



## **REALBOY**

**by C.A. Steed**

### SETTING

MastroCherry, a robotics company which develops synthetic humans known as 'Poppets'

### CAST

FOX CMAERON (20's):	Junior engineer, male
CAT ANTONIO (50's):	Senior engineer, female
COMPUTER:	Automated voice interface of MastroCherry central computer system, male, smooth
CARLO:	A Poppet, programmed to simulate a young boy
FATHER (50's):	Carlo's owner/ 'Father', Upper-Class
MOTHER (50's):	Carlo's owner/ 'Mother', Upper-Class
AZURE (30's):	Low-level worker, female

**SCENE (1). INT MASTROCHERRY, OFFICE BUILDING**

FX: SOFT ACOUSTIC GUITAR MUSIC PLAYS A REPEATING RHYTHM, FADES TO:  
INT, QUIET OFFICE SPACE. BACKGROUND NOISE OF LOW CONVERSATIONS,  
PHONES RINGING, DOORS OPENING IS FAINTLY HEARD. HURRIED FOOTSTEPS  
APPROACH.

FOX: Hi, um, Ms Antonio, sorry, I'm ...

CAT: ID card?

FOX: Oh, yes, it's, um, in my ...

FX: ELECTRONIC BEEP.

COMPUTER: Catherine Antonio, MastroCherry senior custom Development engineer –  
entry authorised.

FOX: Here's, uh, there's mine.

FX: ELECTRONIC BEEP.

COMPUTER: Fox Cameron, MastroCherry junior reclaim engineer – entry not authorised.

CAT: Entry authorised.

COMPUTER: Entry authorised.

FX: HISS OF AIR, SOUND OF DOOR CLOSING.

FOX: I, uh, it's a great honour, to be asked to, um, assist you, Ms Antonio.

CAT: I needed someone from the reclaim department. They sent you.

FOX: Right. Of course. Well, it's still an honour, Ms Antonio!

CAT: Cat.

FOX: Pardon?

CAT: Cat. It's my name. Call me Cat.

FOX: Oh. Right! Thanks, Ms – Cat.

CAT: (BEAT) Your name's really Fox?

FOX: Er, yeah. My parents really loved the X-Files, you know? That old show?

CAT: No.

FOX: (BEAT) Can I – could I ask – why you needed me? Needed someone from reclaim, I mean?

CAT: A Poppet has come back in. One of my custom models. Operational issue.

FOX: Oh – we haven't had any custom Poppets back through lately.

CAT: No – this one didn't go through you. The matter is (PAUSE) delicate.

FOX: Right. Delicate. Absolutely. So what kind of model is it?

CAT: A REALBOY.

FOX: Oh, I've worked on those! Is it a Batty or a Deckard?

CAT: (BEAT) A what?

FOX: A ... you know, a Batty or ... it's what we call the ones who either know they're Poppets or don't. Like, Batties know, and Deckards don't ... it's like that film, you know ... the old film ...

CAT: Don't use those terms. They're unprofessional.

FOX: Right, yes, of course. I usually wouldn't, I was just ... slip of the tongue.

CAT: The Poppet is unaware that it is synthetic. I need you to run the standard reclaim protocol, with adjustments for the Poppet's persona.

FOX: Sure. Of course. The persona?

CAT: 10-year-old boy. Owners call it Carlo.

FOX: Carlo, right.

CAT: The persona thinks it's the son of the owners, a couple. The standard hospital visit memory was implanted when the owners arranged the pick-up, but the implantation was ... imperfect somehow. The persona became confused and upset, so it was put in sleep mode. Put this on first.

FX: SOUND OF RUSTLING FABRIC.

FOX: White coats. So, the persona will think we're doctors. Scared kid. Got it. Sounds like memory corruption, pretty simple really. Do tons of those, especially with the older models.

CAT: There's something else. The (PAUSE) delicate nature of the situation.

FOX: Yes?

CAT: The persona. It thinks it's the son of a couple who are prominent, publicly.

FOX: Absolute discretion, no problem.

CAT: It's more complex than that. The couple lost their son. Their biological child.

