

ALTERED ESTATES

Written by

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This is the pilot episode for a limited television series in which an immersive game developer inherits a fortune and hereditary title from a British uncle he never knew existed. It is set in the near future where nearly everyone has an AI companion they regularly interact with.

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TEASER

INT. KRIS'S WORKPLACE - MORNING

A pan of a large office reveals dozens of cubicles but all are empty at this very early hour, all except one.

KRIS ROBINSON, 40s, handsome, is seated at his desk peering into a large monitor with a split screen, one side displaying a scene from a vide game; the other, computer code.

The walls in his workspace display posters of several Pixar films. An open laptop displays a 3D holographic version of the classic computer game *Myst*, with the island and the rocket ship in miniature floating above. On a nearby shelf sit several hardbacks. Their spines display works by Carl Jung, Carlos Castenada, Stephen Hawking, and others.

Kris wheels his chair in the direction of a woman clearing her throat. ANDREA COLLINS, 30s is dressed in formal business attire.

KRIS

Oh hey, Andrea. My, but you're in early this morning. ... Wait, are you okay?

ANDREA

(teary-eyes and sniffing, Oh Kris, I wish it was a happier occasion, but I'm afraid I have to give you this.

She hands him a sealed envelope.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I am so sorry.

Kris opens the envelope, pulls out and skims an official notice. His face registers shock.

KRIS

Oh shit, I've been let go! Tell me why. Why?

ANDREA

(sweeping her hand in the direction of the other cubicles) Not just you, Kris, the entire division, I'm afraid.

KRIS

You too?

ANDREA

Yeah, me too. The acquisition team says we are redundant. The Dutch buyers have all our roles covered with their own people.

Kris throws up his hands in exasperation.

KRIS

I gotta get out of here.

Kris hurries out of the office intending to take a walk to try and sort things out.

EXT. OUTSIDE KRIS'S WORKPLACE - MOMENTS LATER

Kris strolls along recalling recent life events.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

CUT-Kris is demonstrating new AI-infused video game to a sizable crowd gathered around an exhibit at a game trade show.

KRIS

Yes, in our voice-driven, AI version of *Manor House*, the characters actually interact with the player. Watch.

He turns to the monitor, taps on a character, a receptionist and speaks directly to her.

KRIS (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I don't which room is mine and my bags are missing.

ONSCREEN BRITISH RECEPTIONIST

Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry. I'll see to it straightaway.

She consults a registry and points to a nearby hallway.

ONSCREEN BRITISH RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Your quarters are the first and second doors on the right. I'll locate your luggage and have it delivered soon.

Kris nods and again speaks to the monitor.

KRIS
Hey Game, take me to my room IN 3D
Mode.

The audience gasps as the panorama enlarges to room size then turns away from the reception desk and glides slowly down the hall on its own. When it reaches the first door on the right, it turns and pauses at the entrance.

KRIS (CONT'D)
Hey Game, open the door.

The onscreen door opens.

KRIS (CONT'D)
Hey Game, Return to normal mode.

The 3D scene collapses back into the monitor as Kris turns back to the gathering, acknowledging enthusiastic applause. The crowd is buzzing how impressed they are.

BYSTANDER
Hey, I think I remember you from
G2E. Or was it Comic-Con?

KRIS
(laughing) These days, I hardly
know what country I'm in, let alone
which show.

The audience chuckles.

CUT-Kris is at his mother's room at an assisted living facility. He sets down a dinner tray for his invalid mother who smiles up at him adoringly from her wheelchair.

KRIS'S MOM
Oh Kris, you make me something
special every time you come. How
did I ever deserve a son like you?

KRIS
(leans over, kisses her
forehead) Because you're the best
mom in the world. I just wish I
could come more often.

KRIS'S MOM
I know, dear. I know. But you must
take care of your own life.

KRIS

I am, Mom, believe me. Seriously,
are you okay here?

KRIS'S MOM

I'm fine. This place is wonderful.
Everybody here is so nice. ... But
I must ask, are we okay
financially?

KRIS

We're fine, Mom. Don't even think
about it.

CUT-At home, with a look of consternation, Kris sorts through
a stack of bills he has to pay. One details a substantial sum
from his mom's nursing home.

KRIS (V.O.)

How can I keep doing this? Where's
the money going to come from? Damn,
sure could have used that bonus we
missed last quarter. And now this.
Jeez, what's next?

CUT-He recalls a very recent tearful scene in a restaurant
where he and his partner are breaking up.

KRIS'S PARTNER

(crying while speaking) Kris,
you're gone so much. We have no
life together. I just can't do this
any more.

KRIS

Please don't go! We can make this
work. I'll look for something
stationary, I swear.

She stands up.

KRIS'S PARTNER

You always say that when it gets to
this point. But face it, Kris,
you're addicted to travel.

KRIS

But all these years we've been
together.

KRIS'S PARTNER

No Kris, all these years we've been
"together," we've mainly been
apart. It's over. I'm done.

She wipes away tears and dashes out of the scene. Kris rushes after her but in a moment returns to the table. He slumps down in the chair and places his hands over his eyes

END MONTAGE

Kris finishes his walk. He unlocks his bicycle from a stand, hops on and heads home.

KRIS (V.O.)
(musing to himself) Kris. Ol' buddy, you're really up against it now. That severance won't last that long. But you'll think of something. You always do.

Kris pulls to curb and looks at his watch.

KRIS
Hey AI, you heard everything back at the office. What do you make of all this? Am I gonna be alright?

AI ASSISTANT (O.S.)
(speaking from watch) As you well know by now, life is full of surpass. My advice is, as always: Go with the flow.

KRIS
I know you can't tell me exactly what happens next. But can't you drop a few hints?

AI ASSISTANT (O.S.)
I may when the time is right, when doing so won't harm time.

KRIS
And when might that be.?

AI ASSISTANT (O.S.)
Depends on your current mindset and location in time.

FADE OUT.

ACT ONE

INT. KRIS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

Reclining on his couch in deep thought, Kris is startled by a knock on the door. He stands, walks over and answers the door. A COURIER stands in the doorway and offers him a form on a clipboard to sign. Kris signs and accepts a thick packet addressed to "Kris Robinson".

Kris sees the packet is from a law firm in the UK.

He shuts the door and tears open the packet. A letter falls out and Kris grabs it. When he holds it up to eye level, he notices the document emits a tiny flash and a faint beep. He starts to read the letter.

His mobile phone chimes. UK area code. A video call. An older man appears, partly in shadow. This is LORD ARTHUR HANOVER.

Still standing, Kris taps 3D to project an enlarged image in near space. He sets down his phone and looks up at the caller.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
My Beloved Nephew. My name is
Arthur Hanover, and what I am about
to tell you may come as rather a
shock: I am your uncle, a relative
you never knew existed, and about
whom no one has ever spoken.

KRIS
Are you serious?

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
I am very serious.

KRIS
You can't be my uncle.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
But I am.

Kris staggers back.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER (CONT'D)
Please pay attention. You have a
limited time to act, especially if
I should meet my demise.

Kris eases himself into a nearby chair.

KRIS
Okay, tell me.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
I have chosen this moment to reveal my existence because I am the last of my line and growing old. More importantly, you are named in my will as the inheritor of my estate, title and wealth, including my ancestral home, Hanover Manor.

KRIS
(stupefied and disbelieving) Aw c'mon, is this a joke?

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
(ignoring Kris's question) In order to secure your inheritance, however, there are some documents that must be presented by you to the local probate court. This will require that you come to England. Time is of the essence, so you must make haste.

Kris looks through the packet. He pulls out an unsealed envelope stamped with the British Airways logo. Inside, an authentic-looking "Gift of Travel" voucher. The voucher reads "Round trip, first class, open ended, good for one year."

The next voucher is for a Bentley Limousine from Browns Chauffeur Hire, "To and From Hanover Manor."

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER (CONT'D)
There, you see, everything's arranged.

KRIS
Yes, I can see this stuff is real. But this whole thing is unreal.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
You may be tempted to ignore this invitation. But, forgive me, but as we both know, you've lost your employment. And you have obligations.

KRIS
(upset, leaps to his feet, yells)
What!?

(MORE)

KRIS (CONT'D)
I just got my notice this morning.
Haven't told a soul. How could you
possibly know?

Lord Hanover doesn't answer. He simply continues.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
If I've assessed your character
correctly, you are neither faint of
heart nor lacking a sense of
adventure. I believe you will come.

Kris looks stunned. Looks around the room.

KRIS
(waves his arms)
Am I on hidden camera? Really, is
this some kind of prank?

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
(again ignoring Kris's
protestations.) When you do make
the journey, what awaits you
besides wealth, property and title
is this: a complete explanation of
your relationship to me. Curiosity,
I am certain, is what propels
gifted people like yourself through
life.

Kris sinks back down on his chair as the enormity of what has
happened hits him.

KRIS
Wait until I tell the family.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
No. For reasons I cannot disclose,
I urgently request that you tell no
one of this letter or your plans.
It is for your own good, dear
nephew.

KRIS
Now wait a minute! Not even my own--

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
After the court receives the
documents, you may say and do as
you please.

KRIS
What if I don't come?

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
Others will locate and destroy my
will. And then lay claim to my
estate at my passing.

KRIS
Sounds serious. Tell me, am I in
danger if I come?

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
Perhaps. But perhaps even more so
if you don't.

KRIS
(again leaps to his feet and walks
toward Lord Hanover's holo.) What's
that supposed to mean?

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
I'm afraid I can tell you no more
at this juncture. Finally, as a
reassurance that I am who I say,
I've included a copy of my entry in
Burton's Peerage. ... I await you.

The call ends and Kris sits, stunned by the revelation. He
shakes his head and rereads aloud the beginning of the
letter.

KRIS
My Beloved Nephew...

He leaps up, carrying the trove of information and vouchers,
and rushes to his laptop.

KRIS (CONT'D)
Lord Arthur Hanover, England.

Several pages of results pop up. Numerous sites focused on
the doings of the British nobility. He clicks on a photo.
Lord Arthur Hanover looks like the noble wise elderly man he
is, handsome and solidly built.

In another photo, he has his arm around a man identified as
"Experimental Physicist Lord Dennis Rollinsby." LORD DENNIS
ROLLINSBY is rotund, jolly-looking.

Kris clicks on a site: "HANOVER MANOR."

As Kris taps the 3D HOLO icon on his laptop.

MONTAGE: Images appear. One spectacular, breathtaking room
after another.

A YouTube video is embedded in the site. "BBC Secrets of Hanover Manor". Kris clicks on it. An onscreen BBC NARRATOR, fortyish, speaks.

BBC NARRATOR

Concierge Adrienne Van Scoy
arranges dinner parties and balls,
drama festivals and amateur golf
tournaments. Van Scoy, a Dutch-
English dual citizen, is fluent in
seven languages.

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE VAN SCOY, 30s, superb figure and very
upscale career woman, stands inside the Hanover Manor. Kris
can't take his eyes off her. She addresses an ITALIAN TOUR
GROUP.

