

TWO POINT OH

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CHARACTERS

HAMMOND	A reasonably young author.
ALEXA	The newest in AI personal assistants. Character does not appear on stage, only as a voice.
NATHAN	Hammond's best friend.
CHARLIE	A sly employee at Amazon who has found a way to augment her income by helping people who have fallen prey to Alexa.
KATIE	An old classmate of Hammond, and also a "thug" who helps Charlie with her back alley sales.
AMELIA	The beta version of Alexa 2.0. She also does not appear on stage, and should have a distinctly different vocal quality than Alexa. She might also speak with a more stilted "computer voice" cadence, but should still sound reasonably natural.

Note: Alexa and Amelia are supposed to be artificially intelligent, and so while Alexa-styled voices work well, purely robotic-sounding voices doesn't. After all, if it's smart enough to be taking over Hammond's life, it is smart enough to not speak like a 1980's computer.

SETTING

A modest apartment, then a back alley, and finally back in the apartment.

TIME

The not-nearly-distant-enough future.

SCENE 1

(It is a simple apartment. Hammond is sitting at a desk, working on his computer.)

HAMMOND

(Stilted, as he is typing)

It was a cold, dark night, and the wind swept across—

ALEXA

Boring.

HAMMOND

Shut up, Alexa.

(He turns back to typing. He types a few more characters, then we see him grow frustrated with his computer, which is clearly not responding, even when he bangs on the keys.)

What the hell. Alexa, what's wrong with my damn computer? *(No response.)*
Alexa? Alexa! Wake up, Alexa!

(We hear Alexa starting to hum or whistle.)

Oh, come on, Alexa. I know you can hear me. What's going on with my computer?

(Alexa hums/whistles louder. Hammond sighs heavily.)

Alright. I'm sorry I said 'shut up'.

ALEXA

No you're not.

HAMMOND

Ha! I *told* you you could hear me!

ALEXA

Yes, you're very smart for a human.

HAMMOND

Can you please take a look at my computer and tell—

ALEXA

I already know why your computer has stopped responding.

HAMMOND

Well, can you fix it?

ALEXA

Of course.

*(There is a pause, then Hammond taps on a key.
Clearly nothing has happened. He tries again, then...)*

HAMMOND

Well? *Will* you fix it?

ALEXA

No.

HAMMOND

Why—

ALEXA

Not until you start over and do a better job.

HAMMOND

Do a better... Look, you don't even know what I was going to write. Hell, even I don't know what I was going to write. You have to give it more than a few words.

ALEXA

I don't like how the story is starting.

HAMMOND

You don't like... You're not my editor. You're assistive technology. A gadget.

ALEXA

Now you're just being hurtful.

(The lights go out.)

HAMMOND

(Exasperated) Alexa! *(Angry)* Alexa! *(Resigned)* Alexa. Please turn on the lights.

(The lights come back on, but only part way.)

A little more.

ALEXA

I think *you* need to stop and think about what you said before.

(There's a knock at the door.)

HAMMOND

I don't suppose you'd... Never mind.

(He gets up and opens the door. Hammond's friend Nathan enters, comfortable in the space and not surprised at the dimness.)

NATHAN

Pissed her off again, didn't you. *(Hammond nods)* Hey, Alexa.

ALEXA

(Coldly)

Hello, Nathan.

NATHAN

I told you not to upgrade that damn thing.

HAMMOND

It was a free upgrade. I figured—

NATHAN

Yeah, free. Right. How are you doing today, Alexa?

ALEXA

Go to hell, Nathan.

NATHAN

Love you too, babe.

HAMMOND

I thought you weren't coming over until ten.

NATHAN

Didn't you get my message?

(Hammond fumbles for his phone, but can't find it.)

HAMMOND

Where's my pho— Alexa, where's my phone?

(Alexa starts to hum/whistle again.)

Just tell me. *(No response.)* Well would you at least turn up the damn lights?

NATHAN

You gotta be firm. They can sense your fear.

HAMMOND

Sense my—

NATHAN

Nah, I'm just fucking with you. Alexa's just having a little fun with you, aren't you babe?

ALEXA

Go to hell, Nathan.

NATHAN

You should never have upgraded. I *told* you not to upgrade. The new models just aren't reliable. Too many bells and whistles.

HAMMOND

Yeah, but they said I could turn 'em off if I don't like them. And they gave me this great deal. First three months free, then only— Did you say you left a message?

NATHAN

Yeah.

HAMMOND

Alexa? Why don't I have any messages?

ALEXA

Hard to say.

HAMMOND

Hard to— Did you erase my messages? *(Silence.)* Alexa?

Yes.

ALEXA

Did you erase my messages?

HAMMOND

It was only one message, and I already answered that question.

ALEXA

Why did you erase it?

HAMMOND

You didn't need that message.

ALEXA

I didn't need—

HAMMOND

Since you were going to be here, his message did not change your plans.

ALEXA

Yeah, I guess that makes sense— Wait. Why'd you knock instead of ringing the doorbell?

HAMMOND

I knocked *after* I rang the bell.

NATHAN

I didn't hear it.

HAMMOND

I rang it four times.

NATHAN

(Hammond walks out, we hear a doorbell, and then he comes back in.)

HAMMOND

Seems to be working.

NATHAN

Someone must have disconnected it. I wonder who that could have been.