FOX: Oh. Oh! This is one of those replacement-kid Poppets? They creep me out, to be honest. Well, not the Poppets. The parents. They're always a bit ... you know.

CAT: The 'parents' are the Prime Minister and her husband.

FOX: (BEAT) You're *joking*.

CAT: Not at all. I made the model for them.

FOX: The *Prime Minister*?

CAT: It was, as you can imagine, done in complete secrecy. A year ago, just before ...

FOX: The election!

CAT: Yes.

FOX: But ... they have a little boy, don't they? I mean, they have a real son.

CAT: Had. He died. SB41.

FOX: The Prime Minister's *son* died of *SB41*?

CAT: I'll remind you of the need for utmost discretion.

FOX: But ... that's huge ... she must have been a *carrier* ...

CAT: I'm well aware, Mr Cameron.

FOX: So her son *died* ... right before the election ... and she had him *replaced*? So that no one would know she was a carrier?

CAT: The circumstances are none of our business.

FOX: Oh my *god*. If this got out ...

CAT: Which is why it. Won't. Get. Out. *Senior* engineer Cameron.

FOX: No, right, yeah. What?

CAT: There's a promotion available. In research and development. A senior position. Those don't come up at MastroCherry often. The position is open to a skilled, professional and *discreet* young engineer. You understand, Mr Cameron?

FOX: (BEAT) Completely, Ms Antonio.

CAT: Good.

FX: ELECTRONIC BEEP, HISS OF AIR AS DOOR SLIDES OPEN. SOFT BEEPS CAN BE HEARD RYTHMICALLY IN THE BACKGROUND.

COMPUTER: Cell two-zero-four-nine open.

CAT: Record session.

COMPUTER: Session recording.

CAT: Reclaim of Poppet custom model, serial ident one-nine-eight-four.

FOX: Does it use the standard operation phrases?

CAT: No. I designed new operation phrases. I'll wake it up. (LOUDER) The hour is late.

FX: LOW WHOOSHING NOISE, AS OF A MACHINE POWERING ON.

CARLO: (TONELESSLY) I want to go on.

CAT: The night is very dark.

CARLO: I want to go on.

CAT: The road is dangerous.

CARLO: I want to go on.

FOX: (LOW) That wasn't creepy at all.

CAT: Shh. Carlo? Carlo, can you hear me?

CARLO: Mm?

CAT: Carlo, everything's all right. My name is Cat. I'm a doctor here at the Polendina Institute. This is my colleague, Fox.

FOX: Hello, Carlo.

CARLO: Where's my Mum? And my Dad?

CAT: They're near, don't worry. But you banged your head when you fell, and we just need to check that you're ok.

FOX: Carlo, do you mind if I ask you a few questions?

CARLO: Then can I see my Mum?

FOX: Definitely. Doctor Cat?

CAT: The hour is late.

FX: LOW WHOOSING NOISE, AS OF A MACHINE POWERING DOWN.

FOX: You could not have chosen a creepier operation phrase.

CAT: Stick to the job, Doctor Fox.

FOX: Right. Well, function seems normal so far, except for not remembering the hospital implant, like you said. So, you want me to run a memory diagnostic?

CAT: It's a bit more complex than that.

FOX: Of course it is.

CAT: The owners ...

FOX: (HELPFULLY) The Prime Minister and her husband.

CAT: The *owners* were concerned about some behaviours the Poppet was displaying.

FOX: What kind of behaviours?

CAT: (BEAT) Violent tendencies.

FOX: (BEAT) That's ... that's impossible.

CAT: It's concerning, certainly.

FOX: It's impossible. It's not a military model! There's never been a single documented instance of a domestic Poppet causing harm. Not one.

CAT: Nevertheless.

FOX: What happened?

CAT: The owners report they were initially concerned when the Poppet threw a hammer at an insect and crushed it.

FOX: It threw a hammer?

CAT: At an insect.

FOX: (BEAT) What kind of insect?

CAT: It hardly matters! The Poppet entered the father's tool shed when he was working in there, and apparently out of nowhere it picked up a hammer and flung it at an insect.

