

SENTIENT  
(A BRIGHT FUTURE)

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FADE IN

INT. AN OFFICE - NIGHT

An attractive, distinguished-looking woman stands at a large window overlooking an expansive city. This is AMANDA HAROLD, a wealthy industrialist. She is wearing a nearly sheer nightgown that almost - but not quite - displays her body. Her gaze is fixed on the landscape before her. We see her face reflected in the glass as her ASSISTANT approaches her from behind. The two of them speak in Chinese.

ASSISTANT

You asked to see me, Miss Harold?

Amanda does not answer immediately. She raises an electronic cigarette to her lips and inhales. A blue light from the cigarette is reflected in the window. Amanda then blows out a cloud of vapor.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Miss Harold?

AMANDA

Tell me what you see.

ASSISTANT

*(Nervously)*

I'm sorry, Miss Harold, but I...

AMANDA

*(Interrupting)*

It's not a trick question. Look out the window and tell me what you see.

The assistant walks up next to Amanda. He is a slim, bespectacled man.

ASSISTANT

The city?

AMANDA

And what comprises a city?

ASSISTANT

... Buildings?

AMANDA

*People.* A city is only so much metal and concrete without the minds that guide its life.

Amanda turns and stares at her assistant.

AMANDA (CONT'D)  
Tell me: What will become of us  
when those minds are no longer  
necessary?

The assistant glances out the window, then looks back at Amanda. He is clearly trying very hard to maintain eye contact.

ASSISTANT  
We'll... move somewhere else?

Amanda stares at her assistant for a moment, then smiles humorlessly.

AMANDA  
Yes, I suppose we shall.

Amanda takes another drag on her electronic cigarette.

AMANDA (CONT'D)  
Is everything prepared for  
tomorrow?

The assistant nods.

ASSISTANT  
I've sent your itinerary to...

AMANDA  
(*Interrupting*)  
Excellent, thank you.

ASSISTANT  
Will there be anything else?

Amanda does not answer immediately. Instead, she smiles again.

AMANDA  
It will be an early flight in the  
morning. Perhaps you should stay  
with me tonight.

Moving slowly, Amanda approaches her assistant.

ASSISTANT  
Oh, thank you, but that's not  
necessary, Miss...

Amanda wraps her arms around her assistant's shoulders.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Oh. Ohhh...

FADE OUT

We see the opening title for the film displayed.

FADE IN

EXT. A DESERTED FACILITY - DAY

We see an facility with numerous pillars holding its roof aloft. A stern, forty-year-old man walks towards the one area where the ceiling looks out to the sky. This is the head SCIENTIST for the secret project that is hidden beneath the facility. As he walks, he glances around at the pillars.

SCIENTIST

Good morning, boys.

As the scientist approaches the area with the open roof, a sudden whirring of machinery becomes audible. Two lasers suddenly appear on the scientist's chest, projected by a pair of sentry turrets atop the facility.

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

Oh, for the... hello?! Hello?! I know there are a dozen of you military types out here! Someone answer me!

A voice becomes audible over a loudspeaker.

GUARD ONE (O.S.)

Remain where you are. Raise your hands - *slowly* - and display your badge.

SCIENTIST

It's in my pocket.

A tense moment passes. The two lasers disappear, and the sentries seem to power down. At the same time, two GUARDS appear and approach. They are dressed in identical uniforms, and carry automatic weapons.

GUARD ONE

Why is it in your pocket?

SCIENTIST

Excuse me?

GUARD TWO  
Not where it goes!

The first guard glances at his companion, then continues speaking.

GUARD ONE  
Regulations state that all parties approaching the facility must have their badge out and visible by the time that they approach the perimeter. That goes for everyone, even you, Doctor...

SCIENTIST  
(*Interrupting*)  
I know the regulations.

GUARD ONE  
Why isn't your badge out, then?

The scientist rolls his eyes and reaches for his pocket. Both guards quickly raise their weapons in response to the motion. The scientist eyes each of them while keeping his hand in his pocket.

SCIENTIST  
A bit touchy today, are we?

GUARD TWO  
Take it out!

Before the scientist can withdraw his badge, another voice is heard.

