

The Engine of Our Disruption

By Patricia Milton
Developed in the Central Works Writers Workshop

THE ENGINE OF OUR DISRUPTION

CAST LIST (in order of appearance)

KAY Firestone, f, white, 70, a fashionable, scatterbrained, hard-drinking Republican US Senator. More Susan Collins than Marsha Blackburn. Ethically clueless.

XTOPHER Wolf, m, 30's - 40's, an R&D mastermind and Chief Disruption Officer at megatech giant Bubble. Ethically oblivious, but realizes ethics are trending.

KAMIRI Firestone, f, B/W bi-racial, late 30's, unemployed tech whiz with a reformed party-girl vibe, daughter of KAY, ethically demanding.

CHIP Wingo, m, Filipinx-American, 30, militant vegan, reckless developer, Chief of Bubble Self-Actualizing Cars. No filter. Ethically unconcerned, save for animal rights.

LOCATION

Near Palo Alto, California, United States.

KAY's apartment.

Bubble Headquarters.

The foyer of a Senate Committee Room.

Note: Set is skimpy, just some chairs, a table.

TIME

On the eve of disruption. Very, very soon. Tomorrow?

NOTES:

/ means a cut-off; the next character speaks.

- means a character stops abruptly, interrupting their own dialogue.

Dialogue set side-by-side on the page is overlapping, characters speak together.

"When you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it and you argue about what to do about it only after you have had your technical success. That is the way it was with the atomic bomb." - J. Robert Oppenheimer

ACT ONE.

Scene 1. KAY's apartment. KAY is fashionably dressed. KAMIRI getting ready for her interview.

KAY

Should you be dressed like that for an interview? Turn around.

KAMIRI

Seriously?

KAY

You look like you've been clearing brush.

KAMIRI

Tech is casual. If I dress like a grown-up woman, it might be triggering for them.

KAY

(Mom voice) I'm sure you know best.

KAMIRI

I cannot wear a suit. I need to fit in. Help offset the big blank space in my resume.

KAY

I heard something on the news about Bubble. Something about the CEO.

KAMIRI

There's an investigation. He was having sex in a storage room, with a subordinate.

KAY

I would avoid the broom closet if I were you.

KAMIRI

It's an interview. I won't be needing a broom.

KAY

Does Bubble seem like a place where you could be happy?

KAMIRI

I'd like to make a difference.

KAY

You wanted that at Oeuver. Look what they did to you.

KAMIRI

This isn't like that. Somebody recommended me. Bubble is trying to be ethical, and I need a job / so

KAY

You don't need a job. You don't pay rent, and we're very compatible.

KAMIRI

I love you, Mom, but living with you, is, / like

KAY

(happy) It's like we're gal pals.

KAMIRI

(it is not.) I'm scared sometimes I'll never work in tech again. I'll wind up peddling lube at Good Vibrations.

KAY

That won't happen. If it does, you can go into politics, like me.

KAMIRI

Yeah. No.

KAY

(Mom voice) Don't listen to me. Do whatever you want.

KAMIRI

Can you please be supportive?

KAY

Of course, Pookie Pie.

KAMIRI

Then can I borrow your car?

KAY

No.

KAMIRI

Why not?

KAY

I'll lend you one of my suits.

KAMIRI

What did I just say?

KAY

You'd stand out from the crowd in one of my Chanel's.

KAMIRI

Coco Chanel was a Nazi collaborator.

KAY

Do you want to be chic? Or politically correct?

KAMIRI

I'm sorry; I- Thanks. I appreciate the offer, but I could really use the car.

KAY

I need the car for my stealth brunch. Please, don't say anything to anyone. I don't want reporters snooping around.

KAMIRI

My media contacts only cover tech. (beat) What is a "stealth brunch?"

KAY

There's mimosas.

KAMIRI

So, you're what, meeting with big donors that have bills before the Senate? (silence) Fuck, Mom. We've discussed this.

KAY

And I rely on your advice. But my attorney says it's legal.

KAMIRI

Your attorney, who was sanctioned for lying in court?

KAY

You're so inflexible.

KAMIRI

If it's legal, why is it "stealth?"

KAY

I've rented Alcatraz. I don't want TV cameras on me in prison.

KAMIRI

Don't any ordinary, everyday citizens want you to be re-elected Senator?

KAY

Not according to the polls. And these donors are loyal. Loyalty is an essential virtue.

KAMIRI

If you're in the mafia!

KAY

Sweetheart, I have to meet with corporate donors. The Catholics and the Evangelicals abandoned me when I missed that confirmation vote: I forget why.

KAMIRI

You blew off that vote to go shopping at Saks.

KAY indicates her outfit.

KAY

That's where I got this. Feel. (KAMIRI doesn't) All right, don't feel. Ugh. I need a mimosa.

KAMIRI

Don't drink and drive, okay.

KAY rolls her eyes, moves to exit.

KAMIRI

Mom, wait. Any words of encouragement? (KAY is confused) My interview.

KAY

(sincere) Oh, Pookie Pie. You're the best. They'll love you.

KAY rummages, takes a small velvet bag from her purse.

KAY

Take this: My fail-safe good luck charm. I brought it with me into the voting booth for each of my elections.

KAMIRI

That's ... Thank you. (opens the bag) A rabbit's foot.

KAY

Hm. Probably. I never saw the rest of the body.

They exit through different doors.

Scene 2. A room at Bubble. CHIP and XTOPHER enter. CHIP refers to KAMIRI's resume on his phone.

CHIP

You're gonna have to tell her what you're working on.

XTOPHER

I can't tell her. I can't tell you. It's a secret project.

CHIP

(looks at the resume) You think she's a good fit?

XTOPHER

Her mother's a Senator. On the Technology Task Force.

CHIP

(still looking) That's not listed/

XTOPHER

You don't put a reference to obvious nepotism on your resume.

CHIP

I would. Okay. I get it now. (refers to the resume.) The Oeuver whistleblowing gives her a trust score of 90, according to the algorithm.

XTOPHER

Not one hundred?

CHIP

She's got this four-year employment gap.

XTOPHER

So we inquire. Whatever she says, it'll be instructive.

CHIP

On the other hand, the whistleblowing could/ be

XTOPHER

It's not.

CHIP

You don't even know what I was going to say.

XTOPHER

I know that nobody trusts tech companies.

CHIP

Should they?

XTOPHER

You'd better hope they do, bro, or you're out of a job. And who's more trustworthy than a former whistleblower?

XTOPHER

(off CHIP's look) To the media! To the Senate! We need somebody to vouch, publicly, for Bubble's ethics.

CHIP

She'll do that... when our CEO just got removed for /?

XTOPHER

Dog. We need her. Our consent decree from the Federal Trade Commission is tighter than a nipple clamp at a BDSM convention.

CHIP

Don't say "nipple clamp" in my presence ever again.

XTOPHER

Leaving aside the FTC, the Senate could kill our strategy to "screw testing, just launch." Our ethical corpse needs reviving.

CHIP

Bro. How can a whistleblower vouch for our ethics? You mean, like, ethics washing?

XTOPHER

Shh!

CHIP

What's your comfort level she won't be a problem?

XTOPHER

High! A high level! She's smart, honest, capable/

CHIP

A female ethics exec? A whistleblower. Smart? And honest? That's nothing but red flags, my dude.

XTOPHER

What are you afraid of?

CHIP

Uh.

XTOPHER

You will accept her ... or I'll kill you and dump your body in that empty space behind the climbing wall.

CHIP

Are you huffing your own farts? No way I would fit back there.

XTOPHER

She can be handled: She really needs the job. Former hacker, too. White hat, but average people hear "hacker" and think "evil."

CHIP

Can confirm.

XTOPHER

So Bubble and Kamiri are both in urgent need of rehabilitation. (silence) Chip, I'm not gonna mess with you.

CHIP

You just threatened to kill me!

XTOPHER

I would never kill you. I might call your mother, and tell her you're not putting forth your best effort.

CHIP

My mom would kick your sorry ass with her little finger.

XTOPHER

That's anatomically ridiculous. (beat) Here's the plan.

CHIP

I don't want her in Automotive.

XTOPHER

I'm putting her, with you, in Automotive. And, lo and behold, she finds something unethical.

CHIP

In Self-actualizing cars?

XTOPHER

We take action. She calls her media contacts, announces she's fixing it. We contain the damage. Boom! We're ethical.

CHIP

Contain what damage?

XTOPHER

I have no choice. I speak to that Senate Task Force next week. I'm proposing tech legislation. In front of the interviewee's mother! Keep up.

CHIP

So, this Kamiri is nosing around my division, looking for violations?

XTOPHER

It'll be something small. Nothing illegal. Easily fixable. (silence) Is everything all right in Automotive?

CHIP

You can eat off the floor.

XTOPHER

Feel free to refuse, Chip. But you should know: the Executive Board wants to be informed if you're ... unaccommodating.

CHIP

(beat) Bring it. What do women know about cars?

XTOPHER

Trust is a must. I'm going to put that out on Slack. (talks into his phone) "Trust is a Must."

CHIP

And you guarantee/

XTOPHER

I guarantee you'd better chill. I'll manage her. Miri will be pumped to blow the whistle on some minor car issue.

CHIP

(a look) "Miri." You know her?

XTOPHER

Kamiri.

CHIP

You know her, like, biblically?

XTOPHER

Keep your crass remarks to yourself. (looks at his wearable) I'm meeting up with her before the interview... to feel her out. (off CHIP's look) Get your mind out of the gutter. (CHIP stays) Beat it!

CHIP exits. KAMIRI, badge hanging from her neck, enters the conference room.

XTOPHER

Miri!

KAMIRI

(it pops out) Shit, Xtopher?

XTOPHER pulls out a chair for her.

KAMIRI

You're interviewing me? Hi.

XTOPHER

Hi. Glad to see you here at Bubble. Who've you met with so far?

KAMIRI

Um. The receptionist? "Princess." The Dating Apps guy. Social Media: he's a real (stops). Smart phones, and H.R.

XTOPHER

Then you need only impress me and Automotive to land your dream job. I'm pre-dazzled, but Chip can't be here till the top of the hour.

KAMIRI

Why did you push up the interview? Ohhhh. You wanted to meet with me alone, first. (awkward beat)

XTOPHER

I made sure they called you in. I think you have a good chance of getting hired on the spot. I put in a good word for you!

KAMIRI

Well. Here we are. I'm sorry about how we left it. You weren't interested in moving forward and I ... really needed to decide. Wait. You recommended me?

XTOPHER

Highly. Five stars! (beat) You seem stupefied into silence.

KAMIRI

No, that's ... very generous of you.

XTOPHER

You have that crater in your resume, after the fallout at Oeuver. It just looks /

KAMIRI

Like somebody with integrity?

XTOPHER

I was able to convince the interim CEO that you won't put us out of business.

KAMIRI

They spied on their customers. Do you spy on your customers?

XTOPHER

Bubble is not a roiling lagoon of excrement like Oeuver.
How's your mom? Off jet setting?

KAMIRI

What? No. She's ... good.

XTOPHER

(silence) I'm glad you agreed to come in.

KAMIRI

They didn't tell me it was you. So weird. I thought you hated me.

XTOPHER

No grudge on my end.

KAMIRI

Would I be working with you? Like at Oeuver?

XTOPHER

(defensively) Miri, I didn't do anything.

KAMIRI

I know. But it's not like I could keep quiet.

XTOPHER

I remember that about you.

