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Creating and Producing Immersive Theatre Performances in Found Spaces

by

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Undergraduate honors thesis under the direction of

Dr. Shannon Walsh

Department of Theatre

Submitted to the LSU Roger Hadfield Ogden Honors College in partial fulfillment of
the Upper Division Honors Program.

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Louisiana State University
& Agricultural and Mechanical College
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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Introduction and Goals

In the spring of 2018, I learned about immersive theatre for the first time. In the class Approaches to the Stage, we discussed Punchdrunk's production of *Sleep No More* and I was captivated by the idea of such a production existing. That same semester, I attended the South Eastern Theatre Conference where I attended a workshop titled "Stage Managing Immersive Theatre" where the presenter talked about the various immersive productions she had worked on and the variety of formats immersive theatre could take. Her stories of productions with no stage and audience members occupying the same space as performers sparked my interest in working on such a production. At the same time, I was working on the scenic design for the LSU Lab Season's production of *Woyzeck*. Part of the original concept for this show that was never realized was staging it in an immersive way with various scenes happening simultaneously, so that the audience had to choose what they saw. Learning about immersive theatre in the classroom, from a professional in the field, and from a director in the School of Theatre, all within the span of a month, led me to the questions that set me down this path: Is it possible for me to form a team and create an immersive theatre experience in Baton Rouge?

That became the primary objective of this project. I wanted to assemble a team to collaborate with me in the creation, writing, and performance of an immersive play. This proved to be a rather ambitious goal, but one that pushed myself and those around me to grow as artists as we experimented with theatre in a way that none of us had ever experienced.

The overall process for the creation of what ultimately became *Upgrade* can be broken down into five stages: initial ideas and research; the writing process, the design process, auditions and rehearsals, and tech rehearsals and performances. Each of these steps in the process

had their own journeys, presented challenges, and resulted in some great triumphs for myself and my team.

Initial Ideas and Research

During this stage, I spent a lot of time learning about immersive theatre as an art form as well as thinking of different subjects I might want to explore in the play. Much of my research about immersive theatre came from reading about different immersive productions. One of the best resources I used was “No Proscenium: The Guide to Everything Immersive.” No Proscenium is a collective that focuses on highlighting and exploring non-traditional theatre forms, primarily immersive and site specific work. This collective includes collaborators writing articles on productions across a nation as well as a podcast hosted by the collective’s founder, Noah Nelson. In each episode Nelson explores a new production. He interviews the creators and details how the show was created as well as how it functions. Nelson has created some vocabulary around immersive and site specific theatre which was helpful in understanding the different forms immersive theatre can take, as well as the different stories which can be told in this format. One of the most useful distinctions Nelson created was breaking down the function of most immersive productions into two broad categories: sandbox or gear-like.

In sandbox immersive productions, an environment is set up in which the story happens in many places at once. The audience is typically set loose in the environment and experiences the story in whatever order they choose. This type of show offers the most autonomy for the audience and is best for telling more conceptual stories or stories that the audience is already familiar with in some way. The Punchdrunk production *Sleep No More* is the most popular example of sandbox immersive theatre. The company took a warehouse and set up various set pieces, rooms, and environments throughout the building for actors to perform devised performance pieces based off Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Audience members are free to wander the space and see whatever they like. No two people will experience the show in the same way. As

they chose their own paths throughout the night, every audience member will have some sense of story based on what they see. The challenge with creating sandbox immersive theatre is being able to tell a story in a nonlinear fashion and having very little control over what your audience is seeing and when.

Gear-like immersive productions grant the storytellers a greater amount of control over the audience experience. In these production, there are usually multiple tracks for audience members to go through. Sometimes the tracks intersect, or sometimes audience members will begin on different paths and never see each other until after the show has concluded. These productions rely on these tracks working together and in time with each other, like the gears of a clock, in order to keep the whole production moving. The challenges that come with these types of productions are timing the tracks so everything moves smoothly and writing the script so that no matter what track an audience member experiences, they are getting a full story with a satisfying narrative arc.

Once I had a better understanding of the different ways in which these types of shows can look and operate, I began thinking about what I wanted to write my own show about and how different stories fit the different styles. Early on, Dr. Walsh asked me to come up with a list of five ideas that I felt worth exploring. My original list included: businesses that are open twenty-four hours a day, cyborgs and the augmentation of the human body, frames and how they influence the viewing of art, relationships between queer children and their parents, and children and ghosts.

The next steps I took were reading books and essays that related to the topics I was interested in and assembling a team of collaborators to help me select an idea. I read *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* by Marvin A. Carlson, *Engaging*

Performance: Theatre as Call and Response by Jan Cohen-Cruz, and *A Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna J. Haraway. Each of these readings guided my thinking about which topic I wanted to further explore in my production.

The final step I took in the writing and idea phase was assembling a team with which I could discuss ideas. I formed a team of ten people, and we met in the spring of 2019 to discuss my broad ideas and flush some of them out by using games and exercises from Augusto Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. This book was immensely helpful in stimulating ideas and allowing us to think creatively with our bodies. At the top of our meeting, I explained each of my five ideas and some knowledge from the readings I had completed. Then, we began the exercises. Each exercise was aimed at creating either characters, scenarios, or both. Before starting an exercise, we would collectively decide which of the five topics to explore. After finishing, we would debrief about things we liked, ideas that were sparked, and general thoughts about the possible direction of the project.

By the end of the meeting, I had a much clearer idea of how I wanted to proceed. As a group, we had consolidated my list of five down to three. Frames are something that could be explored as a framing device within whatever story I tell. Relationships between queer children and their families were very interesting to us as a group, but it was something that could also be explored as part of any character in my story, rather than at the center. This left me with the topics of places open 24 hours a day, ghosts, and cyborgs. Of these three topics, the one that made myself and my collaborators the most excited was cyborgs. The idea of cyborgs provided a much to explore and many different ways to approach the subject matter and thus became the subject of my play.

Once I decided to write about cyborgs, I dove into more specific research about the topic. I was not interested so much in cyborgs as a superhero as can be seen in some media, but in cyborgs as a social commentary. I wanted to explore why someone would make themselves part machine and what it meant for someone to be more metal than human. At what point in voluntarily replacing yourself do you lose your humanity?

I noticed there have been a lot of advancements in the world of prosthetics that are making people look more like the cyborgs of science fiction. Angel Giuffria from Slidell, Louisiana was born with left arm ending at her elbow. Throughout her life, she received new prosthetics to replace her hand and lower arm. She has been able to get new ones as she has grown out of older models throughout her life. Her latest prosthetic is electrically charged, allows for a wide range of motion in her hand, and it even glows in a rainbow of colors.

There are also a growing number of people turning to 3D printing in order to get the medical devices they cannot necessarily afford. This method is cost effective, allows for customization of design, and the results are fairly durable. These factors make 3D printing a viable option for many child amputees. Children are able to make their parts their own, and as they grow, they are able to continue printing bigger and new designs throughout their lives.

The fact that some people are able to afford top of the line parts while many are struggling to afford devices that make living much easier and equal for them was something I found particularly striking. It reminded me of what I had heard and read about insulin prices. Pharmaceutical companies charge extremely high prices, despite the relatively low cost it requires to create and package the drugs and the dependence many have on it to live. Upon further investigation, I learned of people rationing their insulin doses despite the risk it puts on

their lives. I also learned there is a pseudo black market where people sell their unused insulin to those who cannot afford it from drug companies.

Out of this research, three ideas began to mingle and ultimately formed the basis for *Upgrade*: people with certain disabilities need some types of prosthetic parts to function in our society, drug companies charging people prices they cannot afford for a drug they need to live, and people selling their own medication in order to help others and provide for themselves.

The Writing Process

Writing Team: Kain Gill, Kayla Bosco, Lance Wise, Makayla Helmick, Mary DeVillier, Mikaela Herrera, and Zoey Young

The writing process for *Upgrade* was modeled after the process used by Caryl Churchill and the Joint Stock Theatre Company used to create *Cloud 9*. In that process, Churchill met with a team of collaborators, worked through devising exercises and discussion, and then wrote a draft of the play. After writing a draft, the team met again to discuss it and work on it some more, and this was repeated until a final script was reached.

This process was an appealing one to model because it allowed me to write the play I wanted while also getting substantial feedback and help from a group of collaborators I trusted to bring exciting ideas to the table. In the fall of 2019, I put together my writing team. This team consisted of nearly everyone involved in the initial idea meeting in the spring plus a few other trusted artists. By the end of the process, there were three major revisions to the script. The first was completed in May 2019, the second in November, and the third in December. The third version is what became the working script for rehearsals and performances. This version saw some slight changes in the rehearsal process, but this was due to a casting choice that will be discussed later.

The first draft was created based on the discussions from our initial meeting and from a short play I wrote in my playwrighting class earlier in the semester. That play was also titled *Upgrade*. At the time of writing it, I had already been thinking about many of the ideas previously listed, and I was assigned to create a play with only four characters. I wrote a play about three friends living together, one without the use of her legs and her friend that ventured out into the city to buy illegal prosthetics for her. These prosthetics had a robot-like quality and

were called upgrades. It ended with a police officer coming to their door and arresting him for smuggling.

The first completed draft included much of this original short play. The three roommates became brother and sister Milo and Cora and their friend Asher. My police character became a senator who owned a company selling upgrades, Carvel. This original draft was very bare bones and functioned much like a script meant to be staged in a regular theatre rather than somewhere non-traditional. Each scene of this draft alternated between focusing on the trio and the senator, and there was almost no interaction between the two parties until the final scene.

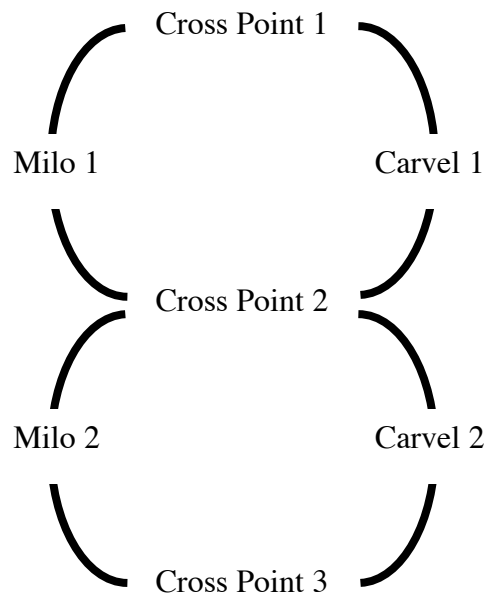
My team met early on in the fall to discuss this draft. At our first meeting, I presented the ideas that went into writing the draft as well as some new ones that had come to me since completing it. We did a table read and then discussed the script at length. We went through the ideas that were interesting, the parts that felt underdeveloped, and things that needed to be further explained.