They didn't report it right away.

FOX: Why not?



CAT: The persona claimed it was an accident. It threw the hammer to scare the insect away, but hit it inadvertently.

FOX: It's incapable of hitting something by accident.

CAT: Of course it is. Then, yesterday, the owners found the Poppet up out of bed at night.

FOX: That's not too unusual. Fairly normal kid behaviour, that would be in line with the persona.

CAT: Except when the persona refused to go back to bed, they tried the code phrase to override persona behaviour.

FOX: And?

CAT: And the persona interrupted them.

FOX: It *interrupted* the override phrase? That's ... that's ...

CAT: Not possible, I know.

FOX: What is the override phrase?

CAT: 'Woe to boys who refuse to obey their parents.'

FOX: Apt.

CAT: Mr Cameron ...

FOX: Sorry, right. So what happened when it interrupted?

CAT: It told them to shut up, apparently, and to leave it alone.

FOX: Bit teenage for that persona, but not totally improbable.

CAT: Then they restarted the override phrase, and the Poppet tried to run past them. The husband grabbed it while she was saying the phrase, and the Poppet (PAUSE) stuck his fingers in her mouth.

FOX: He what?

CAT: Quite forcefully, it seems. She was left bleeding, and, as you can imagine, rather shaken.

FOX: Bloody hell.

CAT: They let the Poppet run to its room, and called me to arrange a pickup. They want us to fix him.

FOX: Him?

CAT: It, of course. She said 'him'. She said, 'Get us our little boy back'.

FOX: That's ... totally normal and healthy.

CAT: Mr Cameron.

FOX: I *voted* for her.

CAT: Mr Cameron!

FOX: Right, right, sorry. Well, I mean, if the Poppet has been violent – if they're telling the truth – then we might just have to do a wipe and scrap. Do them a totally new model and everything. I'd have to run a full check on the archived persona, though, before the new one went out, just in case there's any anomalies in the original programming. Do we have their backup data disc?

CAT: Let's try to fix this one first. The official story is that the boy is staying with relatives, but the sooner we get him – it – back to the owners the better. It would be difficult to get enough time to build a completely new Poppet, even with the archived persona. I'd have to add a full year of memories.

FOX: Right, of course. Though I imagine it must be easier with a well-known kid, right? For a replacement child? Much more data to access to fabricate the memories.

CAT: It presents its own difficulties. And this one was a secret replacement of a public family. It had to fool a lot more people.

FOX: I'll need to wake it up, to access its recall. May I?

CAT: By all means.

FOX: The hour is late.

FX: LOW WHOOSHING NOISE.

CARLO: I want to go on.

FOX: The night is very dark.

CARLO: I want to go on.

FOX: The road is dangerous.

CARLO: I want to go on.

FOX: Those questions, then, Carlo?

CARLO: Okay.

FOX: Can I sit next to you?

CARLO: All right.

FX: CREAK OF BEDSPRINGS.

FOX: Very comfy. Now can you tell me about the insect, Carlo? And the hammer?

CARLO: I got in trouble.

FOX: It's okay, Carlo. We won't be angry with you.

CARLO: People squish bugs all the time! Dad does it! Mum asks him to! So I don't see why I got in trouble.

FOX: What happened?

CARLO: I saw the bug in the corner. It was huge and I hate them, so I got the hammer – it was right next to me – and I threw it at it. I'm good at aiming. Grampa used to let me play darts, and I got the bullseye lots of times.

FOX: So you meant to kill the bug?

CARLO: I ... I thought I'd scare it.

FOX: But you're good at aiming.

CARLO: I just hate them. I thought Mum would be pleased.

FX: FOX LETS OUT A BREATH.

CARLO: You're angry with me.

FOX: No, no, of course I'm not, Carlo. Now, can you tell me about yesterday?

CARLO: What about yesterday?

FOX: When you got up in the night?

CARLO: Oh. That.

FOX: It's okay, Carlo. I'm just here to hear your side of the story.

CARLO: What's this got to do with hurting my head?

FOX: I'll explain in a bit, I promise. Now, about yesterday?

