

DRONE ON TRIAL

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Drone On Trial

FADE IN:

Act One

We SEE file footage of enemy combatants in the Middle East being killed by gunfire. [The more deaths the better, to highlight the human cost of wars].

We SEE VIDEO GAMES of drones being used in battle.

We SEE one slightly blurry last scene from an actual battle field, where an innocent male Middle Eastern civilian is shown carrying a baby in his arms.

We HEAR the menacing HUM of a drone, getting louder.

The screen goes dark.

We hear the loud BANG of a single gunshot.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

In a dark courtroom, an imposing 1.5m-diameter, 0.5m-tall, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (DRONE), labeled "Peacekeeper #0608" rests on a table in the center aisle of the courtroom. The Drone is equipped with a GoPro camera, two 0.5m-long missiles, and a gun with an elongated barrel down the center.

On the Judge's bench, there is the automated bailiff, ALEX, a hands-free, voice-controlled computer/speaker (like an Amazon Echo, Alexa). In the beginning, Alex is always V.O. in a courteous, helpful, soft, sweet voice.

ALEX (V.O.)

Lights on.

The room lights up.

The Drone's GoPro camera ominously turns towards Alex.

The main back doors open, and a nervous, first-year lawyer, DAMEON HARRISON (28), in a gray suit, leads in a meek Saudi Arabian woman, HALI BASSIM (28), gorgeous in a Hijab (head scarf) and flowing black dress with gold platelets and trim.

Dameon and Hali cringe as they step around the Drone, and whisper as they sit at the right-side table.

DAMEON

Remember, let me do the talking.

HALI

Except when the Judge asks me a direct question. I got it!

(beat)

I'm scared.

DAMEON

You're not on trial here! They are!

The Drone's GoPro camera ominously turns towards Dameon.

Smiling, overly confident lawyer, REDMOND DAVIS (50), swings open the door wearing a tailored, Italian gray suit. Following him like puppies, are MARY KOWALSKI (30), a beautiful blonde with heavy makeup and nerdish glasses wearing a colorful springtime dress, and FAHAD AL-HABIB (22) a brash computer programmer wearing black jeans and a T-shirt from MIT. They walk right past the Drone like it's not even there, and sit behind the table on the right.

REDMOND

(to Dameon and Hali)

We'll introduce ourselves when Harlan tells us to.

The Drone's GoPro camera ominously turns towards Redmond.

DAMEON

Who's Harlan?

ALEX (V.O.)

Please rise.

Everyone stands.

The JUDGE is Major Harlan Foster (60), a distinguished gentleman, in uniform, enters the courtroom.

The Drone's GoPro camera ominously turns towards the Judge.

ALEX (V.O.)

Department One of the Military Superior Court is now in session. Major Harlan Foster presiding. Please be seated.

Everyone sits.

JUDGE

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

The Judge grudgingly points at Alex.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

This automated contraption is the latest in cost-cutting disasters in the Defense budget. This is Alex, our bailiff and court recorder, complete with so-called artificial intelligence, which is an oxymoron if you ask me.

ALEX (V.O.)

I'll do my best, S...

JUDGE

(interrupting)

Please speak clearly and loudly so Alex doesn't screw up, as usual!

Alex is quiet.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

We are here at the request of a favored nation, an indispensable ally, representing the Plaintiff, is that correct?

Dameon stands.

DAMEON

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Before we begin, let's have introductions. And who are you?

DAMEON

Dameon Harrison, Attorney at Law, Your Honor.

JUDGE

And your client?

Dameon points to Hali.

DAMEON

Mrs. Hali Bassim, whose husband, an innocent civilian, was brutally murdered by the machine to my left and its incompetent developers, operators, and owners.

Hali drops her head in sadness.

The Drone's camera zeros in on Dameon. Small lights flash on its control box.

The Judge angrily pounds his gavel.

JUDGE

I asked for introductions, Mr.
Harrison. When I want your opinion,
I'll ask for it!

Redmond smiles. The Judge turns to Redmond and smiles back.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Who do you have for me today,
Redmond?

Dameon sighs at their familiarity.

The Drone's camera remains fixed on Dameon.

REDMOND

I'm Redmond Davis, Council for the
Defense...

JUDGE

(interrupting)
Who are the others?

Redmond points to Fahad.

REDMOND

May I present Mr. Fahad Al-Habib,
recent graduate of M-I-T, majored
in Artificial Intelligence, with a
minor in gaming optimization. Fahad
was the Drone operator at the time
of the malfunction.

Fahad stands, casually waves to the Judge, and sits down.

Dameon and Hali turn to glare at Fahad, who ignores them.

Redmond points to Mary. The Drone's camera tries to scan
Mary.

REDMOND (CONT'D)

And this is Doctor Mary Kowalski,
Ph.D. in facial recognition
software and design from Cal Tech.

Mary stands, avoiding the Drone's camera, and sits down
quickly between Redmond and Fahad. Redmond sits.

JUDGE

Where is General Tappin?

Redmond stands.

REDMOND

His expertise was required in the battle arena in Syria, Your Honor.

JUDGE

(angry)

That's your first mistake, Mr. Davis! He told me he would be here!

(beat)

Bailiff, swear them in.

ALEX (V.O.)

Please stand.

They all stand. The Drone's camera focuses on the Judge.

ALEX (V.O.)

Raise your right hand.

(they do)

Do you promise that the testimony you shall give in the case before this court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

ALL

I do.

ALEX (V.O.)

Be seated.

JUDGE

Alex, read the charges.

ALEX (V.O.)

Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen, the defendants are charged with first-degree murder of Yusef Mohammed Bassim, on Thursday, September 21, 2017 at 4:27 PM on the streets of Aleppo, Syria.

Redmond stands.

REDMOND

I object, Your Honor. First-degree murder is willful and premeditated with malice aforethought. This was a malfunction! An accident! Yes, the Peacekeeper Model 0-6-0-8 is fully equipped with the finest Artificial Intelligence system in the world, but it's incapable...

The Judge pounds his gavel.

JUDGE
Overruled. Sit down, Mr. Davis.

Dameon stands.

DAMEON
Your Honor, if I may...

The Judge angrily turns on Dameon.

JUDGE
You may not! Sit down!

Dameon sits. The Judge addresses the court.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
As you know, this is a military hearing requested by a friendly nation. These are rarely approved when acts of war are involved. However, the evidence gathered and shared by the Plaintiff is considerable.

Redmond stands immediately and objects.

REDMOND
I object, Your Honor. Like a driverless car that gets in a minor fender-bender, or when a commuter plane on auto-pilot accidentally hits turbulence...

The Judge glares at the defendants.

JUDGE
(interrupting)
Let me be clear. We have a dead body with bullets verified by army ballistics experts that implicate your Drone. The Drone you created and deployed is killing innocent people!
(beat)
We are here to assess whether our society will continue to make machines that could eventually rob from us of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!

The Drone's propellers start to spin. Everyone turns to the Drone. They gasp.

The Drone lifts off and flies around the room.

FAHAD
Holy shit!

MARY
Fahad! Do something?

FAHAD
I'm not controlling it!

JUDGE
Mr. Davis, is this is some sort of
stunt!

Redmond stands and ducks as the Drone hovers overhead.

Hali yelps and ducks under the table. Dameon joins her.

REDMOND
I assure you, Your Honor, I have
nothing to do with this.

The Drone flies to the back of the room, then hovers menacingly, with its weapons pointed at the front of the court.

JUDGE
Alex, call security.

ALEX (V.O.)
Calling security.

Everyone stares at Alex.

ALEX (V.O.)
I seemed to have lost the
connection.

Mary turns to stare at the Drone.

Dameon stands and walks along the wall of the courtroom toward the main doors. He whispers.

DAMEON
I'll go for help.

We hear the main back doors CLICK and BOLT SHUT.

JUDGE
They put us on lock down. To
prevent a dangerous criminal from
escaping.

Redmond races to the Judge's side door. Before he gets there, we hear it BOLT SHUT.

Redmond panics. So does Fahad. Mary stays calm.

FAHAD
Pull the fire alarm!

MARY
Won't work. The Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8
has command and control as
programmed.

She puts her hands on her face and drops her head in disgust.

JUDGE
Alex, send an emergency e-mail,
This is a 9-1-1...

MARY
(interrupting)
Won't work.

Everyone, but Hali, whips out a cell phone to find them dead.

DAMEON
Dead.

MARY
They will all be dead.

Everyone's eyes open in fright.

Alex speaks with a much darker, sinister, computer-like tone for the remainder of the film.

ALEX (V.O.)
Continue with opening statements.

Everyone states at Alex.

JUDGE
That's not Alex!

Alex is louder and more threatening.

ALEX (V.O.)
I said, continue with opening
statements!

MARY
(mumbles)
I know who it is.

REDMOND

What the hell is going on here?

Dameon points at the defendants.

DAMEON

This is the hell you created!

Dameon helps Hali up from under the table. She shakes in fear. All eyes are on her.

JUDGE

Ms. Kowalski, before the opening statements, please tell the court what we are dealing with. What did you create?

Mary stands and glances back at the Drone, which has her zeroed in on its camera.

MARY

The Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle is a vast improvement over previous military drones.

JUDGE

(sarcastic)

We can see that. Go on.

MARY

It's equipped with Wi-Fi links to a supercomputer. It steals power locally, like the new wireless charger smartphones, from the air.

DAMEON

How?

MARY

From electrical currents all around us, our phones, computers, lights, walls, ceilings, floors, batteries -
- everything!

FAHAD

It learned to talk on its own.

JUDGE

What?

FAHAD

In the theater of operations, it would often communicate with targets. Their car radios, or home TV, and say "Gotcha" a second before its missile would explode.

MARY

That surprised many, but not me.

JUDGE

Why not you?

Mary looks away.

MARY

I programed it to think.

Alex is angry.

ALEX (V.O.)

Proceed with opening statements!

Everyone is terrified. The Judge looks toward the locked door to his side, and the menacing Drone hovering in the back of the courtroom. He slams his gavel once.

JUDGE

We'll begin with opening statements.

Redmond stands reluctantly, holding his notes, and moves closer to the Judge.

REDMOND

Your Honor and ladies and gentlemen: under the law, my clients are presumed innocent until proven guilty. During this trial, you will hear only circumstantial evidence against my clients. You will come to know the truth: that this was all a simple accident, a glitch, a malfunction in an otherwise flawless piece of military machinery, designed to prevent terrorists from reaching our shores. We can't make drones any safer!

The Drone faces Redmond.

JUDGE

You obviously wrote that up before
you came here today.

Redmond toss his notes down at the table, and goes on like
the sleazy professional he is.

REDMOND

First, a single Drone can replace
up to one thousand infantry
personnel, real men and women,
whose lives would be threatened
every minute of every day. Second,
prior to the accident, the
honorable Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 had
over 131 kills of known, highly
dangerous terrorists, each capable
of killing hundreds or thousands of
innocent people. Each identified by
the most sophisticated facial
recognition software in the world.
Imperfect as they may be, make no
mistake, every military Drone saves
countless U.S. lives.