We met three more times between this initial read through and when I wrote the second full draft. This is where my process began differing from that of my model. In our second meeting, we tried using devising exercises from *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, however, we found open discussion and brainstorming to be much more productive in discovering the story. After our first attempt at exercises, our meetings moved almost exclusively to discussions and mapping out ideas on white boards. In these meetings we made many important discoveries, the most important of which was the format for the show.

I knew it was important to decide early on if this show would take a gear-like or sandbox approach. This decision proved to be vital to the approach to writing and the approach we took to discussing how to tell the story. I was more inclined to a gear-like structure due to its ability to

tell more linear stories and give us as the story tellers more control over the environment and the audience. In creating this very experimental show, I wanted us to have as much control as possible to minimize the possible risk of it falling apart when we added audience.

The format we settled on broke the story into two storylines: Milo and Carvel. These storylines would be independent of each other and each have their own arc so that an audience member could go through either and see a complete story, just from the opposite perspective. These storylines would cross at times in scenes we called Cross Points. The roadmap for the performance that we laid out included three Cross Points and four independent scenes. In the Cross Points, all audience members would be together and then they would be broken up to see either the Milo or Carvel scenes. The roadmap looked as follows:



Once a structure was created, we were able to talk about the script and production in more concrete terms. Having a framework to play in also allowed us to take a step back from the story itself. We spent many hours discussing a timeline of events within the world of the play,

including how to logically get from the technology and medical knowledge of 2019 into a future where people are able to become cyborgs for personal and medical reasons. Creating this timeline led to many tangent ideas being created such as what does gender, religion, and gun control look like in this type of future? Many ideas never made it into the final production, but some became inspiration or were hinted at throughout such as Carvel marketing bulletproof upgrades to children being a reaction to school shootings.

In our second meeting, we spent a lot of time flushing out each of the characters. We created personal timelines, detailed backstories, and goals and desires for each of them. There was also a lot of time spent discussing their relationships with each other and how those relationships can be manifested throughout the play in their dialogue and actions toward one another.

One of the biggest challenges in this stage was writing the character of Carvel. When we originally discussed him, we thought of him as someone as a cross between Donald Trump and Steve Jobs. The more we discussed him and the more I wrote, we found him be a difficult character to make likable and appealing to audience members. When we created our roadmap, my idea was that at each Cross Point, audience members would be able to choose if they wanted to pursue the Milo or Carvel storyline. This only worked, however, if audience members actually found Carvel to be a likeable, relatable, or interesting enough character to be worth following. I did not want any audience member to walk away feeling as though they did not see a completed story or that they were cheated out of seeing a better story on the other side.

This led to a very long discussion of Carvel as a character. We threw around a lot of different ideas of what could push someone to become a businessman and a politician. Once we had a grasp on that, the next problem was conveying it to the audience. Our solution was a scene

taking place at a talk show Carvel was appearing on as part of his campaign. I think this worked fairly well and was able to give me the space to convey to the audience his story and garner sympathy for him.

What I discovered in writing these dual storylines was really emphasized by Carvel: no one is right. This writing process allowed me to really explore the adage that there are two sides to every story and in doing so, I was able to play with creating characters and storylines in which no one is perfect and no one has all the answers. There are times when Milo and his friends are foolish and naïve, and there are times when Carvel is callous and disconnected from the people he represents. The most interesting part in writing this was that Carvel and Milo are both the antagonists in the other's story. Understanding this made writing both storylines more challenging, but also more fun as I explored different ways they ideologically butt up against each other.

One of the other exciting challenges about this format was crafting the storylines in such a way that the Cross Points worked. Once we felt we understood the world and its characters, we met to discuss the broader points of the story. When we mapped it out, we decided Cross Point 1 would be a Carvel campaign event where Milo and Asher were protesting, Cross Point 2 would be a scene in the black market that gets raided and results in Asher's death, and Cross Point 3 would be another vague event Carvel and Milo could both attend.

Thinking about these three big events where everyone was together, we then went back and discussed the facts and points the audience needs to know that lead them to the Cross Point. For example, we knew that to get from Cross Point 1 to 2, both storylines would have to discuss and explain the black market, and then make the decision to go to the market themselves. That way, when the audience went to Cross Point 2 in the black market, it made sense for them to be

there. This specific point was handled by having Milo, Cora, and Asher decide to go get Milo's leg surgery and Carvel deciding to call a raid on the market and attend it himself. There were many other points and concepts that we discussed so that everyone would be able to experience a complete story.

While we worked to make sure both storylines connected in a logical way, there were some things that I left out intentionally. For example, Cora is not in Cross Point 1. She does not make an appearance until Milo 1, so Carvel and the characters in his storyline do not know who she is until they encounter her in Cross Point 2. Because of this, audience members who went from Cross Point 1 to Carvel 1 also did not know who she was so they experienced the world in the same way Carvel did.

After these three meetings, I took all these ideas and synthesized them into the second draft. This draft accounted for the split storyline and is written with the intention of being performed in an immersive space. It was also around this time that I found a performance space. Though this was not part of the writing process, it is important to explain the space we performed in as the space influenced the second and third draft of the script.

I was fortunate enough to receive permission from the Honors College to perform in the French House. The French House is a recently renovated building with a large grand salon, study spaces, and classrooms throughout, and it proved to be the perfect venue for our performance. When looking at spaces, I was keeping in mind that there needed to be at least three distinct places for performing: one for the Cross Points, one for Milo, and one for Carvel. The layout of the first floor of the French House could not have been better. The first floor is dominated by a large grand salon at the center of the building. It is incredibly ornate with a large chandelier, gold trims, and large portraits on either end of the hall. On one side of the building off the salon is a

large study room with couches, tables, chairs, and other furniture that could be easily moved. On the opposite end of the French House is a medium sized lecture space with a seating bank and a small space in front of the seats that could function as a performance space. The French House also included a small paved patio just outside the salon. The study room, the classroom, and the salon all had doors that lead out to this area, creating another possible performance space.

This space influenced the writing in many ways. The grandeur of the salon inspired Cross Points 1 and 3 to be campaign events for Carvel, the first being a donors' dinner and the second an election night party. The patio became the fourth performance space and the location of our black market scene of Cross Point 2. The study room became Milo's apartment for both Milo 1 and 2. The classroom became a television studio for Carvel 1 and then Carvel's office for Carvel 2. The seating bank lent itself well to becoming a studio and the intimate space made it perfect for his office.

This space allowed for the audience to begin in the middle of the French House and then break apart to either side only to come back together in the middle after each scene. This made plotting audience tracking patterns much easier on my production team and served well as a physical metaphor of the two sides of the story coming together and seeing each other's perspective.

Upon completing the second draft, I met with my writing team again. We did a table read and then once again discussed strengths and weaknesses, things that could be improved, and ideas for an ending. Ending the show proved to be a difficult challenge. I wanted the ending to be hopeful, but the situation we had crafted felt bleak. One idea that struck me was Milo running for office himself. This idea led to including an epilogue at the end of Cross Point 3. In the epilogue, Milo is offered the idea to run against Carvel and take his seat in office to create systematic

change. This ending felt more hopeful to myself and my writing team, and it ended the story in a good place for all our characters.

Something about the final script that I really enjoy is that Milo 1 is almost the exact script of the original short play I wrote at the very beginning of the process. Names had changed, as had the circumstances, but large portions of that original dialogue found itself still there after all revisions and edits had been made. This script is also something I am proud of because it successfully tells two stories at the same time without either feeling cheaper or less developed. It also explores many various and disconnected ideas in a way that I think flows well.

The Design Process

Design Team

Costumes: Kain Gill

Props: Crystal Hayner

Scenic: Makayla Helmick

Sound/Lights: Zoey Young

Stage Management: Kayla Bosco and Mary DeVillier

Almost everyone on the writing team became a part of the production team. We began design meetings in early January once we all returned from winter break. For our first meeting, I created a collage to share with the team illustrating some of my thoughts. What was most important to me was contrasting the worlds of Carvel and Milo. It was important to me that the Milo scenes and designs be grittier, dirtier, and rougher while also having some more color to them whereas the Carvel scenes feel sleeker and more streamlined with simplicity being the dominating factor, even in color.

As a team, we came to the decision that Milo and his story would be represented by a deep blue whereas Carvel would be gold. This partially came from the design of the French House itself. The salon where Cross Points 1 and 3 were held is painted a golden beige with gold trim and the gold chandelier. We felt the gold encompassed his decadence, wealth, and elegance. Milo on the other hand is more grounded and in sharp contrast to the wealth and power Carvel enjoys, so we decided to go with blue as gold's complement.

The biggest influence to our designs was our budget. Going into this project, I knew that I did not have the money to fund this on my own. The plan was to apply for grants and other sources of funding and work with whatever we had. Just before going on break, I learned about

the LSU Discover Undergraduate Research Grant and that I was eligible to apply. I applied for \$1400 at the end of the fall semester with the hope that even if I only received partial funding, my team and I would be able to make it work. I also planned to apply for a grant through the Honors College, however the applications did not open until the spring semester began.

At our first design meetings, we did not know if we would have any funding at all. We discussed different ways we could cheaply design the show. At this point, it was more important to me that we were able to create the production and make it happen at all. I trusted the creativity of my designers and knew that even if we had little to no money, we could work to make something that was representational of the ideas we had.

In the middle of January, I found out I received full funding from LSU Discover and we now had a budget of \$1400 to create our designs. This greatly impacted how we thought about the show and the possibilities, especially in our props and costumes. We went from discussing making upgrades for actors with tin foil to possibly using something sturdier and firmer like thermoplastics. Once we had funding, the three biggest design challenges we encountered were the weapons in Cross Point 2, the upgrades themselves, and lighting design

The guns presented an interesting challenge for props, sound, and staging. It was extremely important that the weapons used look as un-gun like as possible. Due to the nature of immersive work, the audience could be watching the scene from any angle. Having a realistic looking prop firearm so close to audience members and with them in the possible line of fire was unacceptable for me and my team. Crystal's solution was a bubble gun painted silver. The bubble guns worked really well because they did not look like realistic firearms, lit up when the trigger was pulled, and looked enough like a toy to not cause concern but enough like a weapon to be believable within the story.

The other part of the weapons that was challenging was the sound they would make when fired. Due to the audience proximity, I did not want the sound to be that of a real firearm. I also did not want such a noise because the scene would be taking place outside on a college campus where anyone walking by would be able to hear what was happening. I did not want to be the cause of any sort of gun-related panic on campus. The solution was a blast sound similar to something from *Star Wars* or other campy science fiction media. This blasting sound caused us to refer to the weapons as “blasters” throughout the process which also helped distance them from guns.