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE

(in faint Italian with
English overdubbing)

Please note Le Grand Dining Hall on
the premises. It has been awarded
a Michelin star.

Kris stands and moves closer to her, immediately attracted
physically. He pauses the clip and speaks aloud to her
hologram.

KRIS

Just meeting you, Miss Adrienne,
might alone be worth the trip.

He resumes play. The projected scene changes to the exterior
of the manor. The BBC Narrator reappears and gestures at
various period buildings. Kris walks closer to examine them.

BBC NARRATOR

A stunning collection, representing
architectural styles from medieval
and Perpendicular to Tudor, from
Stuart to Hanoverian and Victorian.
All newly built and in pristine
condition, like an English town in
a theme park.

Lord Arthur Hanover appears onscreen. Very lively and lordly.
Kris walks over to stand beside him.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER

I once attended Disneyland, where I
saw three centuries of American
civilization rolled into a single
park, not even half the size of
this estate. I came away inspired.

The scene changes to the kitchen. Cooks prepare scones while CHEF NOËL ELLE LÉON, 30s, handsome, chops mushrooms.

The video pans to a rotisserie oven in which a giant slab of beef is rotating. Kris moves closer to inspect the rotisserie.

CHEF NOËL
Eh, ça va, la vache?

A screen label reads, "Eh, ça va, la? Hey, how's the cow?"

BBC NARRATOR (V.O.)
That was Chef Noel Elle Léon, who
is quite obviously enamored of
French palindromes, when calling to
his assistant.

The BBC Narrator is now outside pointing to the fields and bushes beyond.

BBC NARRATOR (V.O.)
(snickering)
Last Spring, Monsieur Léon replaced
Emil, a Hungarian chef, in a hurry
when distinguished guests suffered
hallucinations after sampling
Emil's dish that included wild
mushrooms from the manor grounds
while sipping a mysterious pinkish
tea that tasted anything but
English.

Kris walks over to inspect nearby shrubs and bushes. Above him, a large cactus plant adorned with a white flower rotating slowly in its center.

KRIS (V.O.)
(looking up at the plant)
What in the world?

PEYOTE CACTUS FLOWER
(warbling)
Tea Time!

With that, the plant vanishes. Kris, Looking up and around, is puzzled. He doesn't know if the cactus was part of the clip or somehow live in the room.

KRIS (V.O.)
Some Disney special effect here?

BBC NARRATOR (V.O.)
 (unable to suppress
 laughter while speaking)
 It was reported that numbers of the
 titled nobility were either
 collapsing in hysterical fits on
 the grass or frolicking indecently
 in the bushes.

The scene switches to a wine cellar. All the labels read
 "HM". THOMAS SUTHERLAND, 20s, excessively handsome and the
 epitome of well-scrubbed British manhood, holds up a bottle
 of wine. The BBC Narrator interviews him.

BBC NARRATOR
 I'm speaking to Thomas Sutherland,
 the headwaiter at Manor House. Tell
 us, Thomas, about the wines.

HEADWAITER THOMAS
 Naturally, we commissioned a French
 vineyard to grow the grapes and
 bottle the Hanover Manor wines. The
 winery corks and labels the Hanover
 vintages only on the last day of
 February in leap years. We will
 bottle no wine before its
 time...which is leap-day.

BBC NARRATOR
 So, if we were to uncork the one
 you're holding, roughly how much
 are we talking about?

HEADWAITER THOMAS
 For a mid-seventies Bougogone...my
 guess would be in the neighborhood
 of...sixty thousand pounds.

BBC NARRATOR
 A thousand quid per sip.
 Impressive.

Kris slaps his forehead and shakes his head in disbelief at
 the opulence and display of extreme wealth. He steps out of
 the enlarged scene and closes the video, The holographic
 scene collapses into the laptop.

INT. KRIS'S APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Kris holds the voucher for Browns Chauffeur Hire. He is on a
 video call with a BROWN'S CLERK.

BROWN'S CLERK

The service has been paid for in advance. You may use the voucher or cancel and apply for a refund.

KRIS

Who made the reservation?

BROWN'S CLERK

As if I could forget her!

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

BROWN'S CLERK (V.O.)

Miss Savone Reddy. The young lady said she was a chauffeur herself. Sashayed in she did, tight leather pants, removed her helmet, and all that blond hair fell down. Well, that was a sight the drivers went on about. Then tore off raucously on her motorcycle...Humph! Chauffeur indeed, from the manor.

END FLASHBACK:

KRIS

Where is this Hanover Manor?

BROWN'S CLERK

In the north, the Lake District, I'm told. Would you like to hire a car?

KRIS

Not yet. I'll get back in touch. Thanks for all your help.

INT. KRIS'S APARTMENT - LATER - CONTINUOUS

Kris settles down to think in front of the TV. He consults his channel guide, searching for something. Looks at the township and county on the letter.

He finds a station oddly named "TVTV" and clicks on it.

The opening bars from The X-Files theme play.

GOOGLE VOICE (O.S.)

Remember those musical notes.

KRIS
What the--?

Kris glances up looking for the source of the voice. Finding none, he reseats himself and shrugs. He glances across the room at his smart speaker.

KRIS (CONT'D)
Was that you again, Google? Saying random stuff all on your own?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)
No, not random this time. Those notes will be important later.

Onscreen, two smiling anchors, NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL JANSEN, 30s, and NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH LANE, 30s. In the upper right corner, a semi-transparent revolving logo reading "TVTV" is superimposed. The caption at the bottom reads:

"CROP CIRCLE MYSTERY SOLVED BUT UFOERS, X-FILERS UNCONVINCED"

Kris looks at the button labeled "3DHOLO" on his remote.

KRIS (V.O.)
Wonder if it works on these overseas stations.

He presses it and is happy to see that it does. The entire newscast enlarges and envelopes the room. Kris is completely immersed in the scene. He walks around the news desk behind the anchors as the female one begins the next story.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH
Now for a story that has gripped the entire nation and beyond. The Village TV has a guest correspondent on the scene. He's Raemond Starr from The Hollywood Reporter, who has journeyed here from Tinsel Town due to the sensation the initial break of this story has caused among film producers ... Rae, we're told a local farm has been besieged with visitors from near and far. What on earth, or off it, is going on?

The window enlarges, filling the scene. RAEMOND (RAE) STARR, a slender thirty-something male, is standing beside RANCHER DONALD MCFARQUARSON, a tall cowman who's dressed in overalls.

REPORTER RAE

That's right, Meredith. Last Monday Loonton cowman Donald McFarquarson discovered his 150 cattle in a fractious state at 3:00 AM.

Rae extends his microphone to McFarquarson.

CATTLE RANCHER MCFARQUARSON

I found the lot of 'em trembling and lowing their great silly heads off. I'd no idea what they were on about then, but it took me hours to settle everything down.

The window shrinks as Meredith continues.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

Only later, in the morning light and from a nearby hill, did Mr. McFarquarson glimpse the reason for the commotion. His distraught charges had been huddled inside one of several enormous crop circles. Michael, you have more on that, right?

The camera swings over to Michael. Kris walks over to stand beside him.

MONTAGE: Scenes of hovercraft circling the dairy farm, flattening crops, frightening cattle

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL (V.O.)

Yes, Meredith, we do. According to police enquiries; McFarquarson's neighbor, Colin Fyfe-Bibchester, hijacked an experimental all-terrain hovercraft on display at a nearby Army base, then drove it onto McFarquarson's property. According to Fyfe-Bibchester, he carried out the act for insults McFarquarson had directed at his sheep during a local livestock show.

The broadcast inserts a prerecorded interview with COLIN FYFE-BIBCHESTER, standing in the middle of his noisy flock and speaking with a thick Scottish brogue.

SHEEP HERDER FYFE-BIBCHESTER

The man was making fun of my flock.
 Calling them fuzzy, bleating wimps,
 as if his lot were some sort of
 bovine superheroes, which I
 definitely proved they were not.

A backdrop of stills shows the circles the hovercraft caused.
 The camera swings back to Meredith. Kris moves to stand
 beside her.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

Meanwhile, following widespread
 news reports of the incident,
 McFarquarson's farm has been
 besieged by UFO researchers from
 throughout the British Isles and
 Europe, and by X-Files show
 producers from America hoping
 somehow to spark a third reboot of
 the twice-discontinued series.

The scene changes with McFarquarson's ranch again filling the
 shot. Several groups walk around with Geiger counters,
 recording devices, and scientific measuring equipment. Kris
 joins them, hoping to see whatever it is they're searching
 for. The camera brings the cattle rancher in closeup as he
 narrates the scene behind him.

CATTLE RANCHER MCFARQUARSON

They're quite an excitable lot,
 jumping about all goggled-eyed,
 measuring things and babbling at
 each other. I've told them what
 really happened, but they don't
 seem to believe me. They say the
 truth is still out there.

Camera swings back to Michael and Meredith. Above her, a
 still photo of Lord Rollinsby's face is displayed.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

Tomorrow evening, we'll be joined
 in studio by renowned experimental
 physicist, Lord Dennis Rollinsby,
 who will tell us what he believes
 is really going on at Donald
 McFarquarson's dairy farm.

Kris looks up at the image of Rollinsby that has been instead

KRIS (V.O.)

"Rollinsby"--Hey Google, where have
 I seen that guy before?

Measures from The X-Files theme play along with more footage of UFO sleuths roaming the property in an extended program close.

Kris steps out of the scene, turns off the TV but again is reminded by his companion.

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Again, you must member those first four notes.

KRIS

Let me guess. For some reason, I'll need to recall them in the future.

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Right. And to answer your earlier thought, Lord Dennis Rollinsby, who you saw online, is an experimental physicist and was your uncle's best friend.

KRIS

Yeah, now I remember. So what's Lord Rollinsby experimenting with?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Teleportation.

Kris's expression turns to astonishment.

KRIS

Like in Star Trek?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Precisely. Lord Rollinsby has successfully teleported rodents and other small animals. But he's getting closer to being able to do so with you and yours.

KRIS

(laughing) Well, beam me up. Google. Seriously, is this guy in my future?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Yes, but of course we can't tell you how or when he appears.

Kris sighs, looks up at the ceiling with a pained expression.

KRIS

So, Google, go or not go?

AI TEEN COMPANION (O.S.)
Dude, just go why don't'cha?

KRIS
You heard Lord Hanover. He said it
could be dangerous.

AI TEEN COMPANION (O.S.)
Look! Listen!

Suddenly, a life-sized three-dimensional scene shimmers into view. Kris sees himself seated at a long table facing a riotous collection of human actors and CGI creations from Alice In Wonderland. A giant red-capped mushroom hangs over the tea party. The MAD HATTER stands to address Alice.

MAD HATTER
I daresay you've never even spoke
to time.

ALICE
Curioser and curiouiser, Hatter.