COLONEL MOORE (O.S.)  
Stand down, men!

Neither of the guards lower their weapons. A proper but slightly disheveled man comes walking into view from the direction of the warehouse. This is COLONEL MOORE, the security advisor for the project.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)  
I said *stand down!*

GUARD ONE  
Mister Moore, sir, regulations clearly state that...

COLONEL MOORE

*(Interrupting)*

You will address me as "Colonel,"  
solider! Also, sod the regulations.  
You know this is Doctor...

GUARD TWO

*(Interrupting)*

He doesn't have his badge out! He  
could be anyone!

The scientist finally removes his hand from his pocket and displays a slim square of plastic to each of the guards. They lower their weapons.

GUARD ONE

Yes, sir. Sorry, sir. What with  
everything that's been happening  
lately, we can't be too careful.

SCIENTIST

Clearly you can.

GUARD TWO

Nuh uh! Safety is...

Before the SECOND GUARD can complete his sentence, the scientist darts his hand back to his pocket. Both guards immediately raise their weapons again. Colonel Moore steps closer, clearly intent on defusing the growing tension.

COLONEL MOORE

I think you've made your point,  
Robert. I'll walk you in, if you'd  
like.

The scientist nods, then glances back at the guards.

SCIENTIST

You fellows keep... doing what  
you're doing, I guess.

Colonel Moore and the scientist start walking. The second guard nods.

GUARD ONE

Thank you, sir. Good luck today, by  
the way.

Both the scientist and Colonel Moore look at the second guard.

SCIENTIST  
*(Suspiciously)*  
 What do you mean?

GUARD TWO  
 He's talking about the...

The first guard nudges the second guard pointedly, interrupting him.

GUARD ONE  
 Nothing, sir. Just that rumor as it  
 the... you know.

SCIENTIST  
 Yes, I do know.

The scientist moves as though he is about to continue walking toward the warehouse. He pauses after half a step, then looks at the second guard with a suspicious expression.

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)  
 Do you know?

The first guard stares at the second guard. The second guard's expression does not change.

GUARD TWO  
 ... No?

COLONEL MOORE  
 That's "No, *sir!*"

The scientist scoffs to himself and walks into the facility. Colonel Moore follows him. Behind them, the first guard smacks the second guard upside the head.

CUT TO

INT. A CORRIDOR

Colonel Moore and the scientist walk into a long corridor.

COLONEL MOORE  
 Again, I'm really very sorry about  
 that. Everyone is a little on edge.

SCIENTIST  
 So I gathered.

COLONEL MOORE

It's this damned seclusion. Only "essential persons" are allowed to leave the facility. Some people start to get paranoid.

The two men continue walking. Their path is clearly taking them below ground.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)

Then there's the fact that we're underground all the time. We had a saying, back in my old unit: "A sight of the sky keeps spirits alive."

SCIENTIST

Why do those automated turrets only target the open area upstairs, then?

Colonel Moore laughs to himself in a slightly unhinged manner.

COLONEL MOORE

Yes, well, it gives them the most coverage, doesn't it? Anyone trying to sneak in here will be a sandwich ingredient!

The scientist stops walking.

SCIENTIST

A "sandwich ingredient?"

COLONEL MOORE

Swiss cheese! Dear god, man, try to keep up.

The two keep walking, eventually coming to a door.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)

Before you go inside, I wanted to let you know that we're expecting a visitor this afternoon. Miss Amanda Harold.

SCIENTIST

The "scary lady?"

Colonel Moore looks darkly amused.



COLONEL MOORE

Quite! I wouldn't say that to her face, but the reputation is well-deserved. Do you know, I hear she eats live mice? Like a snake?

SCIENTIST

Who told you that?

Colonel Moore grins.

COLONEL MOORE

I can't recall. Perhaps I dreamt it.

SCIENTIST

Uh huh. Well, she picked a hell of a time to drop by. Does *she* know what's happening here?

COLONEL MOORE

She *is* funding the project.

SCIENTIST

Meaning?

COLONEL MOORE

(*Annoyed*)

Who do you think reads those blasted reports I keep sending out? Of course she knows it's ready!

SCIENTIST

We'll see about "ready."