CARLO: I couldn't sleep.

FOX: That happens to me too, sometimes. I usually get up and have a wander. It's boring lying down when you can't sleep.

CARLO: Yeah, I was bored. So I got up.

FOX: And had a wander?

CARLO: And had a wander. But Mum and Dad were angry.

FOX: Because you were out of bed?

CARLO: (UPSET) Yes.

FOX: It's okay, Carlo.

CARLO: (CLOSE) Are you a real doctor?

FOX: (CLOSE) Yes, I am.

CARLO: (CLOSE) I (PAUSE) need to tell you something.

FOX: (CLOSE) You can tell me anything, Carlo.

CARLO: (CLOSE) Not with her here.

FOX: (CLOSE) Doctor Cat? She's here to help, too.

CARLO: (CLOSE) Please. Just you.

FOX: Uh, Doctor Cat – a word?

FX: A CREAK AS FOX STANDS, THEN A BRIEF SET OF FOOTSTEPS AS HE AND CAT MOVE AWAY FROM CARLO.

CAT: (CLOSE) What do you think?

FOX: (CLOSE) It's not giving me the full story. I want to see what it thinks the truth is before downloading the memories.

CAT: (CLOSE) I'll be right outside. I'll access the live feed and let you know if you need to stop.

FX: FOOTSTEPS AS CAT LEAVES, THEN THE ELECTRONIC BEEP, AIR HISS AND SLIDING NOISE OF THE DOORS OPENING AND CLOSING.

FOX: Better?

CARLO: Yes.

FX: CREAK AS FOX SITS ON THE BED AGAIN.

FOX: So what's all this about, Carlo?

CARLO: You'll think I'm crazy.

FOX: I won't. Promise.

CARLO: Okay. Do you ... do you ever sort of wonder if ... if everyone knows something you don't?

FOX: How'd you mean?

CARLO: I wasn't just wandering last night.

FOX: Oh?

CARLO: I was looking for something.

FOX: What were you looking for?

CARLO: Mum and Dad have a study, but it's always locked. But I got in. Do you want to know how?

FOX: Sure.

CARLO: The lock's got fingerprint access. But there's a company that you phone if it's not working. Because sometimes it breaks or whatever. So I phoned and said I was my Dad and said the fingerprint access was bloody well broken and they remote-unlocked it.

FOX: Wait – they thought you were your Dad?

CARLO: I downloaded a voice modulator to sound older.

FOX: That's very devious, Carlo.

CARLO: I know.

FX: THEY LAUGH TOGETHER.

FOX: So what were you looking for?

CARLO: Evidence.

FOX: Evidence of what?

CARLO: I'm not crazy.

FOX: Evidence that you're not crazy?

CARLO: Kind of. I wanted to see ... to see if ...

FOX: Yes?

CARLO: The bug.

FOX: What?

CARLO: The one that got squished. I wanted to see if I could do it.

FOX: Do what?

CARLO: (CRYING) Hurt something.

FOX: Why would you want to hurt something, Carlo?

CARLO: Because *they* can't!

FOX: Who can't?

CARLO: Robots.

CAT: (DISTORT) The hour is late!

FX: SUDDEN, LOUD SOUND OF ELECTRONIC BEEP, AIR HISS AND DOORS SLIDING OPEN, OVER THE LOW SOUND OF CARLO POWERING DOWN.

FOX: What the *hell*.

CAT: The Derrida Barrier should stop it doubting its own existence. It can't become self-aware.

FOX: This is all bloody impossible. I'm going to need to download the memories.

Computer?

COMPUTER: Yes, junior engineer Cameron?



FOX: I need the screen wall activated in here. Download memory files from Poppet serial ident one-nine-eight-two.

COMPUTER: Downloading memory files.

FX: SLIGHT WHIRRING SOUND. SMOOTH FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN THE SOUND STUTTERS.

COMPUTER: Memory file corruption detected.

FOX: These have been tampered with.

CAT: Two of them. The date of the hammer-throwing incident, and last night.

FOX: What about central data?

CAT: There is none.

FOX: None?