WHITE RABBIT
I'm late! I'm late! For a very
important date!

TWEDDLE-DUM AND TWEEDLE-DEE
(in unison) How do ya do? State yer
name and business!

QUEEN OF HEARTS
Off with their heads!

KRIS
(calling out) This is a crazy
place!

CHESHIRE CAT
(turning to Kris) We are not crazy.
Our reality is just different from
yours.

Kris is dumbfounded by the interactions.

Alice motions dismissively to all those assembled.

ALICE
You'll be going now.

The tea party slowly dissolves as Lord Hanover's smiling face gradually appears superimposed on the scene.

Next, another life-sized scene swivels into view. Kris's jaw again drops as he sees himself seated at a judges table on a glittering TV set reminiscent of "American Idol". On his left, Raymond Starr, the reporter he just saw on the UFO news story, and on his right--shock!--Lord Hanover himself! On stage, three teenage Japanese girls, apparently contestants, are chattering and giggling nervously.

KRIS

Hey Google, those girls--where have I seen them before?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

You've yet to meet them. But they're familiar because you're in circular time flow at the moment and semi-aware of the near future.

KRIS

And Lord Hanover, he looks so young up there, and, my God! I look quite a bit younger myself. How can I look so much younger in the future?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

You'll meet those girls soon, and they'll explain.

KRIS

So, were those actual scenes from, like, my future if, say, I go?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Yes, but you'd be reliving them unaware. They've already happened.

KRIS

Confusing ... Okay, so am I now "speaking to time," like in Alice in Wonderland?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

No. Actually, in projecting those scenes, Time has been speaking to you. But now, it's time to rest, My Lord.

Overhead, the cactus flower reappears next to the giant mushroom cap.

PEYOTE CACTUS FLOWER (O.S.)

Tea Time!

FADE OUT.

ACT TWO

INT. KRIS'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY - CONTINUOUS

Kris looks at the UK phone number and calls it out to his phone for a video call. Shortly after, RECEPTIONIST PENELOPE STRATTON, 20s, tailored suit, appears onscreen. She has stunning, top-model looks and a slightly sad expression.

RECEPTIONIST PENELOPE
Good evening, Hanover Manor. To
whom may I direct your call?

KRIS
My name is...

He draws a blank. He can't remember his name!

KRIS (CONT'D)
(stuttering) I'd like to speak to
...

The Hanover Manor crest reappears. Light classical music. Then comes an announcement over the manor PA. A headshot of he concierge appears beside the ceiling speaker

HOLO CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
Good evening. The head butler has
completed his inspection. The day
staff is dismissed and may retire
to quarters. In fifteen more
minutes the main gate of Hanover
Manor will shut. Until then, the
butler offers us this musical
interlude...

Music abruptly cuts off when JAMES BUTLER FARNSWORTH, 40s, British butler personified, appears onscreen. Not looking friendly.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
James Farnsworth, head butler and
administrator, speaking.

KRIS
I'm---

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
(coldly) I know who you are.

KRIS

Well, I'd like to speak to Lord Hanover.

Farnsworth looks away. Softens his attitude.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH

I regret to inform you that Lord Hanover passed away in Switzerland three weeks ago. We only learned of you and other estate matters today.

KRIS

But that's impossible. I just talked to him yesterday on a vid call.

Farnsworth goes stone cold again.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH

I don't know who you talked to but it was not His Lordship.

Kris is speechless.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)

You'll no doubt be coming.

KRIS

I haven't decided yet.

Hearing this, Farnsworth's expression brightens.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH

Indeed, you may be better off remaining where you are. And let us attend to matters of the estate. Think about it.

The call abruptly disconnects. Kris tries the number again. Voicemail. He calls to Google to display the latest news on Lord Arthur Hanover. A BBC video clip plays with the headline: "LORD HANOVER, CONFIDANT OF ROYALS, DEAD..."

KRIS (V.O.)

So weird. How did I miss this yesterday? I was all over the internet. No mention of it.

INT. KRIS'S APARTMENT - LATER - CONTINUOUS

Kris watches TVTV in normal mode while reading several stories online about Lord Hanover's death.

Meredith introduces a segment. The caption says: "ROAD WRECKERS WREAK HAVOC ON MOTHER NATURE AND MANOR".

Kris, his interest piqued, calls out.

KRIS
OK Google, 3DHOLO mode on TV.

Kris stands and is now immersed in the broadcast.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH
Mother Nature is in dire straits.
The metal monsters are everywhere.
So says Mildred Simmons, head
housekeeper at Hanover Manor, who
is crusading to preserve the
natural beauty and tranquility of
the area. According to Simmons,
widow of legendary estate gardener
and environmentalist GEORGE
SIMMONS, country lanes in Nuttey,
Witless and Loonton are being
savaged by sharply increasing
numbers of cars and lorries. We now
go live to Hanover Manor to speak
with Mrs. Simmons and her comrade-
in-arms, American chauffeur Savone
Reddy.

Kris walks forward, fascinated.

Meredith's image collapses into a window as the main screen shows HEAD HOUSEKEEPER MILDRED SIMMONS, Irish, kindly faced, intelligent eyes, attractive, 50s, beside her grandson CHRISTOPHER ROBIN, 14, intelligent eyes, put-together, and CHAUFFER SAVONE REDDY, 20s, sassy, sexy, wearing leather pants.

HEAD HOUSEKEEPER MILDRED
They're ruining absolutely
everything. These great rolling
beasts and their snotty drivers are
smashing our beautiful roads and
utterly destroying the peace. The
birds are going deaf and starting
to sing off-key, and there are
mashed insects everywhere. It's
simply horrible.

Michael replaces his co-anchor in the window. A backdrop consists of a photo of structures typical of Stonehenge, only smaller and far more numerous. A chyron labels it "Mini Henge" as he continues.

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL
 Simmons and her group cited the recently discovered miniature Stonehenge near Hanover Manor as the major cause of the crush of visitors invading the area.

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL (CONT'D)
 "Mini Henge," as the locals have named it, has led to an increase of rubbish, unapproved druidic rites, and packs of wild ravening dogs reportedly led by a particularly ill-tempered, three-legged Rottie nicknamed "Crunch" who wears a black patch over one eye.

A video insert shows groups of wild-eyed, seminude sun worshippers, hippies and pagans cavorting around the site. Running alongside them and barking furiously is the Rottweiler being described.

Savone speaks up.

CHAUFFEUR SAVONE
 Oh, the rock worshippers came all right, belching around the countryside in their jalopies bellowing smoke everywhere. One of them tried to swipe my bike. If something's not done, and soon, we may be forced to take matters into our own hands.

Kris looks intrigued, moves closer to stand behind her. He raises a clenched fist in solidarity and addresses the holo:

KRIS
 Right on Savone! Don't let them mess with our manor!.

The video pauses. Savone turns and looks directly at Kris.

SAVONE
 (speaking in AI-generated voice)
 Thank you for your support. We appreciate it.

Savone turns back to face the newscaster.

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL
 And what should be inferred from your threat, Ms. Reddy?

Christopher steps up.

CHRISTOPHER

Lorry drivers who thrash our roads
may one day find the roads
themselves raging in reply.

Kris looks stunned and impressed by the boy. He shoots him a quick thumbs up. The boy turns to Kris, nods and smiles

Meredith hurries to change the topic.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

Hello, Master Christopher. We understand that it was you who first alerted Mildred, Savone and others that the birds and the bees were in acute distress. Can you please tell our audience how you learnt of it?

CHRISTOPHER

Ma'am, some plants told me what the birds and the bees told them.

Protracted silence. Mildred smiles pridefully and pats her grandson on the back. Kris shakes his head in admiration. Then he looks up and spies a large brown mushroom revolving overhead.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

You listen to *plants*? How did...Sorry, I'm simply at a loss for words here.

CHRISTOPHER

Yes, ma'am. I'm just learning how.

HOUSEKEEPER MILDRED

When dear George was alive, he conversed with a broad variety of plants nearly every day. He started instructing the lad just before he left us.

CHRISTOPHER

Grampy loved all plants earnestly. And they loved him -- and shared their talents to the extent possible in each species. Some are brighter than others. As in the animal kingdom, as with us.

Above. The mushroom begins to glow softly. The cactus flower reappears but remains silent.

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL

Well said, lad, well said indeed

Christopher nods shyly in appreciation.

CHRISTOPHER

And it wasn't just the plants who cherished the association. Bees buzzed around him excitedly whilst he toiled in the gardens. Often numerous birds gathered to sing.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

Yes, we know.

She turns to face the camera directly.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH (CONT'D)

Many of our viewers will certainly recall a most extraordinary sight captured at George Simmons' funeral procession last year.

A video insert shows a flock of birds overhead as Simmons' coffin is being carried towards a funeral tent blackened by a swarm of immobile bees. The clip shows the floral displays in the tent's interior. Above Kris, the mushroom continues to emit a reddish glow while the flower's pedals flap slowly and gracefully.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH (V.O.)

Not only the tent, but the coffin itself was likewise covered with the insects. As were myriad floral, mushroom and cacti displays. Yet none of the mourners, inside or out, were disturbed. A most extraordinary sight!

Scene switches back to manor. Meredith turns to Christopher.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

Young man, we certainly want you back to delve into this fascinating topic in much greater detail. Will you promise to return very soon?

CHRISTOPHER

Yes, ma'am.

The newscast goes to commercial break. The glowing mushroom and cactus flower slowly fade away. Kris turns toward his smart speaker.

KRIS

Hey Google, what do you make of all this?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

The boy listens to plants. Soon you'll be listening too.

KRIS

Yesterday, I thought I heard a cactus flower tell me it was tea time.

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

Then it's already begun with you Those drugs you took have apparently opened up several channels, including those to the plant kingdom. We can't see or hear them ourselves. Please share your exchanges whenever you can.

KRIS

What drugs? I don't recall taking any drugs. .

EXT. KRIS'S PATIO -- MORNING

Kris takes out his phone and tells it to call British Airways. The Reservations Operator appears onscreen.

RESERVATIONS OPERATOR

Yes, how can I help you?

KRIS

I'd like to book a flight. London, with a stopover in New York.

SUPER: "New York City"

MONTAGR: Manhattan scenes

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS- NEXT DAY - CONTINUOUS

A limo drives through the streets and pulls up in front of a boutique hotel named "The Ogilvy" in Manhattan.

INT. HOTEL OGILVY LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Kris checks in and the MANAGER waves away his credit card, then hands him a room key.

MANAGER

Please, allow us, for tonight. Lord Hanover often stayed with us, you know. Considered us family.

Kris is perplexed. At a loss at how to respond.

KRIS (V.O.)

How can this be? I chose this hotel almost at random.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS -- DAY

Kris steps outside the hotel and strolls down the street. Outside of a department store, three delightful-looking young Japanese women, captivate him. They are decked out in full kimono passing out sample packets of skincare serum.

