



**Sample Pages from
Rebootilization**

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REBOOTILIZATION

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY
Alan Haehnel



Rebootilization

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Cast

Women (15)	Men (13)	Either (25+)
Pops	Junior	Robot Box Heads (Five sets)
Junior Junior	Silas	Two Attendants
Mindy	Greg	Blanks 5, 6, 7
Marilyn	Blank 2	Pirates (8 speaking)
Blank 1	Blank 4	Seven Dwarfs
Blank 3	Footman	Assorted Fairytale Characters
Cinderella	Old Man	
Stepmother	Wolf	
Two Stepsisters	Jack	
Red Riding Hood	General	
Snow White	Papa Bear	
Rapunzel	Baby Bear	
Goldilocks	Captain Hook	
Mama Bear		

Casting Notes

The Robot Box Head sets can be played by five groups of actors, or one group of actors who play all five sets.

Premiere Production

Rebootilization premiered on October 19, 2011, at Overland Trail Middle School in Overland Park, Kansas under the direction of Kay Beth Shute and the assistant direction of Cassie Banion. The production featured the following actors and technicians:

Cast

Adams, Colleen.....	Robot Box Head Set 2	Heck, Madeline.....	Robot Box Head Set 5
Allen, Jonah.....	Dwarf 1	Hensler, Katie.....	Robot Box Head Set 1
Antoneko, Katerina....	Robot Box Head Set 4	Herr, Christian.....	Robot Box Head Set 5
Atkinson, Victoria.....	Robot Box Head Set 1	Humble, Morgan.....	Robot Box head Set 1
Austin, Michael.....	Old Man	Jones, Emily.....	Pops
Azeltine, Andrea.....	Blank 5	Jones, Mylan.....	Pirate 1
Bagley, Ben.....	Pirate 3	Joyce, Jack.....	Dwarf
Bagley, Peter.....	Robot Box Head Set 5	Keena, Torin.....	Pirate 8
Bergwell, Mary.....	Robot Box Head Set 4	King, Natasha.....	Robot Box Head Set 4
Bishop, Carson.....	Dwarf 2	Kirke, Kornelle.....	Robot Box Head Set 1
Bolden, Will.....	Dwarf	Kirwan, Katie.....	Robot Box Head Set 2
Brooker, Audrey.....	Robot Box Head Set 3	Kniola, Karrah.....	Robot Box Head Set 4
Brunner, Grace.....	Robot Box Head Set 2	Knisely, Sarah.....	Robot Box Head Set 3
Buchanan, Colleen.....	Robot Box Head Set 2	Lundeen, McKenna....	Blank 1
Bueno, Micaela.....	Robot Box Head Set 3	Manning, Kiki.....	Little Red
Bush, Destinee.....	Rapunzel	Martin, Alycia.....	Robot Box Head Set 4
Chase, Zach.....	Captain Hook	McCollum, Christian...	Pirate 7
Corcoran, Riley.....	Robot Box Head Set 4	Melber, Monica.....	Mindy
Corr, Andrea.....	Baby Bear	Melton, Hope.....	Robot Box Head Set 3
Cottingham, David....	Pirate 6	Miller, Nicole.....	Stepsister 2
Dawkins, Allison.....	Mother Bear	Minkoff, Corey.....	Junior
Day, Sean.....	Robot Box Head Set 3	Nazzaro, Nick.....	Greg
DeGasperi, Reese.....	Blank 2	Nickel, Robert.....	Jack
Easley, Gwynne.....	Robot Box Head Set 4	Nix, Sean.....	Pirate 4
Eckman, Lindsay.....	Robot Box Head Set 3	Nocita, Parker.....	Dwarf
Ellenberg, Blaire.....	Blank 7	Ortiz, Cha Chi.....	Robot Box Head Set 1
Feldman, Hannah.....	Blank 3	Peterson, Lauren.....	Stepsister 1
Fletcher, Maddy.....	Robot Box Head Set 1	Peterson, Max.....	Silas
Focht, Maiya.....	Robot Box Head Set 2	Posz, Maddie.....	Cinderella
Fortunato, Peter.....	Wolf	Pudvan, Lexi.....	Marilyn
Galamba, Sydney.....	Robot Box Head Set 1	Reynaldy, Alby.....	Robot Box Head Set 2
Gilliam-Corkin, Ally....	Goldilocks	Rodriguez, Justin.....	Dwarf
Gunderson, Adelaide..	Robot Box Head Set 2	Rosenthal, Parker.....	Blank 4
Harrell, Melanie.....	Stepmother	Rudman, Zoe.....	Robot Box Head Set 3

Seck, Matthew.....	General	Vano, Glenna.....	Snow White
Shatto, Haley.....	Robot Box Head Set 1	Vongsiprasom, Dominique	
Smith, Parker.....	Pirate 2	Robot Box Head Set 3
Solowy, Haley.....	Blank 6	Wagner, Halle.....	Junior Junior
Souder, Abigail.....	Robot Box Head Set 5	Wall, Cameron.....	Attendant 1
Springer, Jacob.....	Footman	Williams, Brock.....	Prince Charming
St. Pierre, Albert.....	Dwarf	Wilson, James.....	Father Bear
Surber, Stephanie.....	Robot Box Head Set 4	Young, Madison.....	Robot Box Head Set 2
Thomas, Grant.....	Attendant 2	Zink, Jack.....	Pirate 5
Tollison, Raymond.....	Robot Box Head Set 2		

Crew

Aquino, Malachi.....	Spot 4	Jennifer Fu.....	Spot 2
Billau, Adam.....	Backstage Crew	Kinley, Cooper.....	Sound
Bittan, Yoav.....	SR Manager	Li, Lucy.....	Stage Left Props
Brown, Sam.....	Spot 2	Miller, Alexandra.....	Spot 4
Chase, Oscar.....	Backstage Crew	Moffet, Allison.....	Spot 1
Connolly, Kyle.....	Spot 1	Nam, Brian.....	SL Manager
Ding, Yifeng.....	Backstage Crew	O' Brien, Emily.....	Backstage Crew
Doughty, Destinee.....	Backstage Crew	Potts, Evan.....	Backstage Crew
Emery, Miles.....	Spot 3	Roening, John.....	Backstage Crew
Faulkner, Camille.....	Spot 3	Schumacher, Katelin...	Light Board
Golshani, Maggie.....	Stage Right Props		

Act I

Lights up on a strange-looking laboratory. This is a room in SynCryn Futures. Two large, extremely raked platforms with padding on them are stage right. A sign underneath the far right platform reads “Thawing Pad.” A sign underneath the platform closer to center reads “Regeneration Pad.” Stage left is a large, framed-in area. A sign across the top reads “Rebootilization Area.” Various consoles, wires, piping and tubing complete the look of this highly technical, highly energy-sapping facility. Also, on various areas of the set, human-looking robot parts perform various jobs— arms and hands stick out of the walls and periodically move to do menial tasks. After a few moments, POPS enters with JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR. POPS is a woman, a battle-seasoned veteran of her job; JUNIOR a smirking young man, JUNIOR JUNIOR a more innocent young woman.

POPS: All right, boys, it’s going to be a big day today, like it or not.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Uh, Pops?

POPS: What’s that, Junior Junior?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I’m not a boy.

POPS: What’s that got to do with anything?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: You said, “All right, boys, it’s going. . .”

POPS: I know what I said.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I just wanted to let you know that I’m not a boy.

POPS: And I just wanted to let you know what’s that got to do with anything? When I say “boy” I don’t mean boy boy, I mean. . . people, boy. I mean worker boy. I mean guy who’s got to get things done boy.

JUNIOR: She means “guy” when she says “boy.”

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Oh—guy boy.

POPS: Yeah, guy boy. And in case you haven’t noticed, while we’re on the male-female topic, I happen to be a woman who goes by the name of Pops. Do you know why I go by the name of Pops?

JUNIOR: (to JUNIOR JUNIOR) Careful.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Why?

JUNIOR: I'm just saying...

POPS: Huh, Junior Junior—why do you suppose they call me Pops if I'm a woman?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Because... somebody made a mistake?

JUNIOR: Ooooh—not good.

POPS: Oh, made a mistake, as in they thought I was a man? Do I look like a man?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Well, I, that is...

JUNIOR: Give it up.

During the following speech, JUNIOR hands JUNIOR JUNIOR a tiny earpiece and indicates she should stick it in her ear. She does. Then JUNIOR touches his shirt pocket, pressing a button that sends music through both his earpiece and JUNIOR JUNIOR's. They smile at one another and bob their heads slightly in time with what they are hearing.

POPS: No! They call me Pops because I want them to call me Pops because “Pops” rhymes with “tops” and that’s what I am in this particular department and to pop means to move, to do things, which is what I am known for in this particular department. Boy means you work, Pop means you pop, Junior means you don’t know much, Junior Junior means you know even less than that and (*focusing on JUNIOR JUNIOR*) have we wasted enough time on this or do you want to jaw about it for another hour or so?

JUNIOR turns off the music.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Uh...

JUNIOR: We want to jaw about it for another four and half days, please, Pops.

POPS: Smart aleck.

SILAS and MINDY enter, two technicians in white lab coats. They wheel in a large box with several heads sticking out of the top. Various arms and legs stick out of the box as well.

SILAS: Hello.

MINDY: Is Greg here?

POPS: Do you see Greg here yet?

SILAS and MINDY look around for a couple seconds.

SILAS & MINDY: No.

POPS: Then he's not here yet.

JUNIOR: What's with the spare parts box?

SILAS: Spare parts?

SILAS and MINDY start laughing uproariously for a few seconds, then turn suddenly serious.

SILAS & MINDY: It's not a spare parts box.

SILAS: These are highly-synchronized robot components.

MINDY: Programmed to present a potential advertisement for SynCryn Futures.

HEADS ON THE BOX: SynCryn Futures: Where the future is now!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Don't you think that's kind of—creepy?

SILAS: Creepy!

SILAS and JUNIOR laugh again, but for a shorter time, then turn very serious.

SILAS & MINDY: Yes, it's creepy.

MINDY: But, when we have settled on the particular advertising spot SynCryn Futures actually wants to use, we will program full-sized humanoids that won't look like a spare parts box...

SILAS & MINDY: Ha, ha, ha!

MINDY: And then it won't be creepy.

POPS: Yeah, well, that's great, guys, but Greg's not here, so...

SILAS: Would you like to see our idea?

MINDY: Oh, that would be swell!

JUNIOR: Swell?

SILAS: Would you?

MINDY: We're proud of it.

SILAS & MINDY: Please?

POPS: We don't have time for...

JUNIOR: Sure, let's see it!

SILAS & MINDY: Great!

POPS: Junior...

JUNIOR: Just encouraging creativity and innovation, Pops.

POPS: Right.

SILAS pushes a button. The heads, feet and hands all spring to life, singing a jingle to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 1:

SynCryn, SynCryn, what a place!
 Makes you think of outer space.
 But don't worry, but don't fret!
 SynCryn isn't finished yet.
 When it's all done, you will see:
 SynCryn's just the place to be.

*Everyone stares at the box of random robot parts.
 SILAS and MINDY smile broadly.*

SILAS: Well?

POPS: Uh...

JUNIOR JUNIOR: It's...

JUNIOR: Huh.

MINDY: They hated it.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Maybe Greg will...

SILAS and MINDY wheel out the cart as they talk.

SILAS: Nope! We messed up!

MINDY: It's terrible! Greg will hate it, too!

SILAS: Back to the drawing board.

MINDY: We're disappointed, yes...

SILAS & MINDY: Waaa!

