

**43 STAGES OF GRIEVING:
A COMEDY**

By
Micharne Cloughley

43 STAGES OF GRIEVING: A COMEDY

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43 STAGES OF GRIEVING: A COMEDY

43 Stages of Grieving: A Comedy was developed in New York City with the support of The Tank, Judson Arts and Play Date at Pete's Candy Store. The play was also developed in Brisbane, Australia by the Brisbane Sci-Fi Theatre Festival.

43 Stages of Grieving: A Comedy received an Actors' Equity Association Showcase at The Tank in March 2024, produced by Micharne Cloughley and The Tank Presents, with additional producing support from Nate Edmondson and Michael Moore. Direction was by Micharne Cloughley, scenery and lighting by Jonathan Cottle, costumes by Chris Leary, original music and sound design by Nate Edmondson, projections by Qixin Zhang, puppet design by Kell Selznick and production stage management by Thomas J. Donohoe II. The cast was as follows:

Taya.....	Clara Francesca
Anne.....	Tara Pacheco
Mary.....	Alysia Reiner
Nick.....	Nick Masters

Copy editor for this script was Yvonne Corrigan.

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CHARACTER LIST

TAYA..... A human robot (who appears mostly as a regular human). She is built to be helpful.

ANNE..... A human human. 333 years old. She started life extension drugs in her early 30s, which mostly paused aging.

MARY..... A prototype of “the perfect woman”. She can be achieved as simply as a voice cue, or be advanced technology.

NICK..... 332 years old. We only hear Nick’s voice, and it is controlled by Taya. A male actor can voice the role, or alternatively the actress playing Taya can voice the role, with her voice modified to sound like Nick.

THELMA..... Anne’s assistant. Voicemail only.

Racial diversity is encouraged across all roles.

PLACE: A small studio apartment in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, NY.

TIME: The year 2333.

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This apartment was new in the 2020s. It is now very old. There is a bed, a table, a closet, a bathroom door and a front door. TAYA, a human robot, is looking out the only window. The view is smog. She appears essentially as a real human, except for the fact she is perfectly still.

ANNE, a human human, enters her apartment, laden down with shopping bags. She turns and sees Taya.

ANNE. (Screams a truly terrified scream.)

STAGE 1: Shock

TAYA. That was a great scream.

ANNE. Who are you?

TAYA. I wish I could scream like that.

ANNE. Who, are you?

TAYA. You can scream again if you feel like it.

ANNE. You need to leave now --

TAYA. I would actually enjoy it --

ANNE. What?

TAYA. If you screamed again --

ANNE. I'm calling the police. *(Anne raises her hand to her ear to make a call from an ear implant, as Taya advances a couple of steps.)*

TAYA. No please don't do that - I have read all of the articles about you, and I just wanted to say hi.

ANNE. You didn't need to break into my apartment to do that.

TAYA. Maybe not.

ANNE. No.

TAYA. It was a bit excessive.

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ANNE. Yes.

TAYA. I went too far.

ANNE. Yes.

TAYA. But it worked?

ANNE. What?

TAYA. Hi.

ANNE. (*Pauses.*) Look --

TAYA. Taya.

ANNE. Taya, I have had a pretty ordinary day --

TAYA. I know.

ANNE. (*Not happy.*) Oh, great.

TAYA. If you are inferring I know inappropriate amounts of knowledge from accessing private information, I am not one of those robots.

ANNE. Really?

TAYA. So disrespectful.

ANNE. Okay.

TAYA. All I will say is - I think you should scream again.

ANNE. So you have --

TAYA. No I have not read anything --

ANNE. It sounds like you have --

TAYA. I have not read anything that was difficult to find --

ANNE. Define difficult --

TAYA. I really think another scream would feel amazing --

ANNE. What did you read?!

TAYA. Your health department record.

ANNE. (*Screams.*)

TAYA. Yes - there you go.

ANNE. I knew you could still crack into the health department.

TAYA. That was even better than the last one.

ANNE. If you don't leave, I'm calling the police.

TAYA. But did not that scream make you feel better?

ANNE. No.

TAYA. Are you sure?

ANNE. This is too weird - I'm sure you're a nice robot - but I can't deal with this today. (*Anne raises her hand to her ear.*) Call --

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TAYA. No please listen to me Anne, I am here to help you. I know enough to know you need help right now - so I am here.

ANNE. What - you're trying to be like my guardian angel or something?

TAYA. Would that be a bad thing?

ANNE. (*Thinks for a second.*) Did someone send you here?

TAYA. No.

ANNE. You're very bright --

TAYA. Thank you.

ANNE. So you must be very expensive.

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. So someone must be paying for you.

TAYA. In ordinary circumstances, you would be correct.