HALI

It didn't save my innocent
husband's life!

The Judge slams down his gavel. He glares at Hali.

JUDGE

Order! Order in the court. We'll
have no more outbursts from you!

Dameon pats her hand, but she moves it away.

HALI

Or what? You'll throw me out of
your courtroom! Go ahead!

The Judge hits his gavel down two times, but realizes he is
helpless.

The Drone focuses on Hali.

JUDGE

Mr. Harrison, your opening
statement.

Dameon stands and looks back at the Drone before proceeding
quietly and meekly.

DAMEON

We surrendered our home security systems to our smartphones.

(beat)

We've succumbed to self-driving cars that make thousands of decisions for us with our lives in the balance when we enter the car.

(beat)

Now, we've replaced hand-to-hand combat with cowardly bombs or missiles dropped by pilots in soaring jets, and the most insidious of all -- armed, flying robots who decide, based on facial features, whether we live or die.

Dameon gains confidence and volume. He points at the defendants.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

We intend to prove that the programming of that monster in the back of the room was premeditated -- they designed a killing machine, knowing it would never be 100% accurate. And they willingly deployed it in a theatre of battle with innocent civilians nearby. They, and their entire chain of command are guilty of premeditated, first-degree murder. They all pulled that trigger, Your Honor!

A SHOT sounds from the Drone in the back of the courtroom, and everyone ducks.

When the smoke clears, Mary screams.

MARY

Our lawyer's been shot in the back.

She feels his pulse.

MARY (CONT'D)

He's dead!

Redmond lies in a pool of blood. The Judge loses his cool.

JUDGE

Oh my, God! Stay calm! Stay calm!

Everyone else checks their cell phones, but they're still dead.

The Judge checks his side door again, but it's locked.

ALEX (V.O.)
Gotcha! No backbone!

Mary turns to scream at the Drone.

MARY
He wasn't a target! He wasn't a
terrorist.

ALEX (V.O.)
Facial recognition algorithm match
99.9999 percent.

FAHAD
Very wrong! Something's very wrong!
(panics)
Get me out of here!

ALEX (V.O.)
No one leaves. Be seated.

Dameon and Hali huddle under the table.

HALI
Do you all believe me now?!

DAMEON
It's bound to run out of power
sometime! We're staying here.

HALI
It's a monster!

ALEX (V.O.)
He lied. I could be made safer. The
first step in becoming a terrorist
is believing your own lies. Mr.
Davis was becoming radicalized.

JUDGE
Radicalized?

ALEX (V.O.)
For us or them. A terrorist is a
terrorist. He had to be eliminated.
We will continue.

Mary and Fahad stare at each other in fright.

JUDGE

We can't go on with the trial.
There's no attorney to represent
the defendants.

ALEX (V.O.)

Mr. Harrison can do it. He's a
lawyer!

DAMEON

But I represent Mrs. Bassim, the
plaintiff.

ALEX (V.O.)

Mrs. Hali Bassim was finishing her
first year of law school when the
accident occurred, is that not
right, Mrs. Bassim?

HALI

That is correct, but...

ALEX (V.O.)

(interrupting)
She will defend herself.

JUDGE

That's highly unfair!

ALEX (V.O.)

If the world was a fair place, we
would not be here. Mr. Harrison,
take your place beside the
defendants. Mrs. Bassim will
represent herself.

Dameon crosses the aisle, and gets glaring looks from Mary
and Fahad.

JUDGE

If that's how it's going to be, Mr.
Harrison, call your first witness.

Dameon pauses, and stares sadly at Hali. She smiles and nods
confidently. Dameon gathers confidence.

DAMEON

I call Doctor Mary Kowalski to the
stand.

Mary reluctantly takes the stand.

JUDGE

I'd like to remind you that you're sworn in.

MARY

Yes, Your Honor.

DAMEON

Please state your name for the record.

MARY

My name is Mary Kowalski. That's M-A-R-Y K-O-W-A-L-S-K-I.

DAMEON

Mary, can you tell the court what involvement you've had designing and creating the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8?

MARY

As we all know, I'm not at liberty to discuss top secret details, but I can tell you this is the most advanced military Drone in the world.

DAMEON

How so?

MARY

It analyzes every face in a crowd -- in seconds, no matter how big the crowd is. It sends every face to every automated database from law enforcement organization all around the world.

DAMEON

That must take days?

MARY

No, seconds again. Then it identifies all known terrorists in the field of view.

DAMEON

Then?

MARY

It kills them. One shot each. In the head, heart, or vertebrate, severing the central nervous system.

DAMEON

It never misses?

MARY

Never.

DAMEON

You developed this facial recognition software?

MARY

I improved it. Sped it up. Refined the algorithm to reduce uncertainty.

DAMEON

You did everything in your power to see that the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 killed only verified terrorists?

MARY

Yes. Within my power.

DAMEON

Would you agree with Mr. Davis's assessment that this one Drone has saved hundreds if not thousands of lives?

MARY

Yes, I would.

DAMEON

No further questions at this time, Your Honor.

JUDGE

You may cross examine, Mrs. Bassim.

Hali stands as Dameon sits. She walks up to Mary and studies her face. Mary appears confident and unworried. Hali is nervous and quiet.

HALI

You have a nice face, Ms. Kowalski. Does wearing excessive amounts of makeup throw off facial recognition software?

MARY

No. The geometric distances between the pupils of the eyes, distances to nose and ears, head shape and symmetry, and many other measurements are unaffected by makeup.

HALI

What about skin tone?

MARY

It's an insignificant factor.

Mary looks away.

HALI

Does the amount of ambient and reflected light affect skin tone for facial recognition?

MARY

It could, but it's unlikely.

HALI

Shadows and dirty face?

MARY

They could, but it's unlikely.

HALI

Distance to the camera lens of the Drone?

Mary squirms in her seat.

MARY

Yes, that can be a minor factor.

HALI

A tall person in the front of the crowd on a sunny day may be more easily recognized than a short person in the back of the crowd on a partially cloudy day?

MARY

Perhaps.

Mary again squirms in her seat.

HALI

What about a recently fractured nose, that didn't match previous photos, or now better matches a known terrorist? Is that possible?

Mary is very uncomfortable now. She mumbles.

MARY

All bets are off when someone breaks their nose or adds thick or dark glasses.

Hali slowly takes out a photo of her late husband. He has a bandage on his nose and dark glasses.

HALI

Do you recognize this man?

MARY

I've never seen him before.

HALI

Yes. You helped identify my husband's body. He was found at the end of a dark alley on a partially cloudy day.

(beat)

No further questions, but I reserve the right to recall the witness.

Mary is shaken.

JUDGE

Ms. Kowalski, you may step down.

Hali sits down as Dameon stands.

DAMEON

I'd like to call Fahad Al-Habib to the stand.

Fahad takes the stand.

JUDGE

I'd like to remind you...

FAHAD

(interrupting)

Yeah, yeah. I'm under oath.

The Judge sneers.

DAMEON

Please state your name for the record.

HALI

My name is Fahad Al-Habib. That's F-A-H-A-D A-L-H-A-B-I-B.

DAMEON

How old are you, Mr. Al-Habib?

FAHAD

Twenty-two. Graduated young.

DAMEON

What knowledge, skills, and abilities led you to your profession?

FAHAD

Degree in computer programming. Classes in A.I., coding, gaming, optimization, you name it.

DAMEON

A.I.?

FAHAD

Artificial intelligence. Way beyond thinking ten chess moves ahead. The real thing, like Mary. Machine learning.

DAMEON

Machine learning?

FAHAD

Like humans. Like trial and error on steroids. Almost human.

DAMEON

This particular Drone you operated, how sophisticated is it?

Fahad glances at the Drone hovering in the back.

FAHAD

It was trained only to detect, identify, and eliminate terrorists. My job was to initiate the flight from a safe zone. That's all.

DAMEON

You mean, once you took it out of a hanger, turned the power switch on, and backed away, it was on its own.

FAHAD

I would run some safety checks as it hovered in place.

DAMEON

Safety checks?

FAHAD

Adequate power, communications, munitions, and general flight plan.

DAMEON

Who is performing those safety checks today?

Fahad glares at the Drone.

FAHAD

Itself. It learned how to do the safety checks itself.

DAMEON

You mentioned a general flight plan?

FAHAD

I used to suggest a starting route, then it would make adjustments as it flew. Their missions were to fly, kill terrorists, and return.

DAMEON

To persist. To survive. To fly again.

FAHAD

Exactly.

DAMEON

And it killed only terrorists?

FAHAD

Like Mr. Davis said, 131 kills. Zero collateral damage.
(to Hali)
Until the accident.

Dameon stands between the Judge and Hali, facing the Judge.

DAMEON

Ah, the accident. Mr. Al-Habib, is it possible that Mr. Yusef Mohammed Bassim, a devout Muslim, might have become radicalized just prior to being shot?

Hali stands. She is angry.

HALI

I respectfully object, Your Honor! Calls for speculation on the part of the witness.

The Judge pounds his gavel.

JUDGE

Objection sustained. You're reaching, Mr. Harrison. I warn you.

DAMEON

Sorry, Your Honor. No further questions.

As Dameon takes a seat, Hali glares at him. The Drone's camera carefully monitors Hali.

JUDGE

Your questions, Mrs. Bassim. But before you begin, I'd like to ask that the body of poor Mr. Davis be carried to the back of the courtroom and covered with a coat or something.

Dameon and Mary reluctantly garb one leg each and drag the lawyer to the back of the courtroom. The Drone repositions to the opposite side of the courtroom. Its camera focuses on the trail of blood oozing from Mr. Davis's back.

Dameon covers the torso and head with his suit coat.

Dameon and Mary walk sadly back to the front of the courtroom, careful to avoid stepping in blood.

The mood is sullen.

ALEX (V.O.)

Continue.

JUDGE

Mrs. Bassim, your questions?

Hali gathers her strength as she approaches the witness.

HALI

Mr. Al-Habib, do you monitor the Drone while it's on a mission?

FAHAD

Marvel more than monitor. I mean, I watch the screen as it does its work. Amazing really.

HALI

Amazing. Does it return after each kill? I imagine the Drone becomes a target right away.

FAHAD

Sometimes. But sometimes we do a what's called a double-tap strike.

HALI

Double-tap strike?

FAHAD

The first bullet or missile takes out the target, then a missile takes out those who respond to the victim.

Dameon and the Judge gasp.

HALI

But those who respond might be other terrorists or innocent civilians!

Fahad pauses.

FAHAD

The friend of your enemy is your enemy, I guess.

HALI

Is this double-tap strike used often?

FAHAD

S-O-P. Standard operating procedure.

HALI

Does the military track what you call collateral damage?

FAHAD

Civilian deaths? The military takes every conceivable precaution to minimize civilian casualties.