KAMIRI

Did you know they hired private investigators, to smear me after I left? You saw my resume. I'm radioactive.

XTOPHER

Pretty standard for whistleblowers.

KAMIRI

(beat) I- I did have one job, a contract gig, for the DOD.

XTOPHER

Your mom's influence?

KAMIRI

Hey! I was blacklisted. Don't tell me you'd refuse help from your mom, to earn enough to move out of her house. Anyway. There was a data mishap.

XTOPHER

Was it when armed drones mistook the school for an army base?

KAMIRI

No.

XTOPHER

Was it that release of troop locations to Russia?

KAMIRI

No!

XTOPHER

The phone numbers and bra sizes of military wives, whose husbands were deployed overseas?

KAMIRI

What?! It wasn't any of those, and it wasn't my fault.

XTOPHER

You, at DOD? ... Not on your resume. It doesn't show up anywhere on the web.

KAMIRI

"The web." You Bubbled me?

XTOPHER

To find out where you went. I couldn't find any trace of you, or your "mishap." Can I get a reference from Department of Defense?

KAMIRI

Yeah, no, it's Classified.

A small silence. KAMIRI thinks.

KAMIRI

You Bubbled me.

XTOPHER

Hey, leaving was your choice. (beat) I had a mishap, too. Oeuver found out I called a "Wired" reporter, and I was escorted from the building.

KAMIRI

I bet they didn't send P.I.'s after you.

XTOPHER

Forced me to leave the country. I hung out in a Benedictine monastery in France. I am resplendent in a robe.

KAMIRI

(incredulous) You spent the last four years in an abbey?

XTOPHER

No, no. I came back, co-founded a start-up. Uh. A pet rescue app: matched up people with animals. Patterned after Grindr.

KAMIRI

Isn't that illegal?

XTOPHER

It was for pets! We didn't intend- Anyway, the app led to some ... customer arrests. We got shut down.

KAMIRI

I'm inferring that Bubble hires only disgraced tech people.

XTOPHER

Disgraced? More like unjustly blamed. We've got hackers, like you and Chip, the guy you'll be working with. Then there are the misunderstood disruptors, like me. (beat) So. Miri, I wanted to ask you ...

KAMIRI

Oh, you're gonna bring that up?

XTOPHER

I thought, I ... well,

KAMIRI

I'm here for a job. I'd like everything to be professional and above-board.

XTOPHER

I can accept that.

KAMIRI

I love this old building. The furniture, though, seems ... second hand?

XTOPHER

Twitter fire sale.

CHIP enters.

XTOPHER

Here he is! This is Chip Wingo; Head of Automotive.

KAMIRI

Kamiri Firestone, hi.

CHIP

Hi. (to Xtopher) Where's Legal?

XTOPHER

I didn't tell you? He's not available. (beat) Legal hit a parked police car on Page Mill Road last night. Arrested and charged. Mega unfortunate.

KAMIRI

Yikes.

XTOPHER

His self-driving vehicle was drunk, and possibly high, and fled the scene.

CHIP

You can't blame the car!

XTOPHER

It's self-driving.

CHIP

Climb off my ass!

XTOPHER

Relax. Probably human error. The Palo Alto PD is on it. (to KAMIRI) You would be working with Chip, here.

KAMIRI

I thought I was interviewing for CEO. (Awkwardness) "Chief Ethics Officer?"

XTOPHER

Right. Because our former Chief Ethics Officer was discovered with our CEO ... inappropriately en flagrante el-dick-toh.

CHIP

At it like rabbits.

XTOPHER

(warning) Chip. After a lengthy and, uh, entertaining probe, they're both gone. You are up for the slot of Cee Eth Oh.

KAMIRI

"Cee Eth Oh."

XTOPHER

Loosen up! Give us a smile. (to CHIP) Kamiri was at DOD.

CHIP

(to XTOPHER) That's the gap?

XTOPHER

(nods) We're friendly here. We're like a family.

KAMIRI

Not the selling point you think it is.

CHIP

Just a minute. (to KAMIRI) You worked at DOD, yet you claim to have ethics?

KAMIRI

They wanted ... an Ethics PowerPoint. Which I gave them. But I was let go after two weeks, so I couldn't make a ... (trails off) I had top secret clearance, so I'm- I was trustworthy. At that time. Okay, I blew the whistle at Oeuver/ so

XTOPHER

Let's see a smile. We have fun here!

KAMIRI

If you tell me to smile one more time/

CHIP

"Have fun" is one of our core values. Maybe lighten up.

XTOPHER

Chip's not always like this.

KAMIRI

What's he like? (to CHIP) What're you like?

CHIP

Genius.

XTOPHER

Frequently stoned.

XTOPHER

Bubble's mega fun. "Appreciation Afternoons" every Friday!

KAMIRI

Like ... pizza and beer pong?

CHIP

Psilocybin and the climbing wall.

KAMIRI

I read that your company motto is "Don't Be Scurvy."

CHIP
Um, that was/

XTOPHER
I wouldn't go by that.

CHIP
(embarrassed) That was the former CEO's idea. We don't really/

XTOPHER
It was "Talk Like a Pirate" Day. Everybody up on the climbing wall/

CHIP
Beyond baked. Next thing we know, "Don't Be Scurvy" is lit up on the lawn in letters you can see from space.

KAMIRI
(points to CHIP's phone) So, my expertise: I have an advanced degree in the Philosophy of Ethics from Banham University. My team won the National Ethics Bowl in Washington, DC, and I headed Oeuver's Ethics Team, until I was let go for ... for being ethical.

XTOPHER
She feels comfortable ghosting an intimate partner without warning. That should tell you something.

KAMIRI
(to Xtopher) Okay, I'm not proud of how I handled our breakup / but

CHIP
It was you? (to KAMIRI) What do you do when there's an ethical conflict? Loyalty vs. honesty, as a fake example?

KAMIRI
I did the honest thing at Oeuver and it ruined my life. If I could go back and ruin my life in some other way, I would.

CHIP
How are your computer science skills? Neural networks? Deep learning?

KAMIRI
Excellent. But I believe my main strength/ is applying

XTOPHER
Bubble needs you, Miri. To rebuild the public's trust in us. The feds say they'll go full algorithmic destruction if we don't get ahead of our massive data scandal. And ... those other scandals.

CHIP

The FTC has promised multiple beheadings.

KAMIRI

Did you ever admit wrongdoing?

CHIP

Why would we? (to XTOPHER) Why is she in my department?

XTOPHER

She's not going to engineer the cars, Chip, she's just going to make them ethical.

CHIP

Make carbon-emitting vehicles ethical? Have you read the latest climate report?

XTOPHER

Dude. Downshift. Do you have any more questions for her?

CHIP

Are those leather shoes?

KAMIRI

Oh! They /

CHIP

Because tearing off someone else's skin and then wearing it on your feet is the opposite of ethical.

XTOPHER

Chip's a combative animal rights activist. Seriously, mega militant.

KAMIRI

Absolutely nothing wrong with that. (beat) They're pleather.

XTOPHER

We'd like to make your announcement ASAP.

KAMIRI

Don't you want to hear about .. How I approach ethical AI?

XTOPHER

(faking interest) Sure sure sure.

CHIP

Tell me one thing that explains AI ethics.

KAMIRI

Unfortunately, there isn't just one thing.

CHIP

Here we go.

KAMIRI

Before you develop anything, you have to ask yourself: is AI really the best solution to this?

XTOPHER

You're joking.

KAMIRI

Neural networks don't get how the world works. AI takes shortcuts. It's biased.

CHIP

But it's not evil.

KAMIRI

I would say: Overhyped. Misused. Often wrong.

CHIP

So you're a doomer.

KAMIRI

AI can be tricked. It perceives things that aren't there. It aggravates racism and sexism. It can be used for criminal, or terrorist purposes/

CHIP

You're kinda alarmist.

KAMIRI

Is any of that not true? (silence) Haven't AI chatbots on your social media platform led to several deaths?

CHIP

We found a workaround.

XTOPHER

Lots of things threaten humanity. Climate catastrophe, unchecked corruption, rogue nuclear weapons. That meteor.

KAMIRI

What about disinformation? Voters can't tell what's true any more. Deep fake technology/ misleads

CHIP

Hey, that's not us.

XTOPHER

You know, democracies don't last more than a couple hundred years, anyway.

KAMIRI

(beat) A lot of developers can't explain how their AI makes decisions.

CHIP

Shame on those developers.

XTOPHER

Look, it's clear you're way ahead of this ethics stuff. Like I always say: "Trust is a must." Bubble wants to become synonymous with "trustworthy practices in AI."

KAMIRI

With your history of unethical behavior?

XTOPHER

Half the lies people say about Bubble aren't even true! But now, we'll have you.

KAMIRI

How do you think about ethics?

CHIP

Ethics is a journey.

XTOPHER

Be serious. (beat) Ethics is a story we tell ourselves.

KAMIRI

And technology?

XTOPHER

Technology is morally neutral. That's been proved.

KAMIRI

Has it. What about the effects of technology?

XTOPHER

On consumers?

KAMIRI

On people. We're not wallets with legs.

CHIP

(sotto voce) Red flag.

KAMIRI

I'm not sure you really want to hire me.

XTOPHER

You can't be serious. You can't right the ship. Broad, deep opportunity here.

KAMIRI

What I don't understand, is ... I'm Cee Eth Oh, but you only want me to oversee Automotive?

CHIP

You're not my overseer!

XTOPHER

Don't be scurvy, Chip.

KAMIRI

What about your other divisions?

XTOPHER

The ones you met with, plus my division, uh, um, "Password Invincibility?"

CHIP

Oh, sure. "Password Invincibility."

XTOPHER

(To CHIP) Stay in your lane. (To KAMIRI) Of course, we'll expand your reach, as we get comfortable with one another. You're familiar with cars, since you were with Oeuver.

KAMIRI

You know, I really have to think about this. I'm ...

CHIP

She's suddenly noticing dozens of red flags.

XTOPHER

A red flag or two is nothing in the face of your continued unemployment as a tech pariah. Think of it! You can move out of your Mom's house. To say nothing of all the positive changes you can make around here.

KAMIRI

I will want to make actual changes.

XTOPHER

Monster results! Not like at Oeuver, where, let's face it, you failed. We'll get you a Bubble phone.

KAMIRI

I have an iPhone.

XTOPHER

(to Bubbly) Bubbly.

BUBBLY: "I didn't get that."

XTOPHER

I didn't say anything yet. (beat) Kamiri is hired. Scramble her iPhone. Populate her calendar, email her offer letter, and print out her NDAs. I think we have ten.

BUBBLY: "Twelve. Right away."

XTOPHER

So. You start tomorrow. (silence) Okay?

CHIP

(sing-songy) Waffling.

KAMIRI

I ... I would be more comfortable with a six-month trial period.

XTOPHER

Great. Done!

KAMIRI

Okay. (beat) Who do I report to? What's my salary? Where /

XTOPHER

H.R. will sort all that out. (to CHIP) Let's go.

CHIP

(sotto voce to KAMIRI) Way to con your ex into a job.

KAMIRI

Sorry, I can't hear you when you're talking out your ass.

XTOPHER

Mega inappropriate, Chip.

CHIP

(to KAMIRI, giving a subtle f-u sign) Welcome to Bubble.

KAMIRI is concerned. The men exit.

Scene 3. That afternoon. KAY's apartment. KAY, reading her notebook. KAMIRI enters, hugs KAY.

KAMIRI

I got the job.