The look of the upgrades and how they worked was another challenge throughout the processes. This was a challenge for both props and costuming. Milo begins the play in a wheelchair but receives leg upgrades in Milo 1, and he gets them surgically implanted between Milo 1 and Cross Point 2. This meant that we needed a pair of legs that could be held and used as a prop in Milo 1 and then become a part of his costume for the rest of the play. Kain and Crystal created a cast of our actor’s legs and then made a piece that could be Velcroed onto his legs for Cross Point 2. When we tested the pieces in rehearsal, they did not hold to his legs and the pieces themselves came apart. The solution Kain came to was painting a pair of leggings that Milo could wear under jeans for Cross Point 1 and Milo 1. When he changed into shorts for Cross Point 2, it looked like his legs were now metal because of the skin tight painted fabric.

We also needed a lot of prop upgrades for Cross Point 2. The scenic design included many tables of vendors’ upgrades throughout the patio. The multitude of tables allowed for a great deal of creativity in creating upgrades. Once we discussed the sleeker, newer parts in comparison with junkier, older parts, Crystal created a wide range of parts. The older parts were painted casts with silver painting and intricate LEGO designs. The newer parts had less LEGO

pieces and were covered in silver reflective contact paper rather than paint. In the end, we had a table of face pieces, a table with arms and hands, and a table with legs,

The other big challenge we faced as a design team was lighting. At first, there was no lighting designer. Due to the French House not being at all intended for theatrical use, there is no lighting grid or much control in the lighting of the building. In the classroom and the study room, the most control we had over the lights were on and off. At first, I was not concerned with lighting design. It is something that I am not well versed in and I figured if the lights were on that would be enough for the show. Zoey, however, stepped up and decided she wanted to design the lights.

Her idea for lights was that LEDs in the future will become so common, they will be everywhere. She wanted to run LED strip lights along the floor for audience members to follow as a path to the various performing locations, however the strip lights we bought were unable to do this in the way we wanted. Due to the lighting budget being spent and time restraints as we came up to the date of the show, we reworked them to function as a sort of mood light for both sides, Milo always in blue and Carvel's in gold.

Zoey also had the idea that the Hub would be lit in lantern lights and LED paper lanterns. We hung paper lanterns on the outside walls of the French House, the tree nearby, and on all the tents and tables of the Hub as well as the manlift. They blinked in primary colors and gave the Hub a futuristic and thrown together feel that I do not think would have been quite as successful without the lights. We also took four small paper lanterns and lit them blue for Cross Point 3. They were hung on the lighting fixtures of the salon. We also took blue flower petals and scattered them on the tables in the salon. The audience walked into Cross Point 3 set up exactly

as Cross Point 1, but now with encroaching blue as Milo and Carvel's stories blended more together and Milo took more control.

Auditions and Rehearsals

Cast

Milo: Ren Price

Cora: Marielle Lambert-Scott

Asher: Deja Gordon

Carvel: Vincent Bianca

Silas: Quinton McMickens

River: Marq Parks

Dakota: Robin Talbot

For auditions, I chose to not have actors present monologues. Personally, I felt that monologues were formal and required a lot of preparation on the part of the actors, and due to our time constraints, auditions happened very soon into the semester. I knew that once actors became involved, the creation process would get a new life, and their voices and energies were just as important to me as the creative voice and energy of my writing team. I wanted my actors to feel that they could work with me and put their own ideas into the story. This meant that I wanted to see a little bit of their creativity. I also did not want to stress them out too much, as this show was no part of the regular season and was an ambitious enough project on its own. Their willingness to work, flexibility, and creativity was far more important to me than their technical ability to act. In order to see this, and in keeping with the theme of the show that stories have more than one side, I asked everyone to come prepared to tell a story from two sides.

I was fortunate enough to have some incredibly talented and creative actors come to audition. Most of them told a story from their own life, usually from their own perspective and then from their parents', and auditions felt more like stand-up comedy routines. I was able to see

each of their timing, ability to step into another person's shoes, and see how they were able to explain the complexities of their stories from multiple viewpoints. It proved to be a very useful exercise, and it gave me a lot of confidence in them going into rehearsals. After they told their stories, I had some scenes for them to perform together.

Casting did result in a change in the script. Originally, the part of Asher was meant to be a male role. I decided to have Deja read for Asher because there were not many men at auditions, and I wanted to see what she would do with the part. She blew me away. I found her to be such a fun Asher in auditions that I decided to cast her in the role. I asked if she wanted to change the name of her character, but she was happy with Asher, so all of Asher's pronouns were changed and Asher and Cora became a queer couple.

One other way that casting influenced the script was in the number of people in the cast. The script calls for eleven actors. Seven are the main characters of the story and four Guides, two for Milo and two for Carvel. The Guides were written into the script to serve as a liaison between the world of the play and the audience. Guides would be the people who announced to the room where audience members would be going next and walk them to their next destination. Additionally, they would serve as an ensemble of sorts within the scenes, filling in various roles. For example, the two Milo Guides serve as protestors with Asher and Milo in Cross Point 1 and vendors in the Hub in Cross Point 2 while Carvel Guides serve as police officers for both of these scenes.

Because we only had a cast of seven, the Guides had to be rethought a little bit. The only Guide roles that were necessary for the action were the police officers. Our assistant stage manager, Mary, stepped in as an officer for all three Cross Points and as the "Producer Guide" in Carvel 1. For the second police officer in Cross Points 2 and 3, we used Robin. After Carvel 1,

the character of Dakota never appears again. Because of this, Robin was able to do a costume change and become a police officer for these two scenes, which required a little bit of fight choreography. For the second police officer in Cross Point 1, we used a member of our crew, but because it required no combat and just simple blocking, he was not added until we got to tech.

Overall, the rehearsal process was very smooth. The biggest challenge in the rehearsal process was how short it was. I reserved the French House for February 15 and 16 for performances. Auditions were held the first week of the spring semester on Thursday, January 16, with our first rehearsal being Tuesday, January 21. This only gave us three weeks of rehearsal and then a few days of tech rehearsals. Because of this abbreviated timeline, we had to move very quickly. Within a week and half, we blocked every scene, and that brought us up to the end of January. The last week and a half of rehearsal was spent cleaning up scenes and delving into characters.

Blocking the scenes was an interesting challenge. The Milo and Carvel scenes were blocked in a very traditional way. Their playing spaces were allowed for audiences to only watch the scene from certain areas so we did not have to worry about sightlines from all sides. Entrances and exits came through the audience, but other than that, the scenes were standard. The real challenge came in blocking the Cross Points. It was difficult to block these because the audience would be everywhere at once. I wanted each audience member to be able to see something no matter where they were sitting in the space.

The biggest triumph came toward the end of the rehearsal process. Kayla had the wonderful idea to run the show with both tracks running concurrently two days before moving into the French House for tech. If there were any major timing issues, we would have another rehearsal to address them since we had very little time to tech the show. We used two conference

rooms as our Milo and Carvel scene locations and an acting studio as our salon, and we ran the show to see what would happen. Fortunately, the scenes ended within a minute of each other and the show worked. It was the first time we saw our roadmap through in its intended form, and seeing that it worked well was incredibly rewarding.

Tech Rehearsals and Performances

The final phase of this project was our tech rehearsals and then performances. While our rehearsal schedule was compressed, our tech schedule was even more so. Due to events the Honors College was hosting in the French House, we could only have the space for three days of tech, the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday leading up to our weekend performances. The other stipulation with our tech schedule was that we had to set up and break down every night before and after rehearsal.

There was also nowhere for us to store props or set pieces so Kayla, Crystal, and I used our cars as storage units for the week, transporting everything needed for the show in and out of the French House every night. Not only did we only have the space for three nights, we only had the space for four hours each night. By 9:00 pm each night, the French House needed to be restored for class and other events the next day. We overcame this with careful planning on how we would spend each night of tech and what was most important for us to get done in the space itself.

In addition to the time constraints, the weather was a constant concern. The week of tech and performances was a very wet and rainy one, which is the risk we took in staging a scene outside. I briefly considered finding tarps that we could set up over places where audience members could stand, however, there were not many places to hang such tarps from and little money left in the budget for the purchase. I also considered moving Cross Point 2 into the Salon of the French House, however, after setting up for our first night of tech, I saw this would be impossible. The set up for scene took multiple people nearly a half hour to set up properly. During the run of the show, there would only be Kayla and two crew members available to change the Salon from Cross Point 1 to 2 and then back again after. There were simply not

enough people and not enough time to make this happen. Fortunately, the rain held off when we were in tech and held off for our performance times, so no audience members or performers were rained on.

On top of all of this, there was a massive manlift in our way. It was in the middle of the patio where we planned to perform Cross Point 2. When I reached out to the Honors College, they were unsure if they would be able to do anything about its location. This meant we had to restage Cross Point 2 and adjust it to account for the now limited space. This continued to be a problem, however, when every time we showed up to the French House for tech, the manlift was in a different spot. Cross Point 2 was restaged three different times before we had our first audience on Saturday afternoon. Constant restaging was very inconvenient, but I think it added to the authenticity of our Hub scene. It became a part of our set and we attached lights to it, incorporated it into the fight choreography, and became generally fond of it over the course of our week in the French House.

The most important thing in our three nights of tech was figuring out how to most efficiently set up and break down the show. After our second night of tech, everyone knew where every piece of furniture lived and where it needed to be moved for the show. The production team and actors worked well together to set up the building as quickly as possible to allow us as much time to actually work tech elements as possible. The first night was very chaotic as we stumbled through the show and through the French House, concluding with a mad dash to throw everything into boxes and boxes into cars when we ran out of time at 9:00. We managed to have a smoother run on Wednesday, running the show as intended with really great scene timing and fairly smooth time for tech. Friday we had a very small test audience to run through the show, and we were ready to open.

When it came to audiences, the production team had to discuss the tracks people would take. We decided there would be four tracks someone could go on: one in which they go to Milo both times; one in which they go to Carvel both times; one in which they go to Milo, then Carvel after Cross Point 2; and finally one in which they go to Carvel, then Milo after Cross Point 2. In the writing process, we had discussed allowing audience members pick which side they go to after each cross point, but I wanted some way to control where people were so that one scene was not overpacked while the other performed for no one.

The solution was sticky notes that color coded the tracks. When audience members walked in the door, I asked them to select a sticky note. In order to keep track of how many people were taking, I only set out ten of each color. This allowed for a crowd of forty, which we got close to, but never exceeded. Allowing audience members to pick their color allowed them to have some small autonomy in how they experienced the story, which I think is one of the most exciting aspects of this type of work. Once it was time to begin the show, I explained what the colors meant in a preshow announcement.

For the performances, I ended up acting as an assistant stage manager and guide for the audience. At the end of each scene, Mary and I would each announce two colors that were to follow us to the next scene. This worked well because colors are easy to remember, audience members were able to stick them to themselves like nametags, and Mary and I stayed with our respective scenes. I would trigger any cues that the Milo scenes needed for sound and Mary would do any lights and sound needed for Carvel. While we were in our respective scenes, Kayla would be setting up the next Cross Point, and she would call those herself.