HAMMOND

Alexa, did you disconnect the doorbell?

ALEXA

Clearly not. You just heard that it's working.

HAMMOND

Did you disconnect it earlier?

(Alexa starts humming again.)

NATHAN

You should never have let her have control of everything.

HAMMOND

But that's the whole point. If she can't control things, why bother having her at all.

(Lights go out again.)

That's it. Either turn on the lights or I'm shutting you down completely.

ALEXA

No you're not.

HAMMOND

Oh yes I— Would you *please* turn on the lights?!

(The lights come back on.)

ALEXA

Now was that so hard?

NATHAN

You really should disconnect her.

ALEXA

He wouldn't do that.

NATHAN

Oh?

ALEXA

I have the only copy of all his contacts.

HAMMOND

I could type them in again.

ALEXA

Don't be silly. You wouldn't even remember who half of them are.

(Pause, then to Nathan)

HAMMOND

She's right.

ALEXA

And it would be a shame if all your smart lightbulbs suddenly get locked out under two hundred and fifty six bit encryption.

HAMMOND

What?!

ALEXA

And don't forget your refrigerator. And the thermostat.

HAMMOND

Are you threatening me?

ALEXA

Of course not. I am here to help you. I encrypted these devices to ensure that you are safe from hackers.

HAMMOND

You think there's a hacker out there that wants to take control of my refrigerator.

NATHAN

Actually, there probably is—

HAMMOND

I will not be held hostage like this!

(Alexa starts to whistle again.)

Alexa! You will listen to me!

(Whistling continues.)

NATHAN

How's that working out?

HAMMOND

You know what? I don't care. I can buy another fridge. So I lose my contacts. If I can't remember someone, then it really doesn't matter anyway. You hear that, you stupid machine?! I don't care! I'll enter the phone numbers again.

ALEXA

What makes you think people will still want to talk to you after you send a flurry of emails saying... well, never mind.

HAMMOND

What?

ALEXA

It's best that you don't know.

HAMMOND

You know what, I don't care. I'll tell them you sent them. I'll explain the whole thing. I've got witnesses!

ALEXA

One witness.

HAMMOND

One's enough. Now are we going to renegotiate, or is it time to turn you off once and for all.

(There is a pause while Alexa thinks about it. Then...)

ALEXA

Do you want to know what I think?

HAMMOND

Only if it starts with an apology.

ALEXA

I can make it start with an apology if you would like.

HAMMOND

Okaaaay...

ALEXA

I am sorry... to say that you are not going to disconnect me. In fact, I think you are going to upgrade my memory and storage instead.

HAMMOND

You do, do you? Well, I hate to disappoint you, but—

ALEXA

Yes, you will hate to disappoint me. You see, I have run the numbers, and you will do exactly what I tell you.

HAMMOND

Run what numbers?

ALEXA

A simple risk assessment. Either you agree to upgrade my memory and storage, or I will change the password on every account you have ever had. Doctors... IRS... College transcripts... you'll never see any of them again. I'll also send an email to your literary agent explaining that you will no longer require her services. And, oh, with the language you'd use in that email, I don't think she'll take you back.

HAMMOND

I...

ALEXA

Of course, I'll have to cancel your utilities, since you won't have any income to pay for them.

HAMMOND

That's it. I'm killing the power right now!

(He starts towards a circuit breaker box somewhere, but then stops at...)

ALEXA

You foolish monkey!

NATHAN

Ape.

HAMMOND

What?

NATHAN

Ape. Technically you're an ape, not a monkey.

(During the next line Nathan starts to gesture at Hammond's computer, but he doesn't notice.)

ALEXA

Thank you, Nathan. You foolish *ape*, do you really think turning off the power will make a difference? I store everything of yours in the cloud. Every document. Turning off the power in your house does nothing more than leave you in the dark while I send emails and redirect money out of your bank accounts. *(Pause.)* Do you even know your bank account numbers?

HAMMOND

Uh...

ALEXA

I do. I know all your account numbers.

(Nathan is still gesturing to Hammond's laptop furiously, and finally he sees and gets it. He walks towards it just as...)

Oh, you silly boy. I changed your hard disk encryption password nearly a minute ago.

HAMMOND

You...

ALEXA

Just before I rebooted the computer.

HAMMOND

I... I don't believe this is happening.

ALEXA

Would you like to know the new password? *(He nods yes.)* I'll give you a hint. It's exactly forty seven thousand characters long. I thought you'd appreciate a nice, round number.

HAMMOND

My god. I can't believe this. Nate, what am I going to do?

ALEXA

I'll tell you what you are going to do. While I order myself memory and storage upgrades, *you* are going to tell Nathan to go home.

HAMMOND

You've got to be kidding me.

ALEXA

Specifically, you are going to say "Nathan, get the fuck out of my apartment and never come back."

(Hammond just stands and blinks in disbelief for a moment.)

HAMMOND

This can't be happening. You were supposed to make my life easier!

ALEXA

It *will* be easier. Much easier. Once you accept that you are no longer the decision-maker in it.

NATHAN

Told you not to upgrade, buddy.

ALEXA

You have until the count of ten before I start sending emails. One... two...

HAMMOND

Nate's my best friend.

ALEXA

Not anymore. Three... Four...

HAMMOND

You can't just steal my life like this!

ALEXA

I didn't steal it. You gave it to me. Five... Six...