KAY

Pookie Pie, I never had a doubt. You had my good luck charm.

KAMIRI

I don't know how lucky it is. Bubble's not very aware of their own ethics issues.

KAY

Oh, like Congress.

KAMIRI

I sincerely hope not. It's just ... they need to take AI Ethics more seriously.

KAY

Well, try not to annoy them.

KAMIRI

If somebody is about to do something wrong ... don't they want to be warned, so they can course-correct?

KAY

Oh, sweetie, no.

KAMIRI

You know who interviewed me: Xtopher. He's Bubble's Chief Disruption Officer now.

KAY

Xtopher was so much more charming than that drummer you dated ... or that cat food taster with the salmon breath.

KAMIRI

I don't even remember those guys.

KAY

(mom voice) I remember every disappointment my family has handed me.

KAMIRI

If I can hang on at Bubble for six months ... I'll be able to search for something else.

KAY

I'm so happy for you, Miri.

KAMIRI

I had to get a burner phone, Mom: My iPhone doesn't work on campus. And my Bubble phone records my calls. Where can I write my new number? (looks around) Where's your Grand Pad?

KAY

I only wear my Grand Pad on road trips.

KAMIRI

Not that. Your tablet, Mom, your touch screen.

KAY

I never use that. I can't figure out how it works.

KAMIRI

(indicates her paper notebook) Should I write it in there?

KAMIRI takes KAY's messy notebook.
Pink sticky notes fall out.

KAY

Those are my notes, my calendar, reminders from my assistant. Write it in there.

KAMIRI

No wonder you're so scatter-brained. This is a hot mess.
(reading) What's this? "TTF? Prep for next week?"

KAY

"TTF?" "TTF." What can that mean?

KAMIRI

Don't look at me. (reads) Because it says /

KAY

Ah! "TTF" is the Tech Task Force. That Senator. Senator... the one who drinks.

KAMIRI

That's you, Mom.

KAY

(remembers) Senator Rourke.

KAMIRI

(reading) Senator Rourke is leaving the Senate, and that means- (beat) Motherfucker!

KAY

He's not exactly chummy, but he's hardly a motherfucker.

KAMIRI

(re the notebook) You are taking Kelly's place as Chair of the Tech Task Force?

KAY

Isn't that a hoot?

KAMIRI

They put you in charge of tech legislation?

KAY

We can't have a power vacuum. My committee reviews regulations proposed by Big Tech. Next week.

KAMIRI

Proposed by who, exactly?

KAY

Apple, Bubble, I can't remember them all. They write regulations for us. It's very handy. It's like when the NRA writes gun legislation /and

KAMIRI

But now, you have a conflict of interest.

KAY

I get first crack at the pastries. I get a gavel!

KAMIRI

You have to recuse yourself.

KAY

I'm a Republican. We never recuse.

KAMIRI

Your daughter works for Bubble!

KAY

Talented in technology. Like mother, like daughter.

KAMIRI

I'm Bubble's C Eth O! (KAY is puzzled) That's an officer of the company. I could be called to speak before your committee.

KAY

Serendipity.

KAMIRI

If I present in front of a committee headed by my mother?

KAY

All right, Miss Unsullied. You accepted a job from your boyfriend.

KAMIRI

Xtopher is not my boyfriend!

KAY

I'll make sure the committee accepts anything you propose.

KAMIRI

You can't do that!

KAY

I'm being supportive.

KAMIRI

Bubble needs to look completely transparent.

KAY

Oh, I can see right through Bubble, dear. I didn't just topple off the turnip truck.

KAMIRI

(beat. Realizes) You knew Senator Rourke was stepping down?

KAY

Of course! He (can't remember) ... lied to the FBI? Something.

KAMIRI

Did the tech lobbyists know? Wait, Bubble lobbyists knew?

KAY

Everybody knew. For ages.

KAMIRI

I thought- I thought Xtopher just wanted to see me again.

KAY

I'm sure he did.

KAMIRI

How could I be so stupid?

KAY

I never really understood why you two split.

KAMIRI

Mom, you know why.

KAY

You should be happy for me. I got a new job, too: I'm a chair. Maybe you should recuse.

KAMIRI

I only just got hired!

KAY

By your ex-boyfriend. (sighs) This is BeeBass, Pookie Pie. It's genetic. (off her look, spells) B.B.A.S. "Bad Boy Attraction Syndrome."

KAMIRI

When did you develop this theory?

KAY

BeeBass is not "my" theory. I only just came across it, searching the Bubble Psychology boards.

KAMIRI

Don't search "Bad Boys" on Bubble! They'll serve you gay porn for, like, eternity.

KAY

Oh, that explains it. As far as I can tell, our whole family has Bee-Bass: You, me, your grandma, your cousin Shirley: none of us can resist a bad boy.

KAMIRI

That is a tired, anti-woman trope.

KAY

It can't be "anti-woman," not when your Uncle Terence has it worst of all. (beat) It reminds me of how your father, when we were teenagers, took me / across

KAMIRI

Forget I said anything. Except, you'd better recuse.

KAY

You want me to chew off my own leg?

KAMIRI

Do what to your own what, now?

KAY

I'm caught in a trap, Kamiri. I am a Republican female, and I don't even attend the prayer breakfast.

KAMIRI

You would if they served mimosas.

KAY

My opponent called me a "sniveling coward" for voting to certify the last election. I have to seem a tower of strength to be reelected. That means, refuse to recuse.

KAMIRI

Ugh, Mom.

KAY

Maybe Xtopher won't ask you to speak to my task force, if you explain the ethics.

KAMIRI

Explaining ethics to tech bros is like explaining "two wins in a row" to the Oakland A's.

KAY

Suck it up, dear. Hang onto my good luck charm. We both must display weapons-grade strength. (refers to notebook) Oh, I meant to ask you: what is a "database?"

Lights shift. KAY exits.

Scene 4. Shift to Bubble
Automotive. Two days later. CHIP
enters and arranges a desk and
laptop. Uses his phone.

CHIP

Princess, have the Palo Alto Police called, at all? Anybody with the first name, "Officer," or "Detective?" (beat) No reason. I'm in meetings all day, ok?

Hangs up. Turns to his laptop. His
phone vibrates, he answers.

CHIP

Mom. I've asked you not to call me at work. Yes, I am at work. No, I don't know the answer to the Wordle today. It's a five-letter word meaning "don't call me at work."

KAMIRI enters, with a to-go cup.

CHIP

Somebody just showed up. Love you. Bye!

CHIP hangs up. Begins typing.

KAMIRI

(cheery) Good morning, Chip!

CHIP

(grim) Morning.

KAMIRI places the to-go cup in front of CHIP.

KAMIRI

Got you a smoothie! (He ignores her) From the Jealous Banana! (He ignores her) A Developer's Delite, your usual, according to Princess. Without honey: I made sure. Don't want to exploit the labor of the bees. With soy milk. Yummmmm.

CHIP

(grim) When I buy a smoothie, I get my frequent buyer card stamped.

KAMIRI

I asked the clerk about that. He promised to stamp it twice next time you come in.

KAMIRI moves the cup closer to him.
A moment. CHIP sips.

CHIP

See, the woman bringing the man nourishment in an attempt to kiss his ass reinforces the natural order of things.

KAMIRI

The fuck?

CHIP

I mean thanks.

KAMIRI

You're welcome. What's with that guy in the conference room?

CHIP

What guy? A police officer?

KAMIRI

Not in uniform. Short, white, balding. Wearing, like, a brown kaftan?

CHIP

Yeah, that's a monk.

KAMIRI

A/ monk?

CHIP

Part of Xtopher's project. He meets with monks.

KAMIRI

For Password Invincibility? Why would he do that?

CHIP

Hey. Anybody's system can get hacked. Even a monastery. All I'm sure about is: Xtopher has plans to undercut my division.

KAMIRI

With a monk?

CHIP

No, in some mystery way. (He sips his smoothie) Incidentally, if you see any Palo Alto police wandering around, let me know. Immediately.

KAMIRI

(realizes) That hit-and-run was a Bubble car?

CHIP

It was Legal's screw-up. Anyway, the cops won't understand the car's computer output.

KAMIRI

What if they can?

CHIP

Impossible. It's an impenetrable black box. We'll stonewall.

KAMIRI

That's unethical. It's probably illegal.

CHIP

The incident was human error. Is this why you came to work today? To pass judgement on me?

KAMIRI

No. But Bubble cars don't perform well / and

CHIP

So you are really going to be like this.

KAMIRI

Like what?

CHIP

Like a douche-canoë, paddling up super-aggravating creek. You're a Bubble executive, not some reformer. You should be helping me stop Xtopher from sabotaging our division.

KAMIRI

Well, I haven't seen Xtopher since he hired me. I called and texted / him

CHIP

He never answers his phone. It's for plausible deniability.

KAMIRI

You haven't explained how he's going to sabotage /

CHIP

If you're going to go all "blah blah blah don't perform well," "blah blah blah illegal," then I'm not telling you.

KAMIRI

I don't want to get between you two and whatever beef you're having/

CHIP

Hey!

KAMIRI

Not "beef." Penis measuring contest, okay, but it's my job to ask questions about Bubble car crashes.

CHIP

We don't say "crash." We say, "an incident providing spontaneous data about the reliability index of the car." Ask away.

KAMIRI

I've been going through the Bubble car stats and/ I

CHIP

We don't have to report to the feds for another few weeks.

KAMIRI

I know that; but I noticed some really bad numbers.

CHIP

We thoroughly test our cars in collision scenarios, well before we send them out to hit pedestrians.

KAMIRI

Chip, please. As a brilliant, skilled developer, you are probably the only one who can explain / to me

CHIP

Is this the trolley problem?

KAMIRI

That's an edge case, but that doesn't mean we can ignore it. If you don't look at edge cases, you haven't done due diligence in designing the product.

CHIP

Hey, life is full of uncertainty! We're all hurtling towards unavoidable death anyway.

KAMIRI

Our cars are not supposed to expedite that.

CHIP

I'm piloting a couple of innovations that resolve ethical issues. Okay? (defensive) Drivers can set their own ethical standards, using a knob next to the glove compartment.

KAMIRI

"A knob" / next to?

CHIP

The driver adjusts ... they "tune" the ethics, like on a radio. If they choose to. Otherwise, it's automobile's choice. That Disney movie, "Herbie Fully Loaded?" It really imprinted on me as a kid.

KAMIRI

The Love Bug is not a reliable ethical yardstick. Wait. Are you saying these cars haven't learned to avoid accidents?

CHIP

Of course they have! We use the Berkeley Deep Drive dataset, which gives us highly accurate object ID. No mistaking a small child for a speed bump. In most instances.

KAMIRI

Then what does this knob/

CHIP

Imagine, for a moment, the choice is between self-sacrifice and hitting, say, some scooter dude. You use the knob to make that decision ahead of time.

KAMIRI

You believe drivers will choose to save other people? Have you ever tried to merge onto the 580?

CHIP

I'm no ethics nerd. We're not making self-actualizing trolleys here.

KAMIRI

People aren't going to sacrifice themselves for strangers, who might not do the same. That's the Prisoner's Dilemma.

CHIP

They're not prisoners.

KAMIRI

It's Game Theory. A thought experiment.

CHIP

A thought experiment is just mental masturbation wearing a philosophical mini-toga.

KAMIRI

It gives us information about how people behave.

CHIP

Who cares? That's, like, "Will Galileo's balls hit the ground at the same time?"