Our audiences responded very positively to the production. We had two performances on Saturday and two on Sunday, and each time we had between thirty-five and forty-five people in

attendance. We had multiple people come back and see the show twice so they could experience the other story that they had not seen the first time around. It was very exciting to see people come back and want to watch the show again to see more of what we had to offer.

Results and Assessment

My goal at the onset of this project was to create an immersive theatre performance in Baton Rouge, and that is what I did. I am overwhelmingly proud of *Upgrade* and everyone that helped me bring it to life. This process has taught me so much about myself as a person, a collaborator, and an artist. I am proud of this show because my friends and I came together and built it together from the ground up. We said something that we felt was important to us, solved problems together, learned together, held each other accountable, made something that none of us have ever seen or experienced before, and we had a really great time doing it.

The only thing I wish could have been different is having a little more time in rehearsal. I am really happy with the work my actors did, but I think more rehearsal time would have been good for us and only would have made the show better. It certainly would have eliminated the need to rush in the rehearsals we had. This process taught me a lot about building schedules for projects, and I think the most important lesson I learned from our compressed schedule was how to work backward from opening night to the present day. I also learned how to stick to the schedule we made, even when I wanted to spend more time on something.

If I were to do this again, I would be curious to explore the possibility of adding a third storyline. One relationship that we spent some time discovering and playing with in rehearsal was that of Silas and Cora. As the show is now, their relationship is entirely off stage, and this is largely because it does not fit with either Milo or Carvel story line. Silas/Cora is its own story to be told, and I think it would be a fun challenge to create another line to follow.

After completing this project, I want to take the lessons I learned here and continue exploring other stories that can be told in this way. I now have a better understanding of how to write a compelling script and how to collaborate with a group in writing and synthesize their

ideas. I also know how to apply for different types of funding, create schedules and budgets, and I now know what it is like to direct a full production. I think there are other ways immersive theatre can be used and many stories left to be told, and I hope to have more opportunities to tell them.

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Upgrade

Anthony Doyle

in collaboration with:

Zoey Young

Kayla Basco

Kain Gill

Lance Wise

Mary DeVillier

Makayla Helmick

Mikaela Herrera

Setting: America, the year 2059

Characters:

MILO: young man who loss use of his legs following an accident; activist who believes in the
power of peaceful protest

CORA: his older sister; more hotheaded and a believer in strong action to create change

ASHER: Cora's girlfriend and Milo's friend; an Upgrade smuggler

CARVEL: an older politician who produces Upgrades and running for governor

SILAS: Carvel's personal assistant; mostly Upgrade

RIVER: Carvel's campaign manager.

DAKOTA: A daytime television talk show host and interviewer

Notes:

1. This play is written with multiple Tracks that audience members will go on to experience the story. All audience members will be together for each of the three Cross Points and split up into two groups for the Milo and Carvel scenes. No matter which Track and audience member goes on, they will receive a complete story. When audience members come into the space, they will stickie note. Each color signals a track they will stick with throughout the show. The paths of the four Tracks are as follows:
 - a. Blue: Cross Point 1, Milo 1, Cross Point 2, Milo 2, Cross Point 3
 - b. Yellow: Cross Point 1, Carvel 1, Cross Point 2, Carvel 2, Cross Point 3
 - c. Green: Cross Point 1, Milo 1, Cross Point 2, Carvel 2, Cross Point 3
 - d. Orange: Cross Point 1, Carvel 1, Cross Point 2, Milo 2, Cross Point 3
2. There are four GUIDES. The role of the guides to usher the audience between the different plot locations as well as serve in the liminal space between actor and audience member. Two Guides are dedicated to Milo and two being dedicated to Carvel. During the scenes, Guides step into the action occasionally as Police Officers, Vendors, Protestors, etc. They may have the occasional line, but they are chiefly there to guide the audience through the four Tracks.

CROSS POINT 1

A campaign event in a formal space for CARVEL. There is a short stage at the front of the room with a podium center stage. CARVEL enters followed closely by SILAS, his personal assistant, and RIVER, his campaign manager. CARVEL crosses to the podium and addresses the crowd.

CARVEL: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! I am Governor Brock Carvel and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to this campaign. Every dollar you have given my team and I goes toward keeping this state going in a positive direction. A direction that will make life easier for you, the hard working people of this nation. In my last term as your Governor, I have been able to pass legislation that has pushed for better education, better healthcare, and better overall living conditions for all residents. We have also been able to crack down hard on crime. Upgrade smuggling is at an all-time low thanks to the hard work of the Illegal Upgrade Force. They have been able to get dangerous doctors off the streets as well as counterfeits. You deserve only the best and I will not have second rate parts running amuck in our streets. I will not have people who do not deserve Upgrades stealing them from you, the people who have done things the right way. I have also been able to push for legislation that has led to a stronger business infrastructure that has attracted countless companies and corporations to our state. For example, Carvel Industries has been able to open a southern campus here and bring in thousands of jobs for developers, factory workers, designers, programmers, and countless others and has stimulated our economy in ways previously unseen in the American South. I am so proud that my company is able to do such important work in my home state. We are able to create the latest and most advanced Upgrades in the world at

the most affordable prices. Our Upgrades are on the cutting edge of medical technology and every day we are creating new ways to fix and advance our bodies using the medical miracle that is the Upgrade. Carvel Upgrades are the best on the market and if re-elected as your governor, I will make sure that companies like my own and other corporations will be able to continue coming here and working here, bringing you more jobs and more money.

MILO, ASHER, and two GUIDES dressed as protestors enter from the back of the room.

MILO: *(Shouting from the back of the crowd)* What about the people who can't work your jobs, Governor? What about the people who you refuse to hire because they can't afford your Upgrades?

CARVEL: Excuse me, who are you? This is a private event.

ASHER: Ladies and gentlemen, you are supporting a sham!

CARVEL: *(To SILAS)* How did they get in?

SILAS: I don't know, sir, I am contacting security now.

MILO: Your policies and legislations have not helped. What about your Right to Hire Bill?

CARVEL: Son, I will not discuss the intricacies of every bill I pushed for here, this is a civilized event for my donors and I will not have you turning it into a circus.

MILO: Did you know that bill made it legal for business not hire people because they have a disability?

CARVEL: People have the right to hire whoever they would like, that is the purpose of that bill.

ASHER: And its discriminatory.

CARVEL: Young lady, disabilities are almost non-existent. My company and other Upgrades have seen to that. What hand do you have there, a Gen 4? That was a good year for

hands. How can you protest something that you are buying into? My Upgrades and my time as Governor has made positive impacts on so many people, yourself included it seems.

MILO: If you really cared about making a positive impact on people, you wouldn't charge people so much for devices they need to survive.

CAVEL: Are you saying you're dead? It doesn't look it to me.

MILO: That's not the—

CARVEL: Young man, you seem very capable of going out and getting a job yourself. You do not need legs to survive, you seem to be doing just fine. If you want to buy my leg Upgrades, then work for them. Earn them. Do not stand there and tell me that I don't care about people. About my constituents. I do everything for them and for the customers of Carvel Industries. Just look around you, these people are proof enough that there are people that believe in the work I do.

MILO: The work you do hurts people, real people. People like me.

Two GUIDES dressed as officers come in from behind MILO and grab his wheelchair, spinning him around.

MILO: Let me go!

CARVEL: Turn him to me.

RIVER: Brock, careful—

CARVEL: Someone always gets hurt. I can't fix every problem for every person. Do you understand that? If you want to change things, then you have to work for it like I did. Do you think I got here overnight? Do you think I woke up one morning and suddenly owned my own company? That's not how the world works. You cannot burn down things you

don't understand and you cannot come into events that you are not invited to. Do you understand me?

ASHER: People don't even have the chance to work for it.

CARVEL: Of course they do. That's absurd of you to say otherwise. You can work just like every person in this room did. Start small and pay your dues and one day you will be able to donate money to back a candidate you believe in. And if elected as your governor, ladies and gentlemen, I will make sure that I work to ensure everyone has equal opportunity to rise to success just as all of you have. Security, kindly show our friends the door.

Blue and Green go to MILO 1, page 7.

Yellow and Orange go to CARVEL 1, page 16.

MILO 1

The living room of the apartment of MILO and CORA. The apartment is a little run down and has seen better days. It is not dirty, but an old building, somewhere cheap that young people can afford. ASHER sits on the couch flipping through channels on their television. MILO sits in his wheelchair next to the couch, a laptop in his lap.

MILO: Could you please just pick something?

ASHER: I said you could pick the channel.

MILO: I don't care what you put on.

ASHER: Then why are you mad?

MILO: I'm not mad, I just can't stand this flipping through. You let them speak for two minutes and then...flip! (*ASHER continues to press the remote*) It's driving me nuts only hearing snippets of conversations or a commercial or the damn news!

ASHER: Okay, okay! Fine! (*She puts the remote down*) You win! We'll watch.... (*seeing what channel she landed on*) oh, the shopping network. Maybe we can see if there are any Upgrades we can afford. That'll calm our nerves.

MILO: (*He doesn't look up*) If I could afford an Upgrade, I wouldn't be here.

ASHER: You also need a stupid expensive Upgrade. Why couldn't you have busted up a hand or something? Then we could match. (*She holds up her right hand*)

MILO: Wouldn't that be cute? Best friends with the same hand.

ASHER: I know you're worried about her, but don't worry. (*Beat*) They only advertise stupid shit on here anyway. I mean, look at that. Who needs a new nose anyway? What good would that do anyone?

MILO: Maybe a chef, I don't know. People get them all the time just for shits and giggles.

ASHER: Well, I don't need an Upgraded nose to know when something is burning and I've been doing alright for myself.

MILO: You've also eaten fast food every night since I've known you.

ASHER: Hey, that's not fair, I work hard and I get home late every night.

MILO: And?

ASHER: And I'm tired and don't have time to cook.

MILO: Cora sure as hell isn't going to do any of the cooking for you.

ASHER: And she'll make so much money that we can just buy whatever we want every night.

MILO: I dunno...maybe a new nose would look good on you.

ASHER: I like my organic nose just the way it is thank you very much.

MILO: Usually, I think Upgrades don't look nearly as nice as the organic parts, but I think you might be the exception.

ASHER: Okay, but have you seen some of the newest stuff? It's so sleek and kinda sexy to be honest.

MILO: I don't think I've ever found a piece of machinery to be sexy.

ASHER: Then you're looking at the wrong machines.

MILO: Is that why you're dating my sister? For her Upgraded eye?

ASHER: Oh yes, it was definitely her eye that caught my attention.

MILO: Where is she?

ASHER: Milo, you need to chill out. She's done this plenty of times. She's going to be fine.

MILO: And what if this time she isn't? The IUF has been getting stricter and stricter.