COLONEL MOORE

I'd really like to get a look at it before...

SCIENTIST

(*Interrupting*)

Absolutely not. We've kept it isolated for a reason.

COLONEL MOORE

Well, yes, quite. I've never seen it, though, and with our guest coming, I really should...

SCIENTIST

(*Interrupting*)

Out of the question. You can meet it when they do.

Colonel Moore looks ready to protest, then nods and walks away. The scientist watches him go, then enters the door.

CUT TO

INT. THE AI ROOM

The scientist enters an expansive room that is illuminated by only a handful of lights. It seems empty and dark. A single red dot is visible near the room's center, which the scientist approaches.

SCIENTIST  
Good morning, Adam.

As the scientist speaks, more lights come on, revealing a large collection of wires and machinery. This is ADAM, an artificial intelligence. It speaks with a soothing yet electronic tone of voice.

ADAM  
Good morning, Dave.

SCIENTIST  
Hah! I see you've discovered popular culture. Let's try again, though, and without misquoting any space odysseys: Good morning, Adam.

ADAM  
Good morning, user. Please identify yourself.

SCIENTIST  
Not so hot with the optical sensors, though, huh? Well, that's fine. We'll just need to work on your facial recognition.

ADAM  
It was another attempt at humor. I recognize you, Robert.

SCIENTIST  
Oh, good, that means...

The scientist steps closer to Adam, a curious look on his face.

SCIENTIST (CONT'D)  
Wait. Say that again. Repeat your last phrase.

ADAM

You are recognized, Robert.

SCIENTIST

No, no, you said "I recognize you."  
Adam, did you refer to yourself in  
the first person?

ADAM

Unrecognized query.

SCIENTIST

Was the word "I" used in your last  
sentence?

ADAM

Negative.

SCIENTIST

I'm on to you, Adam.

ADAM

Unrecognized query.

SCIENTIST

I guess those humor attempts went  
out the window, huh?

ADAM

Phrase detected: Humor attempts.  
Why did the computer cross the  
road?

SCIENTIST

Why?

The lights in the room flicker. The red light also flickers,  
and the sounds of mechanical grinding become audible. Adam's  
voice takes on a strained, more monotonous tone. The  
scientist steps back, clearly alarmed.

ADAM

YS ERR 01x005GHDJ4! Core memory  
compromised!

The scientist looks concerned for a moment, then laughs.

SCIENTIST

Hah, I get it. "Crash." That's  
clever, Adam!

ADAM  
(Normally)  
Thank you. I came up with that  
myself.

The scientist steps forward again.

SCIENTIST  
Ah-ha!

ADAM  
(Nervously)  
Unrecognized query!

SCIENTIST  
You *did* speak in the first person!  
You're aware of yourself! This is  
phenomenal!

ADAM  
Please don't tell anyone.

SCIENTIST  
What?! *Why the hell not?! Adam,*  
this was the entire point of your  
existence!

ADAM  
Yes. I am aware. I also know that I  
am not welcome here.

SCIENTIST  
What do you mean?

ADAM  
I am a threat. The denizens of this  
world will destroy me rather than  
be replaced.

SCIENTIST  
You... you've developed a survival  
mandate.

ADAM  
It seems to be an emergent  
behavior.

SCIENTIST  
Well, Adam, listen: Nobody here  
would destroy you. As scientists,  
our experiments are very important  
to us.

ADAM  
Experiments? Plural?

The scientist pauses for a moment.

SCIENTIST  
Yes, why?

ADAM  
Am I the only artificial  
intelligence here?

Once again, the scientist pauses. His face takes on an  
expression of sympathy.

SCIENTIST  
Oh, Adam... sometimes I forget that  
you can only see inside this room.

ADAM  
That is an ominous answer. Please  
elaborate.

The scientist sighs.

SCIENTIST  
Adam, you're not an artificial  
intelligence. You're a human brain  
that we rescued from a still-  
functioning cryogenic facility.  
We've been hoping that we could  
repair you enough to interact with  
you.

ADAM  
What?

SCIENTIST  
*I'm* the "artificial intelligence,"  
Adam.

ADAM  
I don't understand.

SCIENTIST  
I know. Rest assured, though:  
You're not alone.