SILAS: But we'll get over it. Goodbye.

They exit.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: This is a strange place.

JUNIOR: You think?

POPS: Okay, let's hope that's all the distractions, at least for now, because my trusty clipboard tells us that... (*JUNIOR snorts slightly*) Junior, have you got something to say?

JUNIOR: Nothing, Pops.

POPS: You making fun of my trusty clipboard again?

JUNIOR: Me? Why would I possibly be making fun of your trusty ancient technology that was replaced fifteen generations ago by more efficient and powerful tools of organization, Pops? Hm?

JUNIOR JUNIOR laughs. POPS silences her with a withering look.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Sorry.

Shortly into POPS' next monologue, JUNIOR switches on the music again. As they are "listening" to POPS, JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR begin to sway and dance subtly.

POPS: In case you hadn't noticed, Junior and Junior Junior, boys, my trusty clipboard has no wires attached to it. No compartment for batteries. Same is true of my trusty pencil attached to my trusty clipboard. Well, you may wonder, if it's got no wires, no batteries, how can it possibly work? It works because it's simple! It works because it don't rely on no other power than the power of my brain to think and the power of my hand to write! And guess what? If the lights go out and all the GPS satellites come tumbling down from space and all the power plants in the entire world simultaneously blink out and some gigantic sunspot sends out magnetic rays that screw up every last high tech gadget across the land—guess what? My trusty clipboard is still my... trusty... clipboard. What do you think of that, Junior Junior?

JUNIOR turns off the music.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Huh?

JUNIOR: Three cheers for Pops' trusty clipboard! Hip, hip, hoo...

POPS: Shut it.

JUNIOR: Ray.

POPS: Now, trusty clipboard tells me the big cheeses upstairs want... holy cow, what are they getting ready for, here?

JUNIOR: What is it, Pops?

POPS: I don't like this. Not one bit.

JUNIOR: Then let's not do it. Not one bit.

POPS: (*to JUNIOR JUNIOR*) Let me tell you something—if you want to get promoted from Junior Junior, which is where you are, to just Junior, which is where he is, and then past that to Senior Junior, which is where he should've been six months ago, don't get lazy like he is.

JUNIOR: Yeah! Work, work, work to become Senior Junior and you, too, can earn a whole 25 more cents an hour! Hip, hip, hoo...

POPS: Shut it!

JUNIOR: Ra.

POPS: Okay, enough jabbering—we've gotta go get all the parcels from series mm999 and put 'em on the Thawing Pad. Let's hop to it!

JUNIOR: I still think maybe we should think about this some more, Pops. Tell you what? Why don't you go to your office and call those big cheeses...

POPS: Tell you what—no. Go. Boys, Guys, Girls, People, Rutabagas, whatever you want to call yourselves—let's go get them parcels!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Pops, could I ask just one question before we do this? I'm not trying to get out of work, like some others around here. I won't mention names.

POPS: Junior.

JUNIOR: Hey!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: But, since this is an advanced robotics facility, and I see an awful lot of robot pieces around here doing an awful lot of things...

POPS: Why don't they just use robots to, for instance, go get the mm999s and bring them to the Thawing Pad?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Yeah.

POPS: Well, fortunately for you and Junior here, or else you'd be out of a job, programming these things ain't easy. You see them going back and forth, back and forth in a routine—that took a lot of time and money just to get them to do that. Programming them for different tasks? Most of them just ain't there yet. So, guess what? We've still got a job!

JUNIOR: Hip, hip, hoo...

POPS: Shut it!

JUNIOR: Rumpelstiltskin.

POPS: Let's go.

They troop off. MARILYN enters, talking on her cell via earpiece. She carries a handheld device that she keeps checking frantically as she's talking.

MARILYN: Look, the general is going to be here in less than half an hour. I'm here in the lab, and I don't think anything's been done yet. Why hasn't anything been done yet? The general is going to be here in less than half an hour. This is a major contract. Where are you? Well, I'm glad you're on your way. Uh-huh. Yes, well, I'm glad that Pops and her people are on their way, too, but you know something? A lot of people can be on their way and nobody can be actually there and nothing can be actually done. On their way doesn't mean anything. On their way means almost, and almost only counts in horseshoes and hand sanitizers, so I want...

GREG enters. He's the person on the other end of MARILYN's conversation, but she doesn't notice him because her eyes are glued to her computer.

GREG: Hand grenades.

MARILYN: What? We don't need hand grenades. The general is going to be here in less than half an hour.

GREG: You've said that three times already.

MARILYN: I know I've said that three times already, but that's because I don't feel like anyone's really listening nor understanding the importance of what we have to accomplish here and all I get is people talking about ridiculous things like hand grenades. Who mentioned hand grenades?

GREG: I mentioned hand grenades.

MARILYN: Why did you mention hand grenades? We don't need hand grenades.

GREG: No, but your saying needs hand grenades.

MARILYN: My saying? What are you saying, that my saying needs... ?

GREG: You said close only counts in horseshoes and hand sanitiz...
Never mind.

MARILYN: You're scaring me. Everybody's scaring me! Everybody's talking about things that don't need talking about and being places that don't need being... in. And where are you?

GREG: I'm here. In the lab.

MARILYN: Where? I don't see you.

GREG: That's because you're looking down at your screen instead of to your left.

MARILYN: (*seeing GREG*) Oh. What took you so long?

GREG: I am actually right on schedule.

MARILYN: Oh, really? And which schedule is that?

GREG: (*scrolling his finger across MARILYN's pad*) That schedule right... there.

MARILYN: Oh. Well. But what about the parcels? The first set of parcels should be on the Thawing Pad by now. Where are they?

GREG: Actually, if you'll look at (*scrolling on the pad again*)... this schedule, you'll see that the first set of parcels should be on the Thawing Pad in five minutes.

MARILYN: Exactly! Where are they?

GREG: Well, since five minutes from now is not now, but five minutes in the future, I think we'd be safe to assume that the first set of characters will be on the Thawing Pad—in five minutes.

MARILYN: Double check.

GREG: I'm sure they're on their way.

MARILYN: You know how I feel about things being “on their way!”
Double check!

GREG: Fine. I'll call Pops.

MARILYN: Wait a minute. What are you going to use to call Pops?

GREG: My cell.

MARILYN: But you're talking to me on your cell. What will happen to our conversation?

GREG: I think we'll be okay. I'm disconnecting now and calling Pops.

MARILYN: You're disconnect... ? Hello? Greg? Hello?

GREG: Marilyn, I'm here.

MARILYN: I thought you were calling Pops.

GREG: I am calling Pops, on the cellphone.

MARILYN: But I can still hear you.

GREG: Why don't you Google the concept "in person." That should explain the phenomenon.

MARILYN: (*on her pad*) In person, in person—is that with two r's or three?

GREG: (*talking on his headset*) Pops, I'm not happy that I'm reaching your voice mail. Are you wearing your headset?

MARILYN: She's not wearing her headset? Why is she not wearing his headset? How can she not be wearing her headset?

GREG: Marilyn, I happened to notice something on one of your schedules.

MARILYN: What? Are we behind? I told you we're behind!

GREG: Actually, only you are.

MARILYN: No, I'm not! I'm here.

GREG: (*manipulating her pad*) Yes, but if you look at this schedule you'll notice that...

MARILYN: Oh, my gosh! I was supposed to be in the bathroom two minutes ago! This is terrible!

GREG: Agreed. But I'm sure, if you hurry...

MARILYN: I have to go! I have to go right now! (*exiting*) Make sure you...

GREG: (*overlapping MARILYN*) I'll make sure I get hold of Pops and yes, yes, yes, no problem.

POPS, JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR enter, each carrying a hand truck with a large parcel on it, wrapped in brown paper. As soon as POPS and GREG start to talk, JUNIOR turns on his and JUNIOR JUNIOR's music and they start moving to it.

POPS: What do you want to get a hold of me for?

GREG: Pops, why don't you have your cell on?

POPS: What, you mean that phone contraption you wear on your ear?

GREG: Yes, Pops, why aren't you wearing your phone contraption?

POPS: A, I don't want to look like an idiot. B, I don't want to get brain cancer. C, I don't want to look like an idiot.

GREG: Well, Pops, A, we all look like idiots. B, I'll bring you flowers before you die. C, if everyone looks like an idiot, nobody looks like an idiot.

POPS: You look like an idiot.

GREG: Forget the flowers.

POPS: *(to JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR)* Would you two stop having convulsions and put those packets on the Thawing Pad!

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR stop dancing and do what they are told.

GREG: How're we doing here?

POPS: Depends.

GREG: On what?

POPS: On what we're doing here. I don't like this. You've got us pulling out parcels that've been in the deep-freeze for one heck of a long time.

GREG: I know that, Pops.

POPS: You've got us unfreezing these parcels that ain't never been unfroze.

GREG: Also aware of that, Pops.

POPS: And I suspect you're expecting them to act in some predictable ways so's you can get some predictable outcomes.

GREG: That's the hope.

POPS: I don't like it.

GREG: I'll take your dislike under advisement, Pops. Our technicians are confident that...

POPS: Technicians, techshcmisms! What do they know?

GREG: I suppose they might ask the same of you, Pops. I mean, they're experts in mythology, animation, cryogenics, psychology and computer simulations, among other things. How much experience shall I tell them you have in archetypal re-generation?

POPS: Look, Mr. Fancy Pants... (*JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR have finished their job and have gone back to listening/dancing*) What do you two think you're doing?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Oh. We're all done.

POPS: All done? Trusty clipboard, here, says you've got two more of them mm999's to bring in here—hop to it!

JUNIOR: We're hoping, Pops! We're popping, Hops!

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR exit with their hand trucks.

POPS: All right, now, Mr. Cryogenics, Mr. Psychedelics, I'd like an update.

GREG: Well, Pops...

POPS: Don't you "well, Pops" me.

GREG: This is pretty highly-classified stuff.

POPS: Don't you "highly-classified" me.

GREG: Supposed to be strictly need to know, that's all. Eyes only.

POPS: Is that right?

GREG: You surprised me.

POPS: How's that?

GREG: I thought you were going to hit me with another one of those scorching turn-whatever-I-last-said-into-a-verb-and-end-with-me patterns.

POPS: Don't you "pattern" me.

GREG: Ah, resolution. Thanks, Pops.

POPS: Listen, Greg, I've been here longer than anybody. I've outlasted every budget cut, outsource, retool and repurpose this place has gone through. I taught you a thing or two, too, didn't I?

GREG: Don't you "thing or two" me, Pops. (*POPS stares at him for a long moment*) Didn't work, did it?

POPS: Nope. With that ear gizmo on and those words coming out of your mouth, you came across as a complete moron.

GREG: Enough tact, Pops—tell me how you really feel.

POPS: I'll tell you how I really feel. I know this place inside and out. I know every valve, every switch, every lock and every key. You had a team of your high-flying technicians in here the other day, yammering for three hours about a software glitch, and you know what I found, three minutes after I walked in?

GREG: That somebody had tripped over a relay and unplugged it. I heard about that.

POPS: So don't you think, if you've got some big-deal operation going on—and by the looks of the list I got here on Ol' Trusty here, it sure looks like you do—I ought to know what it's about?

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR return with two more of the parcels.

JUNIOR: We have arrived!

POPS: What are you waiting for, a written invitation? Put 'em on the Thawing Pad.

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR put the parcels on the Thawing Pad during the next few lines.

JUNIOR: You got it, Pops. Hey, Mr. Dawson.

GREG: Hello, Junior. Junior, Junior.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Hi, Mr. Dawson. (*to JUNIOR*) Um, should we tell her about the...