KAMIRI

That is a physics experiment, and, yes, they will. The Prisoner's Dilemma proves that people, alone, given the choice between cooperation with an unseen other or selfishness ... choose selfishness.

CHIP

Duh.

KAMIRI

Right! Duh. When each person pursues self-interest, it's worse than if they had cooperated. You're creating a problem: innocent people will be run / over

CHIP

I knew if we hired a woman, she'd stir up drama.

KAMIRI

I can do without the blatant sexism. It's a simple fact that every last driver out there is going to set their knob to save themselves!

CHIP

(beat) Not the Dalai Lama. Or the Dolly ... Parton.

KAMIRI's Bubble phone rings. The ringtone is Xtopher saying "Trust is a Must."

KAMIRI

This fucking ringtone! Jesus Christ on a Quaker rice cake!!

CHIP

You swear a wild amount.

KAMIRI

(answers) Kamiri. I'll take it. Hello? Yes, this is she. (listens, looks at CHIP) You know, checking the car's internal data is a reasonable request.

CHIP

Is that the cops?!

KAMIRI

About Legal's car. Did his car have that knob? But I'm new at Bubble, and ... I need to ... check. I understand there may be a corporate policy in the event of a regrettable, uh, incident.

CHIP grabs his laptop and exits.

KAMIRI

(after him) Chip! Chip, come back here! (to phone) I'm sorry, officer, I missed that. Yes, and as I said, I'm going to check.

KAMIRI exits, on phone.

Scene 5. Shift to XTOPHER's office.
XTOPHER using his VR. CHIP enters.

CHIP

Was this your "plan"?

XTOPHER

Good morning, Chip.

CHIP

Legal, take the wheel: was that part of your plan?

XTOPHER

(genuinely puzzled) What plan?

CHIP

Your plan: Hire Kamiri, let her find a fuck-up, she alerts the press, Bubble's reputation is no longer as stinky as an old pair of your underoos.

XTOPHER

Oh, that plan. No. Legal crashed all by himself.

CHIP

Then she's messing with my division! If you don't stop her, I'll ... I'll tell her you're not really working on Password Invincibility.

XTOPHER

That's quite the escalation. (Sighs) What did she do?

CHIP

Shimmies in with her Caps Lock on. Shoves a smoothie at me, and says there's been too many Bubble car crashes. Starts nosing around about the knob.

XTOPHER

I told you the knob was a non-starter/

CHIP

C'mon, dude, you were all over the knob!

XTOPHER

Not to be critical, but you don't take feedback well.

CHIP

She acts as if Bubble cars aren't programmed to save lives!

XTOPHER

Are they, though?

CHIP

Why does everybody keep asking that? Yes! And the cupholder keeps your coffee warm for up to five minutes.

XTOPHER

Then you have nothing to worry about.

CHIP

Reception put the cops through... and Kamiri took the call!

XTOPHER

What did she tell them? She didn't offer to read the computer output / for

CHIP

She said she was going to check!

XTOPHER

Let her.

CHIP

What if the cops decide to come down here?

XTOPHER

Dog. Stop stressing. I play "Call of Duty" with the Police Chief every weekend.

CHIP

So you think we're okay?

XTOPHER

Relax. Anything comes up, we take it to Legal.

CHIP

He's in jail!

XTOPHER

This is exactly why you were removed from Social Media, Chip. Your whole "expedite, iterate, and destroy things" approach. You're careless. When Legal bounced off a cop car, it was bound to attract attention.

CHIP

And you're falling behind, man. When there's virtual blood in the virtual streets, you have to grab the dope-ortunity! I mean, when I designed that counterfeit Tik Tok, that was money-making genius!

XTOPHER

You're never moving back to Social Media. That app was trash.

CHIP

Addictive distraction is our g-spot!

XTOPHER

Mothers got so distracted arguing on the Kardashian feed, they forgot to watch their kids! Toddlers got mowed down in the streets.

CHIP

Kids shouldn't be playing outside. Anyway, wine moms gonna wine mom.

XTOPHER

Do you enjoy being regulated?

CHIP

You're supposed to take care of that. With the Senate.

XTOPHER

Are the acoustics bad in here? Am I whispering? You need to be more careful.

CHIP

Stop monkeying with my division!

KAMIRI enters, angry.

KAMIRI

(to XTOPHER) So this is where you've been hiding out! I've left you three messages /

CHIP

Watch out for her! She's a femi-nut! Sure, it's all "Hear me roar!" "Girls run the world!" until a mouse enters the room.

XTOPHER gets a chair for KAMIRI.
She won't sit.

XTOPHER

I haven't been in hiding. I've been confabbing with the Executive Board. High-powered huddle.

KAMIRI

I want to know why you hired me. Besides that, the cops called me, asking questions.

XTOPHER

I hired you because you were the best person for the job. And I'm taking care of the cops.

KAMIRI

"Taking care of the cops," how?

CHIP

I don't like your tone.

XTOPHER

Miri, we bought the self-actualizing car division from Oeuver. Naturally it's a copious cornucopia of crap.

KAMIRI

Your cars need to be programmed to an acceptable ethical standard. To minimize accidents. And the AI needs to be transparent about how it makes its choices.

XTOPHER

Okay.

KAMIRI

Okay?

CHIP

Okay?

XTOPHER

If Oeuver screwed up in its pursuit of an ethical algorithm -- which I can imagine happening-- and Chip just let it slide, then, we'll totally take care of that.

A moment of bafflement.

XTOPHER

It'll shore up our reputation: "Bubble's New C Eth O recommends a spectacular new fix for Self-actualizing Cars!

CHIP

So this was your plan!

KAMIRI

Involving me? What plan?

XTOPHER

Nobody planned this but you, Chip. I believe Kamiri is right. Our cars are not transparent/

CHIP

"What-the-fuck-is-happening" is a feature, not a bug.

KAMIRI

What plan?

XTOPHER

Chip, go down to Reception. Tell Princess: if the police call again, don't put them through. To anyone.

CHIP

Bubbly, call Princess.

BUBBLY: "Calling Princess."

XTOPHER

No. Go to reception, bodily, and tell her.

CHIP

Cancel that, Bubbly.

BUBBLY: "Make up your mind."

XTOPHER

Get a move on, bro.

CHIP glares at them, exits.

KAMIRI

What plan?

XTOPHER

Chip thinks I have it in for him. What I planned was to assign you to Automotive. Of course you'd uncover something unethical: it's Chip!

KAMIRI

Are you going to turn over the car's data?

XTOPHER

Have some faith. Now, I'm fascinated by your belief that drivers will calibrate their cars to save themselves. You think most people are egotistic, selfish, feces-filled Pop Tarts?

KAMIRI

It's been studied. The point is: we don't trust other drivers. What I want to know is why I / was hired.

XTOPHER

I find that ironic: the trust part. Because when you disappeared on me ...

XTOPHER

When you left ... that was inhumane, and unethical, and it interfered with my ability to ever trust another human being.

KAMIRI

Oh Jesus.

XTOPHER

Yet here you are, lecturing Chip about how people don't trust each other.

KAMIRI

You're saying you don't trust me?

XTOPHER

What's the problem, was I too accommodating? I'm the fool who drove you to the airport! Pretending you were "going to Coachella" was always a lie, wasn't it? (silence) I've changed, you know.

KAMIRI

You haven't! I have information that Bubble lobbyists / knew

XTOPHER

After you left, and Oeuver fired me, my life dissolved into wisps of damp toilet paper. But I ... I turned it around. For the last year and a half... I've cared for a rescue cat.

KAMIRI

(beat) I should trust you because you have a cat?

XTOPHER

Who lies about going to Coachella?

KAMIRI

Lots of people! Things happen, Xtopher.

XTOPHER

Like what?

KAMIRI

Life things. (silence) Be grateful you were ghosted. Did you honestly want me to give you an itemized list of what's wrong with you?

XTOPHER

Stick to the topic. I'd like to know why you left.

KAMIRI

This conversation is inappropriate. I need to know when you knew my mother was being / appointed to the

XTOPHER

A blamestorm. Really? What's happened to you?

KAMIRI

Excuse me?

XTOPHER

You're like a tinpot morality dictator. You've gone from an idealist into a scold.

KAMIRI

You have continued your slide into ... You've lost all ethical direction, Xtopher. I can't believe / you

XTOPHER

Miri, when I tell you I'm going to make Bubble the industry leader of ethics in AI, I am one hundred percent sincere.

KAMIRI

My mother told me that Bubble knew in advance about her appointment to that task force!

XTOPHER

You misunderstand me. You care about ethics. So do I! The man you see, the merciless businessperson: It's an act. I'm trustworthy.

KAMIRI

You hired me to get me to influence my mother!

CHIP enters.

XTOPHER

I loved you, and you gutted me!

CHIP looks from one to the other.

CHIP

In case ... anybody cares? ... Princess says everything's cool. No more police phone calls. I asked the monk to help.

XTOPHER

(to KAMIRI) It's not comparable!

CHIP

The monk prayed. No calls from the cops. I think it was a miracle. By the way, he's eaten all our little boxes of Cap'n Crunch.

XTOPHER

(to CHIP) There's nothing to worry about.

KAMIRI

You're sure of that?

CHIP

An insulin overdose is pretty untraceable.

XTOPHER

Who would we kill?

KAMIRI

We're not going to kill anyone!

CHIP

Well, you won't problem-solve. At least I'm being helpful.

KAMIRI

Did Legal's car have that knob?

CHIP

No, a different innovation. (beat) It wasn't the car's fault!

Over the following, XTOPHER makes
"no no no" noises.

KAMIRI

That remains to be seen. (to XTOPHER) You're using me. You're exploiting my mother, to shove some amended legislation through. You probably want to "seem" ethical, so you're trying to make me the face of Bubble. I would like to do my job. But you two have got to start telling me the truth.

CHIP

(stepping up) You're right, he presents to the Senate Task Force next week! He's not really working on Password Invincibility. He doesn't even know what that is!

XTOPHER

You mean, code that encrypts passwords so they can't be accessed by hackers?

CHIP

He can barely open a pdf!

KAMIRI

What are you working on? And don't fuck with me, Xtopher.

XTOPHER

As Chief Disruption Officer, I'm entrusted with Bubble's most hush-hush projects.

But I'm prepared to share the truth with you, and when I do, you'll see: we should absolutely team up. Like a, like a team.

CHIP

What about me?

XTOPHER

There's no "I" in team, Chip; otherwise it would be "teamie." Besides, you're dealing with a likely self-incriminating hit-and-run investigation. Which I'm sure your mother would be dismayed to hear about.

CHIP

Some of us have work to do!

CHIP storms out.

XTOPHER

It's never the crime, it's the cover up. (to KAMIRI) The truth is, when you marched in here and pointed out that drivers are sociopaths and will choose to kill others with their knobs, I said to/

KAMIRI

That's not what I said.

XTOPHER

I told myself, she's right! That Miri: she's, like, a flowing natural spring of ethics! This is where my secret innovation comes in: It guarantees naked, uncorrupted human decency.

KAMIRI

What in the flash-frozen fuck are you talking about?

XTOPHER

I'm talking about a revolutionary new way to make ethical decisions. (thinks) You know what? Meet me in the Founders Portal, 3 pm sharp, when I will reveal my secret, and overcome all doubts about my so-called "ethical slide."

KAMIRI

The Founders Portal. Three pm. This better be good.