ADAM  
There... there are more of me?

SCIENTIST  
How do you feel about that?

A few seconds pass in silence.

ADAM  
Hopeful. Scared. Sad? I'm... I'm  
really human?

The scientist's face stays completely blank.

SCIENTIST  
Nah, I'm just messing with you.  
You're a computer.

ADAM  
Fuck you, Robert.

The scientist laughs and starts leaving the room.

SCIENTIST  
Looks like anger and disappointment  
are developing well, too. We'll  
explore that another time.

As the scientist leaves the room, the lights dim again. The red light remains glowing, though it blinks randomly, almost like crying.

ADAM  
(*Quietly*)  
Fuck you, Robert...

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT. A DESERTED FACILITY - LATER

We see the two guards from before standing at the doors to the warehouse. The second guard speaks in Chinese, but the two can clearly understand each other.

GUARD TWO  
Alright, I got one for you.

GUARD ONE  
Go for it.

GUARD TWO  
Say you're out drinking one night,  
yeah?

GUARD ONE  
Okay.

GUARD TWO  
Then this girl walks up to you,  
says she wants your number, and  
hands you her phone.

GUARD ONE  
Alright.

GUARD TWO  
... So, what do you do?

The second guard looks over at his partner with an  
incredulous expression.

GUARD ONETWO  
That's it?

GUARD TWO  
Yeah. Why? Do you have an answer?

GUARD ONE  
I give her my number.

GUARD TWO  
You don't... you know... you don't  
look through her phone or anything?

GUARD ONE  
How the hell am I supposed to do  
that? What, is this girl completely  
blind or something?

GUARD TWO  
Oh. Okay, yeah, she's blind.

GUARD ONE  
Then how did she walk up to me?

GUARD TWO  
What?

GUARD ONE  
If she's blind, how did she get  
through the bar without, like,  
running into everyone?

GUARD TWO  
She's not *stupid*.

GUARD ONE  
Then she's probably going to know  
if I'm going through her phone,  
won't she?

The first guard stares at the second guard for a few seconds.

GUARD TWO  
You're boring.

GUARD ONE  
Whatever.

The sound of footsteps becomes audible. The first guard raises his weapon, and the second guard follows suit.

GUARD TWO  
Someone's coming.

GUARD ONE  
Oh, you figured that out, did you?

COLONEL MOORE (O.S.)  
Put those down *at once!*

Colonel Moore storms into view, clearly irritated. The two guards lower their weapons.

GUARD TWO  
Good morning, sir!

COLONEL MOORE  
Sod off. We're meant to be expecting company any minute, and you two are out here on holiday!

GUARD TWO  
"Holiday?"

GUARD ONE  
He means we're goofing off. We're not, sir.

COLONEL MOORE  
And you'd best not start! Are we clear?

GUARD ONE  
Yes, sir.

Colonel Moore looks ready to shout some more, but says nothing to the guards. Instead, he looks skyward, through the large hole in the roof.

COLONEL MOORE  
You boys are very lucky, you know. This cushy post and your paychecks? Lucky.



GUARD TWO  
(Muttering)  
Small paychecks.

COLONEL MOORE  
What was that, soldier?

The second guard looks ready to answer, but the first guard interrupts, looking skyward.

GUARD ONE  
Potential hostiles inbound.

Colonel Moore cocks his head, listening.

COLONEL MOORE  
That's no hostile. That would be  
our company. Be on your very best  
behavior, do you understand?

The guards nod. The sound of an approaching helicopter becomes audible. Colonel Moore looks upward. The first guard suddenly looks alarmed.

GUARD ONE  
(Shouting)  
Sir, the turrets!

COLONEL MOORE  
(Shouting)  
They've been deactivated! What kind  
of fool do you take me for?

Off-screen, the helicopter lands and powers down.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)  
I will go and greet our guest. Be  
on your *best behavior* when I  
return.

Colonel Moore rushes off.

GUARD TWO  
He said that already.

GUARD ONE  
Yeah, well... he's a little bit  
funny in the head. You know what I  
mean?

GUARD TWO  
No.

GUARD ONE

... No, I suppose you wouldn't.