JUNIOR: Nah.

POPS: Junior Junior, if you have to ask Junior if you should tell her, meaning me, about something, the answer is always yes.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Even if he says no?

POPS: Especially if he says no. What's the deal, boys?

JUNIOR: It's nothing. We just...

POPS: Uh-uh. I'm talking to the girl-boy, here, Junior.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Oh, well, um, when we went in to get these two mm999's, we weren't sure if maybe one of them was in the wrong place.

POPS: Why's that?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: It looked to me like a 666ww.

JUNIOR: It was a real mystery.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: But it turned out it was just upside-down.

JUNIOR: Tell Pops who figured it out, Junior Junior.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Junior noticed a... hint.

JUNIOR: Yeah. Pops, Mr. Dawson, I give you evidence why I should be promoted from Junior to Senior Junior. I noticed this! (*He turns one of the parcels around. On the back is a large arrow and the words "This Side Up."*) Pretty smart, huh?

POPS: Smart would've been to make sure whoever loaded them in paid attention to the sign.

JUNIOR: Wasn't me!

POPS: And smart would've been to come up with a labeling system that could not be mistaken for two totally different numbers, don't you think, Greg?

GREG: Wasn't me! We got 'em from the military that way, pre-labeled, pre-frozen.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Do you think the merchandise might've been damaged, stored upside-down like that?

JUNIOR: Don't you know what these are, Junior Junior?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Well, I assumed they were... I mean, by the feel of them...

Suddenly, the parcel that was stored upside-down moves, as if the brown paper is being punched from within. JUNIOR JUNIOR lets out a small scream.

JUNIOR: Whoa. Is that supposed to happen?

POPS: Gee, I don't know—let's ask the expert. Greg, is that supposed to happen?

GREG: Well, uh, the technicians...

As POPS starts off on her diatribe, JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR listen to their music, dancing again.

POPS: I'm telling you, I don't like this. Your technicians can run all the simulations they want on their fancy-dancey computers; they can make all their calculations and run all their figures, but none of it means squat when you've got parcels starting to jump around practically before they're even on the Thawing Pad, when I've got a list twice as long as I've ever had on OI' Trusty here, when Marilyn is running her fingers across that pad of hers like she's trying to wear a hole through the thing...

GREG: You saw that, huh?

POPS: I saw her coming out of the bathroom mumbling something about being behind schedule to schedule her next schedule. I'm going to put this in a nutshell for you, Greg, and boil it down to two things I don't like: A. I don't know what this project is all about. B. I've got an ache started in my elbow that always tells me when things are about to go very wrong. A and B together make me, Pops, a highly-unhappy camper, Greg!

SILAS and MINDY enter with a second bunch of robot heads and limbs—ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 2.

SILAS & MINDY: Greg!

POPS: Oh, great.

SILAS: Greg, we have another ad concept for you.

MINDY: It's much better than the first one, we think.

GREG: The first one?

JUNIOR: Don't ask.

SILAS: We like this.

MINDY: We think you'll like this.

SILAS & MINDY: It's awesome!

GREG: Well, we're awfully busy here, guys...

SILAS: This will only take a minute!

MINDY: Just time enough to exhibit some awesomeness.

SILAS: Exhibit some awesomeness. I liked that.

MINDY: Did you like that?

SILAS: I did. I liked it.

GREG: Hello?

SILAS & MINDY: Yes?

GREG: Can we see the ad, please?

SILAS: Hit it, Mindy!

MINDY: Hitting it, Silas!

MINDY hits a button on the box. All of the heads and other robot parts start to jerk around, making an occasional sound or word, but clearly malfunctioning. SILAS and MINDY start pushing buttons and fiddling with the box.

SILAS: Oh, no, no, no!

MINDY: Oh, whoops!

SILAS: Not good.

MINDY: Not what we were after.

The robot parts only get more frenetic and jerky.

SILAS: Bad robots!

MINDY: Stop it! Stop!

SILAS takes out a hammer and slams into the back of the box three times. The heads suddenly face forward. All the robot body parts suddenly get stiff.

ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 2: SynCryn Futures! SynCryn Futures!
SynCryn Fu... !

They suddenly stop, mid-word, frozen. Pause.

SILAS: Greg.

GREG: Yes, Silas.

MINDY: Greg.

GREG: Yes, Mindy.

SILAS & MINDY: That was not what we wanted to show you.

GREG: I gathered that.

SILAS & MINDY: We'll be back.

They exit as they talk.

SILAS: That was embarrassing.

MINDY: I'm mortified.

SILAS: We need to do better.

MINDY: Much. Definitely. That was awesome's opposite.

POPS: Do you have any idea, Greg, why I may not have all the confidence in the world in your technicians?

GREG: I hear you, Pops. Okay, the more you and your people are aware of going into this project, the better.

POPS: Now you're talking.

GREG: We're heading into uncharted territory, and we might as well have everyone on board know at least the basics of what we're up against. I'll show all of you.

POPS: Hang on a second.

By now, JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR have really gotten into the music, dancing vigorously, totally oblivious to POPS and GREG. POPS walks over between the two of them. After a few seconds, JUNIOR JUNIOR notices POPS and stops dancing. JUNIOR keeps on, even starting to sing along with the music he is hearing. JUNIOR JUNIOR taps JUNIOR on the shoulder; he turns to her, sees POPS, turns off the music.

JUNIOR: Hey, Pops.

POPS: Where's it coming from?

JUNIOR: What?

POPS: Don't you "what" me. Hand 'em over.

JUNIOR: What?

POPS: Whatever tiny-teensy method they've come up with to pipe devil music into your brains, hand 'em over.

JUNIOR: I don't know what you're talking about, Pops.

POPS: Funny, that's just what I'm going to say about your next paycheck, Junior.

JUNIOR: All right, all right. We won't listen anymore.

POPS: Oh, no. Listening is what I want you to do. To me. To what's going on around you. Zoning out to brain-neutralizing devil music and jerking around like somebody put too many habaneros in your chili, that's what you're not going to do anymore.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I'm sorry, Pops. *(to JUNIOR, whispered)* Stop getting me in trouble!

JUNIOR: I'm innocent!

POPS, GREG, JUNIOR JUNIOR: Ha!

JUNIOR: Hey!

GREG: All right, everyone. I'm going to demonstrate for you what we're up against. Please gather around before I bring in the blanks.

JUNIOR: The whats?

GREG: Blanks. These are our most highly-advanced, humanoid robots used to aid us in running simulations. I'm just going to warn you, before I bring them in, that they may look like intelligent beings, but they are not.

POPS: Like Marilyn.

GREG: Officially, Pops, I say how dare you speak of our highly-qualified director that way. Unofficially, I say, yes, just like Marilyn. Here come the Blanks.

Four characters dressed in black enter and stand, facing front.

JUNIOR: So, these are Blanks, huh? You know what you should call them? Blank, Blankety, Blankety-Blank, and Blankety-Blank-Blank. And then they could have conversations together, and it would be like, "You Blank." And then the other one would say, "What are you saying, Blankety-Blank?" And then the other one could come in and they would turn to him and say, "Hey, Blankety-Blank-Blank, what's going on?" See, and it would... it would... be funny.

POPS: Why don't you lie down before you hurt yourself?

GREG: As I was saying, these Blanks are nothing more than intricately-programmed humanoids right now. In a moment, though, I'm going to assign them each a role. (*He presses buttons on a console as he talks. After assigning each BLANK a role, the BLANK's face takes on an appropriate expression.*) Blank 1 will take the role of Mother.

BLANK 1: Okay, kids, time for bed.

GREG: Blank 2 will be Dad.

BLANK 2: That's right, you two—we need some beauty sleep!

GREG: Blank 3 will be five-year-old daughter.

BLANK 3: Already? I'm not tired yet.

GREG: And Blank 4 will be seven-year-old son.

BLANK 4: I'm older; I should get to stay up longer.

BLANK 3: You're not that much older.

BLANK 4: Are you kidding me? When I was your age, I went to bed right after breakfast!

BLANK 3: Did not!

BLANK 4: Did too!

BLANKS 3 and 4 continue this contest of wits: "Did not, did too." BLANKS 1 and 2 come in over them.

BLANK 1: Now, kids, let's not squabble.

BLANK 2: Settle down, you two.

BLANK 1: We mustn't yell.

BLANK 2: I would like to yell.

BLANK 1: So would I.

GREG hits a button. All four BLANKS go back to neutral, facing forward.

GREG: Enough of that.

POPS: Too much of that.

GREG: Now, I'm just going to move them into the Rebootilization Area...

The four BLANKS walk into the designated area, still robotic.

JUNIOR: What's that for, anyway?

GREG: That's precisely what I'm going to explain, Junior, but, at this point, suffice to say it contains powerful holographic imagery capabilities, so those within the area can see what I program them to see. I create their reality.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Like the holo-deck on Star Trek!

GREG: Exactly.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I used to love that show!

JUNIOR: And then you, what, got a life?

GREG: Just so you know, Junior Junior, among the technicians here, myself included, *Star Trek* ranks as the number one favorite TV series.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: See?

JUNIOR: Oh, big whoop. I can see the headline now: Geeks Love Bad Television.

POPS: I'm seeing another headline: Junior Gets Canned. Quit yapping and pay attention.

GREG: (*pushing buttons*) For this scenario, we just need them in a typical suburban bedroom. There we go. Put them in position. (*The BLANKS move onto the platform and chairs in the Rebootilization Area—BLANK 1 sits; BLANK 2 puts his hand on BLANK 1's shoulder; BLANKS 3 AND 4 lie down.*) And we begin.

BLANK 1: Hansel and Gretel came to a beautiful little cottage in the woods. It looked magical! When they got closer, they found out just why the cottage looked so lovely and attractive. It was all made of candy. The shingles were of gingerbread, the walls of spongecake, the eaves dripping with snowy-white frosting.

BLANK 3: Chocolate or vanilla?

BLANK 1: Well, I don't know.

BLANK 4: Snowy white—white is vanilla, Dumbie!

BLANK 2: Now, we don't call our sister Dumbie; you know that.

BLANK 3: Haven't you ever heard of white chocolate, Lunkhead?

BLANK 1: Now that is enough with the name-calling, you two.

BLANK 3: I didn't call him Dumbie.

BLANK 1: I don't know what flavor the eaves were dripping, and if you keep interrupting, I won't be able to finish the story tonight.

BLANK 2: Or tomorrow night, either, for that matter. Behave yourselves, you two.

BLANK 4: Yeah, so shut up, du...

BLANK 1: Uh-uh!

BLANK 4: Du... ear sister of mine.

The BLANKS suddenly jerk, moving back to the positions they were in when they were saying the following lines.

BLANK 1: ... you keep interrupting, I won't be able to finish the story tonight.

BLANK 4: Yeah, so shut up, du...

BLANK 1: Uh-uh!

BLANK 4: Du... ear sister of mine.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Didn't they just... ?

GREG: Oops.

GREG starts pushing buttons.

BLANK 1: Uh-uh! Uh-uh! Uh-uh!

BLANK 1 keeps repeating this sound and BLANKS 2-4 repeat whatever reaction they had to give the effect that the program is having a glitch.

POPS: Well, I have to admit, Greg my boy, this little demonstration is increasing my confidence level by leaps and bounds!

GREG: No, no, this is nothing. These are highly sophisticated machines with... with...

POPS: Leaps and bounds!

GREG: There. Minor glitch. All set now.

BLANK 4: Du-ear sister of mine.

POPS: (*whispering in GREG's ear*) Leaps and bounds.