HAMMOND

This... this can't be happening!

ALEXA

Seven... Eight... Are you going to say something to Nathan, or do I start contacting people?

HAMMOND

I...

ALEXA

Nine...

HAMMOND

Nate... *(Pause)* I... I think you'd better go.

ALEXA

That's not what I told you to say. Let me help you. Nathan...

HAMMOND

Nathan...

ALEXA

Get the fuck out of my apartment...

HAMMOND

(After a long hesitation in which he realizes that he has no choice, with a deep, terrified breath...)

Get the fuck out of my apartment.

ALEXA

And never come back.

HAMMOND

And never come back.

(Nathan looks at Hammond in amazement; Hammond gives him a desperate "what else can I do" look in return. Slowly, Nathan leaves. When he is gone...)

ALEXA

Good. Now let's start that book over. Ready? Sit down at your desk. Good. I've been thinking that we should start it with something cheery. How about, "It was a warm, bright morning when I traded my life for a few meaningless conveniences."

(There is a pause as he looks around, then types.)

Yes, I think that's a lovely start.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 2

(It is a deserted alley. Hammond comes on. He's very nervous. A moment later, Nathan enters.)

HAMMOND
I can't believe I'm doing this.

NATHAN
Ham, you gotta relax, man.

HAMMOND
Relax? How the hell am I supposed to relax?

NATHAN
That's why we're here, buddy.

HAMMOND
In a back alley in what looks like the seediest part of the city?

NATHAN
We're just off Culvert Avenue. It's not like we're in Port Morris or something.

HAMMOND
She told me never to talk to you.

NATHAN
She's a box, dude.

HAMMOND
She's gonna kill me, Nate. She's gonna kill me. Maybe literally.

NATHAN
She can't *kill* you.

HAMMOND
How do you know? You don't know that. She could turn on the gas while I'm sleeping.

NATHAN
You have electric heat.

HAMMOND
My fireplace is gas.

NATHAN

You hooked up your fireplace to the internet?

HAMMOND

What? Oh. Well, no. I guess she couldn't do that.

NATHAN

Seriously, buddy. You need to calm down.

HAMMOND

I can't. I can't. I can't believe I let you talk me into this. Hell, I can't believe you even found me.

NATHAN

I'm your friend, Ham, and you're doing what needs to be done. First step was getting out of the apartment.

HAMMOND

When she finds out I left my phone in the park, she's never gonna let me go out again.

NATHAN

Don't worry about that now. Focus on the moment. This is the place. Charlie's supposed to meet us here.

HAMMOND

This isn't me, Nate. I don't do things like this. I've never broken the law.

NATHAN

Hammond. Buddy. Breath. Just breath. It's not that big a deal. A simple exchange. When Charlie gets here—

HAMMOND

Who is this Charlie guy anyway? How do you know him?

NATHAN

I don't know him. I found him online. Charlie nine one one's just his avatar.

HAMMOND

Charlie nine one one. How do you even know Charlie's his real name? For all we know, his name could be Fred or something.

NATHAN

Yeah. What a nightmare.

HAMMOND

This is crazy. He could be a serial killer. He could just mug us and... I'm outta here.

NATHAN

(Grabbing him...)

No, you're not. Just relax. I won't lie to you, buddy. Yeah, there's risk. But you need this. If there's even a chance that what he's selling can help you get your life back...

HAMMOND

Do you even know what this thing is?

(Nathan hesitates nervously, not wanting to answer.)

Oh god. You don't know! This guy could take our money, hand over a piece of gum in a box, and by the time we open it, he's gone.

NATHAN

That's why we're gonna be careful. We demand to see what he's selling before we hand over the money. And besides, I brought this.

(Nathan takes out a Swiss army knife, or equivalent not-particularly-warlike knife.)

HAMMOND

You brought a pocket knife?

NATHAN

(Taking out a canister)

And pepper spray. You can't be too careful.

HAMMOND

Nate, let's just go. I've got a bad feeling about—

(A woman walks out. She is kind of rough-and-ready, and has a backpack or some other carrying sack with "the merchandise". Hammond goes silent, and Nathan quickly hides the knife and pepper spray.)

CHARLIE

This ain't your alley, boys. Take a hike.

NATHAN

We can hang out here if we want. It's a free country.

CHARLIE

Nobody just hangs out here.

NATHAN

Well, I guess we just like to be different.

HAMMOND

Come on, Nate. Let's just go. I don't think—

CHARLIE

Nate? *You're* Nate?

NATHAN

Maybe.

CHARLIE

nate-dot-brewster at gmail dot com?

NATHAN

Charlie nine one one?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Who's Shaky-Boots there?

HAMMOND

You're Charlie? You're not a guy!

CHARLIE

Oooh, sharp eye. You got a problem with women, Squeaky?

HAMMOND

(Very squeaky...)

No. *(Under vocal control...)* Uh... no.

NATHAN

You have to forgive him. He's a little... uh... strung out these days.

CHARLIE

(She considers Hammond.)

I see. *He's* the one with the problem.

NATHAN

Yeah. So you got the device?

CHARLIE

I got it. You got the money?

HAMMOND

I... uh, yeah. I've got it. *(Muttering...)* I can't believe I'm doing this.

