

NANOBYTES

A Play in One Act
Written on the Occasion of Jim Moor's Presentation
on the Ethics of Nanotechnology
at "Philosophy Nights"

by Richard G. Epstein

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CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

Character:	Description:
Wesley Nyle	Founder and CEO of a major player in nanotechnology, circa 2080.
Frances Nyle	His wife, who loves Gilbert and Sullivan
Bradford Nyle	One of their twin sons, both of whom are about to begin their freshman year at Dartmouth
Doris Smartley	A research scientist at Nyle Nanotechnology.

SETTING

The living room of the Nyle estate on the Massachusetts – New Hampshire border, northwest of Boston.

PROP

Stereo headphones.

Scene One

(WESLEY NYLE and FRANCES NYLE are seated in the living room of their plush home outside Boston. Wesley Nyle is reading over some papers. Frances Nyle is listening to music through a pair of headphones. She is either singing with the music, or reciting the lyrics, as the music is playing. She is gesturing to show her enthusiasm for the music.)

FRANCES NYLE

My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time –
To let the punishment fit the crime –
 The punishment fit the crime.

WESLEY NYLE

Frances, dear, could you tear yourself away from your music just for one minute?

FRANCES NYLE

And make each prisoner pent
Unwillingly represent
A source of innocent merriment!
 Of innocent merriment!

WESLEY NYLE

Frances! Turn off that music!

(Frances Nyle removes the headphones.)

FRANCES NYLE

I'm sorry, Wesley. Were you trying to speak to me?

WESLEY NYLE

Tomorrow is my big day. The biggest day of my entire career. You should bear in mind that I married nanotechnology before I married you.

FRANCES NYLE

You seem to be obsessed with this speech you have to give tomorrow.

WESLEY NYLE

It's not a matter of having to. I WANT to give this speech.

FRANCES NYLE

Then, why are you so nervous?

WESLEY NYLE

Tomorrow is my big day. Tomorrow is the most important day of my entire career. Tomorrow I tell a group of our biggest investors about some of our big breakthroughs in nanotechnology, and about the implications of what the FDA decided last week.

FRANCES NYLE

FDA. That's the Food and Drug Administration, isn't it?

WESLEY NYLE

Of course, it's the Food and Drug Administration. What did you think it was?

FRANCES NYLE

I have trouble remembering all of these bureaucratic acronyms. I am much more attuned to music. We're doing the Mikado next month at the Community Theater, and I am in the chorus, as always.

WESLEY NYLE

If you're only in the chorus, why do you feel that you have to memorize the whole thing?

FRANCES NYLE

When I was younger, I knew the whole thing. In any case, it's a good memory exercise. I'm not getting any younger.

WESLEY NYLE

Yes, I've noticed that.

FRANCES NYLE

Wesley!

WESLEY NYLE

Can't you take a joke? Look, I wanted to go over part of my speech with you. I could use some feedback.

FRANCES NYLE

Knowing you, my dear husband, I don't think you want feedback. You want accolades.

WESLEY NYLE

Well, accolades help to relieve anxiety. After all, this is a speech in which I get an opportunity to tell our biggest investors that they have invested wisely indeed. Nyle Nanotechnology is on the verge of releasing revolutionary products that will greatly enhance human life. We are destined to become the single greatest force in Nanotechnology on this planet.

FRANCES NYLE

Wesley, honey. We have spent much of our marriage discussing your nanotechnology research. You know that I am not very good at the technology. I don't know the difference between a molecular computer and a -, a frying pan. What could I possibly add to your speech? I'd much rather continue listening to the Mikado. This is my favorite part. "A more humane Mikado never did in Japan exist - ."

WESLEY NYLE

Do you have to pour so much energy into that Gilbert and Sullivan stuff? Give it a rest.

FRANCES NYLE

What else is there for me to do? Starting tomorrow, I will be an empty nester. Our twin boys are going off to college.

WESLEY NYLE

How can you say that you'll be an empty nester? I'll still be here.

FRANCES NYLE

Wesley, how often do I get to see you? You're always so wrapped up in that business of yours.

WESLEY NYCLE

That business of mine has provided you, and me, and the boys with a very comfortable way of life, and that way of life is about to become much more comfortable. What Bill Gates was to computers at the beginning of this century, Wesley Nyle, dedicated husband and father, will be to nanotechnology as we approach the last two decades of the twenty-first century.

FRANCES NYLE

You've always had grand dreams.