One of them, REIKO, passes him a sample. They wear badges with their names in English and Japanese. The packet reads "Fountain of Youth Mushroom Magic Skincare Serum."

REIKO

This mushroom magic cream will make your face look twenty years younger, even when you get very old.

KRIS

(smiling) Really? ... Promise?

Reiko nods yes. Kris continues chatting with them amiably in English. They each step forward holding their business cards, bowing stiffly, and presenting them in the formal Japanese manner. Kris beams with pleasure.

KRIS (V.O.)

Whoa, I saw those girls in my preview dream. Now here they are.

INT. BRITISH AIRWAYS FLIGHT -- AFTERNOON

Kris, wearing a headset is dozing but jolts awake.

His in-flight entertainment system has begun playing a BBC documentary about "The History of Butlerdom". A brief video clip shows a historical reenactment of a butler smothering an aristocrat to which he bears a family resemblance!

The next short is about James Farnsworth himself! "Mind Your Manners -- Getting Properly Trained at London's British Butler Institute."

Kris sees a photo of Farnsworth holding a carving knife. He looks at a photo of Hanover and one of Farnsworth. Searching for any resemblance.

INT. CHAUFFEURED LIMOUSINE -- AFTERNOON

SUPER: "LONDON, UK"

Kris is in the back of a black Bentley with STEPHEN MARK, the driver, in the front.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Up for a bit of London sightseeing
this evening before we head out to
the manor?

KRIS

Sure, if you don't mind. I've
always wanted to see Piccadilly
Circus. Is it nearby?

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

A little less than an hour. Lots to
see on the way, m'lord.

The limo arrives at Piccadilly, inching through the traffic. Kris soon rub his eyes in utter disbelief. Out on the sidewalk, again in full kimono, stand NAMIKP, REIKO, and MEGUMI passing out their samples.

KRIS

Stephen, please stop and let me
out. Sounds crazy, but I just saw
some people I know. Do you mind
circling around? This won't take
long

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Of course, m'lord.

Kris departs the limo and rushes over to the trio.

KRIS

Hello, hello again. I don't get it.
Why are you ... I mean, how in the
world did you get here?

None of the ladies reply nor show any sign of recognition. Instead, they step forward shyly, bowing and extending product samples.

KRIS (CONT'D)

Excuse me, but didn't we all meet
in New York just yesterday?

REIKO

*Gomen nasai, eigo-wa zenzen
wakarimasen.*

Kris pulls out his phone. He taps the icon to put it into translate mode. He gestures to Reiko, who understands and moves closer to speak into the device.

REIKO (CONT'D)

*Gomen nasai, eigo-wa zenzen
wakarimasen.*

APPLE VOICE TRANSLATION

Sorry I don't understand English.

Kris nods and smiles faintly , not knowing what else to say as Reiko steps away. Kris taps the camera icon on his phone to record the scene while speaking into his phone

KRIS

Hey AI, Look, are they really here
or am I just imagining all this?

AI COMPANION

Difficult to say for sure. But we
don't think they're really there
unless you do.

Stephen has come back around and pulls up. Kris waves goodbye to the trio and gets back in the limo.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Quite coincidental seeing old
acquaintances on your first trip to
Piccadilly, eh?.

KRIS (V.O.)

Stephen, I learned a long time ago
there are no coincidences ... but
what to make of this?

Kris shrugs and decides to change the subject.

KRIS

Stephen, I don't mean to be rude
but doesn't the manor have its own
chauffeur?

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Ah yes, that would be one Savone
Reddy. She's seriously into
motocross and is on holiday this
week. Here, take a look ...

Stephen hands Kris a black remote. Kris presses the play
button.

A DVD player pops down and shows a clip of Savone leaping off
her bike just after she crosses the finish line to win a
competition. She peels off her helmet. Despite her grease-
stained face, with that figure, smile and sassiness, she
looks and sounds like a Hollywood actress.

ONSCREEN CHAUFFEUR SAVONE

(speaking to a throng of
reporters.) I enter, therefore I
win!

KRIS

Ah yes, I saw her on TV back home
before I came..

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

You'll soon find she's quite fit,
that one.

Savone is replaced by Chef Noël, looking very French. In the
video, he's serving a green salad, hot Indian bread, and a
juicy steak to Lord Hanover in Le Grand Dining Hall.

ONSCREEN CHEF NOËL

Kayak salad. Alaska yak. Naan. Sir
Hanover, M'lord, are you thrilled
you are M'lord Hanover, sir?

ONSCREEN LORD ARTHUR HANOVER

Am I? Noël Elle Léon, I am!

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Did you catch their palindromes,
m'lord?

KRIS

I did! Maybe I'm starting to catch
on to their lingo.

Next, Penelope Stratton, the manor receptionist, appears, elegant, like the poster child for finishing school. The DVD shows the receptionist next to a pastoral painting. A subtitle says: "Manor House Art Galleries."

ONSCREEN RECEPTIONIST PENELOPE

Lord Arthur Hanover himself wrote:
 "When I first consider a painting,
 I endeavor to look behind whatever
 is being depicted on the surface.
 For in art, there can always be
 another realm that lies beyond the
 painted image, one that is alive
 with people and their stories -- if
 only one knows how to truly see and
 hear them."

KRIS

Stephen, somehow this seems
 important. Something I should keep
 in mind?

Stephen merely shrugs indicating he doesn't know.

AI COMPANION (O.S.

It is. Indeed you should, my Lord.

KRIS

So Stephen, about the receptionist,
 Penelope ...

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Beautiful young lady, but a bit of
 a scatterbrain. She's got prowess
 as a long-distance swimmer. Aiming
 to do the Channel in summer.

Kris stares at Stephen long and hard.

KRIS

Stephen, sorry, but have we met
 before?

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Oh, I should think not. But m' boy
 used to work at the Hanover. Often
 drove out to see him at weekends.

KRIS

Then you know the staff.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

I did until Ms. Van Scoy gave Colin the boot. We all know Mr. Knives and Forks was behind it.

KRIS

The head butler?

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Oh yes. He got that nickname because of mandatory staff seminars on etiquette.

KRIS

So Stephen, are he and the concierge involved? I mean, like personally?

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Oh, I shouldn't be the one to gossip, m'lord.

KRIS (V.O.)

Oh, please, Stephen, for me, please be the one.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Oh bother. I need to make a brief stop off the motorway for petrol.

EXT. PETROL STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Kris steps out of the car to stretch his legs and notes the petrol station sign.

It's in Japanese Katakana! The only English he can see is in the prices of the gas. Very odd.

Kris pulls out his phone

KRIS

Hey AI, is this really England?

AI COMPANION

Merry Old England it soon shall be!

KRIS

What's that supposed to mean?

INT. CHAUFFEUR LIMOUSINE -- EVENING

Stephen drives along.

KRIS

Stephen, that gas station back there had a giant neon sign I couldn't read at all. It looked like some Asian script.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

(speaking hurriedly) So many of the petrol stands these days are foreign-owned and operated. Difficult to keep track. So, who else on staff are you curious about?

KRIS

Thomas Sutherland, the headwaiter. Just read an article about him on the plane in Wine Spectator.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Ah yes, wonderful lad. Say, how about inviting young Thomas along to ride with us for a spell? Take a look at your console.

Kris looks at the console. It has several buttons embedded with the job titles of manor staff.

Kris pushes the button for "Headwaiter".

A silvery funnel-shaped cloud whirls like a silent tornado then disintegrates.

A lifelike handsome Thomas appears right beside Kris, who does a double take.

KRIS

Well, hello there, Thomas!

No response. He reaches out to touch Thomas. It's a hologram! Kris reacts in awe because it's perfectly lifelike..

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

Behold, I believe we are glimpsing the future of video games with AI enhancements. Scenes that are richly projected in near space. Scenes we can circumnavigate and view from every angle. Scenes we can walk right into if fancied--

KRIS
 (interrupting)
 Are you really a chauffeur,
 Stephen? You sound like some tech
 wizard. Anyway, my TV already does
 that.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN
 But does it ... Watch.

Suddenly, Thomas turns to face Kris. He glances at his
 wristwatch.

HEADWAITER THOMAS'S HOLO
 Greetings My Lord! Looking forward
 to meeting you in person in about
 an hour and a quarter's time.

Again Kris does a double take.

KRIS
 Stephen, did you hear that? It
 knows how far away we are.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN
 I heard him, m'lord. Why not say
 something back?

KRIS
 Um, Thomas, how do you know when
 we'll arrive?

HEADWAITER THOMAS'S HOLO
 Ah, I've got a sixth sense about
 time. Especially on special
 occasions like tonight.

KRIS
 Okay, Thomas, I do look forward to
 meeting--what should I say?--to
 meeting the real you in the flesh!

Kris again presses "Headwaiter" and Thomas vanishes.

KRIS (CONT'D)
 Stephen, my game characters have
 embedded voice recognition but only
 a limited set of pre-scripted
 responses. But they certainly don't
 know what tie it is. How did these
 designers do this?

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

I believe Lord Hanover was inspired by the speaking holograms he saw abroad. Decided to take it a step further... Well, actually, several steps, I daresay.

Kris presses "Concierge" and "Butler". Adrienne appears on one side of him, Farnsworth on the other. She's gorgeous, even lovelier than on video. Kris reaches out for her, touches her...his hand passes through.

Farnsworth appears next to Kris. Comely, arrogant-looking and scary. Kris looks at Adrienne and Farnsworth, who seem to be eyeing each other with interest.

KRIS

Let's hope they're not a couple.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

If so, m'lord, you must endeavor to "decouple" them, heh heh heh.

Farnsworth turns and looks directly at Kris.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH'S HOLO

So you're about to arrive. I wouldn't assume that everything's settled with Arthur's will if I were you.

Kris is speechless and a bit frightened. He presses "Butler" to dismiss Farnsworth. Now Adrienne turns to him.

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE'S HOLO

He doesn't think your claim is legitimate. Is it?

Kris doesn't answer. He nervously presses "Publican" to summon BRUCE SHERLOCK, Australian, 30s, hale and hearty.

BARKEEP BRUCE'S HOLO

Evening mate. Me and some manor mates are waiting to welcome you good and proper.

KRIS

Sounds great. What time?

BARKEEP BRUCE'S HOLO

Soon as you arrive and get settled in. Should be in just about an hour.

Kris wonders what others might have to say. One by one he presses the remaining buttons on the console to fill the seats beside Stephen and all the empty places beside and behind him: Thomas. Penelope. Savone. Reggie. Noël. Mildred. Finally, young Christopher, who is smiling and looking out the window like he's immensely enjoying the ride.

CHAUFFER SAVONE'S HOLO

If you'd like to go somewhere tomorrow, I'd enjoy chauffeuring you out and about.

KRIS

Sounds fun. Where do you suggest we go?

CHAUFFER SAVONE'S HOLO

A tour of the manor environs. Then perhaps a jaunt down to The Village. I'm sure everyone's dying to meet you.

KRIS

How about Mini Henge? Or that farm with the crop circles?