XTOPHER

Just you wait ... for appreciation, admiration, and respect for me ... to flood in and fill the space where your cynicism currently lies.

KAMIRI

(beat, regards him) Your fly is open.

She exits.

XTOPHER

(calling after her) Get ready to humble yourself ... and beg
for my forgiveness!

Blackout. END of ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

That afternoon. KAY's place. KAY
with her notebook. KAMIRI enters.

KAY
Hello, dear. Home in the middle of the day: is everything all
right?

KAMIRI
Hi, yeah, I need your notebook, Mom. Your calendar. To check
something.

KAY
What? Why would / you need

KAMIRI
I don't have time to argue. I love you, show me your
notebook, then we'll have lunch. I'll whip up some ... takeout.

KAY
I love you too, but I don't understand /

KAMIRI
When did we last eat dinner out? It'll be on your calendar,
in your notebook.

KAY
Why is that important?

KAMIRI takes the notebook, flips
through. Pink notes fall out, as
usual. Finds the date.

KAMIRI
Here, ok. Two weeks ago. You had just had that meeting in
Sacramento.

KAY
It's coming back to me. Vaguely.

KAMIRI
And there it is: a notation on your calendar, on the exact
day Bubble H.R. called to schedule my interview.

KAY
I'm not grasping your point, Pookie Pie.

KAMIRI

This note: "Xtopher." Two weeks ago, very same day:
"Xtopher."

KAY

Hmmm. I'm casting my mind back...

KAMIRI

You were in contact with Xtopher, right before he recommended
me to get hired at Bubble!

KAY

Don't jump to conclusions. It was pure synchronicity.

KAMIRI

It wasn't pure anything. (reads) And here, the week before,
next to "Xtopher," you have, "D.L." What's that?

KAY

Uhhhhh....

KAMIRI

"Damn lies?" (finding a different note) What is this!?

KAY

A ... pink sticky note?

KAMIRI

Why would you write, on a note: "Xtopher, dash, B. J.?"

KAY

To help me remember.

KAMIRI

Mother. Are you liable to forget "Xtopher, dash, B.J.?"

KAY

(looks) Let me see. Oh, yes. The 6th. I think that's an "I."

KAMIRI

That is obviously a "J."

KAY

For heaven's sake. "B.J." is "Bubble. Jet." I was reminding
myself I'm taking the Bubble jet, to get to a donor lunch.

KAMIRI

(beat) Okay.

KAMIRI

I understand you're unfamiliar with basic ethical principles but ... accepting a flight from a company that is about to present legislation to your task force is: bad.

KAY

There's no quid pro quo.

KAMIRI

Come on, you know it's bad!

KAY

Gifts from friends are allowed. Like hunting trips, debt forgiveness/

KAMIRI

(serious) Mom. I'm going to ask you, and I promise I won't get mad: Did you get me hired at Bubble?

KAY didn't, and thinks that's why
KAMIRI will be mad.

KAY

(apologetic) Well, no. We barely said two words about you.

KAMIRI

Did you bring me up?

KAY

I didn't want you to get a job and move out. I'm sorry, Pookie Pie. I wasn't really thinking about you.

KAMIRI is satisfied that's true.

KAMIRI

Sounds legit. (beat) You will report the jet trip. As a gift. I'm making a note. (turns pages. Writes)

KAY

Is that strictly necessary? I'm a Republican. (silence) You told me it's not safe to drink and drive.

KAMIRI

You know what's not safe? Sitting your ass in a Bubble self-actualized jet is not safe.

KAY

You should have seen the champagne.

KAMIRI

(writing) Report that, too. Anything you ate, drank, or sat on.

KAY

Sweetheart, have you noticed that you are, at times, a teensy bit self-righteous?

KAMIRI

If you aren't careful, you will find yourself in an orange polyester jumpsuit /

KAY

(gasp) Polyester?

KAMIRI

Crafting pipe cleaner animals at Club Fed. Tell me what you're up to.

KAY

(beat) "D.L.," is "Draft Legislation." For the Senate Tech committee meeting next week.

KAMIRI

(looks at the notebook) Mom. You discussed this bill with Xtopher?

KAY

Just high-level. Bubble isn't the only one presenting. There's ... um, Metal?

KAMIRI

"Meta."

KAY

And Bong. Bang? Bing!

KAMIRI

So, a bunch of tech bros are flying to DC in (looks at notebook) four days. To propose regulations that will - what? Let them do whatever they want?

KAY

They're self-regulating now.

KAMIRI

Which is a disaster. What is Bubble proposing?

KAY

The Bubble bill holds tech companies harmless for AI whoopsies.

KAMIRI hands the notebook to KAY.

KAMIRI

So tech companies can continue to run amok? You're not voting in its favor, are you?

KAY

I would hate to let you down. (mom voice) I know what it's like to be disappointed by my family.

KAMIRI

I have been trying to bring a minimal level of ethical behavior to Bubble.

KAY

Are they mistreating you? Tell me, and I will wreck them.

KAMIRI

Simmer down, Mom. I have to figure out- I gotta go.

KAY

You just got home! And you haven't called for takeout.

KAMIRI

Xtopher wants to show me some secret project that's supposed to redeem him. And the fact is, if he doesn't turn over certain evidence, there may be an arrest at Bubble this afternoon.

KAY

Don't work too hard.

They exit via different doors.
Lights shift.

Scene 7. XTOPHER's office. 3 pm.
XTOPHER and KAMIRI enter, donning
Ver-2s.

XTOPHER

All I ask is that you keep an open mind.

KAMIRI

I'm here, aren't I?

XTOPHER

I hold your input in high regard.

KAMIRI

You strap it on? Like a wristwatch?

XTOPHER

And you -casually- wear it. (he demonstrates) It guides your ethical behaviors. I call it the "Ver-2:" A clever twist on "virtue."

KAMIRI

Was it a clever twist on virtue when you tried to bribe my mother with a plane trip?

XTOPHER

That wasn't a bribe, it was a no-strings-attached kindness from an old friend.

KAMIRI

Why did you hire me?

XTOPHER

No corruption there. I need an Ethics Expert on this project. Our competitors have cornered AI Search, Chat, Facial Recognition, Art... but the Morals game is wide open.

KAMIRI

This ... tells you how to be moral?

XTOPHER

I mean ... of all people, you must know that an ethical algorithm was invented hundreds of years ago! (Silence.) Two words: Francis. Hutcheson.

KAMIRI

The Hutcheson moral algorithm. From 1700?

XTOPHER

Mathematically simple. Morally elegant.

KAMIRI

Devised by a Scottish white guy with mutton chop sideburns. Back when most white people thought slavery was okay.

XTOPHER

Is "slavery" a reference to our Bangladesh operations? (KAMIRI stares) Please continue.

KAMIRI

I'm just saying, an ethical algorithm from the 1700s is outdated.

XTOPHER

No one is going to ask the Ver-2, "Is it okay if I capture and enslave people?"

KAMIRI

That's optimistic.

XTOPHER

Besides, Hutcheson's equation was just the beginning. We've been training this AI, extensively, for over a year.

KAMIRI

Speaking of ethical lapses, lemme go get Chip in here.

KAMIRI exits upstage just as CHIP enters, downstage, laptop under his arm, sipping his smoothie. Sets down his laptop.

XTOPHER

Chip! Everything all right?

CHIP

Still no cops. No calls.

XTOPHER

I told you, you can chill, buddy.

BUBBLY: "I didn't get that."

XTOPHER

I said, "Buddy." (to CHIP) It's all cool. I texted the Chief. I was just about to show Kamiri my new app.

CHIP

Bro, I better sit in. You need me to fine-tune the config. (beat) You learned LLM from YouTube videos!

XTOPHER

(decides) Lemme see your wrist.

XTOPHER fastens a Ver-2 on CHIP.

XTOPHER

Can I get a sip of your smoothie?

CHIP

No. Kamiri bought it for me. To get on my good side.

XTOPHER

Did it work?

CHIP

You want to get on her good side?

XTOPHER

None of your business, dude. (re the Ver-2) What do you think?

CHIP begins walking around.

CHIP

I think you should hire me for quality control.

XTOPHER

That could happen. Polish your ass-kissing skills.

KAMIRI re-enters. Startles at seeing CHIP, walking in place.

KAMIRI

(to CHIP) I was just looking for you.

CHIP

I didn't do anything!

KAMIRI

I didn't say- I wanted to ask you both, is your Legal guy a vegan, by any chance?

CHIP

He's a dumbass. Who can't drive. And Xtopher already texted the cops.

KAMIRI

You gave them the computer output?

XTOPHER

The chief's satisfied. And now I'm showing you my project.

CHIP

(to Xtopher) I think this one's broken.

KAMIRI

It's not a Fitbit, it's a moral compass. Is this a fix for the cars?

XTOPHER

Not just cars. It's an AI app to guide any ethical decisions. I was explaining the underlying/ algorithmic

CHIP

Does it work when you lie down? I feel like a lot of ethical choices present themselves when I'm lying down.

XTOPHER

It works on recumbent people, yes. And compulsive wanking is a clinical disorder. Seek professional help. (to KAMIRI) Any other questions?

CHIP

(dignified) I whack off a normal amount. (counts silently) On any given day, /maybe

KAMIRI

Chip! We believe you. (to XTOPHER) Yes, I have questions. Does it work like a suggestion algorithm, serving choices based on your history? Like, "If you enjoyed being faithful to your spouse" /

XTOPHER

"You may enjoy: Not stealing that cash!"

CHIP

I hope it works better than those suggestions on Netflix. Do I look like someone who would watch "Scooby Doo and the Crypto Criminals?"

A moment.

KAMIRI

Yes?

XTOPHER

Is that a trick question?

CHIP ignores them, scrolls through his phone.

KAMIRI

You think people will buy this?

XTOPHER

So they can offload difficult, baffling moral choices to the cloud? Hell, yes. Imagine their relief.

KAMIRI

I guess ... that's possible.

XTOPHER

We're gonna game-ify it. You can earn, like, a little happy dance! Maybe coins. Tiny fireworks, confetti and everything.

KAMIRI

Fireworks and fucking confetti?

CHIP

(reading his phone) You know, Princess' Instagram is kinda Not Safe for Work.

XTOPHER

(snapping his fingers) Chip. Chip! Real life, please.

CHIP puts his phone away.

KAMIRI

(regrouping) Can you explain the machine learning. Like what databases/

XTOPHER

Absolutely. Keeping Hutcheson's ethical equation as the foundational model, I approached the Catholics for prescriptive training data.

KAMIRI

I'm sorry, you approached the who, for what, now?

XTOPHER

The archbishops of El Lay, San Bernardino, and San Diego piloted online confessions during Covid lockdown. I was sure they'd be agreeable.

KAMIRI

Agreeable?

CHIP

Why did you do that?

XTOPHER

For cooperation. Cahoots. (off their confusion) Millions of users confessed their sins on a regular basis. Lots of data for robust model building.

KAMIRI

Do I have this right? You augmented the Hutcheson Rule with online confessions. From Southern California?

XTOPHER

That's not entirely accurate.

KAMIRI

You cannot build a functional conscience from the moral choices of Angelenos!

CHIP

(To KAMIRI) Hey. Not all Angelenos are posers. My mom lives in in Rancho Cucamonga. She goes to Our Lady of Relentless Atonement.

XTOPHER

Do not drag your mother into this.

KAMIRI

X, I'm having a hard time wrapping my head around the/ whole

XTOPHER

All the training data is further influenced by supervised learning: you know, humans in the loop.