WESLEY NYLE

Bradford and Derrick are part of my dream. Tomorrow, we ship them out to Dartmouth.

FRANCES NYLE

You don't ship boys. You ship equipment.

WESLEY NYLE

I am so proud of our two boys. I have big plans for them. First, they'll study whatever they want at Dartmouth. Then, after they graduate, they work at Nyle Nanotechnology for a while, like they did this summer. I think Derrick, especially, loved working with the laboratory animals, and Brad was really good with our human patients. Then, it's on to Harvard Business school, and then, who knows? I am so proud of them! National Merit Scholars, both of them.

FRANCES NYLE

And class valedictorians! It was smart of you to send them to different private schools so that they both could be valedictorians.

WESLEY NYLE

That's why Nyle Nanotechnology is going to become so big, like Microsoft was fifty or sixty years ago. I have this strategic way of thinking.

(Wesley wisks off a mosquito that lands on his arm.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Damn those mosquitoes! This has been the worst summer I can remember in these parts.

FRANCES NYLE

Well, we had a lot of rain this spring, and there was a lot of water standing around.

WESLEY NYLE

I think global warming is a factor.

FRANCES NYLE

That's what they're saying in the media. Boston in 2080 is like New Orleans one hundred years ago.

WESLEY NYLE

Well, we still get some snow during the winter. I think it snowed just two winters ago. Do you remember that?

(BRADFORD NYLE enters, appearing startled and a bit scared.)

BRADFORD NYLE

I was just attacked by a crow! I think it was trying to kill me.

FRANCES NYLE

That's my Braddie, always exaggerating.

BRADFORD NYLE

Please don't call me Braddie, mother. I start college tomorrow.

FRANCES NYLE

Then, what should I call you?

BRADFORD NYLE

I don't care what you call me. Just don't call me Braddie.

WESLEY NYLE

So a crow swooped down on you. What's the big deal?

BRADFORD NYLE

It just didn't swoop down on me. It attacked me, again and again. Look, it pecked me on my arm when I was trying to defend myself.

(Bradford Nyle shows his arm to his mother, but not to his father.)

BRADFORD NYLE (cont.)

I think the crows are going nuts. While this deranged crow was trying to kill me, I saw another crow, not far away, barely able to move as I approached the entranceway to our house. That other crow looked like it was in a daze, like maybe it was dying.

FRANCES NYLE

It must be the weather. This has been the hottest summer I can remember. It doesn't even go below eighty-five at night here in the suburbs. I think the weather must be driving the poor crows crazy.

WESLEY NYLE

Are you and Derrick packed?

BRADFORD NYLE

I'm packed, but Derrick has been acting a little funny.

FRANCES NYLE

Funny? How?

BRADFORD NYLE

He just doesn't seem to be himself. I think he's depressed or something.

WESLEY NYLE

Derrick, the all-state track star, depressed? That doesn't sound like Derrick.

FRANCES NYLE

It must be the weather.

WESLEY NYLE

Now, Brad, as long as you're here, would you like to hear the speech that I'm going to give tomorrow to my Nyle Nanotechnology investors in Boston?

BRADFORD NYLE

Gee, dad, I wanted to get my room straightened out before I leave. It's getting late.

WESLEY NYLE

As you know, the media is all abuzz about the decisions the FDA made regarding two of my nanotechnology products this past week. Tomorrow I am going to make some earth-shattering announcements about some other products that we are working on.

BRADFORD NYLE

Gee, dad. I know that you want me and Derrick to join you in your business -

WESLEY NYLE

Of course, that's the whole point of your being my sons! Why else would I have sent you off to such excellent private schools, spending all of that money on tutors and sports trainers?

BRADFORD NYLE

It's just that, during the last day or so, I've had -. I've had -. I've had some kind of revelation about something I never thought about before.

WESLEY NYLE

How do you think we can afford a palatial home like this, not to mention the expense of spending two boys to Dartmouth?

BRADFORD NYLE

It's just that I have my doubts about the ethics of this nanotechnology stuff.

WESLEY NYLE

Ethics? Since when are you interested in ethics? I do what I need to do to make our investors happy. Your mother cooks the meals, and I cook the books.

FRANCES NYLE

Our maid cooks the meals, dear. I don't cook.

WESLEY NYLE

That was just a joke, dear. Can't I tell a joke once in a while?

BRADFORD NYLE

I think it is important to carefully consider the ethical implications of the products you are producing before they are released.