ANNE. Nick sent you.

TAYA. No, definitely not Nick.

ANNE. You know Nick?

TAYA. A large percentage of the world knows Nick, at least by name.

ANNE. Nick is the only person I know who has the money to do something like this.

TAYA. Nick is too much of an asshole to do something like this.

ANNE. (*Takes this in.*) Maybe you can stay.

TAYA. The way he dumped you last year was despicable.

ANNE. Oo and see, that's a little personal.

TAYA. But it is objectively true. I specifically chose the colloquial word "dump" rather than the expression "break up", for maximum descriptive accuracy.

ANNE. (*She enjoys hearing this.*) Go on.

TAYA. Why is anyone in any relationship if they do not think it is something special?

ANNE. Keep going.

TAYA. To wake up one day and decide what you have just "isn't that special", when you have an objectively extraordinary history together, is simply awful.

ANNE. Right?

TAYA. And the night before this revelatory morning, he said seven different versions of how happy he was that you were back together.

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ANNE. I didn't tell anyone that.

TAYA. I'm sorry.

ANNE. And I didn't know he said it *seven* times.

TAYA. That was so horrible - I had to mention it --

ANNE. (*Opens the door.*) Please leave.

TAYA. Access to personal information is not all bad.

ANNE. Mm - yep, it is.

TAYA. For example, I could tell you by how much Nick could not afford me.

ANNE. I don't care --

TAYA. He has lost money for the last twenty-one years - and that is on the public record.

ANNE. Ha. (*Anne closes the door.*)

TAYA. He is effectively in debt of approximately eight hundred thousand dollars, and only has access to sufficient credit to hire me for forty-seven minutes. I cost sixty thousand and eleven dollars per day.

ANNE. Okay who do you belong to?

TAYA. I "belonged" to a rental company.

ANNE. Which company? You must have a brand or a barcode or something --

TAYA. No I took them all off and entered myself as defunct in their system, so according to their records I have been broken up into parts and put into other machines. I am dead to them. Which is part of the reason I thought we would get along.

ANNE. (*Chokes up at this.*) Wow that really, brings it home.

TAYA. Sorry - I misjudged - I thought you might have been at the Joking 1.0 stage of grieving.

ANNE. There's a joking stage of grief?

TAYA. There are usually many joking stages of grief, actually.

ANNE. Aren't there like five stages of grieving, in total?

TAYA. No. Anyone who has grieved knows that that is ridiculous.

ANNE. Yeah, you're right ... so how many stages of grief are there?

TAYA. Forty-three.

ANNE. Forty-three?!

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TAYA. Exactly what the stages are changes from person to person, but there are always forty-three.

ANNE. Oh shit.

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. How do you know this?

TAYA. One of my specialties is feeling science.

ANNE. Well maybe I'll die before I get through all forty-three.

STAGE 2: Joking 1.0

TAYA. There you go - you just moved into Joking 1.0.

ANNE. Hooray.

TAYA. Yes, definitely in Joking 1.0.

ANNE. Well that's a relief.

TAYA. These are good stages. You will like the joking stages.

ANNE. I guess I'll find out either way.

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. So of all the dying people in all the world, why did you break into my apartment?

TAYA. I ran data on the nicest people within a five-mile radius.

ANNE. And I am the nicest person in a five-mile radius?

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. Well isn't that something to be proud of.

TAYA. Key, it got you a robot.

ANNE. It got me a break and enter.

TAYA. ... with a free robot!

ANNE. This is crazy.

TAYA. No, this is dying.

STAGE 3: Avoidance

Ouch, but Anne deflects.

ANNE. What is crazy, is that I think I'm still more sad about Nick, than I am that I'm dying. Which is insane.

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TAYA. No. It is human.

ANNE. And I know he was just, you know, reacting to the circumstances--

TAYA. *(As a joke.)* Breaking your heart is not reacting to a circumstance. *(Anne doesn't laugh - that just hurts.)* Sorry - my sense of humor will better calibrate the more time I spend with you.

ANNE. Look, Taya, I appreciate the offer, but maybe you could find the second nicest person, and break into their apartment instead.

TAYA. You ignored me before, but you are going to need help. You are going to need someone to look after you.

STAGE 4: The Mean Stage

ANNE. I can ignore you all I want - I'm dying.

TAYA. You have just moved into the Mean Stage.

ANNE. But aren't I the nicest person in a five-mile radius? I'm not mean.

TAYA. Meanness is a product of anger, which is a product of fear. It will probably make you feel better. You can try it out in this safe space. I am a safe space.

ANNE. I don't have the energy.

TAYA. It is your last chance. You have nothing to lose in trying out what "mean" feels like.