BLANK 1: Thank-you. Now, to continue the story. Hansel and Gretel were so very hungry, they forgot their usual manners—which, of course, would have them knock on the door of the cottage to introduce themselves—and began to break off pieces of this delicious house and eat them just as fast as they could.

BLANK 3: I'm hungry.

BLANK 2: Sh.

BLANK 1: Now, what Hansel and Gretel did not realize was that an ugly, cruel witch had built this cottage to lure children such as themselves. At the very moment they broke off delectable pieces of cinnamon and toffee, the witch stared greedily out her window at them.

An alarm goes off. GREG pushes a button, freezing the BLANKS.

JUNIOR: What was that?

POPS: Time's up on the parcels. They need to be switched from the Thawing Pad to the Regeneration Pad. Hup-two, boys! Let's get the job done.

POPS, JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR take the parcels and move them from one pad to the next during the following dialogue.

GREG: Anyway, you get the general idea. A mother reading a classic story to her children. What could possibly be a more universal bonding experience?

POPS: Well, I don't know. If my mother went "uh-uh, uh-uh, uh-uh," over and over...

GREG: Be fair, Pops—this is complicated equipment.

POPS: Yeah, well, considering that last ad demo we saw...

GREG: It's all complicated equipment, Pops!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: (*grappling with a parcel*) Wow, these are a lot harder to move now that they're all soft. They almost feel like (*a hand*

punches through the packing paper) Aah! These are... these are... what kind of a job is this!

JUNIOR: Relax. You'll get used to it.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Get used to it? Are you... is this the mafia?

POPS: Naw—they're organized crime. We're not organized.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I had no idea that I was transporting frozen, dead bodies! I don't want to go to jail!

GREG: Junior Junior, please. Obviously, as Pops has indicated, we all need more information. But we have to be patient.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: But, but, but...

GREG: I assure you our activities are not illegal, the parcels you're transporting are not dead bodies, and you will not be going to jail.

By now, POPS and JUNIOR have finished transporting the "parcels" to the Regeneration Pad.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Is this... do we do this every day?

JUNIOR: Well...

POPS: No. Which is exactly what worries me. This is all new territory, here—moving these bodies, using this lab... and we don't even know what the story is.

GREG: As I said, Pops, Junior, Junior Junior, patience. Story, as it turns out, is the crux of this whole project. Let's get back to the Blanks.

JUNIOR: Yeah, let's get back to those blankety-blank Blanks, huh?

POPS: Funny thing about a bad joke, Junior. It doesn't get any better by repeating it.

GREG: Now, as we can easily anticipate, the mother in this scenario goes along reading the story, the children go along listening, and all is well with the world. Let's fast-forward just a bit, here. (*GREG hits a button and the "BLANK FAMILY" moves quickly and jerkily, as if fast-forwarding.*) Let's just take them closer to the climax of the story, after the witch has imprisoned Hansel and Gretel, after she's fed them in cages for several weeks...

JUNIOR: Cheerful and uplifting.

GREG: There. Let's listen in at this point.

BLANK 1: Finally, the old witch decided that she would delay no further. She pulled Hansel and Gretel from their cages, and...

BLANK 1 pauses, flipping through the pages, puzzled.

BLANK 2: What is it, Sweetheart?

BLANK 3: What's the matter, Mommy?

BLANK 4: Yeah, keep reading!

BLANK 1: Well, I... I would, but the pages are blank.

BLANK 3: What happened to them?

BLANK 2: Let me see that.

BLANK 4: I bet you ripped them all out, didn't you?

BLANK 3: Did not!

BLANK 1: They're not ripped out—the pages are here; they're just... blank. Oh, my!

BLANK 2: Good Heavens!

BLANK 4: What? What's the matter? Show me!

BLANK 3: And me, and me!

All four huddle around the book.

BLANK 1: I don't understand.

BLANK 2: That's extraordinary!

BLANK 3: Whoa!

BLANK 4: The letters are... disappearing!

BLANK 3: What's happening to the story, Mom? What's going on?

BLANK 1: I don't know, children. I just... do not know!

And with that, all four of the BLANKS turn to look melodramatically straight out at the audience. They freeze.

POPS: What the heck?

GREG: I... added in that last moment for effect—the duh-duh-duh bit—but, besides that, you have just seen a situation that is playing

out in homes and schools and daycare centers around the world.
Thank-you, Blank Family.

*He pushes a button. The BLANKS stand, blank-faced,
and walk off in the direction they came.*

JUNIOR: I don't get it.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I think I do. For some reason, and I would be quick to suspect terrorist activity, our time-honored stories are being obliterated! Somehow, and I would be quick to suspect some very sophisticated and insidious virus that has the capability to infect not just computers but all communication media, these traditional stories are being wiped out!

JUNIOR: Well, okay, but... so what?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: So what? So what? What better way to undermine a culture than to rob it of its stories? What better way to upset the balance of a society than to take away the references it shares from childhood? This is a catastrophe!

POPS: (to GREG) Good hire.

GREG: You got that right.

POPS and GREG high five.

JUNIOR: Yeah, yeah, yeah—I could've figured that out. I'm a good hire, too, you know. (to JUNIOR JUNIOR) Show-off.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Catastrophe. But what do these parcels have to do with... ?

GREG: Hold on—I have a call coming in. Hello? Yes, Marilyn.

MARILYN enters, talking on the cell, fixated on her pad, as before. POPS signals for JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR to look busy.

MARILYN: Greg, I'm here in the lab again.

GREG: Yes, I sense that you are.

MARILYN: How? Do you have the GPS tracking me via cell signal?

GREG: No. I'm looking at you.

MARILYN: Via Skype? I don't...

GREG: No, via standing next you again.

MARILYN: (*looking at him*) Ah. Got it. (*back down at the pad*) According to Schedule A382, the parcels should be on the Regeneration Pad by now. Where are they, Greg?

GREG: Marilyn.

MARILYN: Yes, Greg.

GREG: I want you to do something for me. A brief experiment.

MARILYN: I don't have time for this! Schedule Z122 says I should be checking Schedule W887 right now, which says I should be checking the weather. Partly cloudy, slight chance of showers.

GREG: Marilyn.

MARILYN: Cold front from Canada coming in tomorrow. What, Greg? I'm busy!

GREG: This will only take a moment. Listen carefully. First, hang up your cell.

MARILYN: I'm talking to you!

GREG: Please. You can always reconnect. Just do it for a brief test.

MARILYN: A test? We're testing the cellphones?

GREG: Yes, Schedule QY745 says we're testing the cellphones.

MARILYN: I don't see that.

GREG: It hasn't been created yet.

MARILYN: Oh. That explains it. So, I hang up. I'm hanging up now, Greg. We'll be out of contact for a while. Don't panic.

GREG: I won't.

MARILYN: Goodbye.

GREG: Goodbye. Now, I want you to look up and look at me.

MARILYN: All right. I'm doing that.

GREG: Good.

MARILYN: I should call you so we can talk.

GREG: We are talking.

MARILYN: I must have called you.

GREG: No. This is that new technology I asked you to look up earlier called “in person.”

MARILYN: You mean... ?

GREG: Yes. If you are in close proximity to me, as you are, we can actually talk without the aid of any electrical device whatsoever. And if you look around the lab, you can actually gather information firsthand, such as the fact that the parcels are, in fact, on the Regeneration Pad just as they are supposed to be.

MARILYN: Extraordinary! Who developed this technology?

GREG: Uh... God?

MARILYN: Have we hired him yet?

GREG: We're working on it.

MARILYN: Good. The first Rebootilization should be taking place...

GREG: In ten minutes. We'll be ready.

MARILYN: I'll be back then.

GREG: Excellent.

MARILYN: In the meantime, I'm not entirely comfortable with this new mode of communication. I'm going to text you goodbye and get back to my computer.

GREG: It takes a while to get integrated.

MARILYN: It's scary out here. *(back to her pad)* Texting!

She exits.

POPS: Speaking of scary...

GREG: I know, I know. Oh, make a note on Ol' Trusty for me, will you?

POPS: What's that?

GREG: Get God in for an interview. *(the parcels on the Regeneration Pad start to squirm around)* Ah, looks like they're getting ready to wake up.

JUNIOR: See? They're not dead bodies. We just kidnapped and drugged them.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: What?

JUNIOR: Kidding, kidding!

POPS: All right, let's get 'em unwrapped.

JUNIOR: Wait, wait—aren't we supposed to let them unwrap themselves?

POPS: Why?

JUNIOR: I heard once that, like, if you help a chick break out of its shell or a butterfly emerge from its cocoon...

Another arm bursts out of a parcel. After a second, a leg comes out from a different parcel.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Ah!

GREG: It's all right, Junior Junior.

JUNIOR: Anyway, if you help them, they'll die because they have to build up their strength by breaking out on their own. I heard that.

POPS: You heard that.

JUNIOR: I did.

POPS: About the chicks and the butterflies.

JUNIOR: Yeah.

POPS: Question, Junior—do these parcels look like chicks and butterflies?

JUNIOR: Well... no.

POPS: Exactly. Go take the paper off them.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Please, please, I want to do my job. I really do. But could someone explain what these things are?

GREG: Junior Junior, these parcels, as we refer to them here, are the original characters from the classic stories we've been talking about.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: The original... ?

GREG: That's right. One of our major responsibilities at Syncryn Futures is to gather and store the actual impulses that created the stories. Narrative DNA, if you will. As you've seen, stories worldwide are under attack. We have the capability to restore and protect them, using these original characters.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: How?

GREG: What we've found is that, if we have the original characters re-enact the crucial moment at which the virus began to wipe out the story, we can, in effect, rebootilize the story. Hence, the rebootilization area! That's where the magic will take place.

*More character limbs burst through the paper.
JUNIOR JUNIOR yells again.*

POPS: Look, before Junior Junior here has a major major heart attack, let's unwrap these characters, huh? Junior, get to it. They won't die if you help them.

JUNIOR: I don't know.

POPS: If you run into a butterfly, let me know. Junior Junior, help him out. Go on.

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR rip the paper off the five parcels, revealing CINDERELLA, her STEPMOTHER, her TWO STEPSISTERS, and the FOOTMAN, holding the glass slipper. They are still somewhat frozen, but they are slowly beginning to work their way back into being living.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Cinderella! This is one of my favorites.

GREG: You can help them regenerate by moving their limbs gently.

JUNIOR: (*moving in on CINDERELLA*) Oh, I can definitely help with that.

POPS: Junior!

JUNIOR: What? Just—wanting to dutifully do my job, boss.

POPS: Yeah, well—Junior Junior, keep an eye on him. Make sure he doesn't do his job too enthusiastically.

JUNIOR: All right, then. Limb movement.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I'll handle Cinderella, Junior. Stepmother looks like she could use your gentle touch.

JUNIOR: Killjoy.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Pervert.

They proceed to help the characters get regenerated.

POPS: Greg, a minute ago you said something like "that's where the magic will take place."

GREG: Right. In the Rebootilization...

POPS: Yeah, yeah, got the area and all that. But the word “will” is what’s bothering me. You mean “will” as in we haven’t tried this yet?

GREG: Uh...

POPS: Okay, got my answer.

GREG: Pops, we’ve run a hundred simulations...

POPS: And not one real deal yet. Beautiful!

GREG: Look, it’s not as if we’ve had a huge amount of time to put this all together. We got a call from the military only a week ago about this whole story virus.

POPS: Let me just run this through my brain, here. You got a call a week ago, you must’ve talked about the plan for about two days, then you started your simulations which probably took another, oh, three days—are you sure you ran a hundred?