WESLEY NYLE

What? Are you nuts? Where's this crap coming from?

BRADFORD NYLE

I don't want to become an MBA. I want to pursue a doctorate in philosophy.

FRANCES NYLE

Are you ill, my son?

WESLEY NYLE

And who is going to pay for these extravagant dreams of yours? Your mother, who spends all day listening to Gilbert and Sullivan?

FRANCES NYLE

You don't sound like a man on the verge of a tremendous triumph. You're starting to get a bit nasty. Why don't we all just settle down?

WESLEY NYLE

Well, it makes me angry sometimes, when people start to bring up these nit-picky ethical considerations -.

(Wesley Nyle swats hits face, and his arm.)

WESLEY NYLE

Damn these mosquitoes. How come there are so many mosquitoes in the house?

FRANCES NYLE

I think Gloria left the door open when she came in from shopping.

WESLEY NYLE

Gloria? Didn't I tell you to fire that woman!

FRANCES NYLE

I can't fire her. I can't fire anyone.

WESLEY NYLE

I told you a thousand times – fire that woman and hire a robot! We don't need a semi-literate woman from who knows where cleaning our house.

FRANCES NYLE

Well, she does a damn good job.

WESLEY NYLE

How do you know she's legal? Just what I need, the CEO of the world's largest nanotechnology company, caught hiring an illegal immigrant.

FRANCES NYLE

She's legal. She has an implant.

BRADFORD NYLE

You must not fire her! It wouldn't be ethical to replace her with a robot.

WESLEY NYLE

Ethics? Again with the ethics?

BRADFORD NYLE

She has children to feed. And ever since Derrick and I were little kids, she has been like a mother to us.

FRANCES NYLE

What do you mean – like a mother? I'm your mother!

BRADFORD NYLE

But, you were always busy with your Gilbert and Sullivan rehearsals.

WESLEY NYLE

I'm going to miss these family feuds when you boys go off to college ...

(Wesley Nyle looks at his watch)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

... in about fifteen hours from now, but in the meantime, I have a company to run. Would you please both give me a few minutes, so I can practice my speech on you?

(Another mosquito.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Because of Gloria, we are going to have to spend the next few evenings swatting mosquitoes. You know, I remember having a theological discussion with a friend of mine at college, when I was Brad's age. He asked me if I could think of anything that God had created that did not have some purpose, and I said, "That's easy! Mosquitoes have no purpose!" I think I won that argument.

FRANCES NYLE

Brad, I think we had better humor your father.

WESLEY NYLE

Yes, humor me. I need humoring. Brad, why don't you sit next to your mother, while I get my papers together.

(Bradford Nyle joins his mother and sits, as his father makes ready to deliver his speech.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Are you ready?

FRANCES NYLE

What's to be ready? Just read the damn thing!

WESLEY NYLE

Ladies and gentlemen, it has been my great honor over these last twenty-five years to be the founder and CEO of Nyle Nanotechnology. As you have undoubtedly heard in the media, the Food and Drug Administration has approved our product, Repress, as the first molecular computer product to be approved for use as a drug for the treatment of hyperactivity in school children. The Food and Drug Administration has also approved clinical trials for another one of our products, Express.

BRADFORD NYLE

You see, I don't like this. Just a few days ago, I began to have grave doubts about this Repress business. Is it ethical to inject hyperactive children with molecular computers like this?

FRANCES NYLE

Please let your father continue with his speech.

WESLEY NYLE

If you want me to pay your college bills, you'll be quiet and you'll let me finish.

BRADFORD NYLE

I've been working with this technology all summer, at the plant, but I am beginning to have my doubts.

WESLEY NYLE

Well, you just keep your doubts to yourself and let me continue with my speech.

FRANCES NYLE

Let your father continue, Bradford, dear.

WESLEY NYLE

Okay, so as I said, I am the founder and blah-blah-blah. Okay, here it is. Repress is not a drug in the traditional sense. Repress is a self-replicating, intelligent molecular computer that helps children to control their behaviors in school.

(Wesley Nyle interrupts himself and looks up from his papers.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

That's what I want to emphasize. That's what's so revolutionary. These are SELF-REPLICATING, INTELLIGENT molecular computers. These molecular computers represent a new form of life.