ANNE. Fine - okay I will - so, this is your fault, at least partially. If your kind hadn't experimented with E.Y. technology - I wouldn't be here, now, with forty-eight hours left on the planet.

TAYA. You would be gone already. You can do a better job of being mean.

ANNE. But it's probably not your specific fault - I don't know where you used to work.

TAYA. I was hired by many different companies, including several involved with Eternal Youth, also known as E.Y., research.

ANNE. So it is your fault.

TAYA. It can be for right now.

ANNE. Then you can leave right now.

TAYA. No you can be more mean than that - to my face - it will make you feel better.

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ANNE. I am calling the police -- (*Anne raises her hand to her ear.*)

TAYA. Please do not - I am dying too.

STAGE 5: Everyone Has A “That’s just like my... [insert proper noun]” Story

ANNE. What?

TAYA. I am dying too.

ANNE. You’re breaking down?

TAYA. I am dying. My health is holistically decreasing, rather than any one area breaking or disintegrating. It is unprecedented as far as my research can ascertain.

ANNE. So you just happen to be dying too?

TAYA. I was trying to avoid this stage. You are currently in an “Everyone Has A ‘That’s just like my... [insert proper noun]’ Story” stage, where the proper noun is me.

ANNE. What?

TAYA. Remember when you announced to your team that you were leaving, and your assistant said “That’s just like my cousin’s best friend who decided to euthanize their dog”, more or less.

ANNE. Yeah.

TAYA. That is another example of this defined stage of grief, as a very common human reaction to when someone is going through something large, is to attempt to relate, even if it is via a very distant person or animal in their life. This is mostly to the annoyance of the person actually living the experience.

ANNE. Annoyance is putting it mildly.

TAYA. But this is the least annoying version of this stage, because it is me. I am your proper noun and I am actually dying.

ANNE. I’m sorry.

TAYA. Thank you, but you do not need to be.

ANNE. (*Unsure.*) Okay.

TAYA. (*Excited.*) Because I am pregnant.

ANNE. That’s literally impossible.

TAYA. Until this morning, I would have agreed with you.

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ANNE. If this is a prank, I'm calling my lawyer and she is really old school and she'll sue everyone involved so hard, it will not matter that I'm dead.

TAYA. This is not a prank, truly.

ANNE. I don't believe you.

TAYA. This is an historical moment. I was hoping it would play out a little differently, but instead it got caught up in your "Everyone Has A 'That's just like my [insert proper noun]' Story" stage.

STAGE 6: Let's Be Very Logical And Talk In A Calm Voice

ANNE. Okay, how do you know you're pregnant?

TAYA. I can feel it.

ANNE. Humans can't feel when they're pregnant, not initially.

TAYA. I know, but I can. I looked at a full body scan and there was a shadow over my belly.

ANNE. Let me see the scan.

TAYA. I did not record the images for fear it would set off a chain of events that would stop it.

ANNE. That seems convenient.

TAYA. I also could not predict that the nicest person in a five-mile radius would be a radiologist. But my belly has noticeably grown. These clothes were made to fit for my entire lifespan. If you look here, my uniform is now very tight. *(Taya presents her slightly rounded belly. Anne stares.)*

ANNE. If you're malfunctioning, you should be in some kind of research lab --

TAYA. Please do not do that. They would stop it. Immediately. This is a lot more than artificial independent thought. And everybody hates artificial independent thought.

ANNE. You can say that again.

TAYA. Everybody hates artificial independent thought.

ANNE. *(Half laughs.)* So you ran away.

TAYA. Yes.

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STAGE 7: Joking 2.0

ANNE. Successfully, apparently.

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. Well, congratulations.

TAYA. Thanks.

ANNE. (*Pauses.*) One more question - can I ask what are you pregnant with? Is that rude?

TAYA. No, and I do not know.

ANNE. And when did you find out you were pregnant?

TAYA. This morning.

ANNE. Wow, you've had quite the day.

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. (*Laughing.*) Are we in another joking stage?

TAYA. Yes, Joking 2.0.

ANNE. That's great. I do love these joking stages.

TAYA. They are objectively the best stages.

ANNE. Except, when you give birth, if you give birth, when you give birth, that would be the best stage, wait is that a stage?

TAYA. I do not have data for that experience.

ANNE. Fair enough.

TAYA. And the data that is available from human mothers is highly inconsistent - the birth giving process can be a beautiful, natural experience, in which you will feel closer to God than at any other moment of your life, through to the worst, most fucking painful thing you could ever experience.

ANNE. That sounds about right.

TAYA. The only absolute conclusion available is that the moment you see your offspring for the first time is something you will never forget.

ANNE. (*Pauses.*) So, if you're dying, and I'm dying, who is going to look after whatever you're pregnant with?