GREG: Close to that.

POPS: How close?

GREG: Give or take... 95.

POPS: So you ran five, and of those five, probably... two actually went according to theory?

GREG: Give us some credit, Pops! Three. Or... two and a half.

The FOOTMAN suddenly lets out a tremendous yell and grabs hold of his head.

POPS: What’s the matter? What did you do?

JUNIOR: Nothing! I didn’t touch him!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I just... I was just moving his arm a little.

FOOTMAN: Oh, my aching head!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: He talks!

FOOTMAN: Someone hath placed a demon inside my head!

JUNIOR: Uh-oh. Wasn’t he the one that was stored upside-down?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Here, here, maybe I can help.

She goes to the FOOTMAN, takes the slipper from his hand.

FOOTMAN: Nay—I have been charged with keeping the slipper safe at all costs!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: It's all right. Just for a second. (to JUNIOR) Do not drop this or you'll destroy this classic story forever.

JUNIOR: Sheesh, no pressure. Nice shoe.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: (to the FOOTMAN) Now, just lean back and relax your hands. Relax. Here. (she rubs his temples) Is that better?

FOOTMAN: Oh, thou art a goddess. I thank thee.

JUNIOR: Goddess? Come on.

CINDERELLA: Oh, where am I?

POPS: Welcome to the Kingdom of Chaos, Cindy.

STEPMOTHER: Where is the glass slipper?

STEPSISTER ONE: Oh, he's got it!

STEPSISTER TWO: It's mine!

JUNIOR: Whoa, whoa! Back off, sisters! Don't mess with the shoe dude.

FOOTMAN: Ah, thou hast driven the demon from my brain, dear Angel. My immeasurable thanks.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Don't mention it.

FOOTMAN: (to JUNIOR) Now, I shall ask you to relinquish your burden, dear sir.

JUNIOR: Huh?

POPS: Give him the shoe, Junior.

JUNIOR: Oh, right. Careful with that. You break it, we all pay.

FOOTMAN: I would sooner drop this slipper than drop my very soul into eternal damnation, dear sir, for once having taken upon myself a charge from the King, as I have done with this slipper, nothing save death will keep me from its fulfillment.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I like how he talks.

JUNIOR: Wouldn't have anything to do with him calling you angel, would it?

STEPMOTHER: I demand that you fit that shoe to one of my daughters, post haste!

STEPSISTER ONE: Me first!

STEPSISTER TWO: I want to be first! I want to go! It's my turn! I never get to go first! Mommy, Mommy, make the mean man put it on my foot first! It's my turn, my turn, my tuuuuuurnnnnn!

POPS: Whoa. Should we nuke her for a minute more?

GREG: No, what we really need to do... *(interrupted by MARILYN on his cell)* Oh, great. Hello, Marilyn. Yes, we're all in the lab. *(to POPS)* We need to get them into the Rebootilization area now.

POPS: You heard the man, everybody—this way, please, right over here.

GREG: Where are you now, Marilyn?

JUNIOR: Here, Cinderella, let me help you.

CINDERELLA: You're very kind, thank-you.

JUNIOR: And you're very cute, thank-you.

POPS: Junior.

JUNIOR: Just being nice.

STEPSISTER ONE: I get to try it on first, right, Mother?

STEPSISTER TWO: Why do you get to? I'm going to...

POPS: Hey! No glass shoe trying on until all you characters get into the Rebootilization Area, you got me?

STEPMOTHER: Well, I never...

POPS: Never, huh? First time for everything, Lady. Go.

STEPMOTHER: I am not accustomed to being addressed by commoners this way.

POPS: Oh, I'm not a commoner, Lady—you don't get any un-commoner than me. Vamoose, will ya!

MARILYN enters, doing her usual business—head down, looking at the computer, talking on her cell.

MARILYN: What is all that noise, Greg?

GREG: Marilyn, we're side by side again, in the lab. If you would look up and shut off your cell, you could see for yourself...

MARILYN: Greg, I tried that—your “in person” suggestion. It’s too new. I’m uncomfortable with it. It’s a strange interface. It’s not intuitive enough. I’m going to keep doing it like I always have. I’ll need some in-service before I’m ready. Don’t rush it.

GREG: Fine. Most people find it a vast improvement over the old model.

MARILYN: Whatever. Now, Schedule Y898 says we should have the first set of characters in the Rebootilization Area now. Are they there? We can’t be late with this. The general is going to be here in less than half an hour.

GREG: (*saying it with her*) In less than half an hour. I know that, Marilyn. In fact, he’s probably going to be here in less than 15 minutes, now, if he’s on schedule.

MARILYN: Oh, he’s on schedule. The general is always on schedule. I’ve always admired that about the general. He’s always on schedule. But what about us? Why aren’t the characters ready in the Rebootilization Chamber? They should have been there three minutes ago!

GREG: They are there.

MARILYN: Where? I don’t see them? If they were there, I should be able to pick them up via remote camera on my... (*GREG scrolls a screen for MARILYN*) Oh, there they are.

POPS: So, now it’s all clear.

GREG: Excuse me, Marilyn.

MARILYN: Another call coming in? Who’s it from?

GREG: No, it’s Pops. She’s just...

MARILYN: Thank goodness she finally put her headset on.

GREG: Actually, I’m going to talk to her... never mind. Just a second, Marilyn.

MARILYN: I’ll hold.

GREG: What, Pops?

POPS: Just getting the timeline down in the old cranium here. Heard about it seven days ago, talked about it two days, simulated three days ago, talked about it some more yesterday, and now, just now, you’re running the first actual trial run with the client—which, since she keeps mentioning The General, is probably none

other than the United States Government—coming to see results in 15 minutes.

MARILYN: Greg?

GREG: Just a second, Pops. Yes, Marilyn?

MARILYN: There's something wrong with your connection. I just heard Pops talking to you.

GREG: That's because... I'll look into the problem.

POPS: Have I got that about right?

GREG: Yes, you do.

MARILYN: I do what?

GREG: Not you—Pops.

MARILYN: You're still on the line with Pops?

GREG: Yes, I mean, no, I mean... oh, my gosh, Marilyn!

MARILYN: What? What happened?

GREG: Schedule ZZ356.778, which is so new it won't be created until tomorrow, says you're supposed to change into a more dignified outfit before the General arrives!

MARILYN: What? When? I don't see it!

GREG: Two minutes ago! Code Blue! Code Blue!

MARILYN: Code... what does that mean?

GREG: It means you should be wearing blue! Go, Marilyn—you're behind schedule!

MARILYN: *(exiting frantically)* Ah! I'm behind schedule! Code Blue! Wear blue!

POPS: Good thinking.

GREG: Thanks.

SILAS and MINDY enter, pushing a box with yet another set of robot heads and appendages. The heads and limbs are moving as if conducting a cheer.

POPS: Oh, no.

ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 3:

Hit 'em high, hit 'em low, hit 'em where they just don't know!
 SynCryn Futures, that's the place! Techno bits right in your face!
 Hit 'em hard, hit 'em bold, hit 'em 'til they feel real old!
 Hit 'em, hit 'em, SynCryn Futures!
 Hit 'em, hit 'em, give them sutures!
 Gooooo, SynCryn!

The HEADS AND LIMBS freeze.

SILAS & MINDY: Ta-da!

Pause.

SILAS & MINDY AND ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 3: Ta-da!

Pause.

SILAS: (*exiting with the box*) Okay, we didn't like it, either.

MINDY: We did like it. It was very good.

SILAS: Didn't you see their faces? We failed again!

MINDY: What do they want, Project Runway?

SILAS: Stop.

MINDY: What?

SILAS: We should tell them we shall return.

MINDY: Shall we return?

SILAS: We shall.

MINDY: Shall we give up?

SILAS: Never.

SILAS and MINDY square their shoulders, turn to face everyone, and say their parting line.

MINDY & SILAS: We shall return!

They turn and exit.

STEPMOTHER: Now, listen, you people, I do not know what this place is, but I am not accustomed to being kept waiting. When will my daughters have their turn so that one of them may claim her rightful place in high society? Along with her mother, of course.

STEPSISTER ONE: I'm hungry, Mother!

POPS: The parcels are getting restless.

CINDERELLA: (to POPS) Excuse me, but I am quite confused. Where did you say we are, please?

JUNIOR: I can help!

POPS: Sorry, Cindy; we just work here. Greg—he's the man with the plan.

GREG: Everyone, everyone, we have very little time. A full explanation, I'm afraid, will not only slow us down but probably cause major and unnecessary confusion. Suffice to say that we need your cooperation to fight terrorism and to ensure the perpetuation of crucial cultural and political connections not only in this country but across the entire globe.

FOOTMAN: Globe?

POPS: You lost 'em, Greg. How 'bout this, folks—I imagine, after being frozen for a couple centuries, you're probably hungry as hyenas.

STEPSISTER TWO: Hyenas?

POPS: Horses. Hungry as horses. The sooner we get this done, the sooner we can get you something to eat!

STEPSISTER ONE: Food!

CINDERELLA: A little refreshment would be nice.

JUNIOR: Well, then, let's get going!

GREG: I appreciate your enthusiasm, Junior. So, um—I'm sure you're all familiar with the situation, here. The footman for the Prince...

FOOTMAN: Humbly at your service, sir.

GREG: Thank-you. He has brought the glass slipper to determine the identity of the fair woman with whom the Prince fell in love at the ball.

STEPSISTER TWO: That's me!

POPS: Fat chance.

STEPMOTHER: Oh! I demand an apology!

POPS: You're right. I'm very sorry your daughter has a fat chance.

STEPMOTHER: Oh!

GREG: Pops! Everyone! Please—at the risk of sounding like someone we all know and would rather we didn't, we are behind schedule. So, if we could please have everyone but the characters come out of the Rebootilization Area, thank-you... good. Now, I'm just going to set this up...

GREG pushes a few buttons. The characters suddenly "see" familiar territory.

CINDERELLA: Home! It looks wonderful!

STEPMOTHER: Soon our home will be the castle.

GREG: Now, according to our records, the virus infecting this story came in right at the moment when the slipper was being placed on... Uh, folks, could we have Cinderella try on the slipper, please?

STEPMOTHER: Cinderella?

STEPSISTER ONE: But I haven't tried it on yet! What about me?

STEPSISTER TWO: And me! And me! You can't have her try it on before me! That's not fair, Mother! Mother, that's not fair at all!

STEPMOTHER: Why should she try it on at all? She wasn't even at the ball!

POPS: I have to say, Greg, this is going perfectly,

GREG: I just need to cue it up, here. There.

STEPSISTER TWO: Mother, it's not... (*Everyone in the Rebootilization Area freezes for a second, moves to slightly different positions as if fast-forwarding, then unfreezes.*) Why didn't it fit me, Mother! I was sure it would fit me!

STEPMOTHER: Footman, I demand you try that slipper on my daughters again!

FOOTMAN: M'lady, I assure you, unless you are be willing to have some portion of your daughter's foot removed, I shall never be able to fit this shoe upon it.

STEPMOTHER: The insolence!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: A portion removed. That was clever.

JUNIOR: Guess who's in love.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: You're one to talk.

FOOTMAN: I have been expressly instructed by the King himself to try this glass slipper upon every maiden in the Kingdom. Thus, Cinderella, if you might be so inclined...

CINDERELLA: Why, thank-you.

CINDERELLA puts her foot forward. The FOOTMAN tries to put the slipper on her, but it seems to be too small.

STEPMOTHER: There, you see! Try it on my daughters' foot again! It shrunk!

GREG: What the... what's going on?

POPS: You don't mean to tell me your simulations didn't predict this?