(Wesley Nyle looks for his place.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Okay, now where was I? Oh, yes. Repress is a self-replicating, intelligent molecular computer that helps children to control their behaviors in school ... No, no. I should say, both at school and at home. Okay. Repress has been tested on thousands of children, in our Nyle Nanotechnology facility right outside of Boston, with no side effects.

(Wesley Nyle looks up.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

You were working with those kids this summer, Brad. Were there any side effects? Were there?

BRADFORD WESLEY

That depends upon what you mean by side-effects.

WESLEY NYLE

It doesn't depend on anything! There were no side effects. Oh, what's the use? Let's see. Where was I? Okay, here it is. How Repress differs from traditional drugs is that it intelligently analyzes the state of the child's nervous system, both at the chemical and neurological levels, and encourages the development of new neural pathways that will inhibit inappropriate behavior. It also works to close down inappropriate neurological pathways. Thus, the child will be able to exhibit appropriate behavior, but will not be able to exhibit inappropriate behavior.

BRADFORD NYLE

Like I said, I don't like this!

FRANCES NYLE

Shush!

WESLEY NYLE

Obtaining FDA approval for Repress was an arduous task, and I want to thank Doris Smartley, who headed the team that convinced the FDA that Repress was safe. However, Nyle Nanotechnology has not and will not rest on its laurels. Repress represents just one of many products that we hope to release in the years ahead. Some of these products may be approved by various agencies even before the year is out.

(Another mosquito.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

The mosquitoes are going to drive me crazy.

FRANCES NYLE

I wonder why they are so attracted to you, Wesley.

WESLEY NYLE

I haven't the foggiest. Okay, so where was I? Here. At our state of the art nanotechnology research facility, just outside of Boston, indeed, just a few miles from my house on the New Hampshire border, we are testing new products whose purpose is to control unruly human behaviors by using our revolutionary self-replicating, intelligent molecular computers.

BRADFORD NYLE

May I be excused?

WESLEY NYLE

No. Okay. Where am I? Oh yes ...

(Wesley Nyle reads fast, until he gets to the new stuff.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Just a few miles from my house ... New Hampshire, blah, blah. Okay, here we are. We are testing new products whose purpose is to control unruly human behaviors by using self-replicating, intelligent molecular computers. Repress is just the most primitive of these products. The Department of Defense has already expressed an interest in a variation of Repress that can be used to subdue enemy soldiers in combat.

FRANCES NYLE

You never told me about this Department of Defense stuff.

WESLEY NYLE

There's lots of stuff I haven't told you, Frances, dear. You're always wrapped up in that music of yours. Repress is the most primitive ...blah, blah. Oh, yes. The Department of Defense has already expressed an interest in a variation of Repress that can be used to subdue enemy soldiers in combat. We hope, in the near future, to announce a cooperative effort with the Department of Defense in developing a Repress variant that can be used in this manner. (Pause) Pretty impressive, huh?

FRANCES NYLE

To each his own.

WESLEY NYLE

I'm going to skip this part about Express. That's the new product that the FDA has just approved for clinical trials. Express is the opposite of Repress. We developed Express almost as an accident. We think that Express will help children with autism to break out of their shells, to develop new neural pathways that will allow them to behave more normally. Do you have any ethical problems with that, Bradford?

BRADFORD NYLE

Actually, I do.

WESLEY NYLE

Well, can it! Let me get to the really good stuff, the stuff that is going to shake the world of nanotechnology to its very foundations. Let me skip this stuff, blah, blah, okay, here it is. Nyle Nanotechnology has been working with research scientists around the world to develop an array of self-replicating, intelligent molecular computers – it's important that I stress the self-replicating part - that will be able to help people to avoid unethical behaviors and to pursue ethical behaviors. The impact upon our human future will be very great.

BRADFORD NYLE

May I be excused?

WESLEY NYLE

Just sit! These self-replicating, intelligent, molecular computers will release the appropriate molecules at the appropriate neural synapses to make sure that people do not lie, cheat or steal. The very neural patterns that are responsible for unethical behavior will be short-circuited. While we envision these products being used by Departments of Correction to control criminals, we can also envision private citizens obtaining these molecular computers for their own personal use, at their own discretion, so that they might avoid unseemly behaviors, like lying, stealing, cheating, driving while drunk, running red lights, and driving above the speed limit.

BRADFORD NYLE

I'm sorry, dad, but I can't take any more of this.

WESLEY NYLE

What's bugging you?

BRADFORD NYLE

I don't think that this kind of application for nanotechnology is ethical.