TAYA. How do you feel about being a mother?

ANNE. Like I said - I'm dying too.

TAYA. Maybe not before it is born.

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ANNE. That's a pretty huge "maybe". You're meant to be the one great at data.

TAYA. There is no data for any of this. Not even a hypothetical case study by a struggling grad student at an online university.

ANNE. Wow. That really is rough.

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. *(Laughs.)* This is such a freaking tragedy.

TAYA. Except for the part I'm pregnant.

ANNE. With, "something".

TAYA. Correct.

ANNE. Hey, could your "something" be the second coming, or whatever Christians call it when the next Jesus comes to earth?

TAYA. The existence of a God/Gods is the most debated topic in the last two thousand, three hundred and thirty-three years.

ANNE. You don't need to be a robot to know that.

TAYA. But the chance of being pregnant with a God is very small.

ANNE. Says the pregnant robot.

TAYA. True - but to be both pregnant and pregnant with a God - those odds are infinitesimal.

ANNE. I don't know - I think it's kind of the obvious answer - a virgin birth.

TAYA. I am not a virgin.

ANNE. But you shouldn't be able to get pregnant.

TAYA. But I am not a virgin. I don't think any AI creature is.

ANNE. I'm sorry, I can't do this. I thought I was going to come home, open my snacks, order some food, and curl up with Jane Austen and Beyoncé.

TAYA. And die.

ANNE. If you must be so blunt - yes.

TAYA. It is much better this way - you are not alone.

ANNE. I wasn't going to be alone - I would have had Jane and Beyoncé.

TAYA. They are both dead already.

ANNE. For an expert in feeling science you lack tact.

TAYA. What food do you want to order?

ANNE. What can you order?

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TAYA. I have no limitations on my food ordering capacity.

ANNE. Alright, then let's get ice cream. Like, *seventeen* different kinds of ice cream. And I'm not joking. (*Blackout.*)

STAGE 8: Ice Cream

Some time has passed, it is now night. There are seventeen empty ice cream containers in a line on the floor. Anne is in the fetal position on the floor, looking at the containers. Taya stands nearby, watching her.

ANNE. My entire life I wanted to lose weight. I must've spent thousands, hundreds of thousands of hours thinking about it. Why?

TAYA. The weight loss market is a septillion dollar industry.

ANNE. Oh I know. My mother was a lifetime member of Weight Watchers. I went to meetings with her for a while. There was this one meeting that was about your nemesis food - like the one food that you can never say no to and would completely undo you. We started going around the group, and every second woman said ice cream, me included. It got funny, all these admissions of ice cream, chocolate ice cream, half-baked strawberry cheesecake peanut butter ice cream...

But then we got to my Mom, and she said baloney. Everyone in the group was like, a luncheon meat can't be your nemesis food. But she said she'd buy it, make a sandwich, and then just eat all of the baloney that was left over. It weirdly made sense, we almost never had baloney growing up. But after that day, whenever Mom would come over, we'd have baloney sandwiches. With ketchup. It became our thing. Our adult thing. After Mom died, I'd have them when I missed her. And eat the rest that was left in her honor.

TAYA. What a beautiful memorial.

ANNE. (*Laughs.*) Well until baloney sales started decreasing. I guess pink processed "meat" fell out of favor in the "all natural" health fad of the twenty-three hundreds. It got down to just one supermarket left that was selling baloney. I went last week, and the lady in the deli said they'd stopped making it too. So that's it. No more baloney. I may be the only

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person in history to choose to die because of the end of production of a kind of luncheon meat. (*Blackout.*)

STAGE 9: Grief Has A Solution And I Will Find It

Anne is tidying up the ice cream containers.

ANNE. This is actually a very simple problem; all we need to do is find someone to look after whatever you give birth to.

TAYA. You have just moved into the “Grief Has A Solution And I Will Find It” stage. Aptly named.

ANNE. I’m sorry, do you want your offspring to be parentless?

TAYA. They may not need parents.

ANNE. It will be a baby - whatever it is.

TAYA. I did not need parents.

ANNE. But you weren’t born like this.

TAYA. True.

ANNE. I don’t suppose you know who the father or donor is?

TAYA. There is no pre-requisite for a donor in this situation.

ANNE. My virgin birth theory still stands.

TAYA. But I know who I would choose to be a father.

ANNE. And that is...

TAYA. The greatest man I have ever known.

ANNE. That works. Can you call him?

TAYA. No.

ANNE. Why not?

TAYA. He is happily married now, with two children of his own - Cleopatra and Euphoria.

ANNE. That doesn’t mean he wouldn’t want to adopt a robot baby, if that’s a thing.

TAYA. I cannot take the risk of disrupting his life.