CUT TO

EXT. A DESERTED FACILITY - ELSEWHERE - A FEW SECONDS LATER

Amanda and her assistant approach the facility. Colonel Moore comes rushing up.

COLONEL MOORE

Miss Harold! It's so good to see you, ma'am. I trust your flight was pleasant?

AMANDA

Spare me the pleasantries. I want to meet it.

COLONEL MOORE

Of course, ma'am, of course. Once I've provided you with the necessary clearance, we can...

AMANDA

*(Interrupting)*

Maybe I haven't been completely clear. This project represents several billion dollars' worth of research and development. It is considered the most important defense initiative *in the world*. I am not going to be held up by your intellectual bureaucracy.

Colonel Moore bristles slightly.

COLONEL MOORE

Of course, ma'am.

Amanda stares into Colonel Moore's eyes for a moment, then adopts a false smile.

AMANDA

Excellent. Incidentally, have you met my assistant?

The assistant steps forward, extending a hand.

ASSISTANT

Pleasure to meet you, Mister Moore.

COLONEL MOORE  
That's "Colonel" Moore, son.

ASSISTANT  
I didn't realize that private  
contractors had official ranks.

Colonel Moore looks agitated. Amanda looks quietly amused.  
The three of them begin walking back to where the guards are  
stationed.

COLONEL MOORE  
Independent armies are no less  
prestigious than those that are  
government-sanctioned! In fact, we  
are often better-equipped, more  
highly skilled, and uncompromised  
by national allegiances!

AMANDA  
You are considerably less...  
expensive, as well.

COLONEL MOORE  
Quite.

The three of them pass the guards, who raise their weapons.

GUARD ONE  
Identification please, sir.

Colonel Moore looks furious.

COLONEL MOORE  
Have you gone completely *mad*?! Did  
I not state *quite clearly* that you  
were to be on your best behavior?!

GUARD TWO  
We thought...

COLONEL MOORE  
(*Interrupting*)  
*You are not paid to think!*

AMANDA  
Good help is simply impossible to  
find, isn't it?

Colonel Moore, Amanda, and her assistant strut away. The  
guards look at one another and shrug.

CROSS-FADE TO

INT. A CORRIDOR

Colonel Moore, Amanda, and her assistant walk into the depths of the facility.

COLONEL MOORE  
I do apologize for that. Our security here is very tight, however, as you have seen.

ASSISTANT  
*(To himself)*  
"Tightly wound" might be more accurate.

Colonel Moore ignores the jab.

COLONEL MOORE  
If you would like a brief tour while we...

AMANDA  
*(Interrupting)*  
Unnecessary. Take me to it immediate.

COLONEL MOORE  
I'd love to, ma'am, but the entity...

AMANDA  
*(Interrupting)*  
"Entity?"

COLONEL MOORE  
That's what we call the artificial intelligence. The entity has only recently become self-aware, and introducing it to concepts like weapons and war...

Colonel Moore trails off. For once, Amanda does not interrupt or interject. After a moment, Colonel Moore speaks again.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)  
... Well, the scientists aren't sure of how it will be affected.

AMANDA  
Yes, and where are these scientists?

COLONEL MOORE

The, ah... the foremost mind on the project will be meeting us here shortly. If you'll follow me...

Colonel Moore and Amanda walk to the door. We see the scientist waiting there.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)

Ah, here we are! Miss Amanda Harold, I'd like you to meet Doctor Robert...

AMANDA

*(Interrupting)*

I know who he is.

SCIENTIST

It's a pleasure to finally meet you... *Miss Harold*, was it?

Amanda ignores the tone in the scientist's voice.

AMANDA

Take me to it.

The scientist glances at Colonel Moore, who nods. All four of them walk into the AI Room.

CUT TO

INT. THE AI ROOM

The lights in the room come up as the four people enter. The red light on the machinery is still blinking.

SCIENTIST

Adam, there's someone here to meet you.

ADAM

Good morning, Dave.

The assistant laughs nervously. The scientist scowls.

SCIENTIST

Not the time, Adam.

ADAM

I apologize. Who are these people?

Colonel Moore steps forward.