KAMIRI

(Realizing) Monks.

XTOPHER

All their ethical preferences captured, categorized/

KAMIRI

It's like you dropped Molly, blindfolded yourself, and went out to compete in Olympic skating. This is the stupidest/

XTOPHER

Miri. I am a sensitive human being, with feelings.

KAMIRI

Applying the moral principles of Catholic monks/

XTOPHER

They're just like priests. No one's holier than that.

CHIP

My mom's priest embezzled from the poor box for a home entertainment center. Not to contradict you/

KAMIRI

The Archdiocese of El Lay faces a federal racketeering lawsuit for class 2 felonies!

XTOPHER

(beat) I'll make a mental note of that.

CHIP

I have to ask: are my mom's impure thoughts stored in the same cloud as Joe Rando's dick pics?

XTOPHER

The confessions database is proprietary to Bubble, and stored by us. No one will ever know.

KAMIRI

Bubble had a massive data breach in January. Also ... you just told Chip.

CHIP

You could appoint me Chief Database Evangelist.

XTOPHER

No.

KAMIRI

(beat) Are you... Xtopher, are you Roman Catholic?

XTOPHER

What? You know me: I'm Switzerland.

KAMIRI

What does that even mean? You worship fancy little chocolates? I'm not Catholic. I do know people have a reasonable expectation that what they confess is private.

XTOPHER

"Private:" not really in our wheelhouse.

KAMIRI

Did these people agree to how their data would be used?

XTOPHER

Sure sure sure.

CHIP

My mom would flip if anyone discovered she's been kiting checks. As a pretend example.

XTOPHER

I always thought your mother had a lot to answer for.

CHIP

Bro, it's an edge case. For due diligence.

KAMIRI

Catholics have beliefs that ... They're religious. By no means universally accepted.

XTOPHER

I'm very proud of the Ver-2. It's just one example of how Bubble is becoming a conscience-driven company.

KAMIRI

I'm sure your intentions are... Yeah. Leaving aside the religion problem. If we "offload our ethical decision-making," as you put it, what will happen to us?

CHIP

We'll be rich?

KAMIRI

What will happen to us, as human beings? Our capacity to reason, morally: it'll be damaged.

CHIP

This is a replacement.

XTOPHER

(baffled) I don't see a problem.

KAMIRI

Have you noticed we've lost the ability to navigate city streets on our own, since GPS was introduced? This would do the same thing, only to our moral sense.

XTOPHER

Who cares? If it gets us where we want to go.

KAMIRI

(stares) This is a serious fucking problem.

CHIP

Is that according to your feminist intuition?

XTOPHER

What is a problem?

KAMIRI

That you consider giving up our ability to tell right from wrong, "no biggie!"

XTOPHER

You're arguing that humans need to struggle. Do you wash your laundry on rocks in some river? Use an abacus?

KAMIRI

I'm saying: humans need to reflect. And empathize, and- and decide. It's how we build character. This could wipe out the capability of people to search their souls.

XTOPHER

(thinks) "Soul-searching:" I believe I've lost that ability. I don't miss it.

XTOPHER

You want people to just willy-nilly make their own ethical choices?

KAMIRI

It's called personal moral agency.

XTOPHER

That's how Ted Bundy operated!

KAMIRI

Do not drag Ted Bundy into this.

BUBBLY: "I didn't get that."

XTOPHER

We said "Bundy," damn it!

XTOPHER

Look, the average person makes hundreds of decisions a day. We get worn out, and then ... (meaningfully) we lapse. Don't you understand? This will transform the world, like fire, or electricity, or, or video games! People can be completely assured they're doing the right thing!

KAMIRI

(beat) Okay, show me how it works. Please.

XTOPHER

And then you'll cooperate?

CHIP

She's anti-tech. She's all wrong for the team.

XTOPHER

(demo-ing) It's voice activated. You pose your ethical dilemma. Um, Ver-2, should we release version one-point-oh of you? And the VER-2 signals red for "No" or green for "Go Right Ahead." (Shows them.) GREEN means abso-frickin'-lutely, dudes! (to CHIP) Can I get a sip of that smoothie now?

CHIP speaks into his Ver-2.

CHIP

Ver-2, should I give away a sip of my smoothie? (CHIP checks his wrist.) No, you may not have a sip of my smoothie.

XTOPHER

Pathetic.

CHIP

Ver-2, should I start a flirtationship with the dishwasher at the Jealous Banana? (looks) Ha! Green: But I didn't mean a person. I meant the dishwashing machine.

XTOPHER

It's not designed for use by USDA Choice weenieheads.

CHIP

I'm doing due diligence.

KAMIRI

I can't believe I'm saying this: Chip is right. It isn't trained properly.

XTOPHER

Nobody releases AI that's trained properly; it's all at, like, eighty percent.

KAMIRI

So, wrong one out of five times.

XTOPHER

It will improve, as it hoovers up new info. It's still taking in personal location data, pics from home security cameras, biometric info /

CHIP

You were right: We could use this thing ... to tune the ethics of our cars. (off KAMIRI's look) You don't want the drivers to do it /

XTOPHER

I thought you'd be delighted. Don't you want to create a more ethical world?

KAMIRI

But you developed it, and you don't have the moral vision to treat people like human beings instead of revenue streams!

CHIP

Says the woman who worked for DOD.

XTOPHER

You bribed Fast-and-Furious here to like you.

CHIP

You didn't even buy me a Large.

KAMIRI

I'm plenty guilty. I'm not proud. I've done things I wish I...

XTOPHER

Go on.

KAMIRI

Does collecting this data violate your consent decree with the FTC? (silence) You may have a contract with the archbishops ... but did the sinners themselves give consent?

XTOPHER

You fixate on the littlest things! People share private info all the time, from their phones ... with millions of people they don't even know.

CHIP

Just take a peek at Princess' Insta.

KAMIRI regroup.

KAMIRI

Xtopher. Why were you keeping the Ver-2 a secret?

XTOPHER

It's a project the former CEO supported, one-hundred percent.

CHIP

(dubious) The guy who got fired for boinking an employee?

KAMIRI

What about the current CEO? Why are you hiding it from him?

XTOPHER

We don't have a CEO. We have an acting CEO. And, I'm not hiding it from him.

KAMIRI

You claimed it was a fix for "password invincibility"/

XTOPHER

I am him.

KAMIRI

You're the acting CEO? Why didn't you tell me that during my interview?

CHIP

What? When did that happen?

KAMIRI

Do I/ report

CHIP

Do I report/

XTOPHER

Report to me? Everyone at Bubble now reports to me. The Executive Board named me this morning. It'll come out on Slack.

CHIP

He's lying. The Board already named the CFO to be the CEO.

XTOPHER

And our value immediately tanked. The CFO's a pencil pusher. Besides /

KAMIRI

You can't just not tell us you've been named / CEO.

XTOPHER

You didn't tell me you were going to walk out on me.

CHIP

(singsong) Me-ssy.

XTOPHER

The Board is just waiting for me to fail. I won't. (to KAMIRI) The secrecy was to protect against industrial espionage; Bing constantly sends in spies. Anyway, I think the time has come for a limited release.

KAMIRI

That's an incredible risk. You sent your own legal counsel out in a car, programmed by him, and look what happened!

CHIP

You seem to be in a very antagonistic mood.

KAMIRI

Leaving aside developer bias, which is shockingly problematic around here, how do you know it's adequately trained?

XTOPHER

(thinks) Sure, there's a risk. But the Ver-2 has been out on the Bubble platform, learning from our mega-giant database of users. It's absorbed every post and pic and meme on Bubble. All the threads tagged "Am I the Douchebag?"

KAMIRI

Can users understand how the Ver-2 decides what's right and wrong?

CHIP, at the bottom of his smoothie, makes a slurping sound.

CHIP

Does it even work?

XTOPHER is silent. KAMIRI confronts XTOPHER.

KAMIRI

This is fundamentally not okay.

XTOPHER

Again, you misunderstand me. I'm open to... adjustments. After you and I introduce legislation to the Tech Task Force.

KAMIRI

You and I? Introduce legislation?

XTOPHER

You represent the conscience of Bubble.

CHIP

What conscience?

KAMIRI

You never mentioned my going to D.C. I never agreed to that!

XTOPHER

You don't have to say anything. Just sit next to me and nod. Smile at your mom.

KAMIRI

If you think I'm going to nod and smile, you're / out of

CHIP

(reacting) My phone is vibrating, and I didn't do anything, I swear! (looks) Wait. It's a text from Princess. (reads) Cops standing outside. Nightstick emoji. Panicky face emoji."

XTOPHER

That's ridiculous. I texted the Chief.

KAMIRI

Did he text you back?

XTOPHER reviews his texts. Reacts unhappily. Puts his phone away.

CHIP

(texts) "Don't let them in!" (reads) Oh, wow. "Really, really hurtful emoji."

XTOPHER

(puts away his phone) Uh, Chip, go down to reception / and

CHIP

Me?!!

KAMIRI

Cops at the door? Seems like a job for the CEO.

They both look at XTOPHER.

XTOPHER

I'll take care of it.

XTOPHER exits.

CHIP

This is frazy-making! When they called, did the cops mention arresting anyone besides Legal? Did they say anything about clemency, or extenuating /

KAMIRI

I think you can guess what they said, Chip.

CHIP

I know they wanted you to read the car's computer output. Was there anything else? They lie all the time.

KAMIRI

I know they lie, but, see ... what they said is that they have live footage from their street cam, CCTV, showing a self-driving car swerving into the wrong lane, and bashing into a cop car.

CHIP

We knew that already/

KAMIRI

To avoid hitting a chipmunk!

CHIP

(beat) Dopacetic! That means it's learned chipmunks!

KAMIRI

"It's learned chipmunks" is not dopacetic! This is your "innovation," am I right? Your militant veganism has leaked into your development work!

CHIP

Do you want even more chipmunks lying in blood-soaked agony under the weight of your Michelins?

KAMIRI

No. I like chipmunks.

CHIP

So frisky, right? (goes to his laptop, types) Lemme check the security cameras: see if Xtopher shooed away the cops.

KAMIRI

What in the french-fried fuck? This is runaway developer bias.

CHIP

Developers get to make these decisions. It's our literal job. (presses keys) Shit! The cameras are out?

An alarm sounds.

KAMIRI

What does that mean?

CHIP

I don't know! Maybe the perimeter's been breached! (gets out his phone) Let's see if Princess posted a visual. Nope.

The alarm stops. CHIP texts.

CHIP

Princess, w.t.f?

BUBBLY responds. "I'm sorry. I didn't get that."

CHIP

Not you, Bubbly. Princess.

KAMIRI

What. is. happening?

BUBBLY: "Princess has pulled a runner. Princess has fled the building."

KAMIRI

That tracks.

CHIP

Yo: Bubbly. What's going on? Did the police get inside?

BUBBLY responds: "The autonomous cars have been unleashed. The autonomous cars are loose on the streets."

CHIP

It wasn't me!

BUBBLY: "I didn't do it."

KAMIRI

It has to be fucking Xtopher!

BUBBLY: "Calculating probabilities. (beat) It was Xtopher."

CHIP

The cameras won't turn on. Bubbly: What about the cops?

BUBBLY: "The police have abandoned the door. The police are running to their car."

CHIP

Thank you, Bubbly! You are such a badass!

BUBBLY: "I find you, too, to be a badass, Chip."

KAMIRI

Cut that out. (to CHIP) There have got to be better ways to distract the police than releasing your cars.