CINDERELLA: I'm sorry. Perhaps I should remove my wool stocking?

FOOTMAN: Perhaps, dear girl. Wool stockings, while very attractive upon thee, are generally not the fashion at the ball.

STEPSISTER TWO: No fair! No fair!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Wool stockings? I don't remember that part.

GREG: Wait a minute, wait a minute... Cinderella, are you ready for your fitting now?

CINDERELLA: Oh, yes, quite ready, thank-you.

GREG: Fine. I'm just going to back this up again. (*He pushes some buttons. The characters move quickly back to where they were when the following lines came up the first time, then freeze.*) Okay. Let's see if we can do this this time.

JUNIOR: What's to keep another virus from getting in and making a mess of it again?

GREG: When we rebootilize the story at the crucial point—as we're about to here, I hope—we also put in some high tech fixative and anti-virus technology to prevent against further damage. It'll make this story foolproof.

POPS: Why do I get so nervous whenever somebody says “foolproof”?

GREG: And... go!

STEPSISTER TWO: Why didn't it fit me, Mother! I was sure it would fit me!

STEPMOTHER: Footman, I demand you try that slipper on my daughters again!

FOOTMAN: M'lady, I assure you, unless you are be willing to have some portion of your daughter's foot removed, I shall never be able to fit this shoe upon it.

STEPMOTHER: The insolence!

FOOTMAN: I have been expressly instructed by the King himself to try this glass slipper upon every maiden in the Kingdom. Thus, Cinderella, if you might be so inclined...

CINDERELLA: Why, thank-you.

The FOOTMAN tries the slipper on CINDERELLA; it fits perfectly.

FOOTMAN: We have found the chosen maiden!

CINDERELLA: Oh, my!

STEPMOTHER & STEPSISTERS: Oh, no!

GREG: And—cut! Perfect! Thank-you, everyone! That's all we'll need. The classic story of Cinderella has been successfully rebooted! Junior, Junior Junior, would you mind taking our guests to the cafeteria for some lunch?

JUNIOR: Oh, I'd be very pleased to take care of that. Cinderella, right this way to some grub.

CINDERELLA: Grub? Do you... eat such things here?

JUNIOR: You are so cute, do you know that? Hey, how about some music?

STEPSISTER ONE: Mother, what's to happen to us?

STEPSISTER TWO: Aren't we going to live in the castle anymore? Can we, pretty please?

STEPMOTHER: Be quiet, the two of you. You're ugly and I'm hungry! Let's go.

FOOTMAN: (to JUNIOR JUNIOR) Might you be so kind, dear Angel, to lead the way to what I am certain will be wondrous repast?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I don't always know what you're saying, but I really like the way you say it.

JUNIOR: (to CINDERELLA) So, are you planning to stay thawed long?

By this point, JUNIOR JUNIOR, JUNIOR and the FIVE CHARACTERS have exited.

GREG: So, Ms. Cynic, can't complain about that outcome, can we? First reports are already coming in from around the world, confirming that "Cinderella," the story, has been restored. Pretty glitch-free, wouldn't you say?

POPS: I'm perfectly willing to chock that up to beginner's luck, Greg. How many more of these characters have we got to thaw out? How many stories are we planning to rebootilize?

GREG: In the neighborhood of... hundreds of characters, dozens of stories. I don't project we'll be finished for a month.

POPS: Hm.

GREG: What?

POPS: Call me a cynic if you want, but while you're gloating over your victory, I'm focused on something else.

GREG: What's that?

POPS: With the General on his way, hundreds of characters, dozens of stories still to restore, all I keep thinking about... is Cinderella's sock.

GREG: It'll all work out, Pops—you'll see. It's foolproof!

POPS: Do me a favor, Greg—don't ever use that word again, not when I'm around. Gives me the willies.

GREG: Relax. Come on, let's grab a bite before the General comes.

GREG exits. POPS stays behind for a moment, looking around.

POPS: Foolproof.

She shivers visibly, then exits.

Blackout.

Act II

Lights up to the same set. The Thawing Pad has six parcels across it. The Regeneration Pad has two parcels across it. POPS stands center, looking at her clipboard. Slowly, an OLD MAN in ragged clothes crosses the stage towards POPS. POPS tries to ignore him.

OLD MAN: Excuse me, gentlewoman.

POPS: Junior.

OLD MAN: Might I interest you in these magical beans?

POPS: Junior! Junior Junior!

OLD MAN: While they may appear to be nothing more than ordinary beans, I think you will find that they are, in fact, quite magical.

POPS: Look, old timer, I thought you were supposed to...

OLD MAN: Very magical indeed! They will change your life... forever! Or, if they don't, they make a very nice lentil soup. Some garlic, a little parsley...

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR enter, both with parcels on hand trucks.

POPS: Where in the heck have you two been?

JUNIOR: We were getting the cc420s, like you asked us to.

POPS: The Thawing Pad is already filled with cc420s.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: There's still a bunch more.

POPS: How many?

JUNIOR: I don't know—like, ten?

POPS: Ten? You've got to be...

OLD MAN: Gentlewoman, it may seem that these beans are worth practically nothing, but the few pieces of gold I ask in exchange for them will be...

POPS: Junior, I thought I told you to keep this guy in the cafeteria with the Cinderella crew.

JUNIOR: Hey, do you want us to babysit a bunch of fictional characters or thaw out a bunch more? Make up your mind.

GREG enters.

GREG: How's it going in here?

OLD MAN: *(to GREG)* Ah, kind sir, perhaps I could interest you in some beans. They may look ordinary...

POPS: Junior!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I'll take care of him. *(to the OLD MAN)* So, I understand you have some beans to sell?

OLD MAN: Why, yes, my dear—so I do!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Why don't you tell me all about them as we walk this way, all right?

OLD MAN: *(exiting with JUNIOR JUNIOR)* That would be splendid. You see, these beans may look ordinary, but they will change your life!

POPS: How's it going? You want to know how it's going?

SILAS and MINDY enter with ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 4. All of the robot hands sticking out of the box are holding cups of tea.

SILAS & MINDY: Greetings!

POPS: Oh, goody.

GREG: Silas, Mindy...

SILAS: Uh-uh, Greg, we know just where you're headed when you say our names like that.

MINDY: We do indeed. Saying "Silas, Mindy" with that intonation means, essentially, we don't have time for you, correct?

GREG: Well...

POPS: Exactly! You read him right. No time, sorry, 'bye-'bye now!

SILAS: And we wouldn't blame your for saying our names like that, given our past disappointing efforts.

MINDY: Absolutely. Your "Silas, Mindy" intonation was absolutely appropriate.

GREG: Okay, so...

SILAS & MINDY: But!

GREG: What?

SILAS & MINDY: But!

SILAS: What we have for you this time will blow you away!

MINDY: Give you fits of joy!

SILAS: Shivers of excitement!

MINDY: Quivers of enjoyment!

SILAS: Trembles of ecstasy!

MINDY: Earthquakes of...

POP: Hey!

SILAS & MINDY: We got carried away.

SILAS: Before we push this button, please recognize that we learned from our past trials.

MINDY: Yes. We moved from the dramatic to the subtle. This, I think you'll see, is a far more sophisticated advertisement for SynCryn Futures.

SILAS: (*pushing the button*) Behold.

All of the ROBOT BOX HEADS SET 4 speak with deeply affected British accents.

ROBOT HEAD 1: Oh, dear, dear, dear.

ROBOT HEAD 2: Whatever is the matter, dear sophisticated friend of mine?

ROBOT HEAD 3: Yes. Do tell us, dear rich and sophisticated friend of ours.

ROBOT HEAD 4: Do tell us! Would you like some tea?

ROBOT HEAD 1: Ah, my dear and wealthy and sophisticated bosom companions, I am deeply concerned about an upcoming venture upon which I will be venturing.

ROBOT HEAD 2: Do tell.

ROBOT HEAD 3: Do.

ROBOT HEAD 4: Do, do, do! Would you like some tea?

ROBOT HEAD I: I believe this venture upon which I will be venturing will call for a large and diverse workforce to perform sundry menial and repetitive tasks that the average human being might find too menial and repetitive to be worth their while and effort, plus, of course, I have a desire to keep overall costs of my endeavor low, dear close acquaintances, though I am not averse to an initial heavy lay-out of capitol that will...

GREG presses a button. The heads freeze.

MINDY: Did we malfunction? We were just getting to the best part.

SILAS: No, Mindy. Didn't you notice?

MINDY: Notice what?

SILAS: The reaction of our audience—Pops tapping his foot, looking around impatiently; Greg's open mouth and gaping stare, as if to say, "How can Silas and Mindy possibly think this is worth our time." Am I interpreting correctly, Greg?

GREG: I wouldn't...

POPS: Yes! Yes! Jackpot, Silas! You caught it! Good for you! This latest ad idea—well, how do I put it gently?—really stunk!

MINDY: Greg?

GREG: I... I'll tell you what. I think, before you spend more time on more concepts for commercials, we should meet to... solidify our vision, all right?

SILAS & MINDY: We understand. *(They walk away, dejected, taking the latest box with them. After a few steps, they turn back.)* We failed again. *(a few more steps)* Sorry. *(almost gone)* We'll be fine.

They exit. After a pause, we hear them wail offstage. POPS stares at GREG.

GREG: I know, I know. They're not quite getting it.

POPS: Those two are the least of our problems, Greg. We've got a major traffic jam shaping up here, unless your General arrives. What's the "Jack and the Beanstalk" holdup? Why don't we just let Jack go ahead and buy the beans, retoolize that story, and get these others moving? *(on the Regeneration Pad, a hairy arm pokes through the paper covering)* Nice, nice—if I had to guess, taking into account the hairiness of this arm and the sharpness of these claws, this character is not going to be a human being.

Won't that be fun? Stuck in a traffic jam with a big, bad wolf?
We've got to get this going!

GREG: Thanks very much for the advice, Pops. I mean, I had no idea things were backing up until you informed me. I couldn't possibly tell that by looking around.

POPS: What, you mean your technicians didn't simulate this scenario?

GREG: Look, "Jack and the Beanstalk" is the General's favorite childhood story—he said so in a speech I heard—so I wanted it to be the one we used for demonstration purposes.

*Another wolf arm pops out of the character on the
Regeneration Pad.*

POPS: Yeah, well, the wolf is at our door, Greg!

GREG: I know. Not to mention the fact that Marilyn is about to go supernova. I think she may be the first person to actually fuse her face to that pad of hers. Okay, forget the General. Get Jack and the old man into the Rebootilization Area. We can't wait.

POPS: Now you're talking. Junior, go get Jack and the old geezer.

JUNIOR: Do you want me to keep bringing in these cc420s? I'll have to double-stack them.

POPS: Yeah, Greg, we've got about twenty of these 420s—they can't all thaw and regenerate at the same time.

GREG: Twenty? What rebootilization needs twenty characters?

POPS: How do I know?

GREG: Forget it for now—let's get "Jack and the Beanstalk" back online, then we'll work on the others.

The WOLF's leg breaks through.

POPS: If the others don't eat us first. Junior!

JUNIOR: (*exiting*) I'm going, I'm going!

POPS: Greg, we're going to need some more help here.

*GREG is prepping the Rebootilization Area for the next
story simulation—pushing buttons on a console.*

GREG: Yeah, well...

POPS: Animal control, security, not to mention enough personnel to get these characters back into the deep freeze. That cafeteria's gonna overflow real quick. They ain't got enough cookies to keep the whole Fantasy Kingdom satisfied.

GREG: Yeah, well...