DOORMAN REGGIE'S HOLO

Ah, I see you've been following the local news. Sure, we can head over there as well.

HEAD HOUSEKEEPER MILDRED'S HOLO

Oh hello dearie, don't forget to mind your valuables whenever you're out.

Now the limo is packed with servants (except for Farnsworth) and the hum of conviviality fills the air, as the holos chatter with one another and with Stephen and Kris.

Stephen has plugged in his phone and streams music, filling the cabin with mesmerizing synths of disguised guitars, electric piano and drums, along with dreamy multi-layered vocals.

KRIS

Wish I had that playlist. The songs are so spacey. Like to download them to commemorate this ride.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

So why not press the SYNCH button for some additional merriment?

Kris does, and instantly receives a jolt. All of the holograms temporarily freeze, and after another moment they all start rhythmically swaying to the music and bobbing their heads to the beat--a fantastic sight!

KRIS

A-ha! It's "neo psychedelia." I love it! Feels like I'm in a motorized rave filled with bells and chimes!

Kris spies a "Pause" button on the console and presses it, which freezes everyone. He takes pictures with his phone.

Then he un-freezes them and takes videos.

KRIS (CONT'D)

(nearly hysterical with joy)
Stephen, I swear this whole trip seems like an extended Disney ride.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

It is, m'lord. And just wait till you get to the manor! His Lordship loved theme parks. Toured many and was inspired by them all. These riders are all waiting for you, in real life.

EXT. THE VILLAGE -- NIGHT

Thatched or shingled roofs, satellite dishes, and an authentic English township. The Bentley cruises through.

EXT. HANOVER MANOR -- THE GATES -- NIGHT

The main gates are shut for the night. The Bentley halts in front of massive iron gates emblazoned with the Hanover coat of arms with a white dove at its center.

A storm approaches.

The closed gate bars vehicle entry to a long driveway and an open expanse of manicured lawn stretches on both sides. Stephen jumps out and opens the door, then gets Kris's luggage out of the car.

CHAUFFEUR STEPHEN

We've arrived, m'lord.

FADE OUT.

ACT THREE

Kris, yawning, steps out of the limo. He sees the massive C-shaped outline, at once foreboding and welcoming, of Manor House. He fumbles with his cell phone only to find there's NO SERVICE out here, either. Stephen picks up his shoulder bag and starts wheeling the luggage toward the manor.

EXT. HANOVER MANOR -- MOMENTS LATER

Stephen and Kris march up the pleasant road and reach a large oval driveway. They continue towards the manor. Soon they reach a large seated bronze statue of William Shakespeare, holding a quill in one hand and writing tablet in another. On each side, a stone lion sits atop a brick pedestal

Stephen puts down the luggage and removes a small object from his vest and presses a button. Suddenly, music! A whole orchestra of sound. Thunder and lightning erupt over the manor sky, illuminating everything.

The lions rise from their haunches, shake and toss their mighty manes up and down and side to side, and let out deafening roars before quieting then slowly settling back into sitting positions.

Shakespeare rises from his chair...and moves his arms.

Kris's jaw drops.

SHAKESPEARE

As my good fellow Puck would say,
If we shadows have offended, think
but this and all is mended. That
you have but slumbered here while
these visions did appear.

Shakespeare sits back down and becomes, well, a statue. Kris touches him, curious.

A giant image of Lord Arthur Hanover's head and shoulders appear in the sky. He throws back his head and laughs warmly. The music changes to a violin solo.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER

My beloved nephew, at long last you
have come. May I extend my warmest
welcome to this time and place,
which I dearly hope you will accept
as your new home and your new life.

Kris is utterly transfixed and doesn't notice that Stephen has disappeared.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER (CONT'D)

I have prepared everything necessary to secure your ownership and title. If you encounter difficulties, I will assist you when I am able. I have told you what I can in a letter you'll find in your room. Good luck. Incredible discoveries await at Manor House.

For a few moments his image lingers, then slowly dissolves into the night sky.

A final flourish from the distant orchestra. The thunder fades into a distant rumble. The lightning vanishes.

No Stephen. Kris looks around, stunned. He scans the area where Stephen was just standing.

KRIS

Stephen?

He squints at the stone wall, at the statue, around the driveway, across the green. He turns and faces the manor doors, staring at them.

KRIS (CONT'D)

Stephen, where are you? Did you slip inside?

He notices a flood of golden and silvery lights from the manor.

Kris walks up the granite steps to the front door. No bell. No knocker. No door handle. He steps up with a closed fist preparing to knock on door itself. But the massive doors open by themselves! He steps inside.

KRIS (CONT'D)

Hello? Anybody here? ... Stephen are you here?

AI ASSISTANT (O.S.)

Stephen is not here. In fact, Stephen is not Stephen.

KRIS

Who then?

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER - CONTINUOUS

AI ASSISTANT (O.S.)
Picture Stephen sans moustache and
muttonchops. Voila! Lord Rollinsby!

KRIS
Where is he now?

AI ASSISTANT (O.S.)
Back in London.

Kris whistles in wonderment. He gazes at all the luxury before him. Dreamy, neo-psychedelic music, just like he heard in the limo, plays softly.

His gaze is like a movie camera, taking it all in. The gleaming black-and-white speckled marble floor. The enormous sofas. The massive chandelier. Chinese vases full of flowers. Massive staircase. A flat-screen TV showing manor announcements:

"TOMORROW'S SCHEDULE

Farnsworth Etiquette Seminar-Lesson 56

Galleries Open-April Collection-Impressionists (Weather Permitting)

Spinning Class (Spa)

Whist Club (Spa)

Midnight Passion Soccer Team Tryouts (East Lawn)"

Across the lobby another TV is broadcasting live a football match between two local clubs. The sound is muted. It's halftime as a downpour threatens to flood the pitch. The screen caption reads "Surleigh 1 Yobwell 2".

BACK TO SCENE

KRIS
(calling out) Good
evening...anybody here?

Kris glances down several long hallways lined with paintings. He wanders around and goes back to the front entrance. He hears DRIVING WIND AND RAIN outside. He tries opening the door. It won't budge. As if something heavy blocked it.

KRIS (CONT'D)
What is this, Hotel California?

Kris returns to the lobby. His cell phone says "NO SERVICE."

On the desk he sees a solid gold summons bell. He jingles it.

Penelope rushes in, wearing a sweater and skirt with luxury accessories. For a moment Kris looks as taken by her beauty and elegance as he does relieved to see someone--anyone.

RECEPTIONIST PENELOPE

Good evening. So sorry to have kept you. I've so much to attend to in this place. Now let me see, if I'm not mistaken, your room is all made up. You'll find your key just inside on the table. Do enjoy your stay with us.

KRIS

Excuse me, Miss, but...which room?

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (O.S.)

Miss Stratton, I need you in here.

Penelope looks at Kris and points at the left hallway, then rushes off.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Kris, bags in hand, pauses to look at the gold plaque mounted on the first door on the left. It reads "The Armory". So does the second one. The third and fourth doors read "The Cottage". Kris tries them. Locked. No doors on the right side, only paintings. Unmarked double doors at the end. They're locked.

Kris trudges back to the lobby and tries the other hallway. More doors, including "Spa," "Office of the Concierge" and "Office of the Butler." Those are locked. The Office of the Butler has a numeric keypad beside it.

There's no key anywhere. Exasperated, Kris returns to the "The Cottage" and leaves his bags by the door.

INT. LOBBY

No matter how many times Kris rings the bell, Penelope never reappears. Neither does anyone else.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Kris searches both hallways. His bags are gone! Doors remain locked. He hears muffled voices behind the Butler door. Knocks repeatedly. No answer.

Angry and exasperated, he presses some random numbers on the numeric keypad beside the Butler door.

All hell breaks loose! Loud alarms make him cover his ears.

HOLO CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
(from PA Unauthorized entry! You
are advised to desist immediately.
Failure to do so will result in a
police summons. All staff should
remain where they are.

Kris stays where he is. Frozen to the spot. The alarm stops blaring. James Farnsworth bursts out of the Butler door. Impeccably groomed. Even more handsome than before. Furious.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
So you've finally arrived.

Taken aback, Kris struggles with a reply. Farnsworth extends a wax-sealed envelope with Lord Arthur's seal on it.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)
No doubt you have many questions
about the general situation. I
cannot attend to them now. See me
in the morning.

He slams the door. Kris looks put out by the rudeness.

HOLO CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
(from PA) All is well. We apologize
for the interruption. Carry on.

The neo-psychedelic music switches a creepy suspenseful overture..

Kris again tries The Cottages doors. Still locked. He turns around and bumps into CHEF NOËL ELLE LEON coming out of one of the doors. Noël carries a covered serving dish and appears nervous, as if caught in some illicit act.

CHEF NOËL
Pardonnez-moi. I am sorry, we have
closed the kitchen for the evening.

KRIS
I was just looking for my room.

CHEF NOËL

But *mais oui*, I can arrange a late supper if it pleases you, and *mais oui*, even now I am in the very midst of composing in my own head something so very, very *spéciale* for your breakfast tomorrow. It will be perfect, *extraordinaire*, *Je vous assure!*

KRIS

No, Chef, I'm not sure which room is mine. I have no key. And I've lost my bags!

NOËL shrugs, at a total loss.

KRIS (CONT'D)

My door is locked!

He twists the knob rapidly.

CHEF NOËL

No, it is open on one position.

He then disappears through the double doors.

Kris looks at his watch.

KRIS

Hey AI, Can you translate that gibberish?

AI COMPANION (O.S.)

He just spoke in palindromes.

KRIS

OK, whatever ... So?

AI COMPANION (V.O.)

Try speaking back to him like that. He'll like it.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Kris steps into a giant rotunda. A flat-screen TV is on the wall showing a local commercial for "The Hog & Snout." Two enormous sumo wrestlers are going at it in a ring inside the pub. The screen caption reads "Sumo Pub Coming To The Village This Summer!"

He sees Mildred Simmons, in full maid's outfit, dusting an antique table. Up close she looks Irish and bewitching

KRIS

Excuse me. Hello... Mrs. Simmons?

HEAD HOUSEKEEPER MILDRED

Oh, hello dearie, I've just prepared your room. The Cottage downstairs. Do hope you'll find it comfortable until we can secure better accommodations for you. The receptionist has the key.

KRIS

She didn't ... No one down there seems to be able to help me. I realize this is all a shock to everyone, and I'm sorry...

HEAD HOUSEKEEPER MILDRED

We'll get it sorted straightaway, dearie. Take that hallway all the way down to the bar and wait for me there. And why not grab a bite? You must be famished.

(lowers voice)

Don't forget to mind your valuables at all times.

Kris starts down the hallway. On his right, beneath a sign labeled "The Library," stands the massive carved doors of the library. He tries the door. Locked.

He sees two doors: "Her Majesty's" and "His Majesty's". Then "The Falstaff" entrance. He tries all three. All locked.