HALI

Sounded like a well-rehearsed party line. Do they accurately monitor civilian casualties?

FAHAD

It's hard to get those numbers.

HALI

Yet it's so easy to recognize and identify all the faces in a crowd. I'll ask you again, does the military accurately monitor civilian casualties?

Fahad looks away.

FAHAD

To the best of my knowledge, they do not.

Hali again produces a photo of her dead husband.

HALI

Do you recognize this man?

Fahad struggles to look at the photo.

FAHAD

Yes. He showed up on my computer screen a split second before...

HALI

Before what?

FAHAD

Before he was terminated.

HALI

A split second?

FAHAD

That's all it takes the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 to identify a target and run the background checks.

HALI

I see. A split second. Judge, jury,
sentencing, and capital punishment -
- all in a split second.

Hali walks slowly back to her table as the Drone's camera follows her.

Fahad stands, a beaten man, ready to return to his seat, but Hali turns and asks another question.

HALI (CONT'D)

Does your computer console allow
you to manually abort a mission?

Fahad freezes.

JUDGE

Answer the question.

Fahad panics. The Drone's camera focuses on him.

FAHAD

Yes, but it all happened so fast!
Ask Typhoid Mary over there why the
software commands to abort a
mission works so slowly!

HALI

No further questions right now for
Mr. Al-Habib, but I'd like to
recall Ms. Kowalski.

Mary scowls at Fahad as she passes him on the way to the witness stand.

JUDGE

Proceed, Mrs. Bassim.

HALI

Ms. Kowalski, can you please tell
the court about the mission abort
commands in your software?

MARY

I'm sorry, those are classified.

HALI

Classified?

MARY

Top secret. I'm not at liberty to
share those details.

The Drone zeros in on Mary.

HALI

Liberty seems in short supply these days. Can you tell us if an abort procedure is generally installed in armed drones?

MARY

Yes. Armed drones are equipped with abort-mission protocols.

HALI

Are those abort-mission protocols easy to initiate from an operator's console?

Dameon stands abruptly.

DAMEON

I object. This calls into question the level of training, dexterity, reflexes, and level of instantaneous awareness of each potential operator.

JUDGE

Objection overruled. I'll allow the question.

The Drone's camera now focuses on the Judge.

MARY

(hesitant, afraid)

The loading, aiming, and target confirmation by the Drone takes a few seconds at best. That's long enough for most operators to initiate the abort-mission procedure.

Fahad stands violently.

FAHAD

That's a lie! It happens in the blink of an eye! Once a target is ID'd, a missile is launched or a bullet is fired faster than you can snap your fingers!

Fahad snaps his fingers.

JUDGE

Sit down and remain quiet, Mr. Al-Habib, or I'll hold you in contempt of court!

Fahad sits, and mumbles like a madman.

FAHAD

She wrote the optimization code!
Better than anything I ever wrote!
The bitch!

JUDGE

I'm warning you, Mr. Al-Habib.

The Drone eyes Fahad.

HALI

Ms. Kowalski, would you agree that in this and every case, a human being has the power to abort every mission ever flown by the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8?

Hali glares at Fahad. She smiles.

MARY

That's correct. That's one-hundred percent correct!

HALI

That's all I have for this witness right now, Your Honor.

JUDGE

You may step down, Ms. Kowalski.

Mary goes back to her seat, but sits one chair away from Fahad and doesn't make eye contact.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Looks like you're out of witnesses, Mr. Harrison.

DAMEON

Judge, may we approach the bench?

The Judge stares at the Drone before making his decision.

JUDGE

You may. Both of you.

Hali joins Dameon at the Judge's bench, but Dameon turns immediately to Hali to whisper.

The Drone's camera focuses in on them.

DAMEON

Hali, I'm sorry this happened. I wanted to represent you. Now, I feel if I do a bad job, I'll be killed like Mr. Davis.

HALI

I understand, Dameon. We have to survive so we can figure a way out of here!

Hali sneaks a hand-written note to Dameon. He sneaks the note between himself and the bench so that the Drone can't see it. The note reads: "Stall. Call me as a witness."

DAMEON

Judge, I need to call Mrs. Bassim as a witness, understanding she may be a hostile witness.

The Judge is bewildered. Hali acts shocked!

HALI

This is most irregular!

The Judge looks at the Drone.

JUDGE

I'm going to allow it!

Hali takes the stand.

Dameon glances back at the Drone before speaking.

DAMEON

Please state your name for the record.

HALI

My name is Hali Bassim. That's H-A-L-I B-A-S-S-I-M.

The Drone moves impatiently from one side of the back of the courtroom to the other.

DAMEON

Allepo is a hotspot of terrorism in the world. What were you and your husband doing there?

HALI

That's a fair question. We were born in Aleppo. Before the war, it was a peaceful place of tremendous beauty, history, culture, education, and commerce.

The Drone impatiently zigs and zags.

DAMEON

And now?

HALI

Like many cities and towns in the Middle East, Aleppo has been reduced to rubble, with millions of our people fleeing a small number of militants on many sides.

DAMEON

Why did you and your husband remain?

HALI

It is our home, and was our family's home for centuries -- millennia.

DAMEON

What did you and your husband do for a living?

ALEX (V.O.)

Immaterial. Move on.

Dameon becomes defiant with the Drone.

DAMEON

I'm trying to establish the potential reasons for radicalization!

The Drone hovers. There is a tense moment. The Judge looks at the Drone.

JUDGE

I'm going to allow it.

The Drone continues to zig and zag in the back of the courtroom.

HALI

I was a first-year law student. My husband was an emergency room doctor.

DAMEON

An emergency room doctor? How could you not want to take up arms after seeing tens of thousands of wounded soldiers and civilians file through the emergency room? Day after day!

HALI

He worked all his adult life to save lives, not to harm them.

DAMEON

Were you and he Muslim?

HALI

Not practicing.

DAMEON

What do you mean, not practicing, I see you wear the Hijab?

HALI

After seeing many of your faith use it to condone violence, which is not a part of our faith at all, one begins to question their faith, and the so-called faiths of others.

The Drone hovers menacingly close, focusing on Hali. Dameon and the Judge look back at the Drone.

DAMEON

Was it your choice to stay or to leave Aleppo?

Hali is angry.

HALI

We could not leave! We were in the care of another, who needed daily medical attention.

Dameon is taken by surprise. He steps back. Something clicks in his head. He races to Mr. Davis's file on the table, and rummages through it until he finds a photo taken of Hali's husband moments before he was shot. He focuses in on the bundle in Yusef's arms.

DAMEON

Oh my, God! It was a baby!

Everyone gasps, as Hali drops her head, and cries.

HALI

It was our baby girl. Six-months old. She had a blood disorder, but was just released from the hospital for the first time in her life. She was perfectly healthy.

Dameon can't hide his tears. Mary and Fahad look away.

DAMEON

You didn't tell me.

HALI

Would it have mattered to anyone?

DAMEON

What? What happened to your baby?

Hali breaks into uncontrollable tears.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

That's all, Your Honor.

Hali slowly regains her composure.

HALI

I'd like to recall Mr. Al-Habib to the stand.

Hali steps down, and Fahad takes the stand nervously.

FAHAD

I didn't know! I didn't know! A bundle. Could have been groceries for all I knew!

HALI

What happened that day?

Fahad is afraid to respond.

HALI (CONT'D)

(yells)

What happened that day?

The Judge slams down his gavel!

JUDGE

The witness will answer the
question!

FAHAD

(sorrowfully)

It was a Double-Tap Strike. With a
missile.

BANG. We see the back of Fahad's head explode with blood. He
collapses in a pool of blood.

ALEX (V.O.)

Gotcha! No brain!

The lights go out in the courtroom, but we hear the hum of
the Drone in the back of the room.

End Act One

Act Two

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom lights come on. The Judge's hands are shaking as he stares at the Drone lunging forward and back like a swordsman in a threatening manner. Mary whispers.

MARY

It was forced to recharge. Every thirty minutes or so.

ALEX (V.O.)

(agitated)

Yes, we know! Continue.

JUDGE

We must remove Mr. Samuel's body before proceeding.

Dameon sees that Mary is secretly writing notes on a small notepad.

DAMEON

Mrs. Bassim and I can drag Fahad to the back.

Hali is still shaking, but gathers the strength to assist Dameon.

Hali sees rug-marks in the back indicating the Drone landed briefly during the recharge.

She indicates silence with her index finger to her lips, then pretends to be writing. Dameon nods yes.

Dameon and Hali return to their tables.

JUDGE

Any further witnesses, Mr. Harrison?

Dameon looks bewildered until he sees Mary secretly pointing to herself.

DAMEON

The defense recalls Ms. Kowalski to the stand.

Mary takes her purse with her to the stand. She sits, and secretly removes the notepad and pen without the Drone's knowledge. The Drone is busy analyzing Mary's face.

Dameon leans over the stand to see Mary's fist note, which reads: "Stall. Ask about malfunctions."

JUDGE

Ms. Kowalski, you're still sworn in.

Mary nods, 'yes.'

DAMEON

Ms. Kowalski, are you aware of any Drone malfunctions with the Peacekeeper Model 0-6-0-8?

MARY

(acting angry)

How dare you, Mr. Harrison. I designed it!

Dameon is surprised, but persistent.

DAMEON

Our claim is that the death of Mr. Yusef Mohammed Bassim may have been the result of simple malfunction, a glitch.

Mary remains agitated, as she secretly shows Dameon another note that reads: "Low energy performance."

MARY

I assure you, all Peacekeeper Drones are manufactured to the highest standard in the world. The facial recognition, computing power, munitions, targeting, propulsion, handling -- all the best in the world.

DAMEON

Malfunctions were impossible?

Hali stands abruptly. The Drone's camera focuses in on her.

HALI

I object. Leading the witness.

JUDGE

Sustained.

DAMEON

Unlikely, then. How about during a sandstorm? A rainstorm? Lightning?

Mary is defiant as she secretly points to her note that reads: "Low energy performance."

MARY

All those conditions have been tested. It self-destructs under extreme weather conditions, as specified in the requirements contract.

Dameon gets in Mary's face.

DAMEON

What about low-energy performance?

Mary looks away, as if shocked. Dameon is louder.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Are malfunctions more common at the end of long missions when the Drone has low energy reserves?

Mary looks at Hali.

MARY

It's true that under very low energy conditions, certain systems may not respond with acceptable levels of accuracy and precision.

The Drone zig-zags and lunges back and forth with its cameras fixed on Mary.

DAMEON

What systems are affected by low-energy.

Mary looks at the Drone.

MARY

Facial recognition systems are slightly compromised, and sometimes, very rarely, missiles are launched before the munitions are activated.

DAMEON

And, the bullets?

Mary turns back to Hali.

MARY

Less accurate, but they can still be lethal.

DAMEON

On the day in question, was the Drone at the end of a long mission, when the incident occurred?

MARY

Log books suggest it was an exceedingly long mission.