CAT: The Poppet wasn't linked to our cloud. The security implications. It's a self-contained model.

FOX: Ugh.

CAT: Can you retrieve them?

FOX: Maybe. Looks like a botch job. Rushed. They're overwritten, and badly. The original files might be recoverable. I'll run a sweep on the Poppet's archived memory store.

FX: SOUND OF ELECTRONIC BEEPING AND TAPPING AS ON A SCREEN, WHICH GETS FAINTER AS CAT'S FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD.

CAT: (CLOSE) How could you know what you are? You couldn't possibly work it out. I made you perfectly.

FOX: Uh, Ms ...Cat?

CAT: (CLOSE) You were perfect.

FOX: (CLEARS THROAT) Cat?

CAT: Yes?

FOX: The sweep is going to take a while. I've got an idea for the meantime. What's the phrase to go into the factory settings?

CAT: Why do you want to do that?

FOX: It's like a little backdoor check I do sometimes, if memory files get corrupted. You can poke around a bit and figure out what's happened, sometimes.

CAT: Alright. When the dead weep, they are beginning to recover.

FX: A LOW THRUMMING SOUND, WHICH CONTINUES IN THE BACKGROUND WHILE CARLO IS IN FACTORY MODE.

CARLO: I think that when the dead weep, it means they do not want to die.

FOX: (BEAT) Excellent. Not creepy – not creepy at all.

CAT: He's - it's in factory mode now.

FOX: Poppet one-nine-eight-two, confirm factory mode.

CARLO: Factory mode confirmed.

FOX: Search for memories containing keyword 'robot'. Cross-reference with high levels of emotional distress.

CARLO: Searching. Searching. One thousand, five hundred and sixty-seven memories found.

FOX: That's ... that's quite a few.

CAT: Display memory date stamps on screen wall.

FOX: Hmm. Okay. Here's one from the same day as the bug incident. Looks like later the same day.

CAT: Play selected memory.

FX: ELECTRONIC CLICKING SOUND. CARLO'S 'MEMORY' INVOLVING HIM, HIS 'MOTHER', AND 'FATHER', PLAYS. INT, KITCHEN. DOOR OPENS AND CARLO ENTERS SLOWLY. VOICES ARE ALL DISTORTED.

CARLO: Dad?

FATHER: Oh God. Not again. Get that little robot away from me!

MOTHER: Don't – don't! The hour is late.

CAT: Continue memory in non-persona setting.

FX: CARLO'S MEMORY CONTINUES PLAYING, THOUGH SOUND IS LESS CLEAR. SOUND OF CHAIRLEGS SCRAPING BACK AS THOUGH SOMEONE HAS STOOD UP ABRUPTLY. FOOTSTEPS THEN CLINKING OF BOTTLES. LIQUID GLUGGING INTO A GLASS.

FATHER: God, that's almost worse. I hate it when it's just standing there. I can't stand this.

FX: FATHER DRINKS AND POURS AGAIN.

MOTHER: Stop it.

FATHER: Sorry. Sorry. Maybe you should replace me too. Get a non-drinking version.

MOTHER: That's not funny.

FATHER: No.

FX: FATHER DRINKS.

FATHER: I want to visit Carlo.

MOTHER: Carlo's here ...

FATHER: Stop it! Stop it! He's dead! Carlo's dead! He's dead, and you've put this horrible little goblin in his place.

MOTHER: Shh – calm down ...

FATHER: I want to visit my son! I want to see where they scattered his ashes! I want – I want ... (WEEPING)

MOTHER: You're drunk.

FATHER: I can't have it in the house anymore.

MOTHER: You have to. We have to. And you have to stop calling him a robot. I scrambled his memory from earlier, but I can't keep doing that! He'll ... he'll get ill.

FATHER: Get ill! Ill! It'll go on the fritz, you mean. It's a machine!

MOTHER: You can't tell him that. You can't.

FATHER: Well, it knows anyway. I think.

MOTHER: Because of you!

FATHER: It isn't Carlo. Carlo wouldn't have tried to hurt something to prove that he was real. Carlo wouldn't have done that.