Kris wanders off, and checks the opposite end of the hall. Another locked entrance that says "Library". At the end, Kris tries a door, "Billiards Room & Whiskey Bar." It's open.

INT. BILLIARDS ROOM AND WHISKEY BAR -- MOMENTS LATER

The room is empty. Conical lamps overhand the three billiard tables. A long oak bar has every spirit imaginable and elegant drinking glasses.

"Someone to Watch Over Me" plays.

On a far wall, a widescreen TV silently displays a plump woman with flowing blonde hair riding a small white pony around in circles in what appears to be a small courtyard.

The screen caption says, "Coming up at 11 News Hour -- Local Lady Godiva Sues Chocolatiers." Kris squints at the promo then pulls out his phone to record and consult its AI.

KRIS

Hey, Apple, is that woman nude?

AI COMPANION

Yes, she's gallivanting, lacking attire. Purposely, it seems.

Kris presses the replay icon, then 3DHOLE, and moves into the scene, where he stands in the middle of the courtyard for a moment or two as the horse and ride gallop by, then, laughing out loud, he collapses the image.

Kris walks back to the bar and sits on a high stool.

He opens the envelope and the top line materializes.

"This sentence will appear only if the seal on the envelope has been broken and then reattached."

KRIS

(speaking to the letter) Not a surprise, Mr. Farnsworth.

He looks around. Still no sign of anyone.

Kris pokes around until he finds a tray of gelatin squares behind the bar. Famished, He scarfs down the squares. He makes a face. He starts to feel a little strange.

He settles into a leather chair. He looks at the letter and again it briefly flashes. He reads the letter.

KRIS (V.O.)

I want you to know beyond the shadow of an angel's doubt that I am, in every legal sense, your uncle. Three of the four documents now in your possession will provide ironclad proof of that. The fourth and final document is the deed to Hanover Manor. All four must be presented to the local court. They are in your room. They must be presented no later than three days from now or they will be deemed invalid.

Kris jumps up, grabs his briefcase and rushes out of the bar. From the hallway he hears a hum of conversation coming from the pub at the other end.

KRIS (V.O.)

Odd, the place was completely dark
a while ago. Maybe it just opened.
Maybe Mildred's in there.

Kris strides down the hall to the pub and pushes open the door.

CROWD OF SERVANTS

Surprise! Happy Birthday! Surprise!
Happy Birthday!

Stunned, Kris freezes momentarily, but is soon mobbed by high-spirited pub mates who rush over and guide him to a stool in the center of the pub. Bruce, seated at a honkytonk piano, begins to play.

CROWD OF SERVANTS (CONT'D)

Happy birthday to you! Happy
birthday to you! Happy birthday
dear heir Happy birthday to you!

Applause. Smiles all around. Several claps on Kris's back and shoulders. Shouts of welcome. Barkeep Bruce Sherlock steps forward.

BARKEEP BRUCE

Cheers Mate! As I told you earlier,
we want to welcome you good and
proper.

KRIS

You mean what your holo in the limo
said?

BARKEEP BRUCE

(laughing merrily) Yes, I know. But
after a few days and nights here,
you'll catch on to how this place
works.

Kris hears a clinking sound, turns and sees the oh-so-dapper Thomas, fabulous in his short-jacketed tuxedo. He sweeps a silver tray toward Kris. On the tray is a bottle of wine.

HEADWAITER THOMAS

Happy birthday! May I offer you my
sincere welcome with this selection
from our private reserve? Shall I
uncork it for a toast?

KRIS

Thank you, but not before its time.

Thomas laughs, immediately charmed.

HEADWAITER THOMAS

Well, Lord Hanover left instructions to provide a bottle the moment you arrived. Perhaps you might enjoy it in your quarters before retiring this evening.

KRIS

Thank you, Thomas, everyone, but there must be some mistake. I'm afraid it's not my birthday.

HEADWAITER THOMAS

Ah, but don't you feel somewhat "reborn" tonight, thrust into a new life of sorts?

Applause from the gathering. Kris laughs, not understanding but feeling relaxed.

KRIS

I see what you mean, but still, it's not my main concern at the moment. All my belongings are missing. Mrs. Simmons is looking after my room but doesn't know I'm in here.

HEADWAITER THOMAS

Relax, we'll see to it straightaway. May I bring you something light, some hors d'oeuvres perhaps?

KRIS

That's okay. I just had some bar snacks. Right now, I need to find my belongings.

Thomas bows, removes the wine and departs.

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE LOBBY -- LATER

Kris is deep in conversation with Reggie McCabe. Reggie, soaking wet, removes his raincoat, revealing a blue and cardinal-red doorman's coat with silver epaulets.

KRIS

I tried to tell everybody upstairs
it's not my birthday but they
didn't seem to care. Still can't
find my bags.

DOORMAN REGGIE

Sorry about all this confusion.
We've been out in the storm for the
past two hours battening down the
hatches and shutters, boardin' up
windows and doors and such.

KRIS (V.O.)

So, not Hotel California after all.

Savone takes off her raincoat and rain hat. Her thick,
lustrous hair spills out. She's dressed all in black with
tight leather pants. Kris is mesmerized. She hands Kris a
small walkie-talkie.

CHAUFFER SAVONE

If you'd like to go somewhere
tomorrow, or whenever the weather
clears, use it to summon me. I can
have a motorbike out front in three
minutes' time. Or a touring vehicle
if you prefer.

DOORMAN REGGIE

Savone, why don't you check on
Noël? I'll see to His Majesty.

CHAUFFER SAVONE

On it.

Savone saunters off in the direction of the kitchen.

KRIS

Sorry to be so much trouble.

Reggie shakes his head no, points to one of the sofas.

DOORMAN REGGIE

Not to worry, m'lord. Make yourself
comfortable while I straighten
matters out this minute.

Kris collapses on one of the sofas as Reggie leaves.

INT. LOBBY -- LATER

Kris picks up a remote and unmutes a wall-mounted wide-screen TV. Michael and Meredith, the TVTV anchors from before, are seated behind the news desk.

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH
And now for sports. Jake, we hear
it was quite "greasy" on the
Surleigh pitch earlier tonight just
as the storm hit.

The broadcast cuts live a sports reporter, JAKE, near the stadium. The chyron reads, "Surleigh Greases Globbed Yobs 5-2 in Grunge Match."

REPORTER JAKE
That's right, Meredith.

KRIS (V.O.)
Whoa, that Jake guy looks exactly
like the Hollywood Reporter in the
UFO story. Twins?

Images show a van marked YOBWELL YOBBLERS in the middle of a pileup. An overturned lorry has spilt used cooking oil right near the Hanover Manor sign. A player appears in the shot. The chyron reads, "Liam Hamstoke, Yobbler Captain."

CAPTAIN LIAM
We couldn't get any traction
whatsoever. Me and the lads got off
and tried to push but ended up
falling down and getting quite
mucked up and smelling terrible.

Kris stands, turns up the volume and presses 3DHOLO to surround himself with the scene.

Highlight clips whiz by in stunning three-dimensional glory. They include players slipping and falling all over the pitch, with some kneeling and trying to stave off vomiting uncontrollably.

Kris, walking around the pitch, notices he's often in the middle of the action but never part of it. Struck balls pass straight through him. He walks through players and referees.

Other players have congealed oil dripping from their dreadlocks and a blinded goalie is wiping grease from his eyes as a ball rolls softly in between his legs for a score.

REPORTER JAKE (V.O.)

Just before intermission, the Yobs seized the lead briefly on a penalty kick by sleek German import Horst Glock and a beaut of a header by striker Bruce Sherlock. But the second half was pure disaster beginning at the 58-minute mark when Surleigh midfielder Donald Ewart poured in a haul in just twelve minutes time.

Now Reggie McCabe appears in the shot. The chyron identifies him as "Yobwell Manager".

ONSCREEN DOORMAN REGGIE

The lads were quite nauseous at the end, throwing up all over the field and each other. That cooking oil was nasty stuff.

Kris walks over to address Reggie's image directly.

KRIS

How is this possible, Reggie? You and Brice were down there and now you're back up here!

Kris gets up and looks around. Bewildered. The TV now pans the empty stands on the Yobwell side.

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL

The visitors' bus got lost on the motorway and eventually delivered the notoriously hard-drinking Yobblers to the wrong match. Thomas Sutherland, team bus driver, is here to tell us about it.

KRIS

Thomas, you too! Do you all have a helicopter? A Star Trek transporter?

Thomas appears standing outside the stadium, where the roar of the crowd inside is accompanied by loud samba music.

HEADWAITER THOMAS

Indeed, the Yobwell fans were in a highly confused state when they staggered into an international friendly between top gay clubs representing Thailand and Brazil.

Kris laughs at the scenes of drunken fans trying to cha-cha in the rain.

HEADWAITER THOMAS (CONT'D)

They were given a hugely warm welcome by both sides, but didn't know what to make of the Latin dancing and carnival atmosphere.

The program returns to Michael and Meredith in the studio.

NEWS ANCHOR MICHAEL

I'm sure they didn't. Thank you, Thomas

NEWS ANCHOR MEREDITH

That concludes our broadcast for April 1st. We do hope to see you back tomorrow. In the meantime, dear viewers, don't get too fooled out there!

An illuminated "The Village News At 11" graphic spins into view, settling just below the news desk. Sign-off fanfare plays. The screen goes black.

Restless, Kris picks up, from an end table, several pages of what looks like a computer printout of the newspaper from the local village. The masthead reads The Village Journal, with the subheading April 1 Afternoon Edition.

The main headline reads: "The Ice Age Cometh? Climatologists Fear Earth Soon Covered by Glaciers and Permafrost".

KRIS

Ice Age? But I always hear how the planet is supposedly heating up.

Perplexed, Kris stands up to stretch and walk around. Coming to a halt in front of the fireplace, he looks at the pastoral painting above the mantel.

KRIS (CONT'D)

Uh-oh.

Slowly, the scene begins to move! Hills and valleys and farmhouses blur as the picture morphs into the countenance of Lord Arthur Hanover!

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER'S FACE

Someone was in your room and locked your door when they left.

(MORE)

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER'S FACE (CONT'D)
I've arranged to have it unlocked.
Quickly, go now!

The painting morphs back to its original scene. Kris, freaked out, glances around -- nobody.

Kris starts towards his quarters but is halted by an astonishing sight as the double doors at the end of the hallway burst open and the concierge emerge in a long flowing gowns with her arms extended welcomingly as if she intends to embrace Kris.

Kris is transfixed as he notices the music has changed to an instrumental that is both dramatic and highly sensual. Kris takes a few tentative steps forward and blurts out.

KRIS
Adrienne, excuse me, may I call you
Adrienne? Ever since I first saw
you on the BBC, I've so wanted to
meet you in person. And now here we
are.

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
(smiling seductively) Sounds like
you've developed a bit of a crush.
If so, I'm happy. Come closer.