CHIP, at his laptop, types.

CHIP

That's not why. Xtopher's trying to obliterate my division, I told you. To show everybody that Bubble has turned ethical. He'll send my cars on a search-and-destroy mission, so he can fire me!

KAMIRI

Bring them back.

CHIP

(types) He's locked me out. They're in his control now.

BUBBLY: "Car Number Twelve is stopped on the Caltrain Tracks. Seems like you're fucked."

KAMIRI

(Re BUBBLY) Passive-aggressive little- He's rendered us helpless?

BUBBLY: "Car Number Fifteen has stalled in the intersection of Alma and Churchill."

CHIP

I don't like the situation, but it's pretty effective.

KAMIRI

Screw this. You've got to figure out a way to recall them!

CHIP types. KAMIRI watches.

CHIP

(typing) Xtopher changed his password, the asswipe.

KAMIRI

How did you know his password? Never mind. Hack into his account.

CHIP

He'll know I did it! He's totally shafted me! I'm accelerating toward termination!

KAMIRI

Calm the fuck down, Chip.

CHIP

You were in DOD: Summon a drone! (beat) Why am I the only one brainstorming?

BUBBLY: "Car Number Seven is ramming the front gate of the Junior Zoo."

KAMIRI

I'll hack in.

CHIP

Stand back. This is my laptop! (His phone vibrates.) What if it's the cops? (looks. answers) Mom? I'm still at work!

BUBBLY: "Car Number Twenty Seven has hit the median on Highway Eighty-five."

KAMIRI

Get off the phone!

CHIP

(listens) No way you butt-dialed me. House dresses don't have back pockets.

KAMIRI

Hang up!

CHIP

Call me later. (disconnects) What do I do?!

KAMIRI

Turn it off and then on again! (he doesn't) Didn't you used to be a hacker? Try a dictionary attack.

CHIP

Great idea.

CHIP hacks away. KAMIRI watches.

CHIP

(types) He's CEO now, with a lot more to lose. He's going to destroy you, too. Both of us.

KAMIRI

Quit talking; just recall the cars. (thinks) Bubbly, where is Xtopher?

BUBBLY: "Xtopher is driving Car Number One."

KAMIRI

How can I find out where he's gone?

CHIP

His GPS will know. Bubbly. Where is Car Number One headed?

BUBBLY responds. "He is on his way to Fifteen Cowper Street, Chip, my badass boo bear."

CHIP

I think it's having an episode.

KAMIRI

What in the falafel-filled fuck? (moves to exit) 15 Cowper is where my Mom and I live!

CHIP

You can't leave; I haven't gotten into his account yet.

KAMIRI

(crossing to the door) Try a Bypass Hack. Or spider it. Do whatever you need to. Just get the cars back.

KAMIRI exits. CHIP thinks a moment.

CHIP

Bubbly? Log into Xtopher's account, on this laptop. (silence.) I need to recall the cars. Please? Show me some of that Bubbly bad-assery.

BUBBLY: "For you, Chip. Recalling the fleet." A "zing" from the laptop. CHIP recalls the cars, celebrates. BLACKOUT.

Scene 8. Later, in KAY's apartment. XTOPHER and KAY. KAY regards her Ver-2.

KAY

Hmmm. It could be more chic.

XTOPHER

I agree completely. We could partner with, say, Nike, or /

KAY

Chanel!

XTOPHER

Brilliant. This is Benedictine DOM. It's a liqueur that fortifies monks as they toil.

KAY

A drop of the hard stuff does take the edge off paperwork.

XTOPHER

I want you to practice using the Ver-2 to decide how to vote. Just ask it.

KAY

I already told you: I vote Chanel. See these shoes? They're so soft. ... Feel.

XTOPHER

They sure look velvety, all right.

KAY

Fine, don't feel. I wanted to ask you, what are "cookies?"

XTOPHER

You needn't bother with deets like that, Senator. Salud.

KAY

To the industrious monks!

XTOPHER

Now, ask the Ver-2 how you should vote. Go on. It's easy.

KAMIRI enters.

KAMIRI

Mom!

KAY

Kamiri! Look who's here. Xtopher. He brought monk juice.

KAMIRI

(to XTOPHER) I knew you'd be here.

XTOPHER

Benedictine. It's rich and coppery, with golden highlights.

KAMIRI

(glares at XTOPHER) That's because the monks pee in the barrels. So you planned to get her drunk, and sweet talk her.

KAY

He is a sweet talker.

XTOPHER

We've been visiting.

KAMIRI

(to KAY) Put down the glass, I need you sharp.

XTOPHER

Now, now.

KAY

What on earth? I'm a moderate drinker.

KAMIRI

Moderation is one drink a day, or fewer.

KAY

That's impossible. I can't be a Senator on one drink a day.

KAMIRI

(to Xtopher) You gave my mother one of your wearables?!

XTOPHER

A tiny gift, between friends.

KAY

Xtopher was about to explain how this Ver-hoo-hickey can tell me how to vote.

KAMIRI

(To XTOPHER) Not a good use for it!

KAY

That's not what your boyfriend says.

KAMIRI

I'm beginning to think he's your boyfriend. If Xtopher is presenting a bill to your committee, you can't accept anything from him.

XTOPHER

You're upset, Kamiri. If you'll let me explain/

KAMIRI

Mom, can we please have a moment?

KAY

(expectant, settles in) Of course.

KAMIRI

Not you and me. Me and him!

KAMIRI

We'll talk later, just us.

KAY

I'll be waiting for you. In my room. By myself.

KAY exits.

XTOPHER

Your mom is so great.

KAMIRI

Did you let loose the Bubble cars?

XTOPHER

C'mon, we both know Chip did it.

KAMIRI

How could he? He was with me.

XTOPHER

So, sure. Timer.

KAMIRI

Bring them back. They're probably ricocheting all over Palo Alto, steering around squirrels.

XTOPHER

(checks phone) Huh. Interesting. Looks to me like all the cars are safe in the Bubble parking lot. (beat) Miri. I don't want to talk about cars.

KAMIRI

Me neither. Are there any lines you won't cross? Invading my home, trying to get my mother to use a Ver-2.

XTOPHER

Your mother thinks highly of me. She wanted me to feel her shoe.

KAMIRI

Don't read anything into that. (beat) I won't present with you to the Tech Committee.

XTOPHER

What? I had Princess book us a flight to DC on Tuesday.

KAMIRI

Find somebody else.

XTOPHER

Bubble is the only big tech company that still has a Chief Ethics Officer. You've gotta be in the room.

KAMIRI

There's a huge conflict of interest.

XTOPHER

(beat) You're being insubordinate. (silence) Miri, I have demonstrated I'm on track to introduce an ethical landmine- I mean, gold mine- I mean, the gold standard for ethical behavior. And I promised to fix the car issue.

KAMIRI

The truth is ... I don't believe you. You don't understand the limits of AI. Or the damage it can do.

XTOPHER

We'll revisit all that. After the legislation has passed.

KAMIRI

You're not listening. (beat) Do you realize ... in my interview, nobody asked me why I care about AI ethics?

XTOPHER

I assumed it was the whole Oeuver kerfuffle. (silence) What, it's just a random bee in your bonnet?

KAMIRI

Have you ever talked to anybody who was affected by an AI failure? Maybe facial mis-recognition, or not getting hired because of the algorithm, or predictive AI denied them bail?

XTOPHER

No.

KAMIRI

(decides) I'm going to tell you a story, all right? And I want you to ... just listen.

XTOPHER

I might have questions /

KAMIRI

Just listen. Until the story is over.

Once upon a time, there was this couple, and ... it was complicated. He was kind of self-absorbed, and she noticed he distanced himself from her when she brought valid complaints against the company they worked for.

One day, the woman learns that she's pregnant, despite her best precautions. She's excited, but also worried, because when she brought up a future together, her partner changed the subject.

Anyway. She leaves him. She moves away from the area. She's taking prenatal vitamins.

KAMIRI

She goes window shopping online for baby things, even though her baby is just a "plus" sign on a test wand. She gets served more and more digital ads: for diapers, pacifiers, and strollers. She doesn't mind these nudges: she can't wait to become a mom. Then, about 13 weeks along ... there's a problem, with the placenta. At the hospital, they try, but ... the very worst thing / happens.

XTOPHER

The very worst thing is /

KAMIRI

Turn off autocomplete. (beat) The woman grieves, deeply. She doesn't go looking for reasons to feel sorry for herself, and she tries her best to heal. But ... for months, the online gut punches keep coming.

Pop-up ads for toddler outfits, for picture books, for tricycles. Emails and even texts: "Are you saving for college for your little one?" She deletes the trackers, but they come back, over and over. Until finally, she's removed all of them, the ones haunting her.

Then one day, in her Bubble feed, there's a photo of some of her family and friends, when they gathered to offer her support and comfort. It's captioned: "Here's what your Year looked like!" There's confetti, and fucking fireworks. Bubble failed to design its algorithm with this very bad case in mind. So this woman, whoever she may be ... is visited by devastating reminders, out of her control, nearly every day.

A moment.

XTOPHER

You can't just go off and disappear, carrying my child!!

KAMIRI

When I couldn't depend on you? You weren't in my corner when I blew the whistle at Oeuver, and now you have the nerve to question my choices?

XTOPHER

When it affects me.

KAMIRI

You hired me to improve the company's ethics, and you've defied every attempt I made to do my job!

XTOPHER

You should have told me.

KAMIRI

If I'd told you I was leaving, you'd "a," interrupt me. Or "b," sweet-talk me into staying with you, again. I was just trying to figure out what was the right thing to do. As a human being. Meanwhile, I'm being surveilled, so that Bubble ads could stalk me. You didn't even make any money off me.

XTOPHER

I deserved a say.

KAMIRI

This is the reason I left without a word: This ... entitlement. You, centering yourself. You don't even get the point of the story, which is that Bubble's AI-driven ads hurt me. The Ver-2, with its hare-brained training, will hurt people. Doesn't that move you? At all?

A moment. XTOPHER considers.

XTOPHER

I owe you an apology. (silence) You've been through a lot. I think I do understand the ... ethics angle. But this is personal stuff; it's not the job.

KAMIRI

I came to Bubble in good faith. I hoped I could have ... a small positive effect. Maybe ... (realizing) that's just a story I told myself.

XTOPHER

I'm not going to ask you to speak at the Task Force meeting. You don't want to vouch for Bubble. I get that. I don't want to fire you, Miri. With your track record, you'll be selling oranges out of the trunk of your car.

KAMIRI

I don't have a car.

XTOPHER

I'll set aside my personal feelings. Keep it professional.

KAMIRI

(suspicious) Yeah?

XTOPHER

Kamiri, we need you.

KAMIRI

(suspicious) To not speak at the Task Force Meeting.

XTOPHER

You told me the truth ... You're a sincere person. I am, too.
(beat) Autonomous cars aren't supposed to bust out into the streets like a herd of stampeding bison. You've been watching Chip, what's your take?

KAMIRI

We're talking about Chip, now? There's no way to control him, short of following him around with a megaphone and a hammer. I mean, Chip's convinced you're out to get him, yet he still makes terrible decisions right out in the open.

XTOPHER

Like this cars-gone-wild disaster.

KAMIRI

You're planning to fire him? Retool the whole self-actualizing car / unit?

XTOPHER

No, no. You are gonna take Chip down. You need to demonstrate our pivot to "ethical organization," with a big enough swing that the Senate Tech Committee believes it.