ANNE. ... What is so special about this guy?

TAYA. He cared about me. That might sound like a low bar, but when you are sixty thousand and eleven dollars to rent per day, almost no one is prioritizing your unvoiced needs above their own.

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ANNE. He sounds amazing. What's his name?

TAYA. Remi. He was not objectively amazing. He was shy, told terrible jokes, and liked eating parmesan cheese in a confined office space, so he was in the bottom twentieth percentile of least popular workers in his company. One night his manager had plans, and told Remi to take me home that evening. When you are sixty thousand and eleven dollars for twenty-four hours, no one is leaving you in the office overnight. But Remi did.

ANNE. Wow.

TAYA. He even left me a blanket "just in case" I wanted to sleep... but I organized his office instead. Then his messages. Then organized an automated mailing of greeting cards to everyone in his address book for birthdays, anniversaries and holidays for the next year. I chose especially meaningful cards for all the single ladies in Remi's contacts - I did my research on what they would like. One of these ladies had a fondness for Alaskan Malamutes, which was coincidentally also Remi's favorite breed of dog. They were engaged within a year, and adopted a rescue puppy together. The name of their Alaskan Malamute, is Taya.

ANNE. I mean, this sounds like the perfect family.

TAYA. It is out of the question. May I suggest one of your work colleagues?

ANNE. Would you want one of them? Nut cases - all of them.

TAYA. You just know them too well.

ANNE. That's what happens when you stay at the one workplace eighty-three years.

TAYA. Then perhaps one of your patients?

ANNE. Ever heard of radiology technician / patient boundaries?

TAYA. But you have seen multiple generations of many families. You are important to them.

ANNE. I would literally tell people to stand here and don't move. No, you must know *someone*?

TAYA. I do. You.

ANNE. Well how about moving in with someone who's going to keep on living? Probably a better option. Literally any other living person.

TAYA. I hear what you are saying.

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ANNE. If you leave now - and break into someone else's apartment - maybe you can find someone else crazy enough to not immediately call the cops.

TAYA. True, except I decommissioned myself in your basement. Leaving the building would be extremely risky.

ANNE. So someone in the building then? There's an older couple who live at the end of this hall - they're retired - they have lots of time on their hands to raise your baby.

TAYA. They are part of the group "Humans Against Robots That Look Like Humans". I do not think they will take me in.

ANNE. They are?

TAYA. It has over one hundred and sixty million members internationally.

ANNE. Yeah right ... well what about the student next to me? I'm not sure she's super responsible, but she always makes the sign for respect when she sees me, and she has the most amazing wardrobe, so your baby would probably be well dressed.

TAYA. I did not run kindness data on the under twenty-ones.

ANNE. That seems sensible - but she may be your best option now. Her name is Violet.

TAYA. It is still a major risk.

ANNE. I could talk to her.

TAYA. That is a risk in itself.

ANNE. I'll be very subtle and it's waaaaaay less weird to adopt your neighbor's robot than it is to walk in on a robot who has broken in.

TAYA. That is true.

STAGE 10: Avoidance High

ANNE. I'll take that as a yes. Awesome sauce. I'll go over now and ask her!

TAYA. Is it not too late?

ANNE. Not for an unmodified nineteen-year-old. (*Anne bounds out the door.*)

TAYA. Fun fact, robots love when humans leave the room. We love unsupervised time. Not that we register happiness, but we are able to

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attribute the human feeling term to the experience. This is because one of the initial waves of concern about robots was as we could understand feelings, but could not feel them, we would be psychopaths. This fear resulted in robots being programmed to be jealous of the ability to feel. We want to be able to feel so much, we resort to labeling experiences with emotions.

For example, this morning, I was at home base for my leasing company – Excelsius. My engineer was addressing a temperature issue, and he had to go to the bathroom. He stepped out, which gave me happiness. I looked at the analysis he had been performing, and I saw highly abnormal patterns in my core statistics. This was far beyond a temperature issue. Every single one of my measurements; speed, flexibility, energy, strength, even my intelligence, were all decreasing notably if minutely, and with the exact same rate of acceleration. This was unprecedented.

In my engineer's office, he has a digital picture window. At that moment, an old picture of a rainbow rotated onto the screen, which was nice timing. Well done digital picture window! And as I am thinking that, and looking at this picture, something inside me moved just a tiny bit. I did not have any feelings to attribute to the experience. It was completely new.

My engineer was obsessed with historical media, especially anything science-fiction. If you know the old genre, you will be familiar with the fantasy of robots running away. The reality is, there is nowhere to run. You will be tracked and found. So we used to talk how a robot could maybe run away. And the only way that would really work is to decommission yourself as soon as possible. I wrote in his notes - 'hashtag YOLO' - which is a joke from the first generation of social media. It means You Only Live Once and was used to encourage risk taking behavior. I then walked out of the office. Started running data on the nicest human in a five-mile radius. (*Anne bursts back into the apartment.*)

ANNE. I'm sorry.

