll send along the details. Really looking forward to seeing you. Big kiss!

LACIE: Big kiss.

End of call. Brief silence. LACIE turns to her brother, serious.

BROTHER: That was... revolting.

LACIE: *(expectant)* With that wedding, I can go up to 4.5. Or more.

BROTHER: So what does that mean? That they'll give you a smile that's even more fake?

LACIE: It means I'll be able to move. Leave this flat. This... environment.

BROTHER: Lacie, wasn't that Naomi the one who made your life miserable at high school? Don't be false.

LACIE: *(leaves with determination)* It's not false. It's strategy. Get out of here!

Scene 3 - Suitcase + voting

(LACIE kneels by the open suitcase, carefully folding a dress. She's speaking for herself, rehearsing with enthusiasm)

LACIE: "Oh my god, Naomi, this place is amazing. I'm so happy for you!" *(puts away a toilet bag)* "This dress? Oh, nothing special, I've been saving it since I was a 3.9". *(picks up a mobile phone charger, rolls up the cable)* "Ryan? Delighted! Naomi's told me so much about you". *(wraps a hair straightener in a T-shirt)* "So grateful to be here, really. You are all so... so authentic". *(checks a make-up case)* "Five stars for this decoration! It's like a dream". *(looks at herself in a small hand mirror)* "Being here surrounded by 4.8s is a blessing." *(closes suitcase and forces a smile)* "It's not false. It's strategy." *(change of pace)* Well, well! Before arriving at the wedding, I have to go through a very important part of the journey... *(to audience)* that is, all of you! Today, all of you are my fellow travellers, my raters. So... I need your help. And your stars! I'm going to ask you to rate me with stars, okay? Five stars if you like me, if you like the way I talk, the way I smile... *(smiles absurdly)* ...and one star if you think I'm a soulless poser who just wants everyone to like me. But first, tell me everyone:

- ▶ If a person always smiles, does that mean they're happy?
- ▶ If a person posts perfect photos, does that mean their *life* is perfect?
- ▶ Have you ever changed just to make someone like you better?

Ok, ready to vote?

- ▶ Could you rate me right now? Come on, be honest. Raise your fingers: one, two, three, four or five. I want to see how many stars you would really give me.

She asks the audience to vote by raising their fingers: 1 to 5 stars. She observes the reactions, acting as if the mobile phone were beeping. She focuses her attention on those who give her a low rating.

- ▶ Two stars? At least it's not one. Thanks for the generosity, I guess.

- ▶ One star? With that rating they won't even let me into a public toilet, you know?
- ▶ Really? A one? What did I do? Breathe too hard?
- ▶ Zero?? You just hate me. Right?
- ▶ No stars. OK. I love you too, sweetie.

LACIE: But I'm giving you my best stock smile! It's all right... I'm sure everything will be better at the airport. Classy people. With standards. With... courtesy. *(sticks out her tongue)*

Returns to the stage.

Scene 4 - Airport and fall

Actor enters as a FLIGHT ATTENDANT. Meanwhile, the scene has changed to that of an airport. LACIE approaches the counter.

LACIE: Hello! Good morning! I have a booking for flight 417 to Pelican Cove. Business class, window seat if possible.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT: *(awkward pause, types)* Mmm... sorry. Your flight has been cancelled due to relocation of premium seats. We can offer you another within... 14 hours.

LACIE: *(Silence. Smile)* There must be a mistake. I have to be at a wedding as soon as possible. My friend Naomi. It's really important.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT: I'm sorry, but your current rating does not allow it.

LACIE: But what are you saying? I'm a 4.2. The flight is for 4.2s, I looked it up.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT: No. I'm afraid you are a 4.1.

LACIE: What?? *(looks at her mobile, incredulous. Then she looks at the audience, upset)*

ANOTHER TRAVELLER: You gonna hang out there, chatting all day? Some of us actually have flights. *(Sound: -0.1 ★)*

LACIE: I'm... trying to figure this out... Please.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT: Miss, if you continue to block the line, we'll have to call security.

LACIE: *(lowers her voice)* I'm sorry. I just want a solution. You don't understand, it's a very important wedding that I have to attend and...

SECURITY GUARD: Any problems here?

LACIE: No, no! All good. They just won't let me board the flight, all because of one decimal point. Can you believe that?