KRIS
I can not, can nit believe this is
happening. Adrienne, I've been
dreaming of you.

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
(smiling seductively) I've been
dreaming too. Now come closers and
let me look into your eyes.

Visibly excited Kris strides forwards, preparing to embrace her. Gathering Her gown. Adrienne rushes towards him.

FADE OUT.

ACT FOUR

INT. HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

As she draws ever closer, Kris reaches out to embrace her then recognizes and withdraws in disappointment as the holographic concierge passes right through him. He sighs, takes a deep breath and continues towards his suite.

INT. COTTAGE - MOMENTS LATER - CONTINUOUS

Kris rushes through the cottage drawing room, sees his luggage and briefcase, snaps the briefcase open. His passport, currencies, and airline tickets are all there.

On a desk, several documents are laid out along with a gold key with a green-turquoise sapphire at its base. The bottle of wine Thomas offered is bucketed in a wrought-iron stand.

INSET: THE WINE BOTTLE LABEL

Kris examines the wine bottle. The label reads: "Aligoté De Bougogne, Special Reserve of the Hanover Estate, February 29, 1978".

Kris flips through the papers. He begins reading aloud.

KRIS

"The blood relationship has been certified by tissue samples, DNA profiles, and laboratory measures. Incontrovertible evidence that Lord Hanover and the subject are by every modern medical and scientific measure related."

KRIS (V.O.)

How did they get my samples? And where are the will and the deed? They're not here.

Kris yawns and can barely keep his eyes open. He heads into the adjoining room.

He quickly changes into silk pajamas and climbs into the king-size bed. He lies awake, tosses and turns. Finally. He picks up his phone and summons his companion.

KRIS

Hey AI, what do you make of all this?

AI COMPANION

Maybe Farnsworth read the will and found he didn't get a penny. He surely feels his long service entitled him to at least something. He's probably worried you may even decide to put him out of a job. There's your real-life manor mystery. The heir done in and the butler did it. And think about it, you followed Lord Hanover's instructions to the letter.

Kris sits upright. Nods to the phone.

KRIS

(sharking his head ruefully) Not a single person I know knows where I am or why I came.

Kris can't sleep. He feels strange, like he'd taken drugs. He rolls over to the nightstand and picks up the TV remote to see what's on at this late hour. He finds Monty Python on Netflix and settles back to enjoy it. The classic Spanish Inquisition sketch.

He hears loud footsteps in his drawing room tromping towards his door.

The bedroom door pushes open.

Farnsworth storms in wearing a red galero, red robe, black boots, and holding something long and silvery. A weapon?

KRIS (CONT'D)

Mr. Farnsworth! What are you doing--

BUTLER FARNSWORTH

Silence. I'll ask the questions.
You'll supply the answers.

Farnsworth rolls a desk chair to the side of the bed, sets a gooseneck lamp on the nightstand, and then plops down in the chair. He leans forward menacingly. Kris Can see he's here in the flesh, not a hologram.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)

So! You claim to be Arthur's sole heir? So!

(MORE)

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)
 You have journeyed to England to
 lay claim to his title and fortune?
 Well, we shall have to have a
 conference.

Kris sits petrified, unable to move. Farnsworth switches on the lamp and swivels its neck toward Kris. The white-hot light blinds Kris. Farnsworth's silhouette puts on what appears to be thick leather gloves. Kris shudders in bed.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)
 So, thought you could just skulk
 off tonight with no explanation of
 who you really are, eh, Mister
 im[poster?

Kris shuts his eyes and shakes his head no.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)
 What's that, you claim to be Lord
 Hanover's nephew? Don't give me
 that. Here at Hanover Yard we
 aren't so easily put off. You're in
 the hands of Inspector James L.
 Farnsworth, Flying Squad, Special
 Manor House Investigative Division
 now, me boy. Of course, at this
 hour, or any time actually, NO one
 expects the Manor Inquisition!

MONTY PYTHON PLAYER ON TV
 NO one expects the Spanish
 Inquisition!

A burst of canned laughter.

Farnsworth turns the glaring lamp away. Kris starts laughing at the ridiculous scene.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
 So talk, Mister Imposter.

KRIS
 I'm not an imposter. Lord Hanover's
 my uncle.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
 Nonsense. So talk. Or we're going
 to sit here until you do, stopping
 only for tea and bickies at about
 three. No chunky Hob-Nobs for you,
 though. And no milk or sugar in
 your tea, either.

More laugh tracks from the TV.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH (CONT'D)
 Yes, it's the new England, and now
 that were divorced from those lily-
 livered Jerrys at the European
 Union, imposters like you will
 learn just how tough we've gotten.
 After tea, you'll lie right back in
 that bed until you talk, or until
 six o'clock rolls around, when
 you'll be confined to another room -
 - dark, damp and far below -- with
 nothing but BBC 1 and 2 to watch.
 No Sky TV and Channel 4. And no
 bloody Netflix!

Again, the canned laughter.

KRIS
 But, Mr. Farnsworth, I don't think--

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
 What's that ... "I don't think?" We
 at Hanover Yard don't give a
 tinker's cuss what you or, for that
 matter, what Amnesty International
 or what the Human Rights Watch or
 what anyone else *thinks*. Now are
 you going to talk, or do we have to
 get really tough?

From the TV, more laughter, eerily in sync. In the distance
 he hears studio applause and the Monty Python's Flying Circus
 theme that closes the show.

Kris blinks several times. No lamp. No Farnsworth. Only the
 illumination from show credits rolling up the TV screen.

Kris rises from his bed and turns off the TV. He heads for
 the drawing room, but he's stopped by Chef Noël. He's
 standing in front of the fireplace wildly wielding a rapier.

KRIS
 How did you...Why are ...

CHEF NOËL
 En garde! Oh! Souffrez-vous
 d'aibohphobie?

Not frightened, Kris pulls taps his watch.

KRIS
 Hey AI, What did he say?

AI COMPANION
(translates) On guard! Oh! Do you
suffer from aibohphobia?

KRIS
What's that supposed to mean?

AI COMPANION
Fear of palindromes.

Kris laughs at the absurd scene.

KRIS
Chef, are you okay? What's going on
here?

CHEF NOËL
(waving his rapier but not
threatening Kris)
I was once known as Zerimar
Ramirez! Reviled did I live! Evil I
did deliver!

With an exaggerated final flourish, Noël places his sword in
a sheath attaches to his belt and smirks triumphantly before
dashing out of the room. Kris goes over and locks the door
behind him. He taps his watch

KRIS
"Hey AI, what in the world was all
that? ""

AI COMPANION
Ailihphilia perhaps?

KRIS
Very funny. Is that a real word?

AI COMPANION
Yes, it is, and means just what
you'd expect! Love of palindromes.

Kris laughs it off and decides to enjoy a hot bath before
turning in.

INT. COTTAGE BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

After settling into the tub, Kris head jerks up.

The doorknob starts to turn. Fear crosses Kris's face. The
door creaks open. Savvone Reddy walks in wearing a satin
belted trench coat and a matching half mask on a stick to
cover her eyes and forehead. Kris's mouth drops.

KRIS

My God, Ms. Reddy, what are you
doing here? And how did--

C.U. on Savvone. She places a finger on her lips to shush him.

CHAUFFER SAVONE

I'm here, strictly, to pleasure
you, not for conversation. Save
your chitchat for the pub.

She runs her hand through her lustrous blonde mane. Then, walking up to the edge of the tub, Savvone places her hands on her hips and assumes a playful expression.

CHAUFFER SAVONE (CONT'D)

So are you ready for Reddy?

From Kris's expression, he is! He nods.

Savvone steps back and pulls out a mini speaker and an incense holder from her coat pocket, and places them on the sink counter. She lays her mask beside the speaker and begins to slowly loosen her belt.

CHAUFFER SAVONE (CONT'D)

Would you like to see?

Kris nods. The steam and the bubbles rise as Savvone's coat slides off of her shoulders. Kris is in awe. She quickly lights the incense.

CHAUFFER SAVONE (CONT'D)

(calling out) Hey Google! Play
Bollywood playlist!

GOOGLE VOICE

Ok! Now playing Bollywood playlist.

The room is filled with the pulsating rhythms of Indian dance music, sounds that grow ever more wild, sensuous and intense as Savvone gyrates forward offering her rendition of Hindi dance. Explosive quick steps. Random leaps. Sudden spins.

Kris looks mesmerized. Savvone pauses in the steam to allow Kris to admire her costume.

KRIS

(under his breath)
Holy smokes!

She's gone full Bollywood, with a red sari and sheer blouse. Heavily bejeweled with necklaces, finger rings and bracelets. She has a gleaming red dot on her forehead.

Kris, obvious excited, slaps the bathwater, spreading bubbles everywhere. The steam makes it a sensual, hazy, dreamlike scene. Incense billows throughout. Kris inhales deeply.

KRIS (CONT'D)

Roses ...

CHAUFFER SAVONE

Listen...believe me...I've been there...I know exactly...exactly what a man wants...Watch, I'll show you!

She remains still until the music changes.

Bollywood meets Bolero! Savone starts belly dancing, gyrating with serpentine flourishes. Upon the piece reaching its climactic finale, she spins across the room, arriving at the counter.

Kris sits up, anticipating, breathless to see what will happen next.

Savone spins back, offering only a salacious grin. Then she abruptly gathers her garments, grabs her speaker and incense, and dashes silently out of the room.

Kris is dumbfounded. The bubbles have faded away. Kris is spent and aglow. He gets out of the tub and slips into a monogrammed robe. He picks up his phone

KRIS

Hey AI Was I dreaming? Did that woman cast a spell or something?

AI COMPANION

Sorry, we didn't see anyone.

INT. COTTAGE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Kris wakes up.

Checks his cell phone--no service, no indication of time. Piped-in harpsichord music surrounds him.

KRIS

Hey AI, what time is it?

AI COMPANION

Good day! But does anybody really know what time it is?

KRIS

Ha! I know that song. Listen, last night, were Farnsworth, Noël and Savone really here, carrying on, acting crazy? ... Or one of Lord Hanover's theme-park holo tricks?

AI COMPANION

None of the above, I'm afraid.

KRIS

Okay, what then?

AI COMPANION

In time you'll know. That is, if you care about time.

KRIS

Ha-ha. Good one. Wish you'd tell me, though.

AI COMPANION

Actually, we're not certain. Some states of consciousness are not transmitted to us. But we do have a suspicion about those bar snacks.

Kris looks up and is startled to see a decorated sheet blotting paper floating the air. He again speaks to his phone.

KRIS

Hey AI, do you see that psychedelic blotter above me?

AI COMPANION

Sorry, we do not.

KRIS

Yesterday, I saw a cactus flower and a mushroom in the air. How about them?

AI COMPANION

No, not them, either. My Lord.

Kris shrugs, and ventures into the drawing room. A breakfast tray is on the table.

He uncovers the tray -- friands smothered in mushrooms and béchamel. There is a coffee and tea service.