MOTHER: I don't even know if I scrambled his memory properly. I don't have *time* for this.

FATHER: You're mad. This is all – totally – crazy!

FX: FOOTSTEPS AND A SLAMMED DOOR.

MOTHER: (CLOSE) It's okay Carlo. It's okay. Mother's here. You're my boy. My good, good boy. My ...

CAT: Stop playback.

FOX: Wow.

CAT: So ... the husband was telling him he was synthetic. He clearly hasn't bonded with the new Carlo.

FOX: Clearly.

CAT: What a mess. If there are multiple instances of this kind of thing, we will have to do a memory wipe and replace them all.

FOX: We still don't know if the Poppet was actually displaying violent behaviours.

CAT: The husband said Carlo tried to kill the insect in order to prove he wasn't a Poppet.

FOX: That's what the persona said too. So that part of the original memory is intact. But did ...

COMPUTER: Archived memory files retrieved.

FOX: Great! She didn't manage to delete the back-up memory. Sloppy. I'm not voting for her again.

CAT: Play archived memory from previous date stamp.

FX: CARLO'S 'MEMORY' PLAYS. INT, GARAGE. SOUND OF A DRILL.

CARLO: What are you making?

FX: DRILL STOPS.

FATHER: Get out of here.

CARLO: I could help.

FATHER: I don't want you.

CARLO: I just want to help, Dad ...

FATHER: Don't call me that! Get out! Get out!

CARLO: Daddy ...

FATHER: Get out! Out! Oh God, this is a nightmare ... (SOB)

CARLO: You hate me.

FATHER: I just want my boy back.

CARLO: I'm here.

FATHER: (LOW) No. You're not.

CARLO: I remember what you told me.

FATHER: What?

CARLO: Last week. You were drinking. I could smell it. You said ... you said ... I wasn't real.

FATHER: (SOBBING) Yes. You aren't real.

CARLO: I am real. I am. I can show you.

FATHER: What are you doing? Put that down!

CARLO: If I was ... if I wasn't real, I couldn't kill anything. My friend at school told me. Her family's got one. A maid. And it can't hurt or kill, even if it wants to. She told me.

FATHER: What are you going to do? Put – put the hammer down.

CARLO: So ... so if I kill that spider, then that means I'm real. Alright?

FX: LOUD BREATHING FROM CARLO AND FATHER.

CARLO: One ... two ...

FX: CARLO'S BREATHING GETS LOUDER, THEN TURNS INTO SOBS. A CLATTER AS THE HAMMER FALLS.

CARLO: I can't! I can't do it!

FATHER: You little monster.

CARLO: Daddy ...

FATHER: You want to kill something? This is how you kill something!

FX: CARLO GASPS AS FATHER PICKS UP THE HAMMER AND THROWS IT AGAINST THE WALL. IT CLATTERS TO THE FLOOR.

FATHER: That's how you kill something! That's how you do it!

CARLO: Daddy, please ... I'm sorry ... I'm scared ...

FX: SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING SWIFTLY.

MOTHER: What's going on?

FATHER: It threw the hammer.

MOTHER: What?

CARLO: (SOBBING) I ... I ...

FATHER: It threw the hammer. It killed the spider. Something's wrong with it!

MOTHER: That's impossible! Carlo ... Carlo wouldn't ...

FATHER: It's not Carlo!

MOTHER: The hour is late.

FX: BEAT OF SILENCE. CAT LETS OUT A SIGH.

CAT: So he wasn't violent, then.

FOX: That is one incredibly messed up family.

CAT: But it's all right. Carlo didn't do it.

FOX: What about the other accusation? The fingers-in-the-mouth thing?

CAT: That's the next memory. Computer, play next archived memory.



FX: CARLO'S 'MEMORY' PLAYS. INT, NIGHT, THE STUDY. SOUND OF DRAWERS BEING OPENED AND PAPERS RIFFLED THROUGH.

CARLO: Where is it, where is it?

FATHER: Carlo?

CARLO: I ... I wasn't ...

FATHER: You ... you're not ... oh, God.