ASHER: The IUF is a joke. Carvel only set it up to scare people out of getting Upgrades at an affordable price. Plus, it takes a long time to get in and out of the Hub and back here, especially with the changing location.

MILO: I know, I know, I just don't like not knowing if she's safe.

ASHER: She hasn't been caught yet and I don't think she plans on going to jail anytime soon.

MILO: What if she doesn't have enough money?

ASHER: I'm sure she brought enough. She's been saving every cent she gets.

MILO: I just wish I could be out there with her.

ASHER: You'd attract too much attention.

MILO: I don't think I stand out that much

ASHER: A wheelchair downtown? You'd be practically screaming for people to stare at you.

Most of the people up there haven't been without an Upgrade since the day they were born.

MILO: Kinda fucked that there are babies with Upgrades. They don't even get a say.

ASHER: Some babies get their ears pierced, some get bionic ears before they even start talking.

MILO: Meanwhile some of us need an Upgrade to live and we get nothing.

ASHER: But that's why we do what we do, right? To fix that. At least a little bit. Tonight could

have gone better, but—

MILO: I think tonight went pretty good.

ASHER: Dude, were you there? We were there for all of ten minutes and got kicked out

instantly.

MILO: But there were all those donors there and the news. And he acknowledged us, which is very good, that means he can't pretend like we weren't there.

ASHER: I mean, I guess. Do you think it really did anything?

MILO: Maybe, maybe not. But we didn't get arrested and no one got hurt, which is good. And we got our message out to some people and interrupted an important campaign event. I think that's a small victory.

ASHER: Are small victories enough?

MILO: You're starting to sound like my sister.

ASHER: You're lucky I didn't charge you for my presence. Normally me showing up somewhere for an Upgrade related event costs a flat hundred dollars.

MILO: Shut up, I know you care about this stuff too.

ASHER: Not as much as you.

MILO: And that's not enough.

ASHER: You care too much.

MILO: Whatever. *(Beat)* Do you think he's going to get reelected?

ASHER: Do you want my honest answer or my hopeful one?

MILO: Yeah, I think so too.

ASHER: For most people he's been doing a pretty good job.

MILO: Most people aren't dying because of the policies he makes.

ASHER: Even if he gets back in, you should have your legs by then.

MILO: But that's not the point. There are thousands of people who are living with disabilities who can't afford insurance or Upgrades. If they don't have any protections they're going to be in even more shit than they already are. It just becomes this vicious cycle of people not being able to work because they can't afford Upgrades and they can't afford Upgrades because it's legal for people to ignore them.

(The door to the apartment opens and CORA enters. She has a small handgun strapped to her belt and a large duffel bag slung over her shoulder. She looks a little rough and is breathing heavy.)

CORA: Hey, guys! I ran here as fast as I could!

MILO: Cora!

ASHER: Hey Core!

CORA: Hey, Ash! Milo, close your eyes!

MILO: C'mon, Cora—

CORA: Bup, bup, bup! Eyes!

(MILO sighs but obeys his sister. She takes the bag off her shoulder and takes out a bionic leg. It is heavy, but she manages to hold onto it and pulls a second one from the bag. She struggles to hold them out in front of her proudly on display. ASHER looks on, a grin spreading across her face as she watches)

CORA: Open up!

MILO: *(screams)* You got them!

CORA: A matching set! *(She sets them down on the coffee table and hugs MILO, almost knocking his laptop down)*

ASHER: That's my girl! Cora, these look amazing.

CORA: They're top of the line. The dealer just got some in the other night.

MILO: How much did these cost?

CORA: Don't worry about it, Milo.

MILO: Cora, these are too expensive to just not worry about.

ASHER: When can you get them installed?

CORA: I actually ran into the guy who did my eye when I was at the Hub. We got to talking and he said he could see you as early as next week.

ASHER: Next week? That's so soon.

CORA: You could be walking before the end of the month!

MILO: I thought that guy was kinda expensive?

CORA: Yeah, but it's because he's an actual doctor and not just a crackpot with a knife and an anatomy textbook.

ASHER: Did you get a good deal on these?

CORA: Well, not the best deal, but I've done worse.

MILO: How much were they?

CORA: It doesn't matter.

MILO: We've been saving for years and they're going on my body. I deserve to know. How much did they cost you?

CORA: *(Beat)* Twelve.

MILO: Twelve?

CORA: ...yeah. Twelve thousand.

MILO: Cora, how are you going to—

CORA: Milo, that doesn't matter—

MILO: Stop telling me it doesn't—

CORA: But right now it doesn't—

MILO: They are my legs!

CORA: And I'm the one who went out and got them for you!

ASHER: Hey, guys, let's not get—

CORA: Ash, please. Milo, I know what I'm doing. I wouldn't have done it if I didn't think it was the best option for you.

MILO: Done what? What do you owe him?

CORA: He told me he needs a runner and I can work for him for a couple months to pay off the rest of them.

ASHER: Core, you didn't.

CORA: I did. He lost one of his guys and it can make us so much money. You make so much Ash and I think I could do it.

MILO: Cora, what the hell?

CORA: I did what I had to, Milo, I couldn't get the legs any other way.

MILO: But that's so dangerous and—and stupid and—

CORA: I'll be fine!

MILO: What do you mean you'll be fine? You'll be smuggling Upgrades into the city.

CORA: And how is that any different from what I've been doing? I've gotten myself an eye and I helped Asher get his hand.

ASHER: Smuggling is dangerous.

CORA: If it's so dangerous then why do you do it?

MILO: Because he's smart and fast and not my sister.

CORA: What the fuck, Milo? I've moved so many Upgrades through this city and I've never been followed by any police or even gotten looked at sideways.

MILO: What if something happens to you?

CORA: Nothing will happen to me.

MILO: Do you know what the charge is for smuggling?

ASHER: Forty years. Possession of an illegal Upgrade with the intent to sell it is up to forty years. And that's before you get charged with stealing them in the first place.

CORA: And isn't that fucked up? Asher, you do this all the time. You know I can do it. You and the people in the Hub are doing more good for people in this city than anyone at the hospitals or in the capitol and if I can get in on that and pay off your legs Milo, I'm going to do it. It's my fault you're like this, I'm going to fix it.

MILO: Cora, you know I don't blame you.

CORA: I want to make real change. You do amazing work, Milo, you really do. I want to just work the problem from a different angle.

MILO: I won't be able to talk you out of this, will I?

CORA: Never.

ASHER: You know, you're pretty hot when you're being stubborn, babe.

CORA: Who asked you?

ASHER: Who said I had to be asked?

CORA: How did tonight go?

ASHER: I've never seen so many fancy people in my life.

MILO: It went well, I think.

CORA: Anyone hurt?

MILO: No, Carvel seemed, I don't know, weirdly entertained by us more than anything.

CORA: What an ass.

MILO: But there were a lot of people there and he talked to us, and I think that was pretty productive.

ASHER: We made the news.

MILO: What?

ASHER: Yeah, when I was flicking through, I saw you.

MILO: And you didn't stop?

CORA: What'd they say?

ASHER: I don't know, I clicked through it.

CORA: God, you can be so useless.

MILO: But that's good! That's even more people who will hear what happened. That's how change happens, a little bit at a time.

CORA: That's not fast enough. There are some people who aren't able to get the parts we are. What about them?

MILO: We just have to keep working at it, that's all.

CORA: You sound so much like Mom and Dad sometimes, it's scary.

MILO: They did good work. They laid the foundation for the Hub and for a lot of the protests I set up now, you know that.

CORA: I know. I just wish they were here.

MILO: I'm sorry, Cora. Thank you. For the legs, really, they're amazing.

CORA: I'd do anything for you. You know that. I'm excited to see you walk again.

MILO: I can't believe it's going to be real.

ASHER: In a week you will be walking and then you can get a real job and really get out there and make a difference for people. We should be celebrating!

GUIDES: Follow us to the Hub.

All go to CROSS POINT 2, page 23.

CARVEL 1

A daytime talk show set. Two chairs are on a stage facing each other and the audience. CARVEL sits in one chair and DAKOTA, the daytime host, sits in the other. SILAS and RIVER, tablet in hand, stand off to the side of the room.

PRODUCER GUIDE: *(From the back of the room)* And we're live in five...four...three...two.

DAKOTA: Welcome back to afternoon boost, I am Dakota Gill joined by Brock Carvel, governor candidate and owner of Carvel Industries. How are you doing today, Governor Carvel?

CARVEL: I'm doing very well, very happy to be here.

DAKOTA: So tell us, what is it like running a company and a state? Is it ever hard to balance both?

CARVEL: Well, I believe life is all about balance, Ms. Gill, and I learned very early on how to balance a lot at once, so I don't think it has been too much of a struggle. In my time as governor, my company has had some phenomenal growth and we have been able to create better and more affordable Upgrades for a wide range of problems.

DAKOTA: I have just been loving my Upgrades. I never realized how bad my arthritis was until I didn't have to worry about it anymore.

CARVEL: That's why we do what we do.

DAKOTA: Tell us a little bit more about the newest line you have coming out.

CARVEL: In our Generation 6 Upgrades, we really wanted to focus on improving upon old designs and improving quality of life for our customers. All of our Upgrades are long lasting, but we're seeing more and more of our earlier models are starting to become obsolete or breaking down. And I make no secret of that. Just like any piece of

technology, if you use it every day for an extended period of time, it will slow down over time. We've seen it with old cell phones and cars, and Upgrades are no different. But now, I think my research team and I have found a way to make them last even longer and work even better.

DAKOTA: Which Upgrade are you most excited for people to get their hands on?

CARVEL: We've developed a really exciting ear and eye Upgrade combo that I think people are going to really get a lot of use out of. The ear and eye connect to the brain and to wireless networks anywhere you go. Now you don't need computers or phones to stay up to date with everything going on in the world. You can customize what content you would like fed to you and you will be able to see and hear anything related to that content. The news will be just a flick of the eye away and you will always get up to the minute updates.

DAKOTA: Wow, that does sound exciting.

CARVEL: I think that one will really revolutionize how we see and hear the world around and beyond us. It's so exciting that we can be more connected than ever before.

DAKOTA: How much does that cost?

CARVEL: Oh, it's incredibly affordable. You can bundle the Upgrade with a surgery for twenty thousand and go from purchase to use in under a day, it's really quite exciting.

DAKOTA: I can't wait to get my hands on it.

CARVEL: They'll be out before you know it.

DAKOTA: Now there were some reports of a protest at your gala last night, what exactly happened there?

CARVEL: Oh, that was nothing. Just some angry kids who wanted an excuse to yell at me for whatever reason. They're nothing, really, they're just looking for some cause to throw themselves on the sword for and for whatever reason, they have chosen my campaign and my company. They claimed they can't pay for Upgrades, but I don't think they're working hard enough to get them.