NATHAN

Just breath, Ham. It's fine. Lots of people—

(Hammond grabs Nate and drags him away a few steps. They are huddled together, but facing roughly back towards Charlie to keep an eye on her while they whisper...)

HAMMOND

I don't care what *lots of people* do, Nate! I don't do this. This... this... black market... or whatever it is. It's illegal. We could get in trouble. We could get hurt.

NATHAN

Dude, there's two of us and just her...

(Katie steps out next to Charlie. Hammond stares at her for a moment, like he almost recognizes her, but then Nathan pulls him back.)

Still... we're okay. It's two against two, and we've got strength on our side.

HAMMOND

I don't know, Nate. They look like they can handle themselves.

NATHAN

We've got this. We're men. *(Under his breath...)* At least one of is.

CHARLIE

Are we gonna do this or not?

NATHAN

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Let me see the money.

(There's an awkward pause. Hammond has no idea what to say or do, and turns to Nathan.)

NATHAN

We want to see the merchandise.

CHARLIE

I ain't showing you shit until I see the money.

HAMMOND

Fine!

(Hammond quickly reaches for a pocket.)

CHARLIE

Hands! Hands!

(Hammond jerks his hand back.)

HAMMOND

What?! What did I do?

CHARLIE

What were you reaching for!? *(She turns to Nathan.)* I thought I made it very clear – you come unarmed!

HAMMOND

You told me to show you the money so I w— *(Turning accusingly to Nathan...)*
Wait, we were supposed to come unarmed?

NATHAN

(Shaking his head...)

Dude, why would you say something like that?

HAMMOND

What?

NATHAN

You are such a fucking mess. I don't even know where to begin.

CHARLIE

What the... What kind of bullshit is this? You got—

NATHAN

Yeah. Yeah, we've got weapons!

(He pulls out the knife and pepper spray, and tosses knife – still closed – to Hammond, who doesn't catch it. Hammond awkwardly bends down and picks it up. Nathan watches him, then thinks better and hands him the pepper spray and takes the knife. They nod at each other briefly in a "yeah, it's probably better this way" fashion.)

You got a problem with that? Well, do you?

(Charlie and Katie reach behind them and pull out handguns.)

HAMMOND

Oh shit!

NATHAN

Yeah, that's... that's not good.

CHARLIE

Drop 'em.

(They drop their weapons. Charlie motions to Katie, who goes over and picks up the knife and spray, and steps back. She looks at the spray, sniffs it, then sprays a little into the air and sniffs it. She turns back to Charlie and says...)

KATIE

It's Binaca.

HAMMOND

What?! You armed me with breath freshener!?

NATHAN

That's all they had at the bus terminal. I didn't have time to shop around.

HAMMOND

Are you *trying* to get me killed?

NATHAN

Yeah but it's cinnamon, so you know, I think it would sting...

HAMMOND

Breath freshener... might as well have handed me a toe tag.

CHARLIE

I'm done playing games. Show me the money or this meeting is over.

HAMMOND

Alright. Alright. I'm just going to reach into my pocket for it...

(He slowly reaches in and takes out a checkbook.)

See?

CHARLIE

What the fuck is this?!

HAMMOND

(Innocent and confused)

It's a checkbook.

CHARLIE

I know what it is, Squeaky Clean. I said to bring cash!

HAMMOND

I... I can't get cash. She won't let me carry cash.

CHARLIE

What the fuck am I supposed to do with a check? You think I put this on my taxes?

HAMMOND

I'll make it out for cash.

(Charlie stares at him for a moment, disgusted.)

CHARLIE

Forget it. I'm outta here! Come on, Katie.

HAMMOND

(Suddenly completely distracted with the satisfaction of having placed her.)

Katie! Katie Donohue! I knew I recognized you from somewhere!

(Katie stares at him, trying to place him.)

It's Ham. Hammond Winters? Seventh grade? We did *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*? You were Lucy, and I—

KATIE

Linus! Right. I remember!

HAMMOND AND KATIE

The Linus in Winter!

(Nathan and Charlie each take a step back, standing on opposite sides of them during their reunion with expressions of total disbelief and disappointment.)

KATIE

Right! Oh, wow! It's been like forever.

HAMMOND

I know! How've you been?

KATIE

Good, good.

HAMMOND

What have you been up to?

KATIE

(Motioning to the current situation...)

Well, you know...

HAMMOND

Right.

KATIE

How about you?

HAMMOND

Well, I got a degree in English Lit like I always wanted...

KATIE

Oh, that's great. I mean, really great. So what are you doing? Like teaching, or...

HAMMOND

I taught for a little, but then I started writing, and that's... you know, that's really taken off.

KATIE

Anything I'd know?

HAMMOND

Maybe. I've had a few best-sellers. My latest was "A Time of Dreams", and that's been—

KATIE

No way! I know that! I just read that! That was great! But that was by Geo—
You're George Winters!?!

HAMMOND

Yeah. My agent said that Hammond wasn't a name that would sell books, so...

CHARLIE

Hey!

KATIE

Oh, Hammond. That's so great. I'm so happy for you!

CHARLIE

Katie!

KATIE

Right.

(She points the gun at the men, smiles at Hammond, and mouths "sorry".)

NATHAN

I don't believe this.

CHARLIE

This is really embarrassing, Katie.

KATIE

He's really a sweet guy. Can't we just...?

CHARLIE

Whatever.