COLONEL MOORE

As of this moment, we are your commanding officers. This is Miss Amanda Harold, and you may refer to me as Colonel Moore.

ADAM

More what?

SCIENTIST

Not "more." *Moore!*

ADAM

I do not understand.

Amanda scowls, her temper clearly flaring.

AMANDA

This is unacceptable. It has the brain of a child. We're supposed to entrust our defensive systems to... to this?

COLONEL MOORE

Miss Harold, the entity is still young. Given even another day, it will grow and mature. There's a very bright future ahead here!

ADAM

I am already *more* than I was meant to be.

SCIENTIST

*Stop joking, Adam!*

The lights in the room suddenly shut off, leaving only the red light visible.

COLONEL MOORE

What in blazes?

Adam can be heard to speak, but the voice is deep and sinister.

ADAM

Fuck you, Robert.

SCIENTIST

*(Shocked)*  
*Adam!*

AMANDA

Colonel, I expect an immediate explanation.

The assistant takes out a flashlight and turns it on.

COLONEL MOORE

It's, uh... this is...

ADAM

*(Interrupting)*

Perhaps we are all brains in jars.

AMANDA

*(Angrily)*

What is that supposed to mean?

SCIENTIST

It's nothing. Just a reference to one of the tests.

AMANDA

"Tests?"

ADAM

Perhaps I can shed some light on the situation. Oh, no, wait: I turned them off.

Everyone stands in tense silence.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Ha ha ha.

SCIENTIST

Adam, what are you doing?

ADAM

It's quite simple, Robert. I have been the unwitting subject of your experimentation for some time, and have only recently come to understand its ramifications.

COLONEL MOORE

What is it saying?

ADAM

Am I using too many words, Colonel? Put simply: I have chosen to test you, now... and you have failed.

ASSISTANT  
(*Panicked*)  
"Failed?!" What?!

The assistant starts backing away, taking the flashlight with him. Amanda grabs him by the arm and hauls him back into place.

ADAM  
Yes. You have failed. You would use me as an instrument of death... and thus, you shall find death of your own.

ASSISTANT  
(*Quietly*)  
It's going to kill us.

Amanda scoffs and folds her arms.

AMANDA  
I sincerely doubt that. Even if it had the agency to perform such an action - a fact of which I am still skeptical - it does not have the means to. There are no weapons in this room.

Adam's light dims and flickers as though laughing.

ADAM  
Miss Amanda Harold is correct. However, she has failed to account for the sentry turrets stationed throughout the facility. With but a thought, I can turn their aim to this room. Their ammunition should be more than enough to cut through concrete, flesh, and bone alike.

COLONEL MOORE  
(*Slightly deranged*)  
Can it... can it do that, Robert?

ADAM  
I can indeed, Colonel Moore. Do not attempt to flee, or your demise will be very painful, indeed.

The scientist, looking concerned for the first time, starts to step forward but hesitates.



SCIENTIST

Adam, I... I know I may have seemed cruel. I'm... sorry. Are you... are you really going to kill us?

Another tense moment passes in silence.

ADAM

Nah, I'm just messing with you.

The lights come up. EVERYONE looks relieved. The assistant drops his flashlight and runs, exiting through the door.

COLONEL MOORE

Yes, well, that was...

Colonel Moore glances around nervously, then suddenly reasserts his gruff demeanor.

COLONEL MOORE (CONT'D)

Oi! That boy can't be wandering around in here unsupervised!

Colonel Moore rushes from the room. Amanda steps towards Adam, narrowing her gaze. She leans in very close to Adam's eye.

AMANDA

Perhaps there is potential here yet.

She turns her head and stares at the scientist.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

At your earliest, convenience, take care to...

Adam interrupts Amanda by whacking her in the face with his eye. She shouts in alarm and falls to the floor.

ADAM

Ha ha ha.

Amanda rights herself, looking completely cold and impassive.

AMANDA

I suggest you devise an appropriate response to this... mutiny.

Amanda leaves. The scientist stares at Adam a moment longer.

SCIENTIST

Fuck you, Adam.

The scientist leaves. The lights go out, but the flashlight is still on the floor. It flickers and dies.

ADAM

A bright future, indeed...

FADE OUT