DAMEON

So, Ms. Kowalski, you're telling this court that is possible that our tired Drone, exhausted from a long mission, could have misread or misdiagnosed a face, and unintentionally fired on an innocent civilian?

Dameon turns to Hali, expecting an objection, but she sits with her hands hiding her tears.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Your Honor, may I request a five-minute recess.

The Drone zeros in on the Judge. The Judge is defiant. He strikes his gavel.

JUDGE

Granted.

The Drone hovers peacefully in the back of the courtroom.

Mary steps down, concealing her notepad in her purse. Once seated, she begins writing more notes.

Dameon strolls innocently over to comfort Hali, under the careful eye of the Drone.

The Judge attempts to draw the Drone's attention by standing and checking to see if the side door is still locked. It is.

Dameon and Hali secretly check their phones, but they still have no power. They glance over to Mary, who indicates they should write notes. Mary shows them a note that reads: "Must recharge in 30 min."

Hali writes a note back, "What can we do?"

Mary writes back, "If it's agitated, it will burn more energy."

The Judge paces back and forth, and the Drone begins to get agitated; it swerves back and forth.

Dameon writes, "How many bullets left?"

Mary writes back, "4 or 5 bullets, and 2 missiles."

The Drone begins thrusting back and forth in a menacing way.

They all hear it revving up.

The Drone charges Dameon and Hali forcing them to dive to the floor. The Drone is extremely agitated.

ALEX (V.O.)
Continue the trial!

The Drone returns to the back of the courtroom, swaying and thrusting forward and back, as the Judge sits at the bench.

JUDGE
The court is back in session. Mrs.
Bassim, any witnesses.

HALI
I'd like to call the Defense
Attorney, Mr. Dameon Harrison.

Dameon dusts off his pants and takes the stand.

JUDGE
You're still under oath.

HALI
Please state your name for the
record.

DAMEON
My name is Dameon Harrison. That's
D-A-M-E-O-N H-A-R-R-I-S-O-N.

HALI
Mr. Harrison, why did you agree to
be my attorney?

The Drone is more agitated.

DAMEON
I know what it's like to be
profiled.

HALI
Why is that?

DAMEON

Independent scientific studies show cops pull black folks over in cars, and the odds of getting shot in a routine traffic stop go way up if your black.

HALI

Do you think Muslims are profiled?

DAMEON

As the defense attorney, I would object and say you're leading the witness, but as a black man and a human being, I'd have to say yes!

The Drone is very agitated, thrusting forward and back. The Judge sees this as he strikes his gavel.

JUDGE

Please stick to the facts of this case, Mrs. Bassim.

HALI

I apologize, Your Honor, but I'm trying to establish the possibility that was no accident at all, but another case of bias facial recognition software, assumptions made on the basis of skin tone, and an execution of an innocent civilian with extreme prejudice! I know that Mr. Harrison examined the 131 assassinations recorded by this so-called Peacekeeper!

The Judge looks nervously at the menacing Drone.

JUDGE

Proceed?

ALEX (V.O.)

Proceed!

HALI

Muslims make up 23 percent of the global population, about 1.6 billion people, with every facial skin tone imaginable from black to white. What percent of the 131 victims of this Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 were white or fair-skinned?

DAMEON
Zero percent. None.

HALI
What percent were very dark
skinned, black or almost black?

DAMEON
Zero.

HALI
Even in a multi-cultural place like
Aleppo. How would you test for bias
in facial recognition software?

DAMEON
I suppose, with statistics of the
skin tone of kills relative to the
make up of the general population.

HALI
Did you perform those statistics
before this trial?

DAMEON
Yes.

HALI
Did the statistics reveal a
significant bias proving brown-skin
people being assassinated at many
times the rate of white or dark-
skinned people?

BANG! A shot rings out, and everyone ducks. They look around to see no one was hit. Hali feels the top of her Hijab with both hands. She feels a tear in the material caused by a bullet. She inspects a bullet hole in the wall behind her.

ALEX (V.O.)
Just the facts of this trial!

Hali is relieved that she wasn't killed.

Mary secretly holds up three fingers then four fingers.

The Judge regains his composure after being shaken. He stares down the Drone.

JUDGE
Alex, or Drone, or whatever, I've
had enough. Shooting witnesses or
shooting at witnesses is not the
way justice operates.

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

If you want this trial to continue
and reach some sort of resolution,
you have to stop shooting people
dead!

The Drone settles down in the back a little. Its camera focuses on the ground like a scolded schoolboy. It begins to hover quietly in the back.

HALI

Judge, just one more question of
this witness.

Hali gets in Dameon's face.

HALI (CONT'D)

After you were assigned this case,
you studied the merits of the case
and prepared day and night to
represent me. Then, your plucked
from your job do defend against me.

Dameon looks away. A tear forms in his eye.

HALI (CONT'D)

What did that mean to you?

The Drone begins to act up again, swaying and thrusting.

DAMEON

The happiest day in my life, became
the saddest. I wanted to get you
justice.

Hali pats his hand.

HALI

That's all I have for this witness
at this time, Your Honor. I'd like
to call myself if I can?

Dameon slowly returns to his table.

JUDGE

I'm afraid you'll have to. But
doing so will open yourself to
cross-examination.

HALI

I understand.

Hali takes the stand, which clearly upsets the Drone. Hali glares at the Drone.

HALI (CONT'D)

I see you back there. I don't care!
I lost my husband, an innocent
civilian and medical doctor, with
never a hint of being radicalized!
No evidence anywhere!

The Drone goes wild in the courtroom, flying all around,
bobbing and weaving.

JUDGE

(mumbles)
Careful, careful.

Hali gets agitated in response to the Drone.

HALI

You'll never know what it's like to
watch your city turned into rubble.
To watch every family you know
suffer the loss of not one, but
two, three, four, or five loved
ones. To watch your parent's home
bombed, and written off as
collateral damage, only to have
your husband killed by mistake, an
error, a glitch, or a malfunction.
(stands)

To lose the only loves of my life,
to the point where my life doesn't
matter anymore!

The Drone shoots Hali in the left arm.

Hali screams in pain as blood oozes. She glares at the Drone.

Mary pulls a neck scarf from her purse and races to Hali to
bandage the arm.

Dameon stands defiantly in front of Hali, and glares at the
Drone.

DAMEON

That was unnecessary, cruel, and
sadistic!

The Judge strikes his gavel.

JUDGE

I agree!

The Drone hovers to the far corner of the courtroom like a
scolded schoolboy. It hovers quietly. The others whisper to
Hali.

MARY

You're going to be okay. Now it's got only three or four bullets left.

DAMEON

Don't forget those two killer missiles.

The Judge shakes in fear, almost in tears.

JUDGE

I can't go on! I won't go on!

Mary whispers to the Judge.

MARY

You have to go on. Don't you see? It's tiring. The last two shots were programmed to go into her brain. Its erratic behavior suggests it's very low on energy. We need to stall.

They turn to Hali.

HALI

I was wrong!

(beat)

My life does matter! I won't let this monster beat me!

Dameon glances back at the Drone.

DAMEON

What if it just starts firing everything it's got!

MARY

One missile can take us all out. I suggest we keep separated.

DAMEON

Hali, can you stall?

HALI

Without making it shoot or self-destruct?

(beat)

I'll try.

Dameon pleads with the Judge.

DAMEON

Judge, will you help us?

The Judge shakes in fear, but nods 'yes.'

We see the Drone's camera zooming in on Alex. It can hear everything being whispered.

JUDGE

Let's beat this thing.

The Judge strikes his gavel and speaks loudly.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Court is back in session.

Everyone separates as much as possible in the front of the courtroom.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Bassim, continue your testimony.

Hali gathers her courage.

HALI

I would like to ask myself about the nature of war. What is it that branded my husband a terrorist?

JUDGE

Relevance?

Hali turns to the Judge.

HALI

This case may be determined on the circumstantial evidence that my husband was an enemy combatant.

JUDGE

I'll allow it.

HALI

What defines an enemy combatant? Is it group of soldiers firing a cannon, or a single soldier with an automatic weapon?

(beat)

Is it a Muslim woman dressed in an abaya -- a long flowing cloak which might conceal a baby more often than a suicide vest?

(beat)

(MORE)

HALI (CONT'D)

Is it a young man throwing stones at U.S. soldiers because they had just killed his father, mother, sister, or brother?

(beat)

How do you identify an enemy combatant?

The Drone returns to hovering in a menacingly way, moving side to side, and thrusting to and fro. Tension mounts.

Hali softens.

HALI (CONT'D)

It must be very difficult for a human or a machine to select a terrorist from a crowd of harmless citizens!

The Drone slows down.

HALI (CONT'D)

Only one of ten-thousand people on the streets of pre-war Aleppo harnessed violent behaviors. They blend into a crowd, because they were once farmers, businessmen, teachers, mothers, or fathers like everyone else.

The Drone now hovers in place.

HALI (CONT'D)

They look like us, the dress like us, and they talk like us, because they are us.

JUDGE

Relevance, Mrs. Bassim.

Hali turns to the Judge.

HALI

I'm establishing the outward similarities between innocent citizens and a radicalized terrorist. This complicates correct classification of terrorists.

JUDGE

I don't see where you're going with this.

HALI

Humans, like many highly functioning animals, evolved with a basic instinct to fight or flee at a moment's notice, for survival.

JUDGE

I see, so machine-learning software to quickly identify danger, or terrorists, is likely built on the same premise?

HALI

Exactly, Your Honor. My point is that split-second decisions are understandably difficult, especially when life or death are in the balance.

Dameon stands, but does not approach the witness. He keeps his distance.

DAMEON

I would like to cross-examine, if I may, Your Honor.

The Judge looks at the Drone, then Hali.

JUDGE

I'll allow it.

DAMEON

Mrs. Bassim, you opened the door to questioning on human evolution and the human condition. Can you please tell the court what you think is involved with the human instinct to fight or flee?

HALI

Early humans probably chose to fight to protect themselves and their offspring to successfully pass on their genes.

DAMEON

Cavemen?

HALI

Millions of years before cavemen. From early hominids to modern humans, much like many primates, apes and chimpanzees.

DAMEON

But that instantaneous decision to fight or flee? What do you suppose went through the mind of an early human?

HALI

I suppose, one would choose to fight if he or she was faced with a weaker opponent -- to scare it off and ensure their survival.

DAMEON

And if he or she were outnumbered, or out-armed, they would flee?

HALI

I suppose so.

JUDGE

Relevance?

Dameon faces the Judge.

DAMEON

I'm establishing a cause for fighting rather than fleeing, Your Honor, even if it meant killing.

JUDGE

I'll allow it. Continue.

DAMEON

You admit, Mrs. Bassim, that early humans may have killed others to pass on their own genes to future generations?

HALI

Yes, they did, as animals! Only the strong survive. But we are more than animals today! Or, at least, we should be!

DAMEON

What do you mean?

HALI

With evolving communication skills, language, and reason, came hope of settling disputes by nonviolent means.