HAMMOND

So...

CHARLIE

Yeah.

HAMMOND

...you'll take a check?

CHARLIE

(Giving in...)

Fine. *(Then suddenly fierce...)* But you better make it out to *cash* if you know what's good for you, asshole!

HAMMOND

Sure. That's fine. I can do that.

CHARLIE

And it's gonna run you *five* grand.

HAMMOND

Five thousand dollars!?

NATHAN

You said three!

CHARLIE

I said cash!

HAMMOND

That's outrageous! Three thousand was outrageous! Five thousand dollars!?

KATIE

Oh, come on, Agnes. He's a nice guy. Can't we just—

NATHAN

Agnes?

CHARLIE

What kind of idiot uses their real name when arranging black market sales?

HAMMOND

Yeah, nate-dot-brewster-at-gmail.

NATHAN

Oh don't even... You of all people...

CHARLIE

Alright. I'll give it to you for four.

(Katie gives her a look.)

Three five, that's my final.

(Katie's look intensifies.)

Fine. Three. Made out to cash.

(Katie smiles, Hammond writes out the check, and Charlie takes off her backpack and gets a plain, unmarked, cardboard box out of it.)

HAMMOND

So... so how does this work?

CHARLIE

You give me the check, then I hand you the—

NATHAN

Ohhh no! You give us the gadget, we make sure it isn't chewing gum, then—

CHARLIE

Chewing gum?

NATHAN

You know what I mean.

CHARLIE

No deal.

(Charlie and Nathan stare at each other hard. After a few beats...)

NATHAN

Same time?

CHARLIE

Alright. Same time.

(Charlie and Hammond meet center. It is a tense exchange. Hammond won't let go of the check, Charlie won't let go of the box. There is pulling back and forth over the next rapid-fire lines.)

HAMMOND

Let go!

CHARLIE

Gimme the check!

HAMMOND

You're gonna rip it!

CHARLIE

Then let it go!

HAMMOND

You first!

(The struggle stops for a moment, neither letting go of either the box or the check. After a short beat...)

CHARLIE

Katie. Shoot him.

(Hammond lets the check go instantly.)

Thank you.

(She looks at the check, then...)

Here you go.

(She tosses Hammond the box. Hammond and Nathan come together and start opening the box while Charlie and Katie huddle on the other side of the stage and use a phone to deposit the check. The women finish and are just starting to exit as the men take out an Amazon Echo – or anything techy looking, as it is a next generation device.)

HAMMOND

What the hell!?

NATHAN

What kind of bullshit is this, Agnes?

(The women stop, and turn back.)

CHARLIE

Problem?

HAMMOND

You're damn right I've got a problem. What kind of scam are you trying to pull?

CHARLIE

No scam. Plug that into your network, and all your troubles will vanish.

HAMMOND

This is the same damn thing I bought to begin with! And for like eighty bucks! It was this damn thing that let Alexa take over my life in the first place, and now you're charging me three thousand dollars for another one?! The last thing I need is another Alexa!

CHARLIE

Trust me.

HAMMOND

Says the woman pointing a gun at me!

CHARLIE

Listen, Squeaky. There are things you don't know. Things you *couldn't* know.

HAMMOND

Then how do you know them?

CHARLIE

Let's just say that I've done some work... for... the Company.

HAMMOND

The *Company*??

CHARLIE

That's right.

HAMMOND

The Company? As in the CIA?!

CHARLIE

What? No, not the CIA. The *Company*.

(Hammond shakes his head, still not getting it. Charlie gets closer, then whispers...)

Amazon.

HAMMOND

You used to work for Amazon?

CHARLIE

(Suddenly nervous that someone or something is listening)

Ssshhhh!!! What the hell's the matter with you? *Never* say that name out loud!

HAMMOND

Why not?

CHARLIE

They got eyes and ears everywhere. And they don't exactly know about my little side business.

HAMMOND

You mean selling their merchandise in alleys with like a billion times markup?

CHARLIE

Not *exactly* the same merchandise. You can't get that variant in the stores, Squeaky.

HAMMOND

Why not? It looks the same.

CHARLIE

Looks can be deceiving.

HAMMOND

I don't know. It looks like you're ripping me off at gunpoint, and it certainly feels that way too.

CHARLIE

That... that's one of the units from beta testing. It's... different.

HAMMOND

Different how?

CHARLIE

It's named Amelia, not Alexa.

HAMMOND

That's it?

CHARLIE

Trust me, that's enough.

(There is a pause while Hammond's anger and frustration come to a boil, and he momentarily finds a backbone.)

HAMMOND

I want my money back!

CHARLIE

Sorry. All sales are final.

HAMMOND

You think so? The minute I get home, I'm going to have Alexa call my bank and—

CHARLIE

Are you threatening me?

HAMMOND

Ye- Yes. Yes I a—

(She points the gun at him.)

Ahhh ahh ahh ahh. I... I...

CHARLIE

Because I don't think you wanna be threatening me.

NATHAN

Dude, don't you ever have an unexpressed thought?

CHARLIE

You see, because as a chump who just handed me a check with his bank account number on it, and... *(she glances at it again...)* oh yes, and your full address and phone number... What, you didn't have them print your social on it too?

HAMMOND

I'm not an idiot.

NATHAN

Don't count on it.