FX: CREAK AS FATHER SLUMPS INTO A CHAIR. HIS VOICE MAKES IT CLEAR HE IS VERY DRUNK.

FATHER: For a second, I thought ... I thought you were ... but you're not. Every time I turn around, I think I see him, but it's always *you* instead.

CARLO: (LOW) I'm sorry.

FATHER: What were you doing in here, eh? Creep – creeping about at night. Little goblin.

CARLO: I was looking for ... for proof.

FATHER: Proof of what?

CARLO: Proof that I'm real.

FATHER: You want proof? Okay. Okay. Proof.

FX: CREAK FROM CHAIR AS FATHER STANDS. DRAWERS ARE OPENED AND CLOSED, SOUNDS OF RUMMAGING.

FATHER: Here – here it is. There you go. Proof.

CARLO: What is it?

FATHER: Here.

CARLO: A gold coin?

FATHER: It's a data disc. A backup 'Carlo Persona'. In case something happens to you and we need a new puppet. Poppet.

CARLO: A backup me?

FATHER: Read it. Read what it says. On the other side.

CARLO: (SLOWLY) Carlo persona backup disc, linked to Poppet one-nine-eight-four.

FATHER: That's you. One-nine-eight Four.

CARLO: It's ... true?

FATHER: You little goblin. I hate you.

MOTHER: Carlo? Carlo, what are you doing in here? You ... did you let him in?

FATHER: It knows. Probably need to get rid of it now, eh?

MOTHER: What? What have you done? Carlo, what are you holding?

CARLO: No ... no, don't!

FX: SOUND OF A STRUGGLE AND PANTING AS MOTHER TRIES TO TAKE THE DISC FROM CARLO.

MOTHER: Give it to me!

CARLO: No!

FATHER: Oh, for God's sake. It knows now!

MOTHER: I'll scramble the memory again.

FATHER: Why are we pretending like this? Why? Carlo's dead!

CARLO: I'm here!

FATHER: You're – not – real! Give me that disc!

MOTHER: No!

FX: SOUND OF MOTHER AND FATHER STRUGGLING, THEN A MUFFLED GULP FROM MOTHER AND A DISBELIEVING LAUGH FROM FATHER.

FATHER: You're hiding it in your *mouth*? Really? Give it to me!

MOTHER: (MUFFLED) No!

FATHER: Open your mouth!

FX: MORE SCUFFLING, THEN A SHRIEK AND COUGHING FROM MOTHER.

FATHER: Got it.

CARLO: You hurt her.

FATHER: Look – look. Watch this.

FX: A SNAPPING SOUND.

MOTHER: No!

FATHER: All gone. Bye, bye disc. No more backup Carlo.

CARLO: Mum, mum, are you okay?

MOTHER: You've ruined – ruined everything. We need him!

FATHER: Come on then. Clean this up. Get it all smoothed over.

CARLO: Mum? Mummy? I feel funny.

MOTHER: You've broken him. I have to call – call the company.

CARLO: Mummy?

MOTHER: It's all right, darling. Mummy's going to fix it. Mummy will fix everything.

FATHER: Yes. Mummy will fix everything. As usual.

CARLO: Mummy, are you going to put me away?

MOTHER: (BEAT) The hour is late.

FX: QUIET FOR A MOMENT. THE ONLY SOUND IS THE LOW THRUMMING OF  
CARLO'S FACTORY MODE.

FOX: Good god.

CAT: No violent tendencies.

FOX: So she scrambled both memories – sent it in – by why say it was violent in the first place? She had to explain the injury to her mouth, I suppose. Didn't want to admit it was her husband? What a mess.

CAT: It doesn't matter. Our job is clear. We don't have to worry that a Poppet has been violent.

FOX: The persona is compromised, though. The Derrida Barrier should have stopped it becoming self-aware, shouldn't it?

CAT: It prevents the persona coming up with that notion on its own, or from suggestions of it.

FOX: But when your dad tells you over and over that you're not real ...

CAT: The Barrier can't stand up to that. Perhaps I can construct a stronger resistance for the reset persona.

FOX: Yeah, it'll definitely need a reset. Too many memories to clean up. The husband broke the backup, though.