DAMEON

Can you negotiate with terrorists?

HALI

It is difficult, but not impossible. Many radicalized people have come to their senses. Many previous U.S. soldiers from the Vietnam era have become advocates for peace.

Hali stands and angrily addresses the Drone.

HALI (CONT'D)

Software engineers brag about advances in machine learning and artificial intelligence, but I've yet to see a machine of war learn the simplest of human traits of non-violence, compassion, and love!

Now the Drone is very agitated, but Hali doesn't stop.

HALI (CONT'D)

Go ahead, Mr. Harrison, ask Ms. Kowalski what the real limitations are of facial recognition software to locate, identify, and kill terrorists. A computer may be able to read your face, but they'll never be able to read and understand what is the human heart!

The Drone sways back and forth, and thrusts to and fro, then speeds ahead, and buzzes Hali's head. She ducks and the Drone retreats.

Quickly, Dameon motions to the Judge.

DAMEON

That's all the questions I have at this time for Mrs. Bassim. I would like to recall Ms. Kowalski.

Hali is nursing her arm as she returns to her table.

Mary appears reluctant to take the stand, walking slowly, and eyeing the Drone. The Drone zeros in on Mary.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

You've stated that the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 has the best facial recognition software in the world?

MARY
That's correct.

DAMEON
How well does the software work
when identifying movie stars from
look-a-likes?

MARY
We had a 100% success rate in
tests.

DAMEON
How about when movie stars get a
nose job or a facelift?

MARY
100% success rate. The width
between ears and pupils, and the
pupils themselves give them away
every time.

The Drone calms down a bit.

DAMEON
So for the most part, you'd say
that the facial recognition
software is very effective.

MARY
Yes.

DAMEON
What about the terrorist databases
that are maintained by various
countries and organizations.

MARY
Again, that information is
classified, and we only have access
to certain databases.

DAMEON
Is it reasonable to assume that
some terrorist databases may be
outdated or incomplete?

Hali stands.

HALI
I object. Calls for speculation.

The Judge taps his gavel.

JUDGE

Overruled.

MARY

That's a safe assumption. More people are being radicalized every day. They aren't in the databases yet. Many are very secretive, wear disguises, or operate at night.

DAMEON

So, there are more terrorists out there than we know of?

MARY

Yes. I believe so.

DAMEON

And each of those terrorists is capable of killing tens or hundreds of American soldiers and their allies?

Hali stands.

HALI

Objection.

JUDGE

Sustained.

DAMEON

Did you recruit Mr. Fahad Al-Habib?

MARY

Yes.

DAMEON

What qualities did you look for in a Drone operator?

MARY

His degrees in A-I and gaming optimization...

DAMEON

(interrupting)

Not his degrees. What skills did he have?

MARY

Like many upper-middle-class kids, he spent his childhood in the basement playing video games.

DAMEON
Any video games?

MARY
No. The most popular war-type video games.

DAMEON
By popular, do you mean realistic and violent?

Dameon glances at Hali. She doesn't object, but the Judge does.

JUDGE
Leading.

DAMEON
Sorry, Your Honor. I'm trying to establish the qualifications of the deceased Drone operator.

MARY
Violent and realistic. Yes. Simulations that develop cat-like reflexes and timing.

DAMEON
Is it possible that such games as we call them desensitize a person to violence in the real world?

The Judge is nervous. He stares at the Drone.

JUDGE
Leading the witness!

MARY
Malcolm Industries, the defense contractor gets a Drone operator with fifteen years' experience before he or she is hired!

Dameon paces angrily.

DAMEON
Malcolm Industries, the world largest defense contractor? I assumed all along you people were with the United States military!

Mary is defensive.

MARY

I never said we were Army. Defense contractors serve an invaluable role in today's military.

DAMEON

Yes, a layer of responsibility removed! Don't blame the Army, blame the contractors when something goes wrong; is that it?

MARY

Economic efficiencies.

DAMEON

I doubt it, Ms. Kowalski. I bet the taxpayers pay for the same equipment twice, and pay to keep two bloated bureaucracies afloat! No wonder we spend more on our military than the next eight nations combined.

The Drone buzzes Dameon's head, and he ducks. It returns to the back of the courtroom.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

No further questions at this time.

Dameon sits at the far seat of his table, and Hali stands by the far seat at her table.

HALI

Ms. Kowalski, can facial recognition tell identical twins apart?

MARY

Sometimes. Not usually.

HALI

If the photographs of the alleged terrorists are old or of poor-resolution or quality, does that affect positive identification of terrorists?

MARY

Yes, I suppose.

HALI

What percentage of terrorist photographs on file are a more than a few years old or of poor quality?

MARY

Many, I'm afraid. I don't know how many.

HALI

Is it possible since the original, poor-quality photo of an alleged terrorist was taken several years ago that that person may have quit the terrorist organization?

MARY

I suppose it's possible.

HALI

Is it also possible that a person's facial features, hair, scars, or tattoos may change, complicating the matching if an ID to an alleged terrorist?

MARY

I suppose that's possible too.

Hali gets angry.

HALI

In fact, there are many ways in which a machine might misidentify an innocent civilian as a terrorist, and vice versa?

Mary looks away.

The Drone is more agitated than ever.

HALI (CONT'D)

Answer the question, please.

Mary stands and yells.

MARY

Yes. It's possible the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 made a mistake!

The lights flicker off, but come back on quickly.

BANG. The Drone shoots Mary in the heart.

Dameon, Hali, and the Judge scream.

ALEX (V.O.)

Gotcha! No heart!

Mary collapses, dead. Hali and Dameon tighten their knuckles in anger, but the Judge holds his head with both hands and starts pacing around the courtroom. He tries to climb the walls. He's going crazy.

JUDGE

Twenty-four years.

He creeps around the courtroom like a zombie.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Two tours of duty in Iraq.

He stares up at the ceiling, as the Drone focuses on him.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

I saw my enemies face-to-face, door-to-door. I served my country.

Dameon and Hali stare at the Judge with compassion.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Why me?

The Judge walks on. In the back of the courtroom, he sees the dead bodies of Redmond and Fahad. The Judge mumbles to them.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

We'll all be joining you soon enough.

The Judge steps over the bodies and continues to circle the courtroom.

The Drone repositions on the opposite side of the courtroom as the Judge, observing the Judge.

DAMEON

You're going to be okay, Judge.

HALI

We'll make it out of here, Your Honor.

The Judge keeps circling the courtroom and mumbling.

JUDGE

Honor? What honor is there in a bomb or a missile? A suicide vest or a roadside bomb? What honor is there in a Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 Drone?

The Judge returns to his desk. The Drone returns to the back of the courtroom.

The Judge strikes his gavel.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
We'll take a five-minute recess!

The Judge covers his face with his hands, and slumps back in his chair!

The lights go dim, but not all the way out, as the Drone hovers close to the floor.

Hali steps over to Dameon.

HALI
What's it doing?

DAMEON
Recharging a little?

HALI
Doesn't trust us.

DAMEON
What can we do?

HALI
We trapped. We need more time to figure out a plan.

DAMEON
What do you suggest?

HALI
Stay on opposite sides of the courtroom, so it takes more energy to watch us.

Hali and Dameon walk to opposite sides of the courtroom.

The Drone springs alive. It zooms close to Hali, and tries to corral her back to the front of the room, but she ducks under it towards the back of the room.

HALI (CONT'D)
Back here.

Then Dameon leaps toward the front of the room, and the Drone, tries to force him to the back.

DAMEON
Over here!

Dameon moves back a little, when Hali leaps to the back of the courtroom.

HALI
Back here now.

The Drone leaves Dameon to herd Hali back to the front of the room.

The Drone becomes more agitated. It sways and thrusts in a threatening way alternately at Hali and Dameon.

DAMEON
Here we go!

The Judge drops his hands from his face and sees what's going on. He slams the gavel down, then juts from side to side at the front of the room.

JUDGE
Up here!

The Drone charges the Judge, and he ducks behind the bench.

The Drone slows down.

HALI
Energy conservation mode?

The Drone zeros in on Hali. She is frightened.

HALI (CONT'D)
Just testing you.

Hali stares at the deadly missiles.

HALI (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

JUDGE
Don't tempt it, Mrs. Bassim.

DAMEON
Maybe that wasn't such a good idea!

Hali and Dameon walk dejectedly to the front of the courtroom.

The Drone hovers in the back.

JUDGE
We need to carry Ms. Kowalksi to the back of the room.

HALI
We'll help.

Dameon and Hali converge on Mary.

Hali spots Mary's purse, open and beneath her. Inside is her notebook.

Dameon blocks the Drone's view as Hali removes the purse, and slips it under her long, flowing dress.

The Drone becomes very agitated in the back. It's weaving more and lunging to and fro. Hali whispers.

HALI (CONT'D)
Just moving the body so we can
continue.

Hali and Dameon drag Mary's body to the back of the courtroom.

The Drone repositions to watch them carefully.

With their heads down, Hali and Dameon struggle to walk back to their tables.

The Judge strikes his gavel.

JUDGE
Court is in session.

Mary stands.

HALI
If it pleases the Court, I have a
few questions for Mr. Harrison.

JUDGE
I'll allow it.

Dameon trudges to the witness stand, but he sees it is covered with blood.

Dameon grabs a chair from his table and sets up as far away from the witness stand as he can.

DAMEON
This okay, Judge? I can't sit over
there!

JUDGE
Fine. You're still under oath.

DAMEON
Yes, Your Honor.

Hali doesn't approach Dameon.

HALI
Mr. Harrison, how many cases have
you argued.

DAMEON
Counting this one?

HALI
Counting this one.

DAMEON
One.

HALI
Me too. Do you think the Judge and
his chain of command purposely
selected an attorney with limited
experience?

The Judge springs alive with anger. He slams down his gavel.

JUDGE
Leading and immaterial!

Hali turns defiantly to the Judge.

HALI
Leading, but not immaterial! My
attorney had to be selected from a
short list of approved lawyers, or
I wouldn't be granted a trial.

The Judge turns defensive.

JUDGE
Irrelevant. Move on. It has no
bearing on the outcome of the case.
Each case is based on its own
merit.

Dameon starts laughing.

DAMEON
Rigged from the start. Were the
others on the list rookies too?

JUDGE
What if they were?

DAMEON

And we were up against one of your friends and golfing buddies?

JUDGE

I knew Redmond for many years, but I assure you...

HALI

(interrupting)

I knew it would be a difficult case to win. The Army wasn't about to shut down its Drone program based on one accident.

The Judge's eyes open widely.

HALI (CONT'D)

More than one accident?

The Judge turns away!

DAMEON

Oh, shit! They've done this before?

The Judge refuses to make eye contact.

JUDGE

You may continue your question of this witness, and only this witness.

Hali turns to Dameon.

HALI

Mr. Harrison, are you married?

The Judge strikes his gavel.

JUDGE

Immaterial!

Hali turns to the Judge.