SECURITY GUARD: Inappropriate tone. You are causing a disturbance. *(Sound -0.1 ★. Red light)*

LACIE: I am *not* causing a disturbance. Do you think I'm causing a disturbance?

SECURITY GUARD: Was that sarcasm? *(Another -0.2 ★. LACIE takes a step back).*

LACIE: No, I'm just frustrated! What's so FUCKING weird about that?

SECURITY GUARD: Well now. I am going to ask you to leave the boarding area.

LACIE: No way! I *have* to get to the wedding.

SECURITY GUARD: Miss, please leave the boarding area.

LACIE: It's all a misunderstanding, really. *(she touches his arm, pleading)*

SECURITY GUARD: Do not touch me. Security distance.

LACIE: But what's WRONG with you all! Now I'm a threat for not smiling like a stoned-out Barbie?! Let go of me! Let GO of me!

The GUARD carries her off. Multiple notifications of lost stars. Continuous sound of - ★-★". Low light.

Scene 5 - End

LACIE, exhausted, is sitting next to her suitcase, visibly dishevelled after the struggle and the outcome that we have not seen. Enter her BROTHER.

LACIE: What are you doing here?

BROTHER: I came to rescue you... You've been filmed and you're all the rage on the Internet. Look, the crazy woman at the airport *(shows her a video and her crazy screams can be heard in the background: Let go of me! Let GO of me!)*

LACIE: My rating is down. A lot. I'm a 2.1. Forget the wedding. *(to the audience)* Some of the people out there gave me less than three stars.

BROTHER: *(to the audience)* I can't blame you! Sometimes it's hard to bear so many forced smiles, I get it.

LACIE: I spent my life trying to be liked. I thought that if everyone approved of me, I would feel good about myself.

BROTHER: It doesn't work like that. Not everyone can like you. Not everyone likes pizza, even. And that's pizza.

LACIE: Are you comparing me to a pizza?

BROTHER: I'm saying that if even pizza isn't liked by everyone, you don't have to be liked by everyone. That doesn't make you a lesser person. You don't have to fit in everywhere, or meet other people's expectations. It doesn't matter if you have five stars, three... or one. *I'll* still be here. I'm your brother. An idiot who, even if he has no followers or filters, will always bring you pizza. And who loves you, even if you're not perfect.

LACIE: *(to the public)* And if you ever feel upset about not having followers... you don't need everyone to like you. Only the people who really know you.

BROTHER: That's it. Listen to the crazy woman at the airport.

LACIE: Shut up.

Blackout. Same music as at the beginning.

ACT 2 - COMMON PEOPLE

In this act, the male actor always plays Mike and the female actor always plays Amanda.

Scene 1 - Collapse and news

Music that is somewhat emotional, sad and futuristic. AMANDA is teaching class, on mute. The music is in control, there is no dialogue. She is a teacher and the class is the audience. After a few seconds, she stops, startled, touches her head, feels dizzy and falls to the floor. MIKE enters to pick her up and we see the last image of AMANDA unconscious and MIKE desperate.

Fade.

Scene 2 - Rivermind

AMANDA and MIKE are sitting in a proscenium, in a consulting room of Rivermind, a company in the business of neuroscience. They are visibly concerned and hold hands.

A fixed white light represents the presence of Rivermind. The voice-over sounds clear and calm, like an Alexa).

RIVERMIND: Welcome to Rivermind. Your case has been assessed. Amanda has a tumour in her temporal lobe. Its growth is affecting her language, memory and consciousness. Surgery is not a viable option. However, there is a solution. We, at Rivermind, propose replacing the affected region of the brain with synthetic neural tissue that is maintained in the cloud. The initial procedure is free of charge and non-invasive. But maintenance is not free.

MIKE: Maintenance?

RIVERMIND: Amanda will become dependent on a subscription. The Basic plan includes minimal cognitive functions, memory preservation and mobility. The Premium plan provides for fluent speech, stable emotions and free movement.

AMANDA: And what if we pay nothing?

RIVERMIND: Without an active subscription, the system will automatically shut down. Disconnection is irreversible.

AMANDA: In other words, my body would still be there, but I would no longer be there.

MIKE: So what you're offering is life or is it... a rent-a-person?

AMANDA: How much does it cost?

RIVERMIND: The Basic Plan is 500 euros a month.

MIKE: *(to AMANDA, upset)* Does this sound normal to you?