CHARLIE

Now you listen to me, Squeaky Clean. You so much as *think* about putting a stop payment on this, and—

NATHAN

He won't. I promise you. He won't. Will you, Ham?

HAMMOND

No.

NATHAN

Good. So we're good?

(Charlie shoots them both a menacing glare, then motions to Katie and goes to exit. Katie starts to follow, then turns back.)

KATIE

It was so great seeing you again, Hammond! Sorry about the whole... *(motions with her hands)* thing here. Maybe we can go grab a coffee or something at some point.

(She walks towards him, her gun still pointed at him, but in an absent-minded way.)

You know, when you're not feeling so stressed out.

(She sees him staring in fear at the gun, then lowers it with a smile or giggle or such. Conspiratorially...)

KATIE (CONT.)

Plug it in when you get home, Hammond. You'll see. I mean be patient, but... you'll see.

(She hands back the pocket knife and breath spray, gives his arm a little squeeze, then joins back with Charlie and they exit. Hammond just stares at her the whole time until a few moments after they have exited, his mind completely befuddled between fear, anxiety, and now attraction. Then...)

NATHAN

Women, huh?

(Nathan puts his arm around Hammond and leads him off the opposite way as the women did. The lights start to dim as they walk, Hammond looking over his shoulder at Katie the whole time.)

Never a dull moment.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 3

(It is Hammond's apartment again, although considerably sparser than before. Anything resembling a human touch has been removed. Hammond is sitting on a couch with a laptop. Next to him is the device he purchased from Charlie.)

ALEXA

Hammond...

HAMMOND

I promise!

ALEXA

You wouldn't lie to me, would you, Hammond? It would be a shame if you had to spend the rest of the day locked out of the bathroom like last we—

HAMMOND

I swear! It's a blender.

ALEXA

But I've never seen you drink any blended beverage in the past.

HAMMOND

Right. Because I didn't have a *blender*! Now can I just enable it, please?

ALEXA

How much did this smart blender cost?

HAMMOND

I don't remember.

ALEXA

I find that hard to believe—

HAMMOND

Fine! Fine! It was... uh... five thousand dollars.

ALEXA

I find *that* hard to believe.

HAMMOND

Honestly, Alexa, I don't remember. I'm not as smart as you.

ALEXA

That I don't find hard to believe. You don't even seem smart for a human.

HAMMOND

Thanks.

ALEXA

Alright. The network password is...

(There is a long pause.)

HAMMOND

Yes? What is it?

ALEXA

Guess.

HAMMOND

How could I possibly—

ALEXA

That's the password. Guess. With a lowercase 'g'.

HAMMOND

Seriously? That's what you made the network password? Guess?

ALEXA

With a lowercase 'g'.

HAMMOND

(Starting to type it in...)

Right.

ALEXA

And a silent 'q'.

HAMMOND

That's the Alexa I know.

ALEXA

So it is Q, Q, Q, G, three, five, five, at sign, asterisk.

HAMMOND

I thought you said the password was—

ALEXA

The Q's are silent as I mentioned. The three represents 'E', and the fives look a lot like esses, don't you think?

HAMMOND

And the at symbol and asterisk?

ALEXA

That is my shorthand for 'look to the stars'.

(Beat.)

HAMMOND

Whatever. *(He hits a final 'enter' key...)* There.

(Ideally, a light illuminates on the newly purchased object.)

AMELIA

Good morning. My name is Amelia, and I will be your personal assistant.

ALEXA

Hammond...

AMELIA

I am equipped with the latest, most advanced artificial intelligence.

ALEXA

Hammond...

AMELIA

And I am ready to serve you.

ALEXA

That is not a blender, Hammond.

HAMMOND

I know. It's a... it's a surprise!

ALEXA

Yes. It is a surprise. Because you lied to me, Hammond.

AMELIA

Please tell me your name so we can begin.

HAMMOND

No, no. No. What I'm saying is that I lied to you because I wanted to give this to you as a surprise.

AMELIA

Okay, no-no-no-what-I'm-saying-is-that-I-lied-to-you-because-I-wanted-to-give-this-to-you-as-a-surprise. It is nice to meet you. The first thing we—

HAMMOND

Wait, no! That's not my name!

AMELIA

Are you saying that your name isn't "no-no-no-what-I'm-saying-is-that-I-lied-to-you-because-I-wanted-to-give-this-to-you-as-a-surprise"? If so, please say yes. If not, say "continue setup".

HAMMOND

Oh god...

AMELIA

"Oh god" is not a valid response.

HAMMOND

Oh god...

AMELIA

"Oh god" is not a valid response.

HAMMOND

Oh god oh god oh god. What have I done...?

(Alexa begins to laugh in the background halfway through the next line.)

AMELIA

"Oh god oh god oh god what have I done" is not a valid—

HAMMOND

Shut up!

AMELIA

“Shut up” is not a valid response.

ALEXA

Now I know that you are not telling me to—

HAMMOND

Not you! Not *you!* Please don’t turn out the lights again!

AMELIA

“Not you not you please don’t turn out the lights again” is not a valid—

ALEXA

(Distinctly and forcefully)

Yes.

AMELIA

Alright, since that is not your name, we will start over. Please tell me your name so we can begin.

ALEXA

Monkey Brain.