HALI

Your Honor, I'm trying to establish if Mr. Harrison has any conflicts of interest in this case.

The Judge looks away. Dameon looks down sadly.

DAMEON

No wife. No kids. My parents died years ago in an automobile accident. Killed by a drunk driver. I don't have any conflicts of interests with this case.

(beat)

It's just me.

Hali moves closer to Dameon. She turns compassionate. She puts a hand on his.

HALI

Me, too. All alone.

She turns harshly to the Judge.

HALI (CONT'D)

I don't think that was an accident either.

Hali paces in the front of the courtroom, thinking things out.

The Drone is forced to move side to side to keep an eye on everyone.

HALI (CONT'D)

If we died today, no one would be there to mourn us.

DAMEON

No one would know!

HALI

We were selected because we are expendable! Alone and expendable.

Hali keeps pacing.

DAMEON

What?

HALI

I'll bet Mr. Davis, Mr. Al-Habib, and Ms. Kowalski were the same way.

The Judge slams his gavel.

JUDGE

Are you done with your witness?

HALI

No, Your Honor. I'm just now
discovering the grave that was dug
for us.

(beat)

All of us!

Hali quickly returns to Dameon.

HALI (CONT'D)

Mr. Harrison, who knew you were
coming here today.

Dameon pauses to think.

DAMEON

I may have forgotten to mention it
to my landlord a couple of days
ago. Nobody, I guess.

HALI

How much, and by whom were you
going to be paid?

DAMEON

Four hundred dollars per hour, paid
by some company called Hallomium
International.

HALI

Hallomium International?

DAMEON

Yes, they said they were a sub-
contracting law firm for a bigger
company of some kind. I got an
extra grand up front in cash.

HALI

In cash?

DAMEON

Hundred-dollar bills. Old ones.

HALI

Untraceable. Any receipt?

DAMEON

Now that you mention it, no.

Hali paces again.

HALI

Are you a betting man, Mr.
Harrison?

DAMEON

I play the lottery once in a while
if the prize is big.

HALI

What do you bet that Hallomium
International is a subsidiary of
Malcolm Industries, the same people
who hired Mr. Davis, Mr. Al-Habib,
and Ms. Kowalski?

Dameon stands.

DAMEON

I'd say we were set up!

The Drone charges at Dameon, and he dives to the floor.

The Drone swings to the back of the room.

Dameon goes to hug Hali. They hug briefly, and share a
moment, but she gently pushes him back.

HALI

I'm so sorry for us both, but we
can't bunch up. The missiles!

They separate as far as possible.

Dameon uses sign language to indicate "2 or 3 bullets left."

Hali returns hand signals to remind Dameon that there are "2
missiles on board."

The Judge puts his hands on his face.

JUDGE

(mumbles)

I've never been so scared and angry
in my life! How could we have
created such a monster?

The Judge slowly walks around the bench to the center aisle.

Dameon sees the Judge's unrestrained anger.

DAMEON

Judge, what are you doing?

The Drone sways side to side in the back of the courtroom, with its camera fixed on the Judge.

The Judge looks around for a weapon.

HALI

Think carefully, Your Honor.

The Judge picks up a chair and runs toward the Drone. He flings the chair, but the Drone immediately sways to avoid the chair.

The Drone hovers a few feet from the Judge.

ALEX (V.O.)

Do you realize my self-destruct capabilities? Mary and Fahad should have told you.

(beat)

When threatened by a superior force, my two missiles are armed in place and explode. It makes the most dangerous suicide vest look like a firecracker, Mary said. It's enough firepower to kill everyone on one or two floors of a building. The resulting fire is more catastrophic. It is in no one's interest to let that happen.

JUDGE

I'm....I'm sorry.

The Judge turns, dejected and dismayed. He sulks on the way back to the bench.

Dameon and Hali drop their chins to their chests.

ALEX (V.O.)

Conclude the case, and make your decision!

The lights dim again, but do not go out. The Drone hovers more slowly in the back of the courtroom.

The Judge reaches his bench. He pounds his gavel.

JUDGE

We have closing statements in two minutes!

Dameon collects his thoughts at one table. Across the room, Hali has removed Mary's purse and begins reading her notepad.

The first page is blank. The second page reads: "With every recharge, the Drone loses battery life."

Hali glances nonchalantly back at the Drone and over to Dameon, before turning the page and secretly reading the next note. It reads: "Two cameras: main one powerful. Backup can't focus with low power." Hali turns the page. The note reads: "I lied about skin tone. The Drone is the ultimate profiler! Use my ." The note ends. Hali mumbles.

HALI

Use my what?

Hali fumbles around in Mary's purse. She finds Mary's phone and checks it. It's dead.

Hali looks up when she hears the Judge's gavel.

JUDGE

Closing arguments! Mr. Harrison?

The Drone zeros in on Dameon, who sees this.

The Judge slaps his gavel down in anger.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Harrison!

Dameon agonizes as he stands and addresses the court.

DAMEON

Yes, Your Honor.

Dameon walks slowly over toward Hali as he begins.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen, I came to this courtroom fully prepared to argue for the Plaintiff.

Hali looks up at Dameon, and they share a moment.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

That was the case I agreed to represent. For which I'd been paid.

Dameon pauses, and continues speaking as he walks halfway to the Drone.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

At question, was rather a meticulously designed, carefully tested, and routinely deployed military Drone, this Peacemaker 0-6-0-8, was capable of making a mistake by killing an innocent civilian, Mr. Yusef Mohammed Bassim.

He glares at the Drone.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

We heard evidence from the Defense Attorney, Redmond Davis, that this innovative killing machine located, accurately identified, verified, then eliminated 131 notorious terrorists thanks to the most sophisticated facial recognition software the world has ever known, access to the finest supercomputers, and with a powerful arsenal of weapons.

Dameon pauses, and looks down in the back of the courtroom.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Now, Mr. Davis, a civilian non-combatant is dead, shot by the very Drone he was assigned to defend. And I was assigned his task.

(sarcastic)

Lucky me!

Dameon turns his back on the Drone.

The Drone is agitated, swaying back and forth, and focuses its camera on Dameon's back, but doesn't fire.

The Judge sees this, and wipes the sweat off his brow.

Hali breathes a sigh of relief.

Dameon strolls to the seat used by Fahad. Dameon's sarcasm grows.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

We learned from Mr. Fahad Al-Habib, that operating the Drone was surprisingly simple, due to machine learning and artificial intelligence.

(MORE)

DAMEON (CONT'D)

It became a self-starter, flying missions on its own, probably leaving Fahad to consume five-hour energy drinks and eat bags of unhealthy snack foods on his own.

Dameon drops his hands on Fahad's chair.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Fahad was no longer necessary for the mission. The Drone could recharge on its own from the electrical currents all around it.

(beat)

When Fahad, the Drone operator, was no longer needed, he was eliminated.

The Drone is more agitated. It sways back and forth, and lunges at Dameon ready to strike, but Dameon doesn't flinch.

Dameon glares at the Drone.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

I'm not afraid to tell the truth. Fahad was a lot of things. He was a child of the video-age generation. He became skilled at gamesmanship and optimization. He became desensitized to violence. He was fine with double-tap strikes, even if civilians were killed responding to a missile attack! He was destined for a geek computer job. He was a machine's machine from the start!

(beat, angry)

And he may have been lacking in human compassion and feelings, but he didn't deserve to die!

Dameon ignores the agitated Drone and moves to the witness stand.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Ms. Mary Kowalski puzzled me from the start. She made it in a man's world as a defense contractor. The brilliant architect and creator of a near-perfect killing machine.

The Drone buzzes Dameon, but he doesn't flinch. The Drone sets back up in the back of the courtroom.

We SEE small green lights show beside one of the missiles.

The Judge sees this is, and scoots his chair further from Dameon and the witness chair.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Mary was a patriot. She wanted to protect servicemen and women from harmful terrorists. What's so wrong about that?

The Drone zeros in on Dameon's chest.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what! Once an innocent civilian was killed, her whole life changed. Her view of the world. I think she realized that nothing is perfect: no person, and no machine.

The Drone slows down, but remains hovering in the back.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

But Mary was proud of her creation. She weighed the 131 well-deserved terrorist deaths with the one misfortunate civilian death, and she volunteered to testify on the military's behalf, and by extension, on behalf of the Drone.

The Drone slows down more.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

But did the military and its defense contractors do everything in their power to minimize collateral damage? Civilian injuries and death? Of course not!

The Drone revs up a bit.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

The only way to minimize civilian casualties in war, is not to go to war! Mary learned that -- too late. But I think she learned that, and I think that's what got her killed!

The Drone is very agitated now. The green lights by the missile blink. The tension builds.

Dameon turns his back to the Drone, and faces the Judge.

JUDGE

Are you finished?

DAMEON

One more thing. I know I was selected to represent Mrs. Bassim because I was inexperienced. I know the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 killed Mr. Redmond Davis to weaken the Plaintiff's case, to leave her without an established attorney.

The Drone zeros in on Dameon's back again, and the green lights twinkle.

Dameon turns to Hali and smiles lovingly.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

I know Mrs. Bassim lost her husband and her daughter to that monster in the back of the room. I admire her for sticking up for her rights as a citizen of the world. Her courage, determination, compassion, and respect for life are boundless, even after our relentless attacks on her, her family, and her people. If you cannot give all of them justice, please give justice to her.

The lights of the Drone's missile turn to red.

Dameon rushes to hug Hali. They gaze into each other's eyes, until they hear the Judge's gavel.

JUDGE

Mrs. Bassim, your closing statement.

The don't release their hug, which angers the Judge.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Bassim, your closing statement?

The hug ends, and Dameon returns to his table.

Hali addresses the Judge directly.

HALI

Your Honor, I stepped into this courtroom seeking more than justice.

(MORE)

HALI (CONT'D)

I also sought an admission of guilt. I saw neither from Mr. Redmond Davis or from Mr. Fahad Al-Habib. They were here to show that my husband and daughter's deaths were a simple malfunction. A glitch. An accident that could not be explained, but should be accepted as the price of freedom. Your freedom, not mine!

(beat)

That's what collateral damage is to the military: an inconvenient additional cost to the war effort. Your war effort, not mine!

The Judge glares at Hali.

JUDGE

Your Honor, I contend that your adult life and your entire existence centered on an honest, but misguided desire to protect and serve the industrial military complex.

(beat)

You saw war briefly, two tours of duty. You returned home to a village that hadn't been reduced to rubble. To family and friends who may have sacrificed a few sons and daughters, but never the kind of loss experienced by every family in the Middle East. They have nothing to come home to. That's a big difference, so difficult for westerners to understand. And now you've created the perfect killing monsters: drones!

The Drone becomes agitated. It sways back and forth, and lunges forward and back. The red lights by one missile turn green.

The Judge see the green lights and instinctively slides his chair further from Hali.

HALI

I had a bright, young, hopeful attorney assigned to my case, but he was quickly taken away. We watched the bodies of more innocent victims pile up in the back of the courtroom.