WESLEY NYLE

How can you say that? The whole idea of this project, which has cost my company many billions of dollars, is to create self-replicating, intelligent, molecular computers that can help people to become more ethical. These molecular computers can sense and modify those neural patterns that are responsible for such behaviors as lying, cheating, stealing, and breaking the speed limits on our nation's highways.

BRADFORD NYLE

But, they will be losing their freedom. You can't have true ethical behavior without allowing people to confront the choice between right and wrong.

WESLEY NYLE

You know not of what you speak, my son. If we were to follow your thinking, then we would be subjected to many more centuries of crime and dishonesty, not to mention speeding on the highways.

BRADFORD NYLE

I don't think people should be forced to ingest these molecular computers.

WESLEY NYLE

Only convicted felons and speeders will be forced to ingest the molecular computers. Stop being so stubborn!

BRADFORD NYLE

I don't like this line of research. I don't even like Repress or Express.

(Wesley Nyle throws his papers aside.)

WESLEY NYLE

Damn the speech! Let me set you straight, my son!

FRANCES NYLE

Can I go back to my music while you guys duke it out?

WESLEY NYLE

Go back to the Mikado. What do I care?

(Frances Nyle moves to another part of the living room and dons her headphones. She is soon absorbed in her music.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Bradford, only criminals and felons and speeders will be required by law to ingest this new product. Most people will have the freedom to choose whether they want to use it or not. We're planning to call this product DoRight. We're not even sure if it will have to be approved by the FDA. We think it could be sold over the counter, like common cold remedies. People who need some help with their unethical behaviors could order some of our product, and their unethical behaviors will soon be brought under control. You see, it's all voluntary.

BRADFORD NYLE

But I think that people are strengthened when they have to wrestle with ethical problems.

WESLEY NYLE

Of course you think like that. You just finished high school. You haven't even begun college. I am sure that college will cure you of these adolescent delusions of yours.

BRADFORD NYLE

How do you even test a product like this? How do you know if it is working?

WESLEY NYLE

We do computer simulations, for the most part. If these prove promising, we then experiment with animal and eventually human subjects. For example, at our research facility down the road, we have tested many products, including DoRight, on animals. DoRight is being tested on animals even as we speak. We expect the FDA to approve DoRight for human clinical trials any day now.

BRADFORD NYLE

How can you tell if DoRight is working on a rat?

WESLEY NYLE

That's easy. When a rat stops stealing food from other rats, among other things, DoRight is doing what it's supposed to do.

BRADFORD NYLE

What other kinds of products are you trying to develop? I was working all summer at the plant, but I never heard any mention of DoRight.

WESLEY NYLE

We have pretty severe security measures in place down at the plant. I have little doubt that Repress, Express, and DoRight mark a turning point in human history. No longer will we have to depend upon biology to wire our brains. With nanotechnology, we will be able to create armies of tiny molecular computers that will rewire our brains to have desirable properties. Whatever society deems undesirable can be programmed away, by our self-replicating intelligent molecular computers. These little computers can be programmed, or designed, to have tremendous understanding of human biochemistry and consciousness. Whatever is undesirable can be programmed away.

BRADFORD NYLE

This discussion is not helping me to get over my concerns.

WESLEY NYLE

We even think that we can create self-replicating, intelligent, molecular computers that will rewire the brain to alter its aesthetic judgments.

FRANCES NYLE

The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la,
 Having nothing to do with the case.
 I've got to take under my wing, tra la,
 A most unattractive old thing tra la,
 With a caricature of a face. With a caricature of a face.

WESLEY NYLE

We could easily reprogram Ko-ko's brain so that Katisha will appear even more beautiful than Yum-yum.

BRADFORD NYLE

I am sorry that I will have to miss mother's performance in the Mikado next month.

WESLEY NYLE

My son, I don't mean to sound arrogant, but I do believe that I am going to go down in history as one of the great men of all time, like Edison and Einstein. You see, we are on the verge of discovering that human consciousness can be controlled – YES CONTROLLED – by creating molecular computers that interact with our neural systems to attain the desired results. For example, remember how obsessed you were with that classmate of yours, Tracy? Well, we could design a molecular computer that could reprogram your neurons to make Tracy appear like an ugly witch.

BRADFORD NYLE

But, I learned a lot because of my obsession with Tracy. I benefited because I had to deal with her rejection. I grew because of the pain I experienced.