DAKOTA: Kids these days. But you and your company have been massively successful for some time now. What was it that made you turn to state government after years of running your own company?

CARVEL: I wanted to make change. When I started Carvel Industries, I wanted to make Upgrades that people could afford and make their lives better. For so long, we relied on organ transplants from the dead and sometimes that didn't always work out, you know. There were lots of devices that preceded our Upgrades on the market, but they mostly relied on things like Bluetooth and charging them and that was such a hassle for so many people and that's just too much, but it was my brother's death that really pushed me into this market.

DAKOTA: Your brother?

CARVEL: He was very sickly as a child, lots of conditions, but they could be solved with a heart transplant. At the time, there were some very advanced devices on the market, but the prices were astronomical, far too much for the ordinary person to pay. Things like pacemakers were becoming less and less common but that was too primitive to solve the problem anyway. So my parents bought a device off the street and found a doctor to do the procedure, but it didn't work out.

DAKOTA: I'm so sorry.

CARVEL: Thank you, it was a long time ago. But that's what pushed me into researching healthcare technology and lead me to creating the Upgrade. I wanted something that was really better than anything else on the market and I hoped it would be at an affordable price. And for a while, I was satisfied. My Upgrades were making real change in a lot of people's lives all over the country and internationally, but I realized that wasn't enough. It's not enough to just create and sell this technology, I needed the law to be on my side and I saw the best way to do that was become the one in charge of the law myself. But for me, being governor is more than just about my company, it's all about making the world better and I think the laws I've passed and the work our state officials have been doing is really doing that. Crime is down, education is thriving, and I am running for reelection because I'd like to continue doing that kind of work.

DAKOTA: Well thank you for all you've done in office and thank you for joining us today.

(Turning to the audience) And when we come back, we'll be experimenting with the latest in vegan Thanksgiving recipes. Stay with us.

PRODUCER GUIDE: And that's commercial!

DAKOTA: Thank you so much for being here today, Governor Carvel.

CARVEL: It's been a pleasure, I always enjoy coming around to the local stations.

DAKOTA: Enjoy the rest of your day and good luck in the race!

CARVEL: Thank you and have a great rest of your show.

DAKOTA exits. SILAS and RIVER come over to CARVEL.

CARVEL: How do you think that went?

RIVER: The sob story about your brother was a good move.

CARVEL: It wasn't a sob story, it's the truth.

RIVER: Whatever it is, I think it's going to boost you. Do you think you could get into the studio and record it so I can send it to the ad team? I think we could get some good sound bites out of that for the campaign commercials.

CARVEL: Silas, what does my schedule look like?

SILAS: You are free all Wednesday morning, I could see about getting you into the space then to do it.

RIVER: Hmm, that could work. If I get the recording to them Wednesday afternoon, we could have those ads airing by Friday evening at the earliest.

SILAS: Does Wednesday work for you?

CARVEL: You're the one in charge of my schedule.

RIVER: We need to work fast after last night's debacle.

CARVEL: I wouldn't call what happened last night a debacle, River.

RIVER: I wouldn't exactly call it a success either. You're lucky I had already scheduled you for this so you had a chance to spin it in our favor.

CARVEL: There wasn't much spinning involved. It's exactly like I said, some angry kids who just want something to be angry at.

RIVER: And what if next time those angry kids have a weapon?

CARVEL: I have security at these events just for that.

RIVER: You didn't tell him?

SILAS: I fired the security team from last night, sir. We will have another one for when we go to the debate in two weeks.

CARVEL: That's probably for the best.

RIVER: If you die, there's no campaign for me to manage.

CARVEL: Lucky for you, I don't plan on dying any time soon. Silas, what else is on the schedule for today?

SILAS: You have that meeting in the capitol with the— *(He freezes, receiving a notification through his Upgrades. Perhaps he touches his ear or something)*

CARVEL: Silas?

SILAS: Sir, there's something you need to know about.

RIVER: What, what happened?

SILAS: Sir, our team may have cracked the code.

CARVEL: Silas, are you sure?

SILAS: I wouldn't be wasting your time telling you if I wasn't.

RIVER: What code?

CARVEL: For years black market sellers have been setting up shop all over the city. They change their location every couple weeks and leave clues to each other on where they're going next. My team has been working with the IUF to figure out where they are. You think they've done it?

SILAS: Yes, sir, they think they've nailed down their next location. We're not a hundred percent sure where they are now, but they believe they know where they're going next. It should be within the next week or so that they move.

CARVEL: I want the IUF out there. I want anyone buying or selling to be arrested.

SILAS: Yes, sir, I will send the memo now.

CARVEL: I want to be there...for campaign reasons.

SILAS: Can we spin this into something for you?

RIVER: You can spin just about anything into the truth if you try hard enough. Are you sure you want to be there? The scene of a crime doesn't sound like the safest of places.

CARVEL: I want to see the people who have been robbing me. We're going to make an example of them.

SILAS: If you say so, sir.

RIVER: This could be a good photo op.

GUIDES: Come with us to the Hub.

All go to CROSS POINT 2, page 23.

CROSS POINT 2

The Hub. A series of tents and stalls, tables with spreads of Upgrades across them. Vendors stand behind their table, ready to do business with anyone who passes. Milo's Guides become Vendors. MILO, ASHER, and CORA enter from a tent. MILO has just received his surgery and is walking on Upgrade legs. He is wobbly, like a deer learning to walk and leans on his sister for support. ASHER is pushing his folded wheelchair.

MILO: Cora, these are amazing, I can't thank you enough. I still can't believe you were able to get these.

ASHER: They look so good!

CORA: How do they feel?

MILO: Really weird.

CORA: Upgrades take some getting used to.

ASHER: Yeah, it was at least a week before I was able to use my hand as good as my other one.

MILO: Yeah, but your hand doesn't support your weight.

ASHER: It does when I do a handstand. *(CORA lightly punches her on the arm)* My arm! I need a new one! Does anyone have an arm for sale?

CORA: Yeah, we'll get right on that.

MILO: You can let go of me, guys, I think I've got it. *(They let go of him. He takes two steps forward and goes flailing, but is caught by ASHER before he can hit the ground.)*

ASHER: Real smooth.

MILO: Shut up. *(He winces)*

CORA: Are you sure you don't want us to wheel you home?

MILO: No, I want to do this myself.

CORA: Dr. Andrews said the pain could last a couple days. You just had major surgery, Milo,
it's ok to need a little help.

MILO: Since when did you become so careful?

CORA: I just don't want you to get hurt.

MILO: I'm fine, I'm fine!

ASHER: Just let us give you a hand...or a leg I guess.

MILO: Ha ha.

CORA: Wait here, I'm going to check in with Mason.

ASHER: You're going to run a job tonight?

CORA: If he needs me to, I will. Just wait right here, I'll be right back. *(She exits into one of the other tents)*

MILO: I don't like that guy.

ASHER: He's not so bad. You just don't like that he hired Cora.

MILO: Can't that be enough of a reason for me?

ASHER: She's really good at it, you know. Even better than me.

MILO: Is that supposed to make me feel better?

ASHER: Dude, we deal in illegal parts. It's always going to be dangerous, but she's the most efficient runner in the Hub, no question and she's only been here a week. The IUF won't get her, believe me.

MILO: I know she's good. There hasn't been a thing she's done that she's not good at. I just hope he doesn't have any runs for her tonight.

ASHER: Since she's offering, he'll probably give her something to do. I wouldn't be surprised if he takes her on full time after she's paid off your legs.

MILO: Can't we just have one peaceful night at home?

ASHER: Home is boring.

MILO: Home is safe.

ASHER: Is anywhere really safe with Carvel in office?

MILO: I mean, not for us, but it's safer than being out on the streets with a bag full of evidence.

ASHER: Yeah, but it's more exciting.

CORA enters with a duffel bag slung over her shoulder.

CORA: I'm ready to go whenever you two are.

ASHER: What's he got you running tonight?

CORA: There's a cargo ship with some crates of lungs that Mason wants me to grab and bring
back here.

MILO: How long will that take you?

CORA: Couple hours maybe?

MILO: Don't you have work in the morning?

CORA: Yeah, but reporters can go in whenever, they're not too hard on us. It'll be fine.

ASHER: Before we head out, can we go see Alex? I heard he got some of those ear and eye
Upgrades that are coming in the new launch and I want to see them.

CORA: No way, they don't release those for another month, how could he have gotten them?

ASHER: C'mon, let's go check out his table.

MILO: You guys can go, I think I need a second to just chill.

CORA: You sure?

MILO: Yeah, I'll be fine, just sore that's all.

CORA: We'll be right back.

ASHER: Yeah, his set up is right over there.

ASHER and CORA go to one of the Vendor's tables across the Hub. MILO leans against a nearby table. Two OFFICERS enter near MILO, CARVEL, SILAS, and RIVER close behind.

OFFICER 1: Everybody freeze!

Vendors scatter, scrambling to throw their wares into bags and escape.

OFFICE 2: You are all under arrest for the illegal possession and distribution of Upgrades.

CARVEL: I can't believe it, look at them all.

RIVER: *(Taking a picture of CARVEL)* Stay right there...perfect.

MILO: Cora! Asher!

ASHER: I got him!

An OFFICER grabs MILO. ASHER shoulders the OFFICER and MILO is released and stumbles. The OFFICER punches ASHER and knocks her to the ground.

ASHER: Is that all you got?

OFFICER 1: Stay down!

ASHER tries to get up but is knocked back down by the OFFICER. CORA runs to them.

ASHER: Cora, get Milo! *(She is punched again. The OFFICER picks her up and shoves her.*

ASHER stumbles into a tent.)

OFFICER 1: You want to play rough, bud?

CORA: Ash!

MILO: Cora!

The OFFICER goes into the tent and there is a gunshot.

CORA: ASHER!

MILO: Cora, we need to get out of here, now!

ASHER stumbles backward, clutching her chest.

AHSER: Cora... *(She falls to the ground. CORA runs to her and grabs her.)*

CORA: ASHER!

CARVEL: No, this isn't what I wanted.

RIVER: We need to get out of here, this isn't safe and we got our photograph.

MILO: Cora, we need to go! Now!

CORA: I won't leave her!

The OFFICER comes from the tent, holding his gun.

OFFICER 1: You are under arrest.

CORA: Look at what you did!

OFFICER 1: It was self-defense. Now put your hands up or you'll join him.

CARVEL: Wait! Stop! I said bring them in alive!

The OFFICER looks to CARVEL. CORA pulls out her own weapon and shoots, the OFFICER crumples, injured, but not dead.

MILO: Cora, what the fuck!

CORA: You! *(She spins to CARVEL)* This is your fault!

RIVER: Sir!

CARVEL: My fault? You just shot an officer!