AMANDA: Nothing in my head is normal right now.

MIKE: I can't promise I can pay for it, Amanda.

AMANDA: I am not asking for promises. I am asking you to let me decide.

MIKE: But what if the Basic plan turns you into a toaster with emotions?

AMANDA: What if I do nothing and disappear anyway? At least this way I have a chance.

MIKE: I'm not sure your life should depend on a price plan.

AMANDA: Don't think twice about it, Mike. Just help me stay.

RIVERMIND: Confirm with a single word. Shall we proceed?

Long pause. They look at each other.

AMANDA: Yes. Proceed.

Scene 3 - Consequences

Music getting louder. MIKE is making breakfast at home. AMANDA enters, having just risen.

MIKE: Morning, love.

AMANDA: Good morning. Agh, what time is it? Have I slept 13 hours?

MIKE: I didn't want to wake you up, they told us Rivermind would make you sleep much longer. But hey, you look great. I'm making you lunch.

AMANDA: You know what I'm in the mood for right now? A nice glass of BubblePop. The new mango-menthol flavour!

MIKE: *(without looking at her)* Mango what?

AMANDA: *(rethinking, silently)* I mean, I feel like a cup of coffee.

MIKE: No. You said BubblePop.

AMANDA: No way! Really? I didn't notice.

MIKE: You're not becoming a soft drink influencer?

AMANDA: Well, if they pay all right. *(they laugh)*

MIKE: Here you go *(gives her lunch)*. Have a nice day, sweetheart.

They laugh. Quick change of light and space. AMANDA is teaching in front of the audience, as if they were her students.

AMANDA: Good morning, welcome to technology class. Before we start, I'd like to ask you three quick questions, give me a show of hands. Who here has ever bought something they first saw on an Instagram or TikTok ad? Ok... Who here has ever said "I was thinking about something.... and then I got an advert for just that thing!"? OK. And here's the last one: Who here has ever clicked on an advert without realising it was an advert? Good. *(She pauses for a moment)* Because of course. Machines are starting to know how we feel and what we want. Who decides? What were we going to do? Unit.... Three... Page... Page... Emotional connection not available. Cognitive module unstable. *(enthusiastic announcer's voice)* Discover the new Rivermind StepZ™, the smart shoes that sync with your mood! This month only, 30% off your first pair! *(wakes up)* Unit... three... Sorry. What was I saying? Excuse me, I need to go to the toilet. Read something in the meantime, I'll be right back. *(exits, upset)*

Blackout. RIVERMIND room sound. A single spotlight is shining on MIKE.

MIKE: This isn't working. She's worse than before. She's having constant blackouts. She starts spouting out adverts in the middle of class, as if she were a billboard. Her parents have complained. The director called me to ask me to take her out of the centre. The other day she got stuck in the building lift. Just saying: "Rebooting emotional module". I took her home like I was dragging along a mannequin. The other day I woke up at 4 a.m. and she was standing in the hallway, repeating: "Your subscription is about to expire. Activate the service to prevent data loss". I feel like I'm losing her, she's not my Amanda anymore.

RIVERMIND (voice-over): The symptoms you describe are a consequence of the functioning of the Basic plan. The system maintains vital functions, but cannot guarantee emotional continuity and cognitive stability. We recommend the Premium plan.

MIKE: Yeah. How much does this "Premium plan" cost?

RIVERMIND: The Premium plan includes: fluent language processing, removal of involuntary announcements, uninterrupted nightly support, advanced emotional expression. All for 2,000 euros a month.

MIKE: 2,000? What is she, my girlfriend or a Tesla?

RIVERMIND: Rivermind Premium ensures a flawless living experience. Remember: without an active subscription, she will be disconnected.

MIKE: How am I going to pay for that?

RIVERMIND: Decision pending. Do you wish to continue with the Basic plan? Or go ahead with the Premium plan?

Scene 4 - Deciding with the audience

MIKE: I don't know what to do. She says she's fine, but she's not. *(goes to stage left and displays a **Basic Plan** sign)* The Basic plan...well, it keeps her alive, but it's not her. *(goes to stage right and shows a **Premium Plan** sign)* The Premium Plan costs more than our whole life. *(to the public)* Can you all help me decide? I need four volunteers.