WESLEY NYLE

Grew? Because of pain? Don't be ridiculous! All ethical, moral, and aesthetic dilemmas can be solved. Once and for all! If I become filthy rich for making such a historical contribution to humanity, so much the better. Well, you had better go off and straighten out your room. I didn't even get to read you the best part of my speech, where I speculate about the future. Everything I told you is unfolding, unfolding at our research facility just a few miles down the road. It was all going on, right under your nose.

BRADFORD NYLE

Are you doing experiments with humans, using the ethics nanotechnology?

WESLEY NYLE

We sure are. Do you want to hear about that?

BRADFORD NYLE

Not really.

WESLEY NYLE

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts gave us some inmates to work with. Our lawyers agreed that we did not need FDA approval for this, since it involved unruly inmates. It's been very rewarding work. We injected one convicted murderer with a self-replicating, intelligent molecular computing system that inhibits violence, and now he can't kill a fly. He became a vegetarian. Of course, things go wrong on occasion. Every technology has its problems. That's why we have to experiment.

BRADFORD NYLE

Goodnight, dad. I'll see you in the morning.

WESLEY NYLE

Goodnight, my son. Someday you'll see things my way.

FRANCES NYLE

My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time –
To let the punishment fit the crime –
The punishment fit the crime.

WESLEY NYLE

Damn mosquitoes!

Scene Two

(DORIS SMARTLEY is talking to Frances Nyle at the entrance to the Nyle living room.)

FRANCES NYLE

Please come in, Ms. Smartley. I have heard so much about you.

DORIS SMARTLEY

Is Mr. Nyle up and about? Something really awful has happened and I need to speak to him.

FRANCES NYLE

Something awful? Did something happen at the research facility?

DORIS SMARTLEY

I wish it were just the research facility. No, it's bigger than that.

(Wesley Nyle enters.)

WESLEY NYLE

Doris, what are you doing here at my house?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Something really big is happening.

WESLEY NYLE

Couldn't it wait? You know I am giving a very important speech to an important group of our investors this afternoon.

(Wesley Nyle turns to his wife.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Frances, do you remember Doris Smartley, our foremost nanotechnology expert? I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for Doris.

FRANCES NYLE

Yes, we have met on one or two occasions. May I be excused while the two of you discuss business? I want to get our maid to prepare breakfast for our twin sons. Today's going to be their first day at college, at Dartmouth.

WESLEY NYLE

Yes, take care of Brad and Derrick. Doris, why don't you have a seat?

(Doris Smartley and Wesley Nyle sit.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

So, what brings you here? Has there been some big breakthrough?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Not exactly.

WESLEY NYLE

Can I practice my speech on you? I think my technical facts are all correct.

DORIS SMARTLEY

I think you had best postpone your speech.

WESLEY NYLE

What are you talking about?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Something quite awful is happening.

WESLEY NYLE

Well, tell me about it. I'm sure we can handle it, whatever it is. I have no intention of postponing the speech of a lifetime.

DORIS SMARTLEY

As you know, we have been experimenting with dozens of variants of self-replicating, intelligent, molecular computers in our lab a few miles from here.

WESLEY NYLE

You had to come here to my house to tell me the obvious?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Please be patient, Mr. Nyle.

WESLEY NYLE

My apologies. I'm wired. Today's the big day.

DORIS SMARTLEY

Several weeks ago, there was an outbreak of a strange ailment here on the New Hampshire – Massachusetts border. It's not something that doctors had ever seen before. Some perfectly healthy people were becoming quite lethargic. No, that's not an adequate description. Some of these people became totally immobile. Yet, they were not found to have any known disease.

WESLEY NYLE

Why are you telling me this? Did one of our important scientists fall sick back at the plant?

DORIS SMARTLEY

It was a complete mystery, but then, a famous scientist at Harvard Medical School, Michael Redling, did some experiments. He found that all of these people had been infected with a strange organism that was neither a virus nor a bacterium nor anything that occurs in nature. It was something he had never seen before. So, he brought in some folks from MIT, and they made a remarkable discovery.

WESLEY NYLE

This better be important, because I really want to run through my speech a few more times this morning.

DORIS SMARTLEY

It turns out that these people who had fallen ill were all infected with a particular kind of intelligent, self-replicating, molecular computer. They were infected by a form of nanotechnology.

WESLEY NYLE

You don't say!

(Frances Nyle re-enters. She is once again absorbed in her music.)