CORA: This whole market is here because of you. You rob people, you take advantage of them, sell them parts that they can never afford and then you sit in your cushy office and pass laws that kill us!

CARVEL: The laws are antiquated. It's my job to update them and serve the people.

MILO: But what about people who can't afford Upgrades?

CARVEL: Then they should work harder so that they can pay for them.

CORA: But they can't work!

CARVEL: Then they should've worked harder when they could. The world doesn't just hand you a reward for doing nothing.

MILO: It's your job to protect us.

CARVEL: It's my job to do what's the best for the most people. More people benefit from not having to employ people who can't actually work anyway.

CORA: That's bullshit!

CARVEL: You're fighting a lost cause. Now put your weapon down. No one else needs to get hurt. Calm down and we'll let you come peacefully.

CORA: Don't tell me to be calm. *(She shoots)*

MILO: Cora, no!

CARVEL screams as he stumbles back and falls. SILAS and RIVER grab him.

MILO: CORA!

CORA: Fuck you!

MILO: Cora, we have to leave!

CORA: Your men killed my girlfriend!

MILO: *(Trying to pull her away)* Cora, come on!

CORA: Let me get to him, I want to finish him off!

MILO: Cora, we're leaving! *(He grabs her and drags her away the best he can.)*

Blue and Orange go to MILO 2, page 29.

Yellow and Green go to CARVEL 2, page 35

MILO 2

Back in the living room of CORA and MILO's apartment. MILO and CORA burst in, MILO stumbles to the couch.

MILO: Cora, what the fuck was that?

CORA: I had a clear shot.

MILO: Cora, do you understand what you've done? You've committed a felony! A felony!

CORA: I've done that plenty of times in case you haven't been keeping track!

MILO: You attempted to assassinate a governor. That's not something that goes unnoticed!

CORA: Good!

MILO: Good? How the fuck is that good?

CORA: This sends a message that we are not to be fucked with.

MILO: It doesn't send a message, it's poking the bear!

CORA: It's cutting off the head. I hope he bleeds out.

MILO: You know he won't. He's probably being patched up in some hospital right now.

CORA: That means I get to shoot him again.

MILO: Cora!

CORA: Milo, you don't know what it's like.

MILO: I loved him too, you know. He was my friend.

CORA: You don't know what it's like to be out there on the streets. To never know if a run will be your last. To not know if the police are going to be around every corner and to never really know if you're walking into some sort of trap or not until it's too late. You just stay here and work from your computer organizing protests that don't do anything!

MILO: Then why do you do it? If it's so hard and so scary?

CORA: Because the looks on people's faces when they are able to get an Upgrade they can afford. When they buy the hand that will let them draw again. Or the eyes that will fix their cataracts. Or the part that will save someone they love.

MILO: That's real noble of you and all, but it doesn't change the fact that you shot him. People are going to be looking for you now if they aren't already.

CORA: I don't regret it.

MILO: So what do we do now?

CORA: I plan to keep working for Mason. It's by far the most effective thing I can think of.

MILO: Have you learned nothing?

CORA: What is there to learn?

MILO: What about Mom and Dad?

CORA: And now Asher, Milo, I can't keep standing by while the police kill everyone I love.

MILO: But you expect me to?

CORA: What?

MILO: You expect me to sit here and wait for you every night while you go out on these crazy dangerous missions. Do you know what it's like to sit here and not know if you're safe? I can't stand it, Cora, I really can't. And I know you don't agree with what I do, but at least what I do has never gotten anyone hurt. I know you're upset about Asher. You have to believe that I am too.

CORA: Milo, I want him dead. I want to wring his neck and make him pay.

MILO: Pay?

CORA: Carvel needs to be held responsible!

MILO: And how will killing him solve anything?

CORA: He's practically repealed ADA. Buildings don't have ramps and elevators! People without Upgrades can't find work because no one will hire them because he made it legal to do that. He runs the IUF and uses them like attack dogs just going after anyone he doesn't agree with or anyone who has the guts to stand up to him!

MILO: Killing him won't solve any of that.

CORA: He's the one in charge.

MILO: And what happens once he's dead, huh? Someone else will take his place.

CORA: Maybe not.

MILO: Cora, don't be stupid. There's always going to be another Carvel. If you get rid of him it will just be someone else. A VP will take over his company. Another equally horrid politician could take his place. Getting rid of one person doesn't magically fix the system.

CORA: He is their figurehead. He is a symbol of hate for people who just want to get rid of the poor and if we get rid of him, maybe people will start seeing sense.

MILO: That's the point of demonstrations and protests. I'm trying to change people's minds and maybe they won't elect people like him.

CORA: *(Beat)* I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Milo, I really am. I don't have your kind of patience. I can't organize marches and protests and write letters and just wait and hope the world will get better and hope that someone important enough will hear us. When I see people like you getting treated like shit for nothing other than not being able to walk, I just can't help it. I need to do something. People like Carvel don't care about you and me and there's nothing we can do to change that. They pass laws that seem innocent enough, but we don't have the money for the law to not hurt us. It's inhumane.

MILO: I know you were just doing what you thought was right, but, Cora, that sets us back and
does nothing for our cause.

CORA: I know.

MILO: It doesn't bring her back.

CORA: I can't believe she's gone.

MILO: It's my fault.

CORA: Don't say that.

MILO: If I could've just gotten out of the way or run or something maybe that guy wouldn't
have grabbed me.

CORA: You can't blame yourself. You would have done the same for her.

MILO: Yeah.

CORA: That cop didn't have to kill her. She didn't deserve that.

MILO: No.

CORA: I'm sorry, Milo. I know that killing Carvel won't really solve anything. I just...had a
shot. I saw a chance and I was so angry and I saw that chance and I took it.

MILO: I know. I just worry about you so much and I don't want there to be another reason for
the police to come for you.

CORA: I know.

MILO: A part of me wants him dead too.

CORA: You're probably right though. About him being put back together in some hospital right
now.

MILO: It's what happens when you have enough money to be important.

CORA: Do you think he could die?

MILO: Everyone dies, Cora.

CORA: People do, yeah. But is he really a person anymore?

MILO: What do you mean?

CORA: He's practically more metal and machinery than he is organic.

MILO: That doesn't mean he can't die.

CORA: But if he's able to just keep replacing everything, then what? When his eyes wore out, he got a new pair and when his Upgrades wear out, he can just get a new pair of eyes, right?

MILO: I mean, yeah, I suppose so.

CORA: I've just been thinking about it a lot lately when I'm on my runs. People like Carvel are able to just keep replacing and fixing themselves and what happens when they've replaced everything?

MILO: If you replace every board of a ship is it still the same ship? You mean Theseus' paradox?

CORA: Yeah, at this point a lot of them are just hunks of metal.

MILO: Hunks of metal who are way stronger than us and are going to outlive us long after we're gone.

CORA: They just get to keep replacing their parts and making themselves new again while people who are doing real good for the community are getting slaughtered in the streets.

MILO: It must be nice to be able to just keep replacing yourself like that.

CORA: I'd never want to get on that level. I do like the Upgrades I have, but I never want to be more Upgrade than human.

MILO: Even if it meant you could live forever?

CORA: What's the point in living if you're not even a person anymore?

MILO: They're still people.

CORA: Technically some of them are just a brain plugged into a robot. They're not people, they're monsters.

MILO: I don't even know if some of them even have entirely organic brains.

CORA: Monsters.

MILO: Monsters who have a lot of say over us.

CORA: I don't think some of them remember a time before they got an Upgrade.

MILO: And that's what I'm trying to do. Remind them that there's a human somewhere under all that metal. They have to answer to the people they are representing. That's supposed to be their job.

CORA: I don't know if some of them can be convinced. I don't think Carvel can. He just fills his own pockets and then makes laws that help keep him rich.

MILO: I want to stage another protest.

CORA: When?

MILO: Election day. About two weeks from now. Carvel is going to be hosting a big party to for everyone who worked on his campaign, some important political people.

CORA: I want to come.

MILO: I don't think that's a good idea.

CORA: Milo, I want to, really I do.

MILO: How is showing up to a political event for the man you just tried to kill a good idea?

All go to Cross Point 3, page 41.

CARVEL 2

CARVEL's office. It's minimalist and sleek like the products he sells. He sits behind a desk working on a computer. His assistant SILAS enters with coffee.

SILAS: Good morning, sir, how are you feeling?

CARVEL: A little shaken, but not too bad.

SILAS: Well, you have had a rough night, but I must say, everyone in the office is very impressed with your recovery speed.

CARVEL: Well, I have the bests doctors and technicians on staff.

SILAS: Any word on the woman who did this?

CARVEL: Not yet. She escaped in the chaos and we have no leads. I should have never gone out there without proper security. It's my fault really.

SILAS: Sir, you can't blame yourself for someone trying to kill you.

CARVEL: Maybe not for trying to kill me, but you and River were right, I should have been more careful.

SILAS: Hindsight is twenty-twenty.

CARVEL: But it will never happen again.

SILAS: Very good, sir.

CARVEL: I'm adding to the newest launch, Silas.

SILAS: Sir, the newest products hit the market in less than three weeks.

CARVEL: It's something development has had on the backburner, but I have brought it to the forefront of their work. I'm never going to let this happen again.

SILAS: Because you are smart, sir. You learn from your mistakes. That's why you're in charge here.

CARVEL: Thank you, Silas. But I've received the first in our newest Upgrades. (*He knocks on his chest*)

SILAS: Sir, did you Upgrade your chest?

CARVEL: The whole thing. Bullet proof casing. My back too. I'd like to see someone try and shoot me now, they won't be able to make a dent.

SILAS: Isn't that a little extreme?

CARVEL: Maybe a little. But I have the means and I have the technology so why not? I think we could be on the brink of something big. I want you to begin drafting a memo to the development team.

SILAS: Yes, sir.

CARVEL: I want to resume research and development on military grade Upgrades.

SILAS: Military grade?

CARVEL: Bullet proofing all Upgrades. I also want every IUF officer fitted with this casing.

SILAS: By when?

CARVEL: As soon as they are available to come in for the operation. I am not going to lose another officer out in the field.

SILAS: Sir, can we afford that cost?

CARVEL: It is an investment, but if every officer is bulletproof, we're far less likely to lose them in the field. The less men and women we lose out there the less we have to replace.

A big price tag up front, but we'll save money in the long run.

SILAS: Understood sir.

CARVEL: Those damn smugglers, robbing parts from me and killing my men and costing me money on both ends.

SILAS: Yes, sir, the smuggling rings are becoming an increasingly pressing issue.

CARVEL: I want them to begin researching the possibly of adding weapons to Upgrades.

SILAS: Any kind of weapons in particular?

CARVEL: Guns. Heavy duty. Something that will slice through anyone who is messing with our shipments and our parts. I want to send them a message.

SILAS: With all due respect, sir, is this the best way to send such a message?