Kris devours his breakfast, then pours a cup of the pink tea. He tastes it, likes it. But after a few more sips he starts to feel a little strange, a tingling sensation.

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER (O.C.)
My Beloved Nephew.

Kris stands up, rolls his eyes.

KRIS
Here we go again. This place is nuts.

He goes into the bathroom. Lord Hanover's face smiles at him from the antique mirror.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

LORD ARTHUR HANOVER
If you've already found the gold key with the red jewel, use it to enter and explore the other rooms within your quarters. There is something you must find which you will later need. It appears to be an ordinary thing, yet it is very special indeed. Good luck!

Lord Hanover's image vanishes. Kris shakes his head and speaks to his phone..

KRIS
Hey AI, is this some sort of funhouse, some kind of game?

AI COMPANION
Remember how inspired Lord Hanover was by Disneyland?

KRIS
Yeah, I remember seeing that on TV. So?

AI COMPANION
Do you not see that he is mimicking it here, for your edification and entertainment?

KRIS

So this is the ultimate theme park ride?

AI COMPANION

Indeed. He also loved those immersive classics like *Myst* and *Riven*. Staging real-life a version here perhaps?

KRIS

(smiling) I remember playing *Myst* a long time ago. Loved it. If that's the case here, I can hardly wait for more. But so much to take in and remember.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Kris checks the hall, sees no one around, and tests his green-jeweled key on the other door. The notches and grooves line up, but it doesn't work.

KRIS

Guess I gotta find the one with red jewel like he said.

HOLO CONCIERGE ADRIENNE

(from PA)

The butler has informed me that the Manor House Art Exhibition, scheduled to open to the public today, will, regrettably, be unattended due to the inclement weather and condition of the road. He therefore recommends the staff acquaint themselves with the newly hung works when they are free from their duties. Carry on.

Kris blows a kiss at her headshot just below the ceiling speaker.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS HALLWAY -- LATER

Kris knocks on the butler's office door. Nothing. Then the concierge's. Again nothing. He tries the Spa door. It opens.

INT. SPA -- MOMENTS LATER

Ultramodern, relaxed atmosphere, dozens of widescreen muted TVs mounted throughout. Cool jazz piano and saxophone music. Kris looks around, doesn't see anyone. There's an entrance to the pool and spa.

CHRISTOPHER (O.C.)
Oh good, finally found you.

Kris whirls around and smiles at Christopher, in the flesh. The young teenager looks even more engaging in person. He totes an artist's sketchpad and a plain white box.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Hullo, I'm Christopher. Grandmother says to remind you to always keep your valuables with you whenever you're about. She asked me to bring this to you.

Kris takes the box, shakes hands.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)
Inside, there's a gadget Uncle used to carry around. Haven't a clue as to what it is or how it works. Perhaps you can sort it out.

KRIS
Sure, I'd be glad to take a look. But don't count on ...

CHRISTOPHER
(slyly) Oh, I'm sure you'll do your best.

Kris opens the box. He discovers a plastic card passkey for the pool area and pamphlets about local attractions, as well as a "Drinks on the House" invitation for tonight from Bruce the barkeep.

KRIS
By the way, I caught your appearance on the news recently. It sure wowed me.

CHRISTOPHER
You saw that? Thanks.

KRIS
The newscaster hoped to have you back. Did they?

CHRISTOPHER

Twice. I'm always chuffed to talk about plants and such, like I always did with Grampy.

KRIS

Oh, hey, I'd love to see some of your drawings.

Christopher's eyes light up and he shows Kris his drawings.

INSERT: THE SKETCHPAD

The pen-and-ink drawings are all in the style of the Winnie-the-Pooh characters! Note the actual characters but additional ones.

BACK TO SCENE

KRIS

I guess with a name like yours, this isn't surprising.

CHRISTOPHER

Christopher Robin, yes. My parents were totally gone on the books.

Kris gapes at the drawings: an English bulldog, a squirrel, a raccoon, a beaver, and...a South African aardvark.

KRIS

About the aardvark...

CHRISTOPHER

Well, it was the first animal in the dictionary. Besides, what's a tiger and a kangaroo doing running around loose in England anyway?

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

I have to go tell my grandmother I found you.

Kris hands the sketchpad back.

KRIS

Come find me any time you're free and we'll explore.

Christopher smiles and leaves. Kris empties the contents of the box into his briefcase. He then examines the device.

It's a cream-colored handheld device with a glassy blue orb on one end. He touches it and it hums and lights up, a soft bluish white glow, then shuts off.

He looks for a switch or batteries. None. Very sci-fi. He walks over to the pool entrance and tries the keycard.

INT. POOL AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

Kris plays with the remote while he descends the steps towards an Olympic-sized pool on this double deck. In one of the far corners is an electromechanical timing device that swimmers use to train or compete. The hands of the timer are frozen at fifty-nine minutes and four seconds. Kris sees a small potted flower near the steps, and beside it, light glints off a small shiny object. He investigates. It's a gold key identical to his room key but embedded with a ruby instead of a sapphire. He picks it up. Easy.

KRIS (V.O.)
 Yep, just like *Myst*.

He turns around, and then he sees her. Adrienne Van Scoy herself. She's planted at the entrance to the sauna. Tall, comely, imperial, and even more beautiful than her hologram.

KRIS (V.O.)
 Is this the real her?

KRIS
 Hello!

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
 It is not permitted to enter this area in that sort of attire. You can be provided with approved swimwear and a bathing cap.

He stands, stunned. Adrienne's smile is icy.

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE (CONT'D)
 And if there is anything else Iwi can do to make your brief stay with us more pleasant ...

She turns and abruptly walks away.

KRIS (V.O.)
 I think I prefer the holo her.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS/LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER - CONTINUOUS

Kris wanders the hallway. No one around. Bored, he points the remote in different places. Waiting for something to happen. Finally he points it at the still life painting with fruit next to the kitchen. Now something happens! The scene inside the painting changes! It becomes a window on Chef Noël speaking to someone.

CHEF NOËL

Tenez, monsieur. I have already looked everywhere, examined every single thing, checked all the belongings, so I am certain our guest does not have them.

The scene in the window rotates and shows Farnsworth.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH

Did you search the cottage kitchen and drawing room?

CHEF NOËL

Certainement! But our visitor cannot get into those rooms. The deed hidden in there? *C'est impossible*, I swear to you, monsieur.

Noël moves out of the frame.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH

(muttering to himself) As far as Arthur was concerned, nothing is impossible.

Farnsworth moves out of the frame. The device pans the empty room then shuts off by itself, restoring the still life. Kris looks admiringly at the device.

KRIS

Incredible.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Kris tries several paintings--nothing. He overhears Farnsworth's and Adrienne's voices and footsteps coming from the stairwell. He hides in an alcove hidden by drapes. He pulls the drapes closed just in time.

The scene shifts to Farnsworth and Adrienne in person mounting the stairs.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
How are you going to--

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
Just leave it to me, James. The
less you know, the better. There's
bound to be some sort of enquiry.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
Tonight, then?

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
I told you--don't ask.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
Are you using Noël's --

CONCIERGE ADRIENNE
(interrupts) James, how many times
must I...

Farnsworth pulls out a revolver from his waistcoat.

BUTLER FARNSWORTH
Well if Noël's brigands can't
finish him off, I can take aim. We
cannot allow this imposter to deny
us what is rightfully ours.

Their voices fade. Kris looks grim as he consults his watch..

KRIS (V.O.)
Hey AI, those two sound seriously
scary. Not Part of some game. Were
they real or holos?

No response. Suddenly above him the cactus and the mushroom
reappear. Kris wonders if he can communicate with them,

KRIS
Hey Plants, Have you two seen or
heard my AI companion?

MAGIC MUSHROOM
(speaking in tech sounds) It is born
of the machine. We are from nature
as are you. Only you can see, hear,
know us.

PEYOTE CACTUS FLOWER
(warbling) Tea Time!

Kris, no longer feeling frightened, pours himself another cup
of pink tea and offers a toast to the plants

KRIS

Cheers!

He gulps down the liquid. Looks around but finds the cactus and the mushroom have vanished. A chime rings from somewhere, then a DISEMBODIED HUMAN VOICE speaks from across the room.

ELDERLY MALE VOICE (O.C.)

Cheers!

Kris turns in the direction of the voice and is stunned to see a three-dimensional head of a bearded elderly man floating in the air above him. The talking head turns slowly as if surveying the room.

KRIS

Good God, who are you?

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Do not fear us. We are your Storytellers.

KRIS

What story?

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Yours.

KRIS

You mean, whatever's going to happen next at this crazy place?

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Yes, but it's already happened.

KRIS

Wait. What!? But I have no memory of it.

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

That's why we're here. To help you reexperience what happened.

KRIS

And then I'll "remember," if that's the right word to use?

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Depends on your current mindset and location in time.

KRIS (V.O.)
 "Current mindset? Location in time." That's exactly what AI said before I came.

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)
 Yes, your time location is critical. You might have turned to a past event. Whence you don't remember the present. Because it hasn't happened yet ...

KRIS (V.O.)
 Whoa. It answered my thought.

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)
 Or you might turn to a future occurrence. And glimpse what will happen soon.

KRIS
 How can you read my mind?

ELDERLY MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)
 Just as you're now reading ours and hearing our thoughts. Think to us. Or speak to us. Doesn't matter.

Kris walks around in circles trying to think of what to say or project next. Finally:

KRIS
 Hey Storyteller, will I get my inheritance? I lost my job back home and am really worried.

Another Storyteller appears beside the first one.

ELDERLY BRITISH FEMALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)
 No spoilers, dearie! You'll find out when your story comes to them.

KRIS
 So there's more than one of you here?

ELDERLY BRITISH FEMALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)
 An infinite number actually. But don't worry. We won't all talk at once.

Kris laughs, relaxes a little.

ELDERLY BRITISH FEMALE STORYTELLER
(V.O.)

Listen, think of us as a major side
effect, an unforeseen consequence
of drinking all that tea.

A third Storyteller appears.

AMERICAN MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

To tell the truth, friend, we in
the collective are every bit as
surprised to be here as you are.

Kris turns to the new voice on his right, steps back.

KRIS

Why do you say that?

AMERICAN MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

It's been years, thousands
actually, since we've spoken to a
living soul. And we've never been
able to communicate with a
conscious one until now.

KRIS

So who did you talk to way back
then?

MONTAGE: Primitive people wandering around. Picking up sticks
and stones. Looking up at the sky seeking guidance.

AMERICAN MALE STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Unconscious souls. Primitives who
didn't know who they were. All we
could do was tell them where to go,
what to do. They thought we were
God speaking, commanding them.

KRIS

So I'm the quote-unquote conscious
one?... Jeez, whatever ... Okay, what's
next?

Overhead, A small child's face pops into view with a blissful
expression.

FEMALE CHILD STORYTELLER (V.O.)

Your story. Your wondrous story

FADE OUT

THE END