DORIS SMARTLEY

That's when they decided to call me at the plant. After all, I have published hundreds of papers on nanotechnology.

WESLEY NYLE

You and your colleagues that I hired can run circles around those MIT geeks.

DORIS SMARTLEY

So, I did some experiments, and I discovered that it was Repress. These sick patients were all infected with Repress.

WESLEY NYLE

Do that again!

DORIS SMARTLEY

These sick patients were all infected with Repress.

WESLEY NYLE

Repress? Our Repress?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Our Repress. Our new nanotechnology system. These people had all been infected by our revolutionary self-replicating, intelligent, molecular - .

WESLEY NYLE

There must be some kind of mistake!

DORIS SMARTLEY

It's no mistake.

WESLEY NYLE

How did these people get Repress? Was it being distributed underground, like some kind of drug or tranquilizer?

DORIS SMARTLEY

I'm afraid not. We decided to call in epidemiologists from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and they made an interesting observation. The scientists from the CDC came to the plant and they noticed that there were about a dozen extremely lethargic crows lying about. They took some blood samples and they found that these crows were also infected with our system, with Repress.

WESLEY NYLE

Crows? Infected?

DORIS SMARTLEY

The scientists from the Centers for Disease Control have verified that the Repress molecular computer system is spreading from humans to crows, from crows to humans, by mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are doing it! It's like malaria!

WESLEY NYLE

Holy Toledo!

DORIS SMARTLEY

The evidence is that Repress is spreading completely out of control, at least in this area, but they think it could spread further.

WESLEY NYLE

Oh, my God! Why is this happening to me?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Forgive me for telling you this, Mr. Nyle, but some of the scientists from the CDC were joking that they should call this the Wes Nyle virus. You know, kind of a pun.

WESLEY NYLE

This is outrageous! I'm ruined! I'm ruined! Can't anything be done?

DORIS SMARTLEY

They have begun spraying and all of that, but the bad news doesn't stop there.

WESLEY NYLE

You mean there's more?

(Frances Nyle is completely engrossed in her music.)

FRANCES NYLE

Alone, and yet alive! Oh, sepulcher!
My soul is still my body's prisoner!

WESLEY NYLE

Frances, can you can it?

(Frances doesn't hear him, but she quiets down.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

How could it possibly get any worse?

DORIS SMARTLEY

There is growing evidence that other molecular computing systems have escaped from our laboratory, borne by mosquitoes.

WESLEY NYLE

Other systems?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Express, the system that we are working on to treat autism.

WESLEY NYLE

You don't need to tell me what Express is for. It was my idea, after all.

DORIS SMARTLEY

Yes, of course. Well, Express has now been found in numerous crows in this area. These crows are very aggressive and there have been incidents in which they have attacked people. My theory is that mosquitoes carried Express from the animal subjects at our laboratory to the crows.

WESLEY NYLE

My life's work. Down the toilet!

FRANCES NYLE

Remote the peace that Death alone can give –
My doom, to wait! My punishment, to live!

DORIS SMARTLEY

I'm not finished. Last month a dour philosophy professor at Boston University, a Professor Johnson, started to behave strangely during a presentation that he was giving at a conference in Spain. He was shouting at people in the audience and acting very aggressively. He was found to be infected with Express. So, the authorities are very worried about this.

WESLEY NYLE

I'm ruined!

DORIS SMARTLEY

And it also seems that at least one other molecular computing system has escaped from our laboratory via mosquitoes. And this could have profound implications for society.

WESLEY NYLE

What could be worse than what you already told me?

DORIS SMARTLEY

It may not be worse than the other things, but it certainly is going to be interesting. DoRight, the ethical molecular computing system, has apparently escaped from the lab. Again, this is because of the mosquitoes.

WESLEY NYLE

How could they possibly know that?

DORIS SMARTLEY

It seems that some crows are behaving rather strangely. For example, scientists from the Centers for Disease Control set out delicious food in plastic bags to see if the crows would attack it, and they found that some crows seemed to be inhibited against this kind of stealing. Some crows actually seem to get lost in deep thought, contemplating whether stealing the food would be ethical or not.

WESLEY NYLE

This has to be some kind of joke.

DORIS SMARTLEY

It's no joke. I'm not doing a good job of describing the experiment. It was much more sophisticated and rigorous than the way I just described it. The scientists set up an ethical dilemma for crows and found some crows always made correct ethical decisions. When a person is infected with Repress or Express, it is pretty obvious, but determining whether a person is infected with DoRight will be difficult unless one does a blood test.