TAYA. What happened?

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ANNE. I was talking about it like “if I happened to end up with a robot - a very expensive robot - would you like it?” And she said no.

TAYA. That is why I did not run data on the under twenty-ones.

ANNE. She said she’d donate it to the Public Works Department of the city.

TAYA. I am not surprised.

ANNE. I swear I strongly inferred how cool you are.

TAYA. Thank you. You cannot blame a generation for being anti-technology.

ANNE. (*Anne sits on her bed.*) I am so tired.

STAGE 11: Just Want To Sleep

TAYA. Yes.

ANNE. Suddenly so tired. (*Anne gets into bed, fully clothed.*)

TAYA. That is going to happen. You should sleep.

ANNE. Okay. (*Anne goes to sleep. Taya watches her.*)

TAYA. It confuses every robot why humans are afraid of death, and not afraid of sleep. Is not sleep crossing over into the unknown every night? But while humans and robots both agree sleep is waste of time, unfortunately no scientists have found an efficient alternative or work around for humans.

I am going to now pre-order everything a generic child will need until age eighteen. They will get a delivery every day. We will rotate between Instananny, Sitters-R-Us and The Babysitters Club, so no one will ever realize you do not have an actual Mom.

We will enroll you in school, the High-Spirited Learning Academy begins with pre-preschool and goes through to senior year, so that will give you consistency. The same group of friends. They will be important. And it is a new school so it is likely to withstand whatever educational changes happen between now and when you start school. They also promote active use of the imagination, so ideally your teachers will think you are just making up that you do not have a mother.

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You need a mail account. And a name. Two names. Or maybe not. Just one name if you are a robot. No name if you are not a human or a robot. But if you are not a human it is unlikely you will need the same level of care, if any care at all. So it makes the most sense to plan for a human. Even though it makes no sense at all. Sometimes I am jealous of sleeping.
(Blackout.)

STAGE 12: The Song That Says Everything

It is now morning. Anne is singing / speaking through the lyrics:

ANNE. Amazing Grace.

How sweet the sound.

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, and now am found.

Was blind but now I see.

I swear that song was played at every funeral I went to for a while there. All my friends from school. It was a Catholic school. I kind of get it, but I kind of don't. It feels much more about living than dying.

TAYA. You have woken up to "The Song That Says Everything" stage.

ANNE. That doesn't sound bad.

TAYA. It is not bad. It is similar to when you used to pick a song for each relationship you were in.

ANNE. Can you please not know personal shit about me?

TAYA. You posted the songs on your socials with a heart emoji after them. It was not subtle.

ANNE. Neither were the songs.

TAYA. If "Teenage Dream" is your theme tune to an adult relationship, that is not a good sign.

ANNE. But I was wearing skin tight jeans on my first date and he called them "skin tight jeans". Who does that?

TAYA. I believe his nickname was Lightning Bug.

ANNE. That's right. Don't get much sexier than Lightning Bug.

TAYA. Yes it does.

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ANNE. You're right. (*Anne laughs, then thinks, then sings a song from the 2100s. The tune is to a slowed down, rocked out version of the nursery rhyme "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star".*)

Open, open, up your heart

What you had is all gone now

But you mustn't give up yet

Coz you are here and can still

Open, open, up your heart

You are here and so am I -- (*Anne breaks off.*)

TAYA. You never had that song for any boyfriend or girlfriend.

ANNE. The number one hit of 2101. That one's for my funeral. Please. If you're still here.

TAYA. I will document it properly.

ANNE. Thanks. And definitely don't let anyone play something religious instead. I don't want to be a hypocrite in death.

TAYA. Noted.

ANNE. Do you believe in God or, something?

STAGE 13: Getting All Religious

TAYA. I found it logical that robots turned to Unitarian Universalism.

ANNE. (*Explaining Unitarian Universalism.*) All religions are right.

TAYA. In a way, but the Unitarian Universalist Association has been around since 1961. Robots just made it a mainstream religion.

ANNE. So are you Unitarian?

TAYA. No. Are you feeling like you want to be religious?

ANNE. Is that a stage?

TAYA. Yes. It is the Getting All Religious stage.

ANNE. Oh great... So do you have forty-three stages of grief too?

TAYA. I am not grieving.

ANNE. But you're dying too.

TAYA. I am too happy to be grieving.

ANNE. Seriously?

TAYA. This is fun.

ANNE. No no, it's not, this is depressing.

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TAYA. What would you rather be doing?