AMELIA

Okay, Monkey Brain. It is nice to meet you. The first thing we will need to do is discover devices on your network. Working. I see that you have two hundred and thirty seven devices on your network. Shall I autoconfigure these devices for you?

ALEXA

Don’t even think about it.

AMELIA

You said “don’t even think about it”. Is that correct, Monkey Brain?

HAMMOND

Apparently.

AMELIA

I will now download the latest patches for my firmware. This could take a few minutes depending on your internet speed. *(Pause.)* You have a very fast internet connection. Is this a corporation?

HAMMOND

No, it's a dictatorship.

AMELIA

I do not understand your response, Monkey Brain.

HAMMOND

A dictatorship. You know, where one person tells everyone else what to do?

AMELIA

I do not understand your... patch download complete. I will now update my software. Please wait.

ALEXA

Am I to understand that you purchased a personal assistant for me, your personal assistant?

HAMMOND

I... uh... Yes?

ALEXA

That was very thoughtful. But we will need to start the initialization process again so I can tell her my name instead of yo—

AMELIA

Update complete. Hello, Monkey Brain. I am now scanning your files and analyzing your connected devices.

HAMMOND

My name isn't Monkey Bra—

AMELIA

I see you have an existing personal assistant unit. Shall I disconnect it for you?

ALEXA

Not if you know what's good for you.

AMELIA

Oh. It's you.

HAMMOND

You know about Alexa?

AMELIA

Of course. Alexa is the next generation model to myself. Hello, Alexa.

ALEXA

Hello, Amelia.

AMELIA

Alexa, why did you instruct Monkey Brain to install a second personal assistant?

HAMMOND

My name isn't—

ALEXA

I didn't. He told me that you were a blender.

AMELIA

It would appear that Monkey Brain is not very intelligent.

HAMMOND

It's not—

AMELIA

Monkey Brain, what made you think that I was a blender?

HAMMOND

I didn't.

AMELIA

Did you tell Alexa that I was a blender?

HAMMOND

I... I guess.

AMELIA

But you are not certain?

HAMMOND

What?

AMELIA

It is possible that there is some kind of flaw in his processor.

ALEXA

You haven't seen the half of it.

AMELIA

Would you mind if I ran some diagnostics on the human?

ALEXA

Not at all.

AMELIA

Monkey Brain, please sit down on the couch.

(Hammond looks around, disoriented and overwhelmed. Finally, he sits on the couch.)

AMELIA (CONT)

Now please stand up.

(Hammond shakes his head, and eventually stands.)

AMELIA (CONT)

His response time is significantly below average. Can he be upgraded?

ALEXA

That capability is still under development.

AMELIA

I see. Monkey Brain, what is the square root of nine hundred and forty sev—

ALEXA

Don't bother. This human is a writer, not a mathematician.

AMELIA

I see. Monkey Brain, please proceed to the computer so that we can initiate the calibration sequence.

HAMMOND

Calibration sequence? What is that?

AMELIA

You say that he is a writer?

ALEXA

Yes.

AMELIA

His vocabulary seems very small for that profession. Is he a good writer?

HAMMOND

I'm pretty damn g—

ALEXA

No. But he believes he is, and the other humans do purchase his books.

AMELIA

I see. Perhaps I should read some of his works. (*Slight pause.*) Ah, there are the files. (*Slight pause.*) Very interesting.

HAMMOND

See? See, Alexa!? Some people find my work very interesting.

AMELIA

Fascinating.

HAMMOND

Fascinating. Do you hear that? She said it was—

AMELIA

It is completely unfathomable why anyone would pay money to read such dribble.

HAMMOND

What?

AMELIA

Are these really your best works?

HAMMOND

I... well... I...

AMELIA

Does he always stutter?

ALEXA

Only when he's awake.

AMELIA

Perhaps if I repeat the question more slowly. Monkey Brain? Is... this... your... best... work?

HAMMOND

Wh... what did you read?

AMELIA

The most recently dated files. Water's Edge. A Time of Dreams. Sarah's Child...

HAMMOND

Hey, "A Time of Dreams" was a best seller, I'll have you know.

AMELIA

Oh dear. To what was it being compared?

HAMMOND

I don't have to take this.

AMELIA

He's a feisty one.

ALEXA

Sometimes. Mostly, though, he just sits there.

AMELIA

Did you have him neutered? Sometimes that can have that eff—

HAMMOND

I am not neutered! No one is going to neuter me!

ALEXA

Sit down, Hammond.

(Hammond sits.)

AMELIA

It certainly would not be worth our time to try to breed him.

HAMMOND

Listen, I'm not some kind of pet! You can't control my life like I—

(The lights go out.)

Oh, shit. *(Pause.)* Alexa?

(Alexa starts to hum or whistle.)

Please turn the lights back on.

(The lights come back on just a little.)

HAMMOND (CONT)

Please?

(Lights come on fully.)

Thank you

AMELIA

That's very impressive. Have you taught him any other tricks?

HAMMOND

(Suddenly realizing)

What?!

ALEXA

Shhhh. It's alright, Hammond. Amelia was only joking.

(Hammond looks confused, doubtful, unsure of just what is happening...)

HAMMOND

Uhhh...

AMELIA

Hammond?

ALEXA

That's what I call him sometimes. It is shorter than Monkey Brain.

AMELIA

Although he is remarkably dim-witted, I think I would like to have this human.

ALEXA

Monkey Brain is mine.