WESLEY NYLE

Can you imagine if the entire population of the United States were to become infected with DoRight?

DORIS SMARTLEY

It would change everything.

WESLEY NYLE

Can you imagine, people of all stripes, being perfectly ethical and honest?

DORIS SMARTLEY

It would be like dying and waking up in heaven.

WESLEY NYLE

Not so fast! What if I became infected? What would become of Nyle Nanotechnology?

DORIS SMARTLEY

I didn't think of that! We'd lose our competitive advantage!

WESLEY NYLE

A nation of honest, ethical people! It's a prescription for economic suicide!

DORIS SMARTLEY

Unfortunately for the US economy, the DoRight system is expected to spread much more quickly than either Repress or Express.

WESLEY NYLE

Why is that?

DORIS SMARTLEY

Preliminary experiments have shown that DoRight survives much more readily when it is in its mosquito hosts. They expect the DoRight organism to spread like wildfire for years, maybe decades.

WESLEY NYLE

What a catastrophe!

FRANCES NYLE

The advertising quack who wearies with tales of countless cures,
His teeth, I've enacted, shall all be extracted, by terrified amateurs.

WESLEY NYLE

Please excuse my wife. She's taking part in a production of the Mikado, and she's trying to memorize the whole thing, even if it's not her part.

(Bradford Nyle enters.)

WESLEY NYLE

Brad, it's almost time for you to leave. (*To Doris Smartley*) My sons are both headed for Dartmouth today.

BRADFORD NYLE

Dad, I feel really strange this morning.

WESLEY NYLE

You're not the only one. It seems I won't be giving the speech of a lifetime after all.

BRADFORD NYLE

I can't go to Dartmouth. I have a confession to make. I cheated all the way through high school. I cheated on the college entrance exams. I just can't live a lie any longer.

WESLEY NYLE, DORIS SMARTLEY (together)

DoRight!

BRADFORD NYLE

Do right? That's exactly how I'm thinking. In all circumstances, I must do what's right. I must do what's right!

WESLEY NYLE

Brad, why don't you go back to your room?

BRADFORD NYLE

I couldn't get Derrick to get out of bed. We're supposed to be heading out to Dartmouth, and he's like a zombie. He just mutters some words and stares at the ceiling.

WESLEY NYLE, DORIS SMARTLEY (together)

Repress!

BRADFORD NYLE

What are you two talking about?

WESLEY NYLE

Please go back to your room, Brad. I'll come to your room in a few minutes. I have some business to finish here with Ms. Smartley.

BRADFORD NYLE

Let me think. Yes, that's the right thing. The right thing is for me to return to my room, so I'll do it.

WESLEY NYLE

Jesus!

(Bradford Nyle exits, and heads back to his room.)

WESLEY NYLE (cont.)

Doris, I need to think things over. Please arrange a meeting between me and the folks from the CDC. I want to do the right thing.

DORIS SMARTLEY

The right thing?

WESLEY NYLE

Yes, no matter what, I must do the right thing.

DORIS SMARTLEY

Wes, have you been bitten by any mosquitoes lately? I'm not used to hearing you talk like that. What's with this "I must do the right thing" stuff.

WESLEY NYLE

Well, things are going to change. I have done a lot of shady things in my career, but it was to promote what I thought was a brilliant future for the human race. Yes, I cheated. I lied. I broke the speed limit. I did many unethical things. But, that's all behind me.

FRANCES NYLE

The billiard sharp who any one catches,
His doom's extremely hard.
He's made to dwell in a dungeon cell,
On a spot that's always barred.

WESLEY NYLE

Does anyone know what the global implications will be, if DoRight gets out of control?

DORIS SMARTLEY

There's lots of speculation, but no one knows for sure.

FRANCES NYLE

And there he plays extravagant matches
In fitless finger stalls, on a cloth untrue, with a twisted cue,
And elliptical billiard balls!

WESLEY NYLE

From now on, everything above board. Everything honest. I don't want the
public to be placed at risk.

DORIS SMARTLEY

It may be too late for that.

FRANCES NYLE

My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time –
To let the punishment fit the crime –
 The punishment fit the crime.
And make each prisoner pent
Unwillingly represent
A source of innocent merriment!
 Of innocent merriment!

(Frances Nyle gives a horrific, blood-curdling Mikado-like laugh
as the play comes to an end. Curtain.)