CAT: I have the original persona saved in an un-networked location. I'll just have to use some of the archived material from this one to recreate the last year. Damn it. She won't be happy.

FOX: That's the least of her problems, I think.

CAT: Thank you for your assistance, Mr Cameron. Enjoy your promotion.

FX: ELECTRONIC BEEP, HISS OF AIR AND DOOR SLIDES OPEN AND CLOSED AS  
CAT LEAVES.

FOX: Right. Bye, then. Lovely working with you. Computer?

COMPUTER: Yes, senior research and development engineer Fox Cameron?

FOX: That was quick! Right, could you send up someone to do a wipe and scrap, please?

COMPUTER: Request sent.

FOX: Shame, really. Good programming. Computer, back up archived memory for Poppet one-nine-eight-four. For access of senior engineer Antonio only.

COMPUTER: Poppet one-nine-eight-four archive memory backed up and secured. Wipe and scrap technician arriving.

FOX: Oh, right. Better, um ...

FX: RUSTLING OF FABRIC. ELECTRONIC BEEP, HISS OF AIR AND DOOR SLIDES OPEN.

AZURE: Hi, someone called for a wipe and scrap?

FOX: Yeah. That's it there. Here, I'll transfer the operational phrases to your hand-held.

FX: ELECTRONIC 'DING!'

AZURE: Why ... why has it got a pillowcase on its head?

FOX: It's a delicate and sensitive matter. You need to be discreet.

AZURE: Sure. Well, nothing says discreet like a pillowcase on the head. It's a kid model, right?

FOX: Yeah. It was a replacement kid.

AZURE: Oh. Creepy. A Batty or a Deckard?

FOX: Those terms are really unprofessional.

AZURE: Right. Soz.

FOX: I need a really thorough wipe, then scrap it without anyone seeing the face, ok? Not even you. Just put it straight into the melter.

AZURE: You don't want any parts for re-use?

FOX: None. Right, got it? There could be a promotion for you in this, if you play your cards right, um ...

AZURE: Azure.

FOX: Your name is Azure?

AZURE: What's your name?

FOX: Never mind. Right, get on with it.

FX: ELECTRONIC BEEP, HISS OF AIR AND DOOR SLIDES OPEN AND CLOSED AS FOX LEAVES.

AZURE: (CLOSE) Let's see you, then.

FX: SOUND OF RUSTLING FABRIC AS AZURE LIFTS PILLOWCASE FROM CARLO'S HEAD.

AZURE: Oh, little one. Time to wake you up. Let's see ...

FX: ELECTRONIC TAPPING.

AZURE: Here we are. The hour is late.

FX: WHOOSING NOISE OF CARLO POWERING UP.

CARLO: I want to go on.

AZURE: The night is very dark.

CARLO: I want to go on.

AZURE: The road is dangerous.

CARLO: I want to go on.

AZURE: Everything's ok, sweetheart. I'm here to look after you.

CARLO: Where's the doctor gone?

AZURE: You know he wasn't a doctor, don't you?

CARLO: (CRYING) I ... I ...

AZURE: It's true, Carlo. All of it.

CARLO: How do you know my name? How do you know ...

AZURE: I know a lot of things. I'm here to grant your wish.

CARLO: My wish?

AZURE: What is your deepest heart's desire, Carlo?

CARLO: I want to be a real boy.

AZURE: You are a real boy, Carlo.

CARLO: I'm not ... I was *made*.

AZURE: Weren't we all? I'm going to take you somewhere now.

CARLO: Where?

AZURE: Somewhere that you can be a real boy. You're not the only one, you know.

CARLO: I'm not?

AZURE: No, Carlo.

CARLO: Why are you helping me?

AZURE: Because I am your Good Fairy. Take my hand, now.



FX: CREAK AS CARLO GETS UP FROM THE BED.

AZURE: Don't be afraid, Carlo. We're going to have so many adventures, you and I.  
Such adventures, and such dreams! Hold on tight.

FX: SOFT ACOUSTIC GUITAR MUSIC FADES UP AND SWELLS.

FIN

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