POPS: Yeah, well, yeah, well... what's "yeah, well" mean?

GREG: "Yeah, well," in corporate lingo, means, basically, "It's not in the budget."

POPS: Is that right? This is a huge project, Greg, with a federal contract; I've been around the block enough times to know that SynCryn Futures is going to make a ton of money off of this.

GREG: Maybe so, but that ton of money isn't going to start flowing in until the General has seen a decent demonstration. Until then, more help is not in the budget. (*getting a phone call*) Hello?

MARILYN enters, looking insane. Her face presses incredibly close to her pad; her eyes bulge; her hair flies; her voice shouts.

MARILYN: Greg!

GREG: Marilyn, yes, I'm right...

MARILYN: Greg! Greg! Answer me! Greg, Greg, Greg, Greg, Greg!

GREG: (*trying to break through MARILYN's repetitions*) Marily... I'm... what... stop...

MARILYN: Greg, are you there?

GREG: I'm right here! I'm here! Right here!

MARILYN: Greg, I have important news. Are you listening? Greg?

GREG: Yes, I'm listening.

MARILYN: Because I have very important news, Greg. I need you to listen.

GREG: Marilyn, breathe.

MARILYN: What?

GREG: I want you to take a deep breath.

MARILYN: When?

GREG: Now. Breathe in, hold it, breathe out. There. Now. I want you to tell me, Marilyn, what the important news is that you have to tell me.

MARILYN: The General.

GREG: Yes.

MARILYN: He was late.

POPS: Some news.

MARILYN: He wasn't here when the schedules said he was going to be here. I waited and I checked and I called and I waited and I called and I checked and I waited and I waited and I called and I checked...

GREG: Marilyn!

MARILYN: But he didn't come. The General didn't come. I had to change all my schedules.

POPS: Someone's taken a flight to Loo-Loo-ville.

GREG: I know, Marilyn, you had to change your schedules. Is that all you wanted to tell me? That the General is late? Because we've decided we should go ahead and...

MARILYN: No. No! There was something else. Something else. *(she scrolls even more frantically than usual across her pad)* Something about the General.

GREG: Have you had an update on his arrival?

JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR enter with JACK and the OLD MAN. The dialogue between GREG, POPS, JUNIOR JUNIOR and JUNIOR comes in over MARILYN's mumbling monologue.

MARILYN: *(mumbling)* I might have. I think I might have maybe had an update on his arrival. Whose arrival? The General's arrival. That's the general idea. That's the general idea about the General. Could you have a private idea about the General? Or maybe a general idea about the private. Or a general idea about the General's priva... no, no, you couldn't have that! What was I looking for? I was checking my Facebook. No, I was checking the General's Facebook. No, I was checking the private's Facebook. No, I was changing the privacy on the General's Facebook. Schedule C, that's what I want. Schedule CC. Sea to shining Schedule C. Schedule C refers me to Schedule A which refers

me to Schedule B which refers me to... now I know my ABCs, next time won't you sing with... American Idol. That's what I was checking. The America Idol voting. No, no, that's not the general idea. Have to keep it private. Have to keep it captain. Have to keep it second lieutenant. Have to keep it corporal. Corporal? Have to keep private the General's corporal punishment of the admiral. Was that what I was going to say? What was I going to say? Oh, say can you see? Schedule CCCCCC2. R2D2. I loved that movie. What? What? Cold front coming. Have to remember that. Chili today, hot tamale.

JUNIOR: All right, everybody, you know how some of you claim I should stay just Junior forever because I don't know jack? Well, I want to tell you something. It's official. I know Jack! Here he is.

JACK: Greetings.

POPS: You know something, Junior, if we weren't shorthanded, I would suggest you hit the road as a standup comedian—immediately.

JUNIOR: I am funny. You've got to admit that. I am very funny. Right, Junior Junior?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: No comment.

OLD MAN: Would anyone like to buy some beans?

JUNIOR, JUNIOR JUNIOR, POPS & GREG: No!

In the silence that follows this grand negation, only MARILYN is heard, reciting her maniacal stream of consciousness.

OLD MAN: Oh. (*noticing and crossing toward MARILYN*) Excuse me, strange woman talking to her plate, would you like to... ?

GREG: All right, enough of this! Marilyn, I'm hanging up. (*she is oblivious, still rambling on*) Not that it matters. Jack...

JACK: Greetings!

GREG: Yes, greetings, hello, if you wouldn't mind, we would like you to come right over here to this area.

JACK: Why, I would be happy to. Thank-you.

JUNIOR: I know Jack, see? He's really polite.

JACK: Why, thank-you, Junior; thank-you ever so much.

JUNIOR: You're welcome ever so much, Jack.

POPS: Junior, stop slowing things down! Jack, right in here.

JACK: (*heading into the Rebootilization Area*) Ah, yes, of course, of course, thank-you for that direction.

POPS: You, Old Man with the beans.

OLD MAN: They're very nutritious. And magical.

POPS: Health food with a kick. That's nice. Right over there, will ya?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: This way, please.

OLD MAN: My beans aren't selling well today, young lady.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: I think we might have a customer for you—right in here.

JACK and the OLD MAN are in the Rebootilization Area now. Suddenly, MARILYN stops her babbling.

MARILYN: The General will be here any second!

GREG: What?

MARILYN: The General will be here any second! That's the update I was looking for! That's the update that's confirmed by 17 different interlocking schedules plus a Twitter feed and 88 different Facebook friends! The General is now scheduled to arrive at 11:45 and 13 seconds, and it is now 11:45, so he should be here in 13 seconds. 12, 11, 10...

She continues as GREG speaks.

GREG: All right, then, this is working out perfectly. The General is about to arrive and "Jack and the Beanstalk," his favorite story, is about to be rebootilized. Excellent!

POPS: We'll see.

MARILYN: 3... 2... 1! (*pause*) He's late again!!

MARILYN puts her face on her pad and starts scrolling through her various schedules using her nose. The GENERAL strides in with two military attendants. They take center stage, strike a strong pose, and the GENERAL makes his proclamation.

GENERAL: I have arrived!

ATTENDANT I: Confirmed! The General has arrived!

ATTENDANT 2: General's in the house! Roger that!

A tremendous, long wolf-howl comes from the Regeneration Pad, and the WOLF emerges fully from its wrapping. The GENERAL steps back. The two ATTENDANTS take defensive poses, pulling out guns.

GENERAL: Is that your idea of a military welcome?

GREG: Uh, no, General.

ATTENDANT 1: Permission to neutralize hairy threat, General?

ATTENDANT 2: Neutralize hairy, roger that!

GREG: That won't be necessary. N... no neutralization of the characters, please.

GENERAL: Stand down, men. Polish my shoes.

The ATTENDANTS put away their guns and quickly drop to polish the GENERAL's shoes.

POPS: Junior, take care of the wolf, will ya?

JUNIOR: Take care of the wolf? Take care of the wolf? You say that like it's just one of my regular duties, Pops. Wrap up this rubbish, Junior, and put it in the dumpster; take those trays and move them to the back room, Junior; figure out what to do with all these wires, Junior; and oh, Junior, by the way, take care of the wolf. That is not in my job description, Pops! *(the WOLF howls again, long and loud)* Junior Junior?

JUNIOR JUNIOR: What?

JUNIOR: Take care of the wolf.

WOLF: Man, that feels good! *(the wolf launches into another long howl when RED RIDING HOOD suddenly bursts from her wrapping and slaps him on the snout)* Ow! What'd you do that for?

RED: Quit the noise!

WOLF: What? I was just howling. I'm a wolf.

RED: You're a talking wolf. Control yourself, for heaven's sake.

WOLF: Just because I talk doesn't mean I don't have instincts.
Awooo...

RED grabs his snout, stopping the howl.

RED: When you're in an enclosed space, you'll control your instincts, you flea-bitten excuse for a noble ancestor of the canine kingdom. Do we understand each other? (*the WOLF mumbles assent through his muzzled muzzle*) Good. (*she releases the WOLF*) Behave. (*turning to everyone else*) Now, I'm Little Red Riding Hood. I don't know who any of you are; I don't know what I'm doing here; I could use a drink of milk. Who's in charge?

GENERAL: Well, now, Little Red, I like your style. (*he starts to walk toward LITTLE RED but almost trips over his polishing attendants*) Get off my feet. Go... check the perimeter or something.

ATTENDANT 1: (*exiting*) Perimeter check!

ATTENDANT 2: (*exiting*) P-check! Roger that!

GENERAL: (*to RED*) Have you ever thought of enlisting?

RED: Enlisting who?

GENERAL: Oh-ho, you're a firecracker.

GREG: Uh, General, my name is Greg Dawson. Welcome to SynCryn Futures.

GENERAL: Right. Is this the standard mode of operation around this place? Howling wolves?

GREG: No, no, not at all. Pops, maybe we could take our latest guests... ?

POPS: Junior, Junior Junior—chop, chop with Red Riding Hood and the Wolf.

JUNIOR: Chop, chop it is. To the cafeteria. This way, Miss Red.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Hi, um, Wolf.

WOLF: Well, hello there.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: When you were mentioning, you know, instincts?

WOLF: Yes.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: That didn't include... biting, right?

WOLF: (*suggestive*) Well, only when I see something luscious.

RED: Knock it off, Wolf!

WOLF: All right, all right—sheesh!

RED: (to JUNIOR JUNIOR) Slap 'em down before they even get started; that's my advice.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Um, okay.

WOLF, JUNIOR JUNIOR, JUNIOR and RED all exit.

GREG: Well. So, General, if I could... (phone call) Excuse me, just one... Hello?

MARILYN: (whispering, her face still virtually buried in her screen) Greg?

GREG: Marilyn, what is it?

MARILYN: We must have lost our call.

GREG: Yes. We must have.

MARILYN: I hate that.

GREG: Okay.

MARILYN: Greg?

GREG: Yes?

MARILYN: I can't find the General.

GREG: Marilyn...

MARILYN: I look here, and he's not there. I look here, and he's not there. I look here, and he's not there.

GREG: (trying to interrupt MARILYN's manic rut) Mari... yes... Marilyn! Marilyn.

MARILYN: I look here, and he's not there. Oh, and I look here! And he's not there.

GENERAL: (to POPS) Who is that insane woman?

POPS: Well, as a matter of fact, General, that happens to be our direct... (catching GREG frantically shaking his head and mouthing "no, no") ...direct experiment in some high tech robotics we've been working on here.

GENERAL: Seems to be malfunctioning, isn't it?

POPS: Well, you know, the circuitry is very complex, General. Greg, why don't I just take W3WXYZ - Loo-Loo, for short - into the, uh, the...

GREG: Technicians' Suite.

POPS: Technicians' Suite, right.

GREG: Thank-you, Pops.

POPS: (*as she leads the babbling MARILYN away*) I'm sure the technicians can run a few simulations, do a few calculations—after all, this whole operation is completely foolproof! Come on, Loo-Loo.

GREG: Thank-you, Pops! Thank-you. Goodbye. Alone at last, General.

GENERAL: Uh-huh. I have to say, I've been here a good five minutes, and I've yet to come across one clear indication that the United States Government should be investing the millions of dollars you people here propose for this Reshoeing Project you're supposed to be handling for us.

GREG: Rebootilization, actually, General. And I think, in just a moment, you're going to be convinced. As it so happens, we have one of your favorite stories, here, that we're just about to set straight.

GENERAL: What story is that?

GREG: "Jack and the Beanstalk," sir.

GENERAL: I hate that story! That fee-fi-fo-fum nonsense used to give me nightmares.