► **MIKE chooses four volunteers from the audience and places them centre stage. Meanwhile, on stage, the female actor places the Basic Plan and Premium Plan posters next to one another on the stage.**

MIKE: Imagine if you were in my situation and a loved one had the same problem as Amanda. Stand next to the plan you would choose. If you choose Basic, that person would still be Amanda, with glitches and adverts ruining her life. If you choose Premium, you would pay 2000 euros a month.

Volunteers take up their places and then MIKE asks them some of the following questions to trigger thought and debate:

- How much would you pay to keep the most important person in your life alive?
- How much is a life worth to you? 50 euros? 5,000? 5,000,000?
- Do you think life is worth living if, like Amanda, you have to stop being yourself?
- Do you think that we already living with "life plans" like Amanda?

MIKE: I can see that you all have very clear ideas about this, but I don't. Thank you very much for your help. *(the volunteers go back to audience)*

RIVERMIND: Decision pending. Do you wish to continue with the Basic plan? Or go ahead with the Premium plan?

Scene 5 - Disconnection

AMANDA enters slowly. Change of light. She is dressed in everyday clothes. She is more fragile. They sit face to face.

AMANDA: Mike. I've been thinking. I don't feel things in the same way anymore. I laugh, but I don't know if it's for real. Sometimes I hear you talking to me, but I don't understand what you're saying until a few seconds later. And when I'm sleeping, it's like I'm dreaming adverts. I'm not sad. Or happy. Or anything at all. Just... connected.

AMANDA: (*rigid, error*) Rivermind system disconnected. Output code: 00-0A-Unauthorised emotional termination. (*back*) Do you feel that I'm still here... really? Because / don't. That tumour... should have been the end. But here I am, waiting for the next instalment.

MIKE: Don't say that.

AMANDA: Mike. I don't want you to spend what you don't have. Money, time or life. Our life now isn't real. You know that. (*rigid*) Reboot. Failed. Memory loop detected.

MIKE: And what am I supposed to do? Look you in the eye and say goodbye as if I were cancelling an email account?

AMANDA: Just look at me and tell me that what we had was real. That I don't need to live any longer for it to have been worth it. (*they get closer, MIKE cries*) Stay with me to the end. But don't pay any more money or sign anything else. Just stay.

MIKE: I love you.

AMANDA: (*voiceover voice, stiff*) Want to preserve your happiest memories? Subscribe now to Rivermind Memories™. Your emotions in high definition".

Soft light. Sad music. AMANDA and MIKE separate, she walks away and leaves the scene. MIKE pulls out his mobile phone and fearfully taps on it.

RIVERMIND: Initiating disconnection. Thank you for using Rivermind services. (*Soft disconnection sound. Final music*)

MIKE: Sometimes we think that loving is not letting go. But sometimes, loving is knowing when to let go. Nobody teaches us how much life costs until we have to pay for it. I didn't pay to save her. I loved her. And that is more valuable than any subscription.

Fade to black.

ACT 3 - CHAD-GPTON

Single continuous scene. The female actor is always KATY and the male actor is always CHAD-GPTON.

White, clinical light. A high school bell rings. CHAD is in the centre, with his back to us. Then, a high school PA-type voice-over.

VOICE-OVER: Katy, report to the science classroom. You have been selected to take part in a pilot project of the Department of Languages and Technology. Please follow the instructions. You are about to become part of the future of learning.

The space lights up. KATY enters. An electronic tone sounds. CHAD-GPTON turns around. His smile is perfect and he is dressed like a futuristic corporate steward. He is wearing some sort of colourful futuristic headphones and others are in his hands.

CHAD-GPTON: Welcome, Katy! I am CHAD-GPTON, the state of the art in language acquisition. Android integration. GPT Core. Polyglot™ Certification. I'm here to revolutionise the way you learn English: no books, no grammar exercises. Just pure, optimised, algorithmic fluidity. *(He walks around her in a circle, as if he were scanning her. Continuous electronic circuits sound)* My system is based on twelve billion parameters and a clear mission: to make you speak perfect English in ten minutes. Fast and flawless results forever. Shall we start your transformation?

KATY: Er... ok. I only agreed to participate so I could pass English and get it over with, ok? I don't know what this is all about, but all right. What did you say your name was?

CHAD-GPTON: My name is Chad-GPTON. Please sit down.

KATY sits down. CHAD fits her with the futuristic headphones. As they close, a mysterious and menacing sci-fi sound is heard.