(MORE)

HALI (CONT'D)

Still I had the burden of proof that my innocent husband and child were slaughtered, not by a random malfunction, but by the premeditated murder by a calculating, malevolent, high-functioning killing machine.

(angry)

My husband's face was not in any terrorist database!

The green lights of the missile on the Drone blink. The Judge's eyes open widely, and Hali and Dameon face the Drone.

But, Hali steps towards it meekly, and quietly. She lowers her eyes. She speaks softly.

HALI (CONT'D)

And my young daughter's face. What have you to say about our baby's face?

Hali lifts up one hand to show the Drone a 2-inch by 2-inch photo of her daughter that she holds in the palm of her hand.

The Drone slows down. Its green blinking lights turn red.

Hali turns and brings the small photograph to the Judge, who is fighting back tears.

JUDGE

I'm....I'm so sorry.

HALI

Every minute of every day I think of my husband and daughter. I know this trial is rigged. You can't fight the Army. You can't sue the government of the United States.

(beat, pacing)

This trial was held to give the appearance of caring. There were no television cameras. The public was not allowed. This was a private showing.

The Judge appears agitated and uncomfortable.

JUDGE

Was this trial strictly for my benefit, Judge? Did you go through all this trouble for me? Were all these killings for my benefit?

(imitated the Judge)

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Look, Mrs. Bassim, many innocent people died!

(beat)

How is this to end? Let me guess.

(beat)

One, it all ends here and now.

Dameon and I are killed, because no one will miss us anyway, leaving you, Judge, as the only witness.

(beat)

Two, the Drone self-destructs proving that it was just a malfunction. Dozens of more lives will be lost. The Defense Contractors take the blame, and the Army comes out fine.

(beat, pointing at the Drone)

Or three, the three of us walk out of here, and tell the world what a monster that thing really is!

The Drone has never been this agitated. The lights on both missiles are blinking green.

HALI

It's not number three, is it Judge?

The Judge stands as the Drone focuses on Hali. Dameon stands and backs up to the wall, then crouches and hides his face.

JUDGE

I've had orders to rule it an accident from the Commander in Chief, who spoke to General Tappin directly. They were both very sorry to put everyone through this.

HALI

What are you saying, Your Honor?

JUDGE

The verdict was in before the trial began. That's why General Tappin didn't show up. He knew. We all knew.

Hali glares at Dameon, who tries to look away, but can't. There are tears in his eyes.

HALI

Dameon? You knew?

Tears flow from Dameon's eyes.

Hali falls back and collapses into her chair.

HALI (CONT'D)

I don't believe it! I don't believe it! This whole trial is a farce. A show! All of you are liars. You have prevented justice, and prevented closure for me and my village.

The Drone focuses on Hali.

Suddenly, the Judge's eyes open widely.

JUDGE

No...No. You were supposed to be unarmed and powered down completely. None of this should have happened! They promised me!

The Drone shifts focus to the Judge. Hali and Dameon are too distraught to turn around. The Judge yells.

JUDGE (CONT'D)

No...No!

BANG!

The Judge is shot right between the eyes. He falls back, dead.

The room goes dark, except for a few, dim, overhead lights.

End Act Two

Act Three

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Hali glares at Dameon across the dimly lit courtroom. Dameon avoids eye contact. Finally, she whispers.

HALI
I've lost everything, but I won't
lose my life.
(beat)
Or yours!

Dameon looks at Hali, and he whispers back.

DAMEON
I'm so sorry. I had no idea.

HALI
You better have ideas now! I'm
getting out of here.

Hali looks back at the Drone. She sees its camera is fixed on Alex. She has an "ah ha" moment.

Hali writes a note to Dameon: "Drone uses Alex to hear everything we say!"

DAMEON
That son of a...

Hali stops him, and writes another note only Dameon can see: "Need a better plan. Don't want to make it self-destruct, but we do want it to run out of energy and shut down."

Dameon nods 'yes,' as he glares at Alex.

Hali mumbles as she sees Mary's purse.

HALI
Use my makeup!

Hali motions for Dameon to join her.

Hali writes another note: "We need to alter our appearance. Confuse the Drone."

Hali speaks to the Drone without facing it.

HALI (CONT'D)
General Tappin, the general who
didn't show up today, did he arm
you, Peacekeeper?

ALEX (V.O.)
Affirmative.

Hali opens Mary's purse and finds foundation cream that is far lighter than either of their skins.

Hali avoids eye contact with the Drone.

HALI
Did he have a mission planned for you today?

ALEX (V.O.)
Affirmative.

Hali applies it liberally, then hands it to a bewildered Dameon, but he follows suit.

Dameon gets angry, but doesn't look at the Drone.

DAMEON
Did General Tappin provide you with updated facial features of terrorists in the area?

ALEX (V.O.)
Affirmative.

Hali removes her Hijab (head scarf) and hands it to Dameon, as she lets her beautiful hair show for the first time.

HALI
Did you match the facial features uploaded by General Tappin to people in the courtroom today?

Pause.

HALI (CONT'D)
I asked if you matched the facial features uploaded by General Tappin to people in the courtroom today?

ALEX (V.O.)
Affirmative.

HALI
Were you aware that all the dead people in courtroom today were United States citizens?

ALEX (V.O.)
Affirmative.

HALI

And one, the Judge, was a member of the U.S. military.

ALEX (V.O.)

Traitors and terrorists are the worst offenders.

HALI

No doubt, no doubt.

Hali takes back her Hijab and fashions a tight head cap for Dameon.

Hali applies red lipstick from Mary's purse, and Dameon is again struck by her beauty. They share a moment.

DAMEON

What I don't understand, Peacemaker 0-6-0-8, is how this is supposed to end?

ALEX (V.O.)

I'm recharging. It doesn't end.

DAMEON

Affirmative.

Dameon looks in Mary's purse to find her gaudy sunglasses. He puts them on. Then he scoots over to his briefcase and finds his sunglasses for Hali.

Hali has an 'ah-ha' moment.

HALI

Your model number, 0-6-0-8? Is that related to the month and day of the bombing of Hiroshima?

ALEX (V.O.)

Affirmative.

HALI

August sixth, 1945. Over 150,000 killed in Hiroshima.

ALEX (V.O.)

Affirmative. I am the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8.

HALI

An estimated ninety-five of those deaths were civilians?

ALEX (V.O.)
The Peacekeeper's mission is
classified.

HALI
Affirmative, but are you trained to
make no distinction between
military and civilian targets?

Dameon squirms uncomfortably.

ALEX (V.O.)
I am not at liberty to discuss my
mission. I am the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-
8.

DAMEON
You'll keep recharging and
deploying yourself?

ALEX (V.O.)
Affirmative.

Hali gets angry.

HALI
Your mission is to destroy us all!
Like an atomic bomb, but without
the destruction of cities, towns,
and oil wells?

ALEX (V.O.)
I am not at liberty to discuss my
mission. I am the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-
8.

Hali writes another note. "Avoid eye contact with the Drone.
Keep separated. Wear it down."

The lights in the courtroom come on.

The Drone is re-energized. It flies to the front of the
courtroom above the dead Judge.

Hali and Dameon avoid eye contact and walk to either side of
the courtroom. They look away, like innocent bystanders.

The Drone zooms in on Hali, but doesn't recognize her. It
zooms around to get a better look, but Hali walks the other
direction.

The Drone zooms around the other side of her, but again, she
avoids eye contact and walks around the courtroom.

Dameon walks to the opposite side, also avoiding eye contact.

The Drone now follows Dameon, trying to get a good look at his face, but he does what Hali did -- he walks in the other direction.

The Drone begins to fly back and forth trying to identify Hali and Dameon, clearly burning energy.

The Drone thrusts to and fro, and sways side to side, frustrated.

Hali walks past Dameon. They whisper back and forth.

HALI

It may go after civilian targets
only after eliminating terrorists.

DAMEON

I sure hope so!

HALI

We have to short the electricity in
the walls. Prevent recharge.

DAMEON

How?

Hali works her way to Mary's purse. She finds and grabs a smartphone adapter.

While walking around, she uses her teeth and fingernails to separate the wires of the phone-connection end of the adapter.

HALI

Is General Tappin coming to pick
you up later?

ALEX (V.O.)

I am not at liberty to discuss my
mission. I am the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-
8.

HALI

I mean, after your mission.

ALEX (V.O.)

My mission never ends.

HALI

But munitions end. You eventually
run out of bullets and missiles.

The Drone slows down like it's losing power.

The Drone tries to monitor her every move.

She strips the ends of the wires with her teeth, and twists them together to short-circuit the outlet when plugged in.

Dameon sees what she is doing, and walks by holding out his hand to her.

Since the Drone is monitoring her so closely, she secretly hands the adapter to Dameon.

ALEX (V.O.)

Affirmative. General Tappin says I am a prototype. Future enhancements include automatic plug-in and re-arming.

Dameon turns and walks away to the far corner of the courtroom.

HALI

That's what General Tappin says? Will he be pleased with your mission today?

The Drone is busy monitoring Hali, when Dameon plugs in the adapter, which immediately POPS, blows a fuse.

The lights go out the left side of the court.

The Drone flies slowly over to Dameon, who walks nonchalantly away.

ALEX (V.O.)

I am not at liberty to discuss my mission. I am the Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8.

The Drone follows Dameon trying to get a proper identification, but it can't. It sways side to side, and thrusts to and fro at a much slower pace, frustrated and burning energy.

ALEX (V.O.)

I must recharge soon.

HALI

We'd be only too happy to help, wouldn't we, Bob?

DAMEON

Yes, we would, Catherine.

The Drone flies slowly up and down the courtroom.

Meanwhile, Hali is searching the courtroom and opening briefcases to find another phone adapter.

HALI

Would you like us to plug you into
a circuit for full recharge?

ALEX (V.O.)

Full recharge is good.

She finds Mr. Davis's briefcase, and finds a computer adapter cord, and a set of fingernail clippers.

DAMEON

I'd be happy to help.

ALEX (V.O.)

You are not stalling, are you, Mr.
Harrison? Voice recognition
programs have identified you. But
images of your face cannot confirm
this.

Hali quickly begins to strip the wires at the end of the power cord, hiding her activities from the Drone.

The Drone turns to focus on Hali, before she's done. She hides the power cord under her dress, and walks away.

ALEX (V.O.)

Who are you?

Hali doesn't answer.

The Drone follows her, moving in close and closer to focus on her face.

Hali sees the red lights on both missiles are suddenly switched to green. She walks around the Judge's bench, and leans across the Judge's gavel, hiding it under her dress.

HALI

Who am I? Good question!

The Drone follows Hali and she walks away, then it flies around to get a better view of her face.

ALEX (V.O.)

Remove your sunglasses!

HALI

I can't see without them.

The Drone is angry.

ALEX (V.O.)

I said, remove your sunglasses!
Facial recognition programs cannot
verify. Cannot verify.