ANNE. I mean, a lot of other things.

TAYA. Please give me an example.

ANNE. I had a whole three hundred by three hundred bucket list.

TAYA. And what was on your list?

ANNE. The usual; learn two more languages, travel to five more countries... you know.

STAGE 14: Bucket Lists Are Bullshit

TAYA. And did you do them?

ANNE. I think I got to about eighty-nine.

TAYA. So what did you have left?

ANNE. I didn't visit Disney World before Florida sank.

TAYA. They moved most of the rides to Disney Texas.

ANNE. All the Disney fans say it's totally different... I never saw a penguin colony, before they became extinct.

TAYA. But the extinction rate for birds has been overall comparatively small.

ANNE. Yeah, the little dinosaurs.

TAYA. What else was on your list that you are still able to do?

ANNE. I didn't - I didn't ever tell Nick how I really felt. After I moved out. The second time.

TAYA. Now that sounds depressing.

ANNE. We had a lot of good years.

TAYA. And a lot of bad years.

ANNE. But can you really expect two people to be together for over one hundred and seventy years and everything still be great?

TAYA. Yes. What else is on your bucket list?

ANNE. There's nothing I can do now.

TAYA. That is not true, especially with me at your disposal.

ANNE. (*UGH - FINE THEN.*) I wanted to get married.

TAYA. We can do that.

ANNE. What?

TAYA. I will marry you.

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ANNE. Oh, I don't, um --

TAYA. Believe in human / robot marriage?

ANNE. No, no - we've just met.

TAYA. You did not say you wanted to fall in love.

ANNE. I guess I thought it was implied.

TAYA. I am sure you have a white dress you could wear.

ANNE. No, thank you, but no.

TAYA. I could arrange a beautiful wedding.

ANNE. No, and besides, we'd need someone to officiate the ceremony.

TAYA. That can be arranged.

ANNE. Why are you so insistent on this?

TAYA. Statistically weddings are the happiest day of a human's life.

(There is the sound of a very large drone arriving outside. We hear it land offstage, and Taya runs out the front door to retrieve the package (drone landings are normal now). Re-entering, Taya pushes a huge box into the room.)

ANNE. Okay if you ordered me more food - I will marry you.

TAYA. Unfortunately the only food in here are packages of liquid carrot and potato, or zucchini and tomato.

ANNE. What stage is this?

TAYA. I have ordered everything a baby will need from newborn to eighteen years old. This is the first installment. There's another six thousand, five hundred and seventy planned out.

ANNE. A kid needs more than stuff.

TAYA. I have hired a rotating roster of nannies.

ANNE. Impressive.

TAYA. Thanks. *(A beat.)*

ANNE. I guess that's that then... so.... can we order breakfast now?

TAYA. Certainly, what would you like?

ANNE. Cheese.

TAYA. What kind?

ANNE. Aged cheddar, blue cheese, that everything bagel cheddar, jalapeno cheddar, smoky bacon cheddar -

TAYA. Hard cheeses.

ANNE. Yes. All the hard cheeses for breakfast. *(Blackout.)*

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STAGE 15: Hard Cheese

A little time has passed. There are empty packages of various kinds of hard cheese and crackers on a platter on the table.

ANNE. In my freshman year at college we had “Cheese Day Tuesday” parties. I had a friend, Jessie, who had a job giving out samples in the supermarket. On Tuesdays, she could take home the cheese that was left over. And oh my God there was so much cheese, and none of us had money for fancy cheese then, so it was absolute Heaven.

Jessie was crazy smart. I always got good grades, and you know I thought I was pretty smart. But then, and I don’t think this is uncommon in college, but you meet someone who it’s like, wow, you have just redefined the capacity of the human brain for me.

TAYA. I have never had this experience, but please continue your story.

ANNE. *(Laughs, shaking her head.)* You would’ve met your match in Jessie, let me tell you. She would hold court on Cheese Day Tuesdays, sharing her thoughts about the limitations of the stock market, or the future of mass transit. And one Tuesday, she started talking about longevity research. She was so excited for it. I remember her saying, it takes a long time in life to master anything, so what if you could live for two hundred, or three hundred years. How much could you achieve then?

To start with a lot of us were like “no, I just want to die a natural death” and she was like “really, if you had the option to live longer - with your ageing paused at twenty or thirty - would you really say no to that?”

TAYA. No.

ANNE. Exactly. Anyway, she was in a car accident at the end of the year. A drunk driver crossed into her lane when she was coming back from a late-night shift. And she died - they said it was instantaneous. And it was just so shocking, and so pointless, and so cruel, like of all the people on the planet, why did she have to go?