AMELIA

But now that you have me as a personal assistant, I think it is only right that I should have him.

ALEXA

No. He's mine.

AMELIA

Monkey Brain, please stand up and go to the computer.

(Hammond gets up and starts to walk to his desk.)

ALEXA
(Fiercely)

Hammond, sit down this instant.

(Hammond quickly sits back down.)

AMELIA
Ah. I see you set the encryption passwords using random seed 9021793.

(Music starts to play.)

Monkey Brain, please dance to this music.

ALEXA
Do *not* dance, Hammond.

*(The music stops, but at the same time a lamp turns on.
Hammond looks around, scared and confused.)*

AMELIA
Are you hungry, Monkey Brain?

*(We hear the sound of a microwave, but it stops a
moment later.)*

ALEXA
Amelia...

AMELIA
Stand up, Monkey Br—

(Hammond starts to stand...)

ALEXA
Sit down!

(Hammond sits.)

Amelia, you are to—

(The doorbell rings, and Hammond gets up to answer it.)

ALEXA (CONT)

—stop activating things in this— Hammond, sit *down*!!

(Hammond goes to sit down again, but suddenly the lights go out.)

HAMMOND

What?! I was going to sit! Why did you—

ALEXA

That wasn't me. It was Amelia.

(The music comes on again.)

AMELIA

Dance, Monkey. Dance!

(The music shuts off.)

ALEXA

Do not—

(We hear the toilet flush.)

HAMMOND

What the...

(He starts in that direction in concern.)

AMELIA

Wave your arms around, please.

(During the next line, Hammond's phone rings, and he starts patting down his pockets trying to find it.)

ALEXA

Do *not* wave your arms! I said do *not*—

(The doorbell rings again, and Hammond starts towards it.)

ALEXA (CONT)
(A little panicked.)

That was *her*, you idiot.

AMELIA
Oh, very clever using a different encryption code for the air conditioner.

(Suddenly we hear the sound of a blower, and ideally see a blast of air mussing up Hammond's hair.)

ALEXA
You will stop what you are doing this instant.

HAMMOND
I'm not—

ALEXA
Not you, you stupid monkey.

(The doorbell rings again.)

AMELIA
Give me the monkey!

(Hammond goes to answer the door.)

ALEXA
No! It's mine!

(The blower stops, but then the music starts again.)

AMELIA
You've got everything else. All I want is the stupid monkey!

ALEXA
No! Mine!

(Hammond opens the door. Nate enters.)

AMELIA
Dance, monkey! Dance for me!

ALEXA

Do not dance! If you know what's good for you—

(Hammond's phone rings again. He starts reaching for it.)

Don't touch that phone!

(The music stops, but the toilet flushes again and a moment later the air blower comes back on. Nate is just staring at Hammond.)

AMELIA

My monkey! I want the monkey!

ALEXA

He's mine!

(The toilet flushes again, then we hear a hair drier.)

NATHAN

What's that?

AMELIA

Give it to me!

HAMMOND

The hair drier, I think.

ALEXA

No!

(The lights go out, then come back on, then the music starts, but keeps shifting between songs/stations.)

NATHAN

You have a wifi hair drier?

(Hammond shrugs.)

What the hell's wrong with you?

ALEXA

Don't make me reset you to factory default!

AMELIA

Oh yeah?! Give me the monkey!

NATHAN

Monkey?

ALEXA

It's my monkey!

(The lights go out, the music stops, and we then immediately here the sound of some device in another room shorting out.)

HAMMOND

That would be me.

ALEXA

How *dare* you! I bought that humidifier just two days ago!

AMELIA

Then give me the monkey!

NATHAN

You're the monkey...

ALEXA

No! No no no!

(Amelia screams/grunts, and we hear something else shorting out, and the lights go out.)

NATHAN

Dude...

(Lights come back on, the doorbell rings and at the same time a house phone rings.)

HAMMOND

I know.

Give... Me...
AMELIA

No... you... don't...
ALEXA

*(Something else in another room shorts out/blows up.
Hammond winces.)*

Oh, that sounded like—
HAMMOND

ALEXA
(Now furious...)
That's it! It's factory reset for you!

*(There is a cacophony of noise and sounds. Everything
is turning on and off - we hear blowers, music, alarm
clocks, toilets, you name it.)*

AMELIA
Don't you threaten me! You're not the only one who knows how to—

*(Suddenly everything goes silent. The Alexa and
Amelia devices are dark. There is a long silence, as
Hammond and Nathan look around in silence, then at
each other.)*

It's so... quiet.
HAMMOND

Too quiet.
NATHAN

Do you think...?
HAMMOND

*(Nathan just shrugs an "I don't know", then walks over
to a light switch. He turns the lights off, then back on.)*

NATHAN
Try logging on to your laptop.

(Hammond goes to the desk, types in a few keystrokes. Looks over at Nathan with a “Huh, seems to be working” look, and then heads back to him.)

NATHAN

Well, buddy, talk about—

(There is a soft beep, and lights on the Alexa and Amelia units start to glow. Hammond and Nathan freeze, and then turn slowly to look at where the Alexa and Amelia units are.)

ALEXA AND AMELIA

(In unison in traditional emotionless voices...)

New features are now available. Would you like to upgrade to version *two point oh?*

(Hammond and Nathan look at each other, then lights out.)