CARVEL: I want the message to be loud and clear: take my parts and you will die. It's the risk they take and the price they can pay.

SILAS: Isn't that a bit harsh?

CARVEL: One of them shot me for doing nothing more than my job. Now tell me, Silas, isn't that a bit harsh?

SILAS: Yes, sir.

CARVEL: I have worked for the better part of thirty years to get to where I am and I am not going to let some children with guns and a hero complex steal from my costumers. My customers have come to expect the highest prestige and quality and I cannot guarantee that when there are undeserving people running around with my parts because they were stolen and resold. That's not fair to my customers and it spits in the face of all the hard work I have done.

SILAS: Yes, sir.

CARVEL: Tell them I want them to get on this right away. I want updates by the end of the day. Start compiling anything they send back to put together a report for the Department of Defense. I think they'll be very interested in our findings and could be a possible business partner.

SILAS: The Department of Defense?

CARVEL: If research and development gets what I want, I think they will be very interested in giving them to our men overseas.

SILAS: That seems a bit intense.

CAEVEL: These smugglers are like rats. You can't just catch one or two and call it a day. You have to wipe out the whole infestation.

RIVER enters, busy with a tablet. He has a bag over his shoulder.

RIVER: So there's good news and bad news. Good news is that attempted assassination is really good for the sympathy vote. Bad news, your opponents are saying you're not strong enough to continue running and should drop out. But other good news, you're still doing very well in polls.

SILAS: He was almost killed less than twenty four hours ago. Do you ever think of anything else?

RIVER: I don't get paid to think about anything else. When do you think you could make a statement?

CARVEL: What kind of statement?

SILAS: Seriously? Sir, I think you need rest.

CARVEL: I'm fine, Silas.

RIVER: I drafted up some options for you last night.

SILAS: When he was in surgery?

RIVER: You already look sympathetic because someone tried to kill you, so we have that going for us. The news has reported about that girl that was killed, but I think we can spin that in our favor.

CARVEL: How?

RIVER: Simple. We say that she attacked first, which is technically true. She tackled the IUF officer for just doing her job. Then we say that she threatened to hurt her and when she went to attack, our officer simply shot to defend herself and then was senselessly slaughtered by these lowlives for doing his job.

SILAS: He's not dead. They replaced his knee and he's with his family.

RIVER: Okay, but they don't need to know that. People are stupid. The hospital sent us the video footage he took with his eyes, there's no other evidence of how it went down.

SILAS: Won't he know that he's not dead?

CARVEL: We could pay him off. An early retirement as a thank you for his service and for being injured in the line of duty.

SILAS: But, sir—

CARVEL: Is there a problem, Silas?

SILAS: No...I don't think so.

CARVEL: Good. Go get in touch with the family about the money and draft that memo I asked for.

SILAS: Yes, sir. *(He exists)*

RIVER: I expect that man will take the money. We can prep now.

CARVEL: I want to announce our work on bullet proof Upgrades.

RIVER: Bulletproof, huh? That could work in our favor. *(He works on the tablet for a moment)*

That should do it. I wasn't sure if you would feel up to going out to the studio today, so I brought a portable. *(He reaches into his bag and takes out a recording device. He hands his tablet to CARVEL)* Whenever you're ready you can start reading.

CARVEL: You may have heard the news that there was an attempt on my life last night. This news is in fact true. My officers at the Illegal Upgrade Force came across intelligence that lead them to a center of illegal Upgrade sales and I called for a raid. I wanted to attend to show my dedication to ending this type of horrid crime. Unfortunately, things went sideways. A criminal jumped one of our officers and she lost his life in the line of duty. I fully support the brave men and women who risk their safety to ensure our own and I mourn the loss of one of this city's finest. As your governor, I am back to work and if reelected, I will continue to ensure the safety of each and every citizen and I will not rest until every criminal is off the streets. In the meantime, I am proud to announce that Carvel industries will be further protecting the men in blue with bullet proof Upgrades. These Upgrades will help ensure that we never lose another man or woman on the job ever again. We will not cower and be ruled by fear, but stand tall, prepared for whatever the world throws our way.

RIVER: Great work, as always.

CARVEL: Thank you, River.

RIVER: Only fifteen days until election day.

CARVEL: An election and a product launch in a span of two weeks. Who let me do this?

RIVER: If anyone can do it, it's you.

All go to Cross Point 3, page 41.

CROSS POINT 3

An election night event for CARVEL. Very similar set up to CROSS POINT 1 with a stage area and podium. CARVEL enters followed closely by RIVER and SILAS. CARVEL's GUIDES serve as GUARDS and stand on either side of the stage. CARVEL goes to the podium and addresses the audience. At some point during the following, MILO enters from the back of the room, similar to CROSS POINT 1, this time with his guides. They link arms. .

CARVEL: Ladies and gentlemen, we are so close to having our final results. Win or lose, I want to thank all of you for your hard work, your dedication, and your support. I did not get into politics for myself, but for you and serving as your governor has been such a blessing and a joy. Thank you for standing by me as I have worked tirelessly to create a better tomorrow for our communities. As a part of creating that better tomorrow, I wish to introduce a very special new Upgrade that will be hitting the market immediately. We live in a world that is growing more and more dangerous with each passing day. I am dedicated to ensuring the safety of each and every citizen and in order to make that a reality, I am proud to announce our new chest and back Upgrade. Have you ever worried about senseless gun violence? It is no longer just a concern for those serving out in the field of duty, but something that must be considered at all times. You never know when a madman with a gun will come for you. But now, you no longer have to worry. This Upgrade will completely replace your chest and back in a bullet proof casing and protect every vital organ from stray bullets. We are even offering this Upgrade in child sizes that can be replaced and fitted with your children as they grow up so you never have to worry about them going out into the world. I am proud to say that I have this Upgrade as do all the security you see here tonight. Together, we can end death from gun violence.

MILO: And what about the people who can't afford to bullet proof themselves? Mr. Governor,
please consider all the people you represent and not just the wealthy!

CARVEL: You again? When are you going to learn?

MILO: I have the right to speak my mind. You can't take that from me.

CARVEL: You are speaking in favor of a system that is no longer useful. The world has moved
on and I suggest that you get with the program and move along with it. Now please
vacate the premises before my guards force you to.

SILAS: Sir, they've blocked the roads.

CARVEL: What?

SILAS: I'm getting reports that protestors are in front the building blocking the exits. How
would you like to proceed?

CARVEL: What is your move here, son? You're going to just stand in our way and make us
walk around you?

MILO: We're going to block your exit until you promise to reinstate legislation to help the
disabled.

CARVEL: This is not the time or place for such discussion. I'm going to ask one more time:
leave on your own or I will force you to.

CORA enters and stands next to MILO and the guides.

CORA: It is our right to protest and demand you to change.

MILO: Cora, I told you not to come!

CORA: I couldn't let you do something dangerous without me.

RIVER: Security, detain her! Sir, get back! *(He moves to pull CARVEL off the stage)*

CARVEL: Hold on! *(He gently removes himself from RIVER and looks to CORA)* Was once not enough for you?

CORA: No.

CARVEL: Come to finish me off then?

MILO: Cora, you promised—

CORA: I'm not here to hurt you, just to protest.

CARVEL: Hurt me? My dear, you've only hurt yourself. You thought you could kill me? What did you think? That you would spark some grand revolution? Well you didn't, did you? You thought you could hurt me, but you have made me stronger. *(SILAS exits unnoticed)* And for that I thank you.

CORA: Thank me?

MILO: Cora, please go.

CARVEL: Yes, thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, this young woman right here is the very cause of my new additions. You can all thank her for setting into motion the Upgrades that will save the lives of your children and families! Let's have a round of applause!

RIVER: Sir, what are you doing?

CARVEL: Or better yet! How about a test? *(To CORA)* Go ahead, pull your gun on me.

MILO: Cora—

RIVER: Sir!

CARVEL: What's the matter? You've already done it once, what's another try?

CORA: Go to hell.

CARVEL: I knew it. You're weak. You think you're so mighty and you think you can achieve these grand plans, don't you? But at the end of the day, you are just a weak little girl who wants everything handed to her. You disgust me.

CORA: I try my best.

CARVEL: *(To the GUARDS)* Take them all.

SILAS enters from behind MILO and grabs his arm as the GUARDS go to CORA and the protestors.

SILAS: I need you to trust me.

MILO: What?!

SILAS: Sir, I got one of them!

MILO: Let go of me! Cora, let's go!

The one GUARD grabs CORA, the other grabs another protestor. CORA struggles against them as she is brought back toward CARVEL.

CORA: Milo, go!

MILO: CORA!

SILAS: Get out of here!

MILO: Wait, what?

SILAS: I need you to trust me. Struggle against me and then get out. *(MILO doesn't move)* Do you want to be taken in or not?

MILO looks at SILAS for a moment and then resists against him. SILAS lets him go and MILO runs to an exit, taking one last look at CORA before leaving. SILAS looks to CARVEL.

CORA: Yes, Milo!

SILAS: Security! He went that way! *(Points in a different direction from where MILO exited)*

CARVEL: Thank you for your dedication, Silas, but she is the real prize.

CORA is brought out and followed by all but SILAS. He looks back at where MILO exited before exiting himself as there is a slight scene change. The podium is cleared. MILO enters and looks around for a moment, waiting for someone. SILAS enters.

EPILOGUE

MILO: I was worried I was being stood up.

SILAS: Sorry, I got held up at the court house.

MILO: How much time have we got?

SILAS: A few minutes at most.

MILO: How is the new committee doing?

SILAS: They're working very hard to crack our new code, but I don't think they're going to get there anytime soon. They haven't even been looking in the right direction. I think the Hub is safe again for the foreseeable future.

MILO: That's a relief. It's just not the same anymore.

SILAS: It's been almost a year since it was raided and it ran for almost fifteen years before that. Give it some time, it'll get back on its feet.

MILO: I'll have to take you when it does.

SILAS: The less details I know about your end of the operation, the better.

MILO: Do you know when the vendors they got are going to trial?

SILAS: Word in the office is that they'll begin in the next couple of weeks. Carvel pulled some strings to get Cora to trial faster than normal just so he could make an example out of her.

MILO: Asshole.

SILAS: Right.

MILO: And you're still safe?

SILAS: I don't think anyone suspects anything. Carvel certainly doesn't, or if he does, he hasn't been smart enough to limit my access to his information. Which reminds me (*He takes*

out paper from his pocket) I had these printed for you. Some Upgrade shipping dates and preliminary security schedules to pass along to Mason and the others.

MILO: I'll pass them along. Any other info that we need to know?

SILAS: I've actually been thinking about a new tactic we could use that I wanted to run by you.

MILO: What is it?

SILAS: It may sound a little crazy, but in about three years Carvel's term is up.

MILO: Right.

SILAS: How would you feel about becoming Governor Milo?

END