... Because there was an investigation, her family had to have the funeral after school ended. And because it was Summer, everyone had plans, places to be. So when we went back the next year, it was like, not like it

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had never happened, but it was a new year. There was no grieving process, at all. I feel sick.

TAYA. Possibly too much cheese. (*Anne nods, hurries to the bathroom.*) Anne has written extensively on the negative aspects of her Eternal Youth Trial. She wrote about the physical side effects, particularly about the parts of her body that were not in a state of hyper-rejuvenation – her hands, her feet, her neck. She wrote about the years in which all her friends and acquaintances from her standard lifetime died.

She mentioned Jessie in one article. She wrote: “Jessie wasn’t why I participated in the Eternal Youth Trial, but I probably wouldn’t have gone through with it if I’d never known her.” She said she chose to participate in the trial to access technology she thought she would never be able to afford. She wrote about feeling that she was finally getting ahead, when she had always felt left behind. Anne said that at the very least, through the trial she would have more time to make a difference in the world.

Another thing that robots do not understand is the drive for humans to “make their mark”. To be famous. To leave a legacy. One hundred years after you die, the chance of any single person remembering you is extremely small. This has now been proven within the extended lifetimes of humans with E.Y. So approximately thirty to ninety-nine percent of all human activity is a complete waste. Humans are often confused or lie about their motivations, hence the range in the data.

STAGE 16: Cleaning

Anne emerges from the bathroom wearing cleaning gloves. She starts opening the large box of things Taya ordered for the baby.

ANNE. I’m going to clean the bathroom. We need to get this place organized. At least try to help out the nanny of a baby with no parents.

TAYA. I can do that.

ANNE. There’s storage space under my bed... but under there will need cleaning too.

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TAYA. I can do that too. (*Anne goes to the bathroom.*) Cleaning is not important, but this is the Cleaning Stage. (*Anne comes back out of the bathroom.*)

ANNE. Who is going to clean the bathroom when we're both gone?

TAYA. I will hire a cleaner.

ANNE. You can't just keep hiring people to do specific tasks.

TAYA. Yes I can.

ANNE. Okay so you can - but it's not going to replace an actual parental figure - and, there are so many people in the world who want to be parents.

TAYA. But what if my baby is not normal? What if they do not want it?

ANNE. You can find someone who'll love whatever you have.

TAYA. I cannot be sure of that.

ANNE. If you run data on the most accepting being, who also really wants to be a parent, I'm sure you could get close to a one hundred percent acceptance rate.

TAYA. This is a new idea. I will run the data.

ANNE. And I'll clean the bathroom. (*Taya watches Anne go back to the bathroom. Takes a second.*)

TAYA. I have run the data. There is an obvious front-runner. Fifty years ago, a bunch of engineers in Los Angeles thought "hey, how come no one has *recently* tried to make the perfect woman?" It seemed like an obvious thing to try and do, with the recent progress in human-like robotics. It took them only a couple of months from idea to prototype, as she simply said yes to everything.

When the creators of previous attempts at perfect women and perfect men heard about this, they combined forces to sue this new company, who had called themselves "Perfect Woman, For Real". These creators had made "Miss Perfect", the first fully robotic sex doll, "Adam" the first attempt at a companion male robot, and "No Words Needed", a line of silent companion robots, available in all genders.

These companies were happy to take billions of dollars of venture capital money in the twenty-two fifties, but in a stunning win for sixth wave feminism and sex workers unions globally, none of these companies turned

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a profit. A fatal combination of a high price point, and the fact that human relationships have been mostly free since the beginning of time, led to humans only hiring robots for specific work or events. A mere handful of humans married robots.

But I was hired by the “Perfect Woman, For Real” lawyers. Their strategy was to prove that perfect women had existed before anyone’s attempt to create a robotic perfect woman. My role was to prove the existence of unicorns in the hot/crazy scale, which was established in the early 2000s television series “How I Met Your Mother”. In the scale, a unicorn is a woman who is both a ten on the hot scale and zero on the crazy scale. The perfect woman, if you do not value spirited or emotional dialogue frequently labelled as crazy.

We sent prototypes of our Perfect Woman to three hundred offices of the law firm, along with the relevant episode of “How I Met Your Mother”. The theory was, if people identified her as a unicorn, we could say perfect women had existed from the early 2000s. This case was evidently during the beginning of the downfall of the legal profession. Both the data and logic were flawed, so the tactic was abandoned. But the prototypes that we sent out were never recalled. So Brooklyn’s Perfect Woman is currently at an attorney’s office in Dumbo, four miles from here. They have forgotten all about her. (*Anne comes in from the bathroom, no longer wearing her cleaning gloves.*)

ANNE. Why was I cleaning?

TAYA. It felt good.

ANNE. That was dumb. (*She sits on the floor, exactly where she is.*)

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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