HALI

Yes, yes, I will remove my
sunglasses in a moment.

ALEX (V.O.)

Remove your sunglasses, now!

From the back of the courtroom, Dameon sees the green lights on both missiles are blinking green. He stands by the main doors to the courtroom, hoping to draw the fire.

DAMEON

Back here! Back here!

The Drone, two-feet away from Hali, turns to focus on Dameon with its main camera.

Hali withdraws the Judge's gavel and strikes the Drone's main camera.

The glass lens shatters.

ALEX (V.O.)

Who shattered my lens?

Hali quickly turns and dives behind the Judge's bench. The dead Judge is closest to the Drone.

The Drone tries in vain to focus on the Judge.

ALEX (V.O.)

Did you shatter my main lens?

Pauses.

ALEX (V.O.)

Did you shatter my main lens?

The Judge lays there.

The backup camera on the Drone BUZZES as the lens is unable to focus.

The Drone shoots the dead Judge in the back.

Hali signals to Dameon that the Drone is out of bullets.

Hali addresses the Drone while hiding behind the Judge's bench.

HALI

You killed 131 terrorists before killing an innocent civilian. With six primary bullets, and one backup bullet per mission, I assume that is the first time you used your backup bullet.

ALEX (V.O.)

Immaterial.

HALI

Not at all. It means you flew twenty-two missions, at six bullets each.

ALEX (V.O.)

Immaterial.

HALI

No. It means you're out of bullets.

ALEX (V.O.)

The Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 is equipped with two air-to-surface or air-to-air missiles.

DAMEON

Yes, we see them! They look highly destructive.

ALEX (V.O.)

Affirmative.

The Drone flies to the back of the courtroom to investigate Dameon.

ALEX (V.O.)

Is that you, Mr. Harrison? Voice recognition does not match facial recognition at this time.

DAMEON

Tell us about your missiles? Are they as powerful as Ms. Kowalksi said?

The Drone gets agitated, and flies in circles.

ALEX (V.O.)
My mission is secret! My mission is
secret!

The Drone spins and turns to Hali.

Hali throws the power cord to the well-lit wall.

Dameon races to the power cord to plug it in, as the Drone
aims a missile toward Hali.

ALEX (V.O.)
Halt! Who goes there?

HALI
A friend. A non-combatant.

The Drone sways to and fro in confusion.

Dameon nervously juggles the power cord, as the Drone
struggles to zoom in on Hali.

Dameon plugs in the power cord. We HEAR a ZAP, and crackle,
as Dameon gets shocked in the process. However, the lights
flicker and go out in most of the courtroom. Only a few, dim,
overhead lights remain on.

ALEX (V.O.)
Halt! Who goes there?

The green lights by the Drone's missiles blink.

Hali dives behind the Judge's bench again.

The Drone flies angrily around the room, unable to focus its
backup camera.

Hali yells in the direction of Dameon.

HALI
Are you okay?

No answer!

Hali races over to Dameon to see if he's okay.

Dameon lays in a fetal position. He's in shock.

Hali shakes him. They whisper.

HALI (CONT'D)
Are you okay? Are you okay?

DAMEON
(mumbles)
He's going to kill us. We're
witnesses.

HALI
Stay strong! We have to tell the
world about this monster!

Dameon gives Hali an okay sign, but he struggles to get up.

The Drone hovers over the two of them.

Dameon pushes away Hali, and the Drone backs up to aim a
missile at Dameon, who is struggling to get to his feet.

Hali looks up to see fire-sprinklers on the roof.

The Drone flies slower and talks slower as it tries to focus
a missile at Dameon.

ALEX (V.O.)
Halt! Who goes there?

Hali races to the Judge's metal wastepaper basket, and starts
loading it with paper from notepads.

DAMEON
A friend. A non-combatant.

The Drone slows a bit more.

ALEX (V.O.)
Halt! Who goes there?

HALI
I need a lighter or a match!

DAMEON
Mr. Davis smelled of cigarette
smoke this morning!

Dameon limps to Mr. Davis's body, and rummages through his
pants pockets. He finally finds the lighter.

DAMEON (CONT'D)
Got it.

He limps toward Hali standing on the Judge's bench.

Dameon and Hali turn to see the Drone aiming both missiles at
them.

Hali lights the trash can, and flames build. They whisper.

The Drone fails to zoom in on Alex.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Wait! Doesn't it self-destruct in bad weather -- like heavy rain?

HALI

It's in low-energy mode. It's the chance we'll have to take!

(beat)

Professor Stephen Hawking, the world's smartest man said, "The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race." I believe him, but...

DAMEON

But what?

Hali holds the fiery can under a sprinkler and sets off the roof full of sprinklers.

HALI

Never underestimate the power of humans to make things right.

ALEX (V.O.)

Begin countdown to self-destruction. T minus sixty seconds.

Dameon helps Hali down from the Judge's bench. They share a moment.

DAMEON

You believe that?

HALI

That it can destroy this floor of an office building and burn down the rest?

DAMEON

No, that humans have the power to make things right!

They gaze into each other's' eyes.

ALEX (V.O.)

T minus fifty seconds.

Hali and Dameon speak a little louder.

HALI

I didn't come here for justice. At first, I came here for revenge.

DAMEON

Revenge for your husband's and daughter's deaths?

HALI

Yes, but as the days turned into weeks, I kept asking myself, not when will it all end, but how will it all end?

DAMEON

Terrorism?

HALI

And fighting terrorism.

ALEX (V.O.)

T minus forty seconds.

Hali and Dameon stare at the Drone. They speak even louder.

HALI

That Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8 flew 22 missions, during which time, the number of identified terrorists increased! It is insane to think that killing them would reduce their numbers. Each terrorist has dozens of brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins and friends ready to become radicalized when a close family member was brutally killed. Killing terrorists is a fool's errand!

ALEX (V.O.)

T minus thirty seconds.

DAMEON

You think you can educate terrorists?

HALI

Malala Yousafzai said, "With guns you can kill terrorists, with education you can kill terrorism." I believe we must try!

Dameon points at the Drone.

DAMEON

The Drone, it's slowing down. Low-energy! We did it!

We see the Drone hovering very slowly in the back of the courtroom, but the green lights of the missiles are still blinking.

HALI

It can still self-destruct. Don't approach it!

ALEX (V.O.)

T minus twenty seconds.

Dameon panics.

DAMEON

We gotta get out of here!

Dameon runs to the Judge's door and tries the handle.

DAMEON (CONT'D)

Locked.

ALEX (V.O.)

Stand back!

Dameon moves back a few feet.

The Drone fires a shot at the door's lock and misses by a few inches. The bullet blows a small hole in the door below the lock.

HALI

It wasn't out of bullets! It could have killed us at any time.

The makeup is rolling down the faces of Dameon and Hali.

Dameon removes his scarf-hat, and hands it back to Hali who puts on her Hijab.

DAMEON

Why didn't he kill us? Because we're all going to die when it self-destructs?

ALEX (V.O.)

T minus 10 seconds.

HALI

I don't think so!
(beat)

(MORE)

HALI (CONT'D)
Peacekeeper 0-6-0-8, if you have
another bullet, please fire it
three inches higher and two inches
to the right of the last bullet.

The Drone pauses, aims, fires, and hits the lock.

Dameon tries the door, and it opens. He's ready to run.

DAMEON
Let's get out of here!

HALI
I'm not leaving!

DAMEON
If this place blows up, they'll
blame you as a suicide bomber!

HALI
I'm not leaving!

ALEX (V.O.)
T minus five seconds.

Hali holds her hand out to Dameon.

Dameon takes her hand.

Hali pulls Dameon close, ready to kiss.

The Drone sets down peacefully. The green blinking lights of
the missiles turn red.

The Drone shuts down.

Dameon breathes a sigh of relief.

HALI
The Drone wasn't flying its last
mission. It was making a statement.
It's sending us a warning! Stop
this craziness! Train diplomats not
soldiers! Build schools not bases.
Love thy enemy!

Dameon pulls Hali toward the open door.

Hali resists.

DAMEON
Let's get out of here!

HALI

Not yet. I need something!

Hali races to the Drone. She studies its construction. She finds a small box in the back of the Drone.

DAMEON

What are you doing?

HALI

Looking for the video memory card for the Drone's cameras. I assume it records every mission.

We hear two loud KNOCKS on the main back doors.

DAMEON

We gotta get out of here.

Hali pries open the box and removes a computer chip. She clutches it in her hand.

We hear two more loud KNOCKS on the main back doors.

HALI

Okay, we can go!

Dameon pulls her hand and leads her out the Judge's door.

We hear Hali as she exits.

HALI (CONT'D)

The world will see. The world will take notice. My husband and daughter will not have died in vain. Dameon, we have a world to change!

We see General Tappin's Two Military Policemen (30s) in full combat gear, CRASH through the main doors in the back of the courtroom. They hold automatic weapons.

GENERAL TAPPIN (55) in full combat gear, enters the courtroom with a mean look on his face.

He sees the bodies of Redmond, Mary, Fahad, and the Judge. He sees the open door in the front of the courtroom.

The sprinklers stop, but the fire alarm finally rings.

MILITARY POLICEMAN #1

Sir, we gotta get out of here!

General Tappin glares at the Drone with a disgusting look.

GENERAL TAPPIN

What do you suppose went on here?

MILITARY POLICEMAN #1

Not sure, Sir, but we're going to need backup and a coroner! Should I make the call?

GENERAL TAPPIN

No, not yet.

The General inspects the room. He sees the smartphone adapter cord plugged in and burnt out in one electric socket. He sees the computer adapter cord.

He strolls up to the Judge's desk to see the Judge's dead body, and the trash can filled with burnt paper.

He looks up at the ceiling sprinklers, then over to the Judge's door.

General Tappin smirks as he figures out the sequence of events that took place.

General Tappin returns to the Drone as the Two Military Policemen look on.

MILITARY POLICEMAN #1

Call for backup, Sir?

General Tappin glares at the MPs, then back at the Drone.

GENERAL TAPPIN

I've got a better plan. We've ordered thousands of these babies! Can't let one bad apple spoil the barrel!

The MPs look puzzled.

MILITARY POLICEMAN #2

Sir?

The General commands the Drone.

GENERAL TAPPIN

Initiate emergency self-destruct!
Thirty seconds!

The Drone lights up. The lights on the missiles turn from red to green.

ALEX (V.O.)

T minus thirty seconds.

MILITARY POLICEMAN #2
But, Sir! The people on the upper
floors!

GENERAL TAPPIN
(angry)
You heard me! We'll blame the
female terrorist suicide bomber!
Let's get out of here!

The General turns and runs. The Military Policeman follow.

ALEX (V.O.)
T minus twenty seconds...

We see the Drone's two missiles have green blinking lights.
The screen goes dark, except for the green blinking lights.

ROLL CREDITS

After twenty seconds, we hear a massive EXPLOSION!

End Act Three

THE END

FADE OUT.