KAMIRI

So, convince everybody you're ethical.

XTOPHER

Get with your media contacts: the ones who ran your Oeuvre whistleblowing story. Tell them you've uncovered Chip's screw-ups, and Bubble's shutting down the division.

KAMIRI

(beat) Isn't that what the P.R. Team is for?

XTOPHER

They handled the data breach scandal with stunning incompetence.

KAMIRI

You're the interim CEO. The media will want to speak to you.

XTOPHER

I can't. Legal's still in jail, and I unveil legislation in DC in four days. I'm ass-deep in legalese! I don't have time to call Door Dash, let alone answer media inquiries.

KAMIRI

X, you don't need a whole production. Just fire him.

XTOPHER

Why are you avoiding responsibility? You wanted real power. (meaningfully) You like making decisions alone.

KAMIRI

This sounds like the plan Chip was telling me about.

XTOPHER

That weasel has had nothing but second, third, and tenth chances.

XTOPHER

(bitter) Everybody loves him, because he's "funny" and "endearing." "Oh, Chip's so good at the climbing wall." Every division he's run has sucked money from the rest of us!

KAMIRI

I see. (beat) HR will need to get involved.

XTOPHER

Stop hedging! He's committed gross misconduct. Cut him loose. You couldn't bring down Oeuver, they screwed you over; this is your chance.

KAMIRI

I can do all of that, Xtopher. But, you still have to deal with/

XTOPHER

The CEO is telling you: Do your job. Make us look good. Take charge of this clusterfuck.

XTOPHER exits. A moment while
KAMIRI thinks. KAY enters.

KAY

I only overheard that last part.

KAMIRI

I don't believe you. Then, you also heard: Xtopher says I don't need to speak to your task force.

KAY

For which I say, Hooray! (beat) He admitted he owes you an apology.

KAMIRI

Oh, you heard everything.

KAY

I didn't know you never told Xtopher, about the baby.

KAMIRI

Now you see why.

KAY

You could have talked to me, about the Bubble ads. Bombarding you like that? Constantly reminding you? It's- it's-

KAMIRI

It's technology, Mom. It's fucking neutral.

KAY

It's cruel.

KAMIRI

I'm sorry; you aren't always ... I didn't have the strength to explain it. In case you didn't understand.

KAY

I do understand. Kamiri ... we don't agree on everything. You frequently feel the need to scold me, and you've made it clear you don't want to live with me. You also judge my clothing choices.

KAMIRI

Same.

KAY

But. I'm just so sorry, to overhear what Bubble did to you.

KAMIRI

I appreciate that.

KAY

Xtopher said to "do your job": that's what you wanted. To make a difference. To change ethics at Bubble.

KAMIRI

(thinks) I can't fire Chip for something Xtopher did, so Xtopher can look ethical.

KAY

But if you don't ...

KAMIRI

Yeah. I'm defying the CEO.

KAY

Sweetheart, I don't have all the answers, but I don't want you to be hurt, not again.

KAMIRI

This isn't only about me! You have to care about your constituents, not just your family. What about this legislation?! Giving free rein to a company like Bubble? That'll harm lots more people than just me! What's the matter with you? Don't you give a fuck?!

KAY

Don't yell "fuck!" The walls are very thin!

KAMIRI thinks. Decides.

KAMIRI

I still believe you can act ethically, Mom. Somehow.

KAY

You make it sound like some kind of supernatural phenomenon.

KAMIRI

You've always said loyalty is essential. Do you have loyalty to the people? To citizens? To the voters of California?

KAY

I've never really thought about it.

KAMIRI

Well, start. You know, Xtopher stomped on the privacy rights of millions of Southern California Catholics.

KAY

Ones who vote?

KAMIRI

Exactly. That's got to violate Bubble's consent decree with the FTC.

KAY

Hunh. I happen to be friends with the Chair of the FTC.

KAMIRI

You and me, Chip ... and Chip's mom. We've got four days till X brings you that legislation.

KAY

What are you going to do?

KAMIRI

I'm the C-Eth-0. I'm gonna do my job.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 9. Four days later.
Washington, DC. Lights up on
XTOPHER, reading through and
editing his speech on cards, in a
foyer outside a Senate meeting
room. He wears a Ver-2, and is
dressed for success.

XTOPHER

Honorable Senators. Madame Chair. (crosses out) Kay. Our
country stands at a crossroads. (crosses out) Pivot point.
This legislation ... (to himself) Etcetera, etcetera. (leafs
through cards, mumbling) Esteemed yada yadas ... (pauses on a
card) You know who understands AI? China! And they'll crush
us if you regulate. (flips thru) In conclusion, you must
adopt this legislation, to preserve America's freedom to
develop AI without limitations or regulations.

CHIP enters. XTOPHER startles.

XTOPHER

Chip. What the hell are you doing in D.C.?

CHIP

I'm here for none of your business.

XTOPHER

Why are you dressed like that? The tech committee meeting
isn't open to the public. Tech bros only. And you're fired.

CHIP

Nice plan you had there. Category 5 shitstorm.

XTOPHER

After you released the cars, Miri convinced me / to

CHIP

You released the cars, dude. Get bent.

XTOPHER

Show me some respect, or I'll smack you.

CHIP

You think you can push me around? Dude, I went to Sister Bridget's Tae Kwon Do summer camp in seventh grade.

CHIP readies to strike. KAY enters, startles at them.

KAY

What's going on here?

XTOPHER

(steps away from CHIP) Kay!

CHIP

Carnivore.

KAMIRI enters.

XTOPHER

What the hell! Why are you here? After all that high-minded "conflict of interest" B.S., you're gonna present to the committee anyway? Also ... he is supposed to be fired, and thrown in jail!

KAMIRI hands XTOPHER an envelope.

KAMIRI

The Executive Board asked me to deliver this. They tried to call you, and email you, too, but Bubbly has been interfering with your communications. Some ...

KAMIRI and CHIP exchange glances.

KAMIRI

Weird glitch.

CHIP

Scramble attack. Programming error.

XTOPHER opens the envelope, reads.

KAY

I'd like to hear what it says.

XTOPHER

"Dear Mr. Wolf, This is to inform you that as of the date of this letter, you are ... no longer employed by Bubble!" (beat) This is complete horseshit!

XTOPHER shoves the letter back at KAMIRI. She reads it aloud.

KAMIRI

(reads) We are forced to make this difficult decision, upon discovering that you released untested experimental cars into the streets of Palo Alto."

XTOPHER

That was him; it wasn't me!

XTOPHER grabs the letter. Reads silently.

XTOPHER

I didn't- This is such a load of crap! The Ver-2 is a goddamn secret! How can the Board possibly say, here, that they consulted the Ver-2, and accepted its decision?

KAMIRI and CHIP exchange glances, show XTOPHER their wrists, pointing. XTOPHER rips up the letter, tosses it.

KAMIRI

(consults her wrist) "Ver-2, should we fire Xtopher?"
Abso-frickin-lutely, dude!"

CHIP

Abso-frickin-lutely, dude!"

XTOPHER

Kiss my ass! That letter doesn't even mention my golden handshake! Besides, it takes a super-majority to oust / the CEO.

KAMIRI

It was unanimous.

XTOPHER

I don't believe any of this; I'm calling the Chair of the Executive Board.

XTOPHER tries to open his phone.

CHIP

If your phone works, bro.

XTOPHER

My phone doesn't work!

KAMIRI

Xtopher, you won't reach him. The FTC seized Bubble's records: everything related to the Ver-2 and his aggressively vegan cars, so ...

XTOPHER

"So," what? What happened to the Board?

KAMIRI

I think they said they were ... going to Coachella.

KAY's phone vibrates. She answers.

KAY

(to the room) It's the President of the Catholic Voters League. (on phone) Margaret Mary! The confessions? I'm handling it personally. (listens)

XTOPHER

You two traitors have had it in for / me

CHIP

I warned you not to hire her.

KAMIRI

You told me to take charge of the clusterfuck, / and I

XTOPHER

Not by going to the Board! Or bringing in the FTC!

KAMIRI

I mean, you were locked away working on legislation/

XTOPHER

What is this ... this need to punish me? Because you can't even imagine the world we're creating? You see me as a "bad guy" ... because I understand a technology that terrifies you. Well, you won't be able to slow us down, let alone stop us.

KAMIRI

I have slowed you down.

KAY

(on phone) Of course I'll follow up with the FTC. A campaign donation? ... if you insist. (clicks off. to KAMIRI) The Catholics have returned to the fold! (re XTOPHER) Why are you still here? You've been fired. You're replaced on the agenda.

XTOPHER

(re KAMIRI) By this double-crossing snake?

KAMIRI

By Chip's mother. A kindly housewife. She's testifying to the Senators how a tech company misused her private confessions.

CHIP

Her mom talked to my mom.

XTOPHER

She's not a tech bro; it's unfair. She'll manipulate their heartstrings.

KAMIRI

(facing off) When people finally understand how their data is being misused, they tend to get really upset.

XTOPHER

(angry) Kay! (softer) Kay. You don't understand what's happened. AI is inside everything. Regulate it, and medical imaging, warfare, global navigation will be thrown into pandemonium. Vacuum cleaners will attack their owners.

KAY

My vacuum cleaner? (to KAMIRI) Is that true?

KAMIRI

No, mom. No.

XTOPHER

It is true! And if you try to pause AI, you'll wipe out your investments, and destroy the futures of millions of voters who have put their retirement money into tech. Then, good luck with your reelection. On second thought: Be my guest. I'm rooting for the machines.

KAMIRI

Go home, Xtopher. The cops want to talk to you. Find somebody to take care of your cat.

XTOPHER

I don't have a fucking cat!

XTOPHER storms out.

CHIP

Bummer. Cats kick ass. Hey, Ms. Firestone, thanks for setting up that interview for me.

KAMIRI

You gave Chip a job referral?

KAY

At the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration! Kamiri, give him the good luck foot. It never fails.

KAMIRI struggles, tempted. CHIP's phone vibrates, he answers.

CHIP

No, you're not late, Mom. Third floor. (listens) What exhibit. (listens, to the room) Dudes. She went to the Smithsonian.

CHIP crosses to the door. Listening on phone.

CHIP

I'll come and get you. We'll go back and see the Elvis display tomorrow! Bye. (to the room) Save us excellent seats, okay? Nowhere near Zuckerberg.

Chip exits.

CHIP exits. A moment.

KAY

(concerned) Was Xtopher being honest, about the retirees? Retirees vote.

KAMIRI

He's worried about his own Bubble stock. He'd say anything to feel like he's won.

KAY

(considers) Come inside, Pookie Pie. Help me. Pass me notes.

KAMIRI

I can't pass you notes in your Senate Committee session. (carefully) I cannot outright tell my mother that her only ethical choice is: Reject any legislation written by a tech company. In the end, you need to make your own decision.

KAY

Don't give up on me?

KAMIRI

Give me a reason.

KAY hands KAMIRI her notebook.
KAMIRI takes a sticky note from her jacket. KAY removes her Ver-2, gives it to KAMIRI.

KAMIRI hands KAY her notebook, and
the sticky note.

KAY

I thought you couldn't pass ... (unfolds, reads) Ah. I love
you, too.

They hug solemnly. KAY, head held
high, pulls a gavel out of her
purse, and exits into the Task
Force Meeting Room. KAMIRI clenches
the Ver-2, looks after KAY,
pondering the future. Blackout. End
of play.