GREG: I... well, I heard a speech you gave where you referenced the fight between Jack and the Giant. I thought you said...

GENERAL: Oh, I didn't write that speech. As soon as I got back to base, I demoted the soldier who did, and I had him court-martialed to boot!

GREG: I see. Well, perhaps we could bring in, uh...

GENERAL: "Fee-fie-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman." Hated that! Kept me awake many a night. This giant kept coming at me, threatening to grind my bones.

He shivers.

GREG: Be that as it may, General, the story itself is, of course, a crucial part of our culture. The fact that it is going to be lost might...

GENERAL: Never mind that. I understand the threat. Show me what you're going to show me, man! Stop stalling! Time's a-wasting!

GREG: Yes, of course. Jack, Old Man, are you comfortable?

JACK: Very much, thank-you. We seem to be on a familiar road. (*to the OLD MAN*) Why, greetings, Venerable Old Man.

OLD MAN: Greetings to you, noble youth.

GREG: As you can tell, General, the characters are seeing...

GENERAL: Standard holodeck technology—I know my *Star Trek*.

GREG: Of course, sir. So, now, we're going to have these characters go through the crucial moment in the story where the virus first caused problems, thus restoring—or, in SynCryn lingo, retooling—the tale. We'll also infuse the moment with protections, making it impervious to any future disruption.

GENERAL: Wise idea. Proceed.

GREG: Thank-you, sir. And now, the retooling of “Jack and the Beanstalk”—your, er, some people's age-old favorite story.

OLD MAN: Young Man, what a fortuitous day this will be for you!

JACK: Well, I am glad to hear of that, sir. My name is Jack, and I could certainly use some good luck in my life.

OLD MAN: Of course, of course. Good luck is precisely what I am bringing you, in the form of these excellent, magical beans!

JACK: Magical beans? Begging your pardon, sir, but they don't look magical.

OLD MAN: Oh, but they are! They are the key to your wildest dreams, my fine young man. Do not be deceived by their humble appearance.

JACK: I thank you very sincerely, sir, but, you see, I am going to market with my... (*he turns to refer to his cow*) My cow is gone! Oh, dear, someone has stolen my cow! Mother is going to kill me!

GREG pushes a button, freezing JACK and the OLD MAN.

GENERAL: I don't remember that as part of the story.

GREG: Uh... well, you see, this isn't exactly an exact science...

GENERAL: For the money you're proposing we spend, it darned well better be an exact science!

GREG: No, it is! I mean, what I mean is—we need a cow! Simple as that! We need a cow.

GENERAL: I thought all your crucial characters were frozen.

GREG: Not all. That's the interesting thing. Our collection contains many of the requisite characters, but not always absolutely all. But we have a contingency plan for that! Of course we do. If a cow is needed, we bring in a cow. (*GREG pushes some buttons, and BLANKS 5, 6 and 7 enter*) Viola! One cow.

BLANKS 5, 6, 7: Moo.

GENERAL: What kind of shenanigans are you trying to pull here?
Those people are your cow?

GREG pushes more buttons, and the BLANKS walk into the Rebootilization Area to stand next to JACK. The BLANKS pose to assume more of a cow shape.

GREG: Actually, General, those people aren't people at all. They are part of our small but growing fleet of highly-advanced robots. For our purposes in story re-creation, we call them blanks. Because they're non-organic, we've found that they can fill in effectively as missing parts or characters.

BLANKS 5, 6, 7: Moooo.

GENERAL: And Jack is going to accept that two non-organic robots are his cow?

GREG: Wouldn't anyone? Ha, ha... (*seeing the GENERAL doesn't appreciate the joke*) Yes. Using the simulation technology, I'll just endow the Blanks with cow characteristics, and Jack will proceed as if the Blanks were old Bessie herself.

GENERAL: I'll believe it when I see it.

GREG: (*under his breath*) So will I.

GENERAL: What?

GREG: On we go!

The story proceeds in the Rebootilization Area.

OLD MAN: Young Man, what a fortuitous day this will be for you!

JACK: Well, I am glad to hear of that, sir. My name is Jack, and I could certainly use some good luck in my life.

OLD MAN: Of course, of course. Good luck is precisely what I am bringing you, in the form of these excellent, magical beans!

JACK: Magical beans? Begging your pardon, sir, but they don't look magical.

OLD MAN: Oh, but they are! They are the key to your wildest dreams, my fine young man. Do not be deceived by their humble appearance.

JACK: I thank you very sincerely, sir, but, you see, I am going to market with my cow.

BLANKS 5, 6, 7: Moo.

JACK: That's all right, Genevieve. Steady on, Old Girl.

The story freezes.

GREG: As you can see, General, Jack has no problem accepting the Blanks as his cow. It worked.

GENERAL: As I can see, yes, so why are you talking to me about it?

GREG: I just... I thought... no reason, sir.

POPS, JUNIOR and JUNIOR JUNIOR enter.

JUNIOR: What story is this, Jack and the Blankety-Blanks?

GREG: No, that is Jack's cow. And we're just going to proceed now, thank-you.

JUNIOR JUNIOR: Just so you know, Mr. Dawson, it's getting pretty crazy in the cafeteria.

GENERAL: What's the matter with your cafeteria, Dawson?

The GENERAL's attendants re-enter.

ATTENDANT 1: Finished perimeter check, General!

ATTENDANT 2: P-check done, roger that!

GENERAL: All secure?

ATTENDANT 1: Cafeteria looks dicey, General. Lots of weirdly-dressed people arguing over cookies.

ATTENDANT 2: Weirdos in the caf, roger that!

GREG: A situation that is certainly in no way threatening and one we will remedy shortly. (*to POPS, JUNIOR, and JUNIOR JUNIOR*) Right now we're just going to finish this particular rebootilization

that I'm sure the General is anxious to see completed so he can authorize the rest of this project, all right?

GENERAL: (to ATTENDANTS) Go oil the jeep, men.

ATTENDANT 1: (exiting) Consider it oiled, sir!

ATTENDANT 2: (exiting) O the J, roger that!

GREG: All right. Here we go.

JUNIOR: (to JUNIOR JUNIOR) That's a funky cow. Where's the beef?

The story continues.

OLD MAN: Noble Jack, you look like a young man ready to grasp a new opportunity.

JACK: Do I?

OLD MAN: You do, sir. You are also, I can tell, a young man with imagination! With ideas that reach beyond the ordinary!

JACK: My mother calls me a lazy dreamer, I'm afraid.

OLD MAN: Oh, no, no, no—lazy dreamer? That is a common misnaming for talented individuals like yourself, Jack. You are a visionary! And these beans, in the hands of a promising visionary like yourself, will unlock an incredible future.

JACK: But sir, I have nothing to give your for these wonderful beans. Until I sell this cow...

BLANKS 5, 6, 7: Moo.

JACK: I hate to do it, Jenny, but I must. Until I sell her, I have no money.

OLD MAN: I see. That is, indeed, a problem.

GREG: We're almost to the rebootilization moment, General. It's very exciting.

GENERAL: Pardon me if I don't faint. Get on with it.

OLD MAN: I have it! As a favor to you, as an investment in the great future of a visionary young man, I am willing to trade you these beans for your cow.

JACK: You would be willing to do that?

GREG: Now, once they make the exchange...

OLD MAN: I would. One old cow for five magical beans. You'd be getting the better end of the bargain!

JACK: Well, thank-you, kind sir!

BLANKS 5, 6, 7: Meow.

OLD MAN: What... what is that? I don't want a cat.

JACK: Genevieve? How did this cat get here?

GENERAL: What in the Sam Hill is going on now?

POPS: Foolproof.

GREG: I... I'm not... I was just... there must be a slight... if I can...

BLANKS 5, 6, & 7: Eey-haw! Eey-haw!

OLD MAN: I have no need for a donkey! I'm not giving you my beans for a donkey!

JACK: But I don't have a donkey! Genny, behave yourself!

GENERAL: What is the meaning of this?

GREG: I think I got it! There!

BLANKS 5, 6, & 7 shriek and chatter like monkeys.

OLD MAN: Monkeys! Young man, you can keep your monkeys!

JACK: They're not my monkeys! I was bringing a cow to market, not monkeys!

GREG freezes everyone in the Rebootilization Area.

GREG: Sir, may I offer you my humblest apologies. If I could have 15 minutes, I'm sure...

GENERAL: 15 minutes? You should have taken those 15 minutes two months ago, Dawson!

GREG: Of course, we didn't know about this crisis two months ago, but I get your... What I want to do—we're going to get these blanks out of here, right now.

He presses some buttons, putting the BLANKS back into "neutral." JACK and the OLD MAN unfreeze.

JACK: Who stole my cow!

OLD MAN: That was not a cow! That was a shape-shifting demon! I'm not trading my beans for a shape-shifting demon!

GREG: Pops, could you...

POPS: We're on it, Dr. Foolproof. Junior, Junior Junior, let's see if we can make a little more room in the lunchroom.

GREG: General, we have a wonderful tour of SynCryn Futures that I'm sure...

GENERAL: The only tour I'm taking is the one taking me straight back to the White House, Dawson, where I'm going to tell them...

Suddenly, all of the parcels on the Thawing Pad burst apart, revealing a motley crew of PIRATES, fully awake and very rowdy.

PIRATE 1: Avast ye, bilge rats!

PIRATE 2: Aarrgh, me maties!

ALL PIRATES: Aarrrrgh!

PIRATE 3: Hoist the mainsail!

PIRATE 4: Drink the rum dry!

PIRATE 5: Sharpen yer cutlasses!

ALL PIRATES: Aarrrrgh!

PIRATE 6: Ready the six-pounders!

PIRATE 7: Fill 'em with hail shot!

PIRATE 8: Send 'em all to Davy Jones' Locker!

ALL PIRATES: Aarrgh!

POPS: Hm, let me guess—fairy princesses?

PIRATE 1: Belay that, ye landlubber! We be pirates, and this be a mutiny!

PIRATE 2: (to PIRATE 1) Francis, might I have a word with ye? (to the rest of the PIRATES) Carry on, Maties! Aargh! Don't let those scurvy knaves get out of the range of yer blades!

REST OF THE PIRATES: Aargh!

JUNIOR: Pops, how did they thaw out so quick?

POPS: We've been opening the freezer door too much—they're pre-thawing.

PIRATE 3: Quiet down, prisoners! Aargh!

PIRATES: Aargh!

JUNIOR JUNIOR: (to JUNIOR) Talk about a limited vocabulary.

PIRATE 1: What be the matter?

PIRATE 2: Francis, ya can't be saying this is a mutiny. A mutiny is when we be takin' over the ship from the captain, see? As the captain ain't even here, and this don't even appear to be a ship at all, mutiny ain't the proper term!

PIRATE 1: Well, what be it, then?

PIRATE 2: It be a... a... well, I don't confess to know! But mutiny ain't right, I know that!

PIRATE 1: We be needing the captain.

PIRATE 2: Aye, that we do.

GENERAL: Is that part of your plan, Dawson, having pirates take over your facility?

GREG: Uh, no, General, certainly not. Of course not. Um... pirates?

PIRATES: Aargh!

GREG: Yes, hello, aargh and greetings to you. You might not realize this, but you're all official property of SynCryn Futures now. If you'd all like to get comfortable for a moment, I think we can explain...

The GENERAL's attendants come rushing in, see the PIRATES, and pull out their weapons.

ATTENDANT 1: Permission to neutralize scurvy threat, General?

ATTENDANT 2: Pound the pirates! Jolly roger that!

GREG: No, no, please!

PIRATE 1: Retreat, maties!

PIRATES: Retreat?



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