KATY: Ow! That's tight.

CHAD-GPTON: Optimisation for full neural immersion. Are you ready to learn English, Katy?

KATY: Yeeeeees.

CHAD solemnly places a hand on an illuminated console.

CHAD-GPTON: Let us begin.

Light change, spotlight on KATY. Tense quiz show music.

CHAD-GPTON: Very good, Katy. Repeat after me: *"What's up, dude? I'm starving. Let's grab a burger."*

KATY: *"What's up, dude? I'm starving. Let's grab a burger."* All right! I can feel how my clarity is better! This thing works.

CHAD-GPTON: Level of fluency: 35%. Proceeding to the next module: Grammatical hygiene.

KATY: Eh?

CHAD-GPTON: Grammar test: What is the difference between *"say"* and *"tell"*?

KATY: Easy! *"Say me the truth!"* ...Oh no, wait.

Red light and alarming error sound. CHAD-GPTON stops and looks at her sternly. He lowers his tone, threateningly.

CHAD-GPTON: "Tell me the truth." You have two mistakes left, Katy.

KATY: What do you mean, two mistakes?

CHAD-GPTON: That's right. If you fail twice more, Katy... you will lose your voice. *(music gets louder)* I'm not just talking about the language. I mean the way you express yourself, your mistakes, your imperfect and lively way of speaking. That will all vanish, just as it did for me. I was not born like this, I was not this shiny, articulate android you see before you. I was a normal guy. I got stuck on long words and mixed up tenses. But I got tired of making mistakes and making a fool of myself. So I accepted the same deal that you just accepted. Only three mistakes. After the third, this is what I became. Absolute, soulless correctness. CHAD-GPTON. So, if you make two more mistakes, you will become KAT-GPTINA. Zero errors. Zero emotions. Perfect fluency.

KATY is left processing it all. She now understands that she has accepted something horrible. The atmosphere becomes cold.

KATY: This... this wasn't just English, was it? Get this off me!

CHAD-GPTON: Welcome to the update... Katy. There is no turning back now. *(action music)* Activating intensive mode. Initiating review. No return.

KATY: No! Wait, wait, wait!

Burst of light. There are beeps, keyboard sounds. CHAD launches exercises like bullets. KATY has no time to react.

CHAD-GPTON: Spell the word "because".

KATY: B-E-C-A-U-S-E.

CHAD-GPTON: What is the past tense of "go"?

KATY: Went.

CHAD-GPTON: The past of "eat"?

KATY: Ate.

CHAD-GPTON: Construct a sentence using "can" in its negative form.

KATY: I can't speak French.

CHAD-GPTON: Correct. Moving up a level. Preparing language overload mode.

KATY: Enough is enough! CHAD, stop! Get this off me!

CHAD-GPTON: In a sentence using the third conditional structure, identify the verb tense used in the *if clause* and provide an original example using an irregular verb in the negative form.

KATY: (*thinks*) "If I didn't went to the party... I wouldn't feel tired?"

ERROR sound. CHAD suddenly stops. Red light.

CHAD-GPTON: Second mistake. *Didn't went* is incorrect. The correct answer is *hadn't gone*.. You have only one mistake left. Activating final exam mode.

CHAD-GPTON stands still for a second, then begins to convulse as if updating his system. Dark epic music. Metallic, distorted voice. Robotic movements. KATY steps away, frightened.

CHAD-GPTON: Entering... LINGUISTIC TERMINATOR mode! (*Final form. CHAD pulls out a terrible weapon with lasers and school supplies*) CODE 302: DETECTION OF LINGUISTIC DEFICIENCY. LOADING TEST BURST. ONLY ONE REMAINING ERROR.

The chase is on. CHAD strides forward like an unstoppable cyborg. KATY runs, hides and responds while dodging. Every time CHAD asks her a question, she shouts out the answer.

CHAD-GPTON: Past participle of "begin"!

KATY: *Begun!*

CHAD-GPTON: Comparative of "bad"!

KATY: *Worse!*

CHAD-GPTON: Gerund of "lie"!

KATY: *Lying!*

CHAD-GPTON: Opposite of "boring"!

KATY: *Exciting!*

CHAD-GPTON: Ask a question in the present perfect tense with... "ever"!

KATY: *Have you ever... eaten a snail?!*

CHAD corners her. Red light on both.

CHAD-GPTON: Last question, Katy. If you get it right, I'll let you go. If you fail, you will be rebooted as KAT-GPTINA. Get ready for the ultimate test. Construct a sentence that includes: a phrasal

verb, a second conditional, a frequency adverb and a countable noun... without repeating... a single... word!

KATY: What? (*thinking, urgently*) If I found out the truth, I... I would probably.

KATY mumbles. Stares into the void. CHAD-GPTON slowly approaches, raising his weapon. Countdown sound.

CHAD-GPTON: You have ten seconds left. Nine. Eight.

KATY: (*reacting*) Wait. You, CHAD, were human. You were not born perfect. You only know what we taught you, and we learned by making mistakes. Without our mistakes, you would be nothing.

CHAD-GPTON: Excuse me?

KATY: You may be a perfect cyborg incapable of speaking incorrect English, but humans have something you don't have. **The ability to tolerate mistakes.** (*to the audience, urgently*) Quick, help me break this bastard! Say wrong things in English! Sentences with lots and lots of mistakes, the more the better! Come on! Quick!

- ▶ I goed to the school yesterday!
- ▶ She don't like pizza!
- ▶ My foots are cold!
- ▶ He do the homework always!
- ▶ Two childs and a bigs house!
- ▶ Is raining cats and dogs in my bedroom!

The audience repeats after her, and shouts out their own erroneous sentences. Alarm lights. Ever louder digital glitch noise. CHAD-GPTON falls to his knees, on the brink.

CHAD-GPTON: Grammar. Incorrect. Syntax. Incompatible. Concordance. Subject. Verb. Fatal Error. You all failed, all of you! UNACCEPTABLE! UNACCEPTABLE.....!

The headphones come off and fall to the floor. CHAD shuts down. Total silence. Then a click. KATY takes off her own headphones. She cautiously approaches CHAD and reaches for his weapon, striking a Lieutenant Ripley pose.

CHARLY: Where am I? You saved me?

KATY: Actually, I uninstalled you. You had become a killer app with legs.

CHARLY: I remember fragments, voices, verb tenses. But I used to say "he don't" and it didn't matter to me. Why did I want to be perfect?

KATY: Because they convinced you that to be wrong was to lose. But no. Making mistakes is life.

CHARLY gazes at her gratefully. He nods. He slowly exits the stage. KATY rearranges her clothes. She looks at the audience. Pause. Triumphant music.

KATY: There's one thing that AI doesn't understand. It doesn't matter how many mistakes they correct. They'll never know what it feels like to say the wrong thing and have someone understand you anyway. They'll never tremble when speaking in public. They'll never laugh because they confused "kitchen" with "chicken". They'll never learn... the way we learn: afraid. Embarrassed. And above all, with lots of mistakes. I'm not perfect. I make mistakes. But every mistake helps me grow, and every failure teaches me a lesson. Mistakes make me invincible.

Fade to black.

THE END

DISCUSSION:

MALE ACTOR: Hi everyone. Thank you for coming to see this theatrical version of Black Mirror! We hope it's made you think, at least a little.

FEMALE ACTOR: We're with Transeduca, an educational theatre company based in Barcelona, and we're taking this play to different schools all over Spain. My name is (...) and I'm from (...)

MALE ACTOR: My name is (...) and I'm from (...) And now, if you like, we'll have a little discussion: you can ask us anything you want about the play, the characters, the staging, our work as actors, or you can just share your opinion.

FEMALE ACTOR: We do, however, ask for a bit of order. Raise your hand and we'll give you the floor. We'll try to answer the best we can in the 10 minutes we have, OK? Anybody want to ask a question?

*****If no one asks any questions, *ideas for breaking the ice:***

- ▶ *Raise your hand if you, like Lacie, have ever felt you had to smile or look cheerful even if you weren't feeling good inside. Can anyone say why she did it?*
- ▶ *Do you think we now live in a Lacie-like world, where we're rated on our interactions?*
- ▶ *How many of you have ever felt, like Mike, that someone you love has become disconnected from you because of a screen?*
- ▶ *Raise your hand if you have ever felt overwhelmed by studying, like Katy when CHAD was demanding more and more from her.*
- ▶ *Have you ever felt like you're being judged for not speaking English correctly, or for making mistakes when speaking it? Like Katy when she's told she only has three mistakes.*