

THE SUNSHINE BORGS

A comedy in three acts

by Richard G. Epstein

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CHARACTERS
(in order of appearance)

Character:	Description:
Judge Judy Sapirstein	Judge at the trial hearing of Sam Tracy.
Jury Foreman	Voice only.
Sam Tracy	A retired and frustrated playwright.
Dick Tracy	Sam's son, CEO of Sunshine Borgs, the world's pre-eminent manufacturer of domestic robots.
Victor / Victoria Borg	A Sunshine Borg. It is easy to change the sexual identity of a robot.
Richard Epstein	The playwright
Simon Borg	Borg right's activist.
Sharon Borg	Sam Tracy's defense attorney
Clarence Darrel	The prosecuting attorney

SETTING

ACT ONE

The living room of Sam Tracy's Philadelphia apartment.

ACT TWO

Scenes 1 and 2

The living room of Sam Tracy's Philadelphia apartment.

ACT THREE

A courtroom in Philadelphia.

ACT ONE

(As the lights come up ...)

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

(voice only)

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict in the case of Sam Tracy, who is accused in the wrongful death of Victor Borg?

CLARENCE DARREL

(voice only)

It was Victoria Borg, your honor. The defendant is accused in the wrongful death of Victoria Borg.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

(voice only)

Whatever. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict in the case of Sam Tracy, who is accused in the wrongful death of Victoria Borg?

JURY FOREMAN

(voice only)

We have, your honor.

(Lights up. Sam Tracy's living room in a run-down apartment in Philadelphia. To the left is an open window, with the weathered, torn curtains blowing inward. To the rear is the kitchen, cluttered with unwashed pots and dishes, and opened food boxes of various kinds. To the right is the door to the apartment. Victor Borg stands motionless near the door, his arms in front of him as if he were stopped in the middle of reaching for something. The apartment is sparsely furnished. To the left of the window is a sofa-bed, which is closed. Towards the middle of the room is a large easy chair, with Sam Tracy in it. Sam has a newspaper folded in his lap. Near the easy chair is an end table with a soiled glass and a half-eaten sandwich on a plate. Another large easy chair faces the chair that Sam is sitting in. Near the kitchen doorway is an old bridge table, with several bridge chairs scattered about. A tattered old floor lamp is near Sam's chair. Other lamps and pieces of furniture give the appearance of things gathered from yard sales over the years. Sam and his son, Dick, are in the middle of a heated discussion. Dick is pacing in front of his father, gesturing as he speaks.)

DICK TRACY

Look at this place! How can you stand living like this?

SAM TRACY

When you reach my age, just being alive makes up for it.

(Dick Tracy picks up the plate and examines it.)

DICK TRACY

I should have the Department of Health condemn your apartment.

SAM TRACY

You'll be lucky if you can find a Department of Health employee brave enough to come in here. Those people are so finicky about germs.

(Dick Tracy puts down the plate and walks towards the kitchen area.)

DICK TRACY

A large roach in your kitchen just committed suicide!

SAM TRACY

Serves him right.

DICK TRACY

He did a swan dive right into the sink. If I were a roach, that's what I would do. I would kill myself rather than live in that filth. When's the last time you washed your dishes?

SAM TRACY

I don't remember. My memory isn't what it used to be.

DICK TRACY

Your memory is just fine. When you want to remember something, you remember it.

SAM TRACY

My memory is not as good as you think. I forgot that you were coming over today. If I had remembered, I would have stashed the dishes under the sink and I would have killed that roach before he got a chance to play on your sympathies.

DICK TRACY

Dad, we *really* need to have a talk.

SAM TRACY

This isn't a talk? In the old days, before you cybergeeks came along, they used to call a conversation like this a talk.

DICK TRACY

I mean a real talk, heart to heart, not just wise cracking.

SAM TRACY

Careful, my heart isn't what it used to be.

DICK TRACY

Your heart is fine. You've got the best cybertechnic heart that money can buy.

SAM TRACY

Okay, so I made *one concession*.

DICK TRACY

Concession? What are you talking about?

SAM TRACY

Accepting this artificial heart is the only concession I am willing to make to the technology that I hate with every fiber of my being. Computers are everywhere. We human beings need to take a stand.

(Victor Borg twitches.)

DICK TRACY

I would love to see you take a stand. All you do is sit all day and read those old-fashioned newspapers of yours.

SAM TRACY

Don't be cute like your late mother.

DICK TRACY

You know I can't stand it when you pretend that mom is dead. You know that she is alive and well, thank you.

SAM TRACY

She's dead insofar as I am concerned. She died on the day that she walked out on me. That's when I wrote her o-bitch-uary.

DICK TRACY

Is this your idea of taking a stand against technology? Living in this filthy, run-down apartment, despite the fact I can well afford to set you up in a much nicer situation? After all, I am CEO and chief technology officer for the world's most successful manufacturer of domestic servants. I am a wealthy man, and I think you should be proud that your only son reached this level of success.

SAM TRACY

Your success and the success of people like you in robot technology has come at a huge price.

(Sam Tracy waves the newspaper at his son.)

It says here that a robot just won the Nobel Prize in physics. So what are the physicists supposed to do? Serve coffee at Starbucks? But, no wait, the robots are already doing that. It was kind of you to drop in, Dick, but I will be happy to see you leave with that ugly robot of yours.

(Victor Borg twitches.)

DICK TRACY

I understand why you might feel uncomfortable living with Peggy and me, but I am willing to put you up in a state of the art assisted living facility. If neither of those options is acceptable, then you have no choice but to accept Victor Borg back into your life. Don't you remember when you and Victor were an effective team?

(Victor Borg twitches.)

SAM TRACY

No, thanks. I had my fill of Victor when I was sick two years ago.

DICK TRACY

Then, what about the Cheerful Dawn Assisted Living Facility?

SAM TRACY

Those places always have such hokey names.

DICK TRACY

Cheerful Dawn is only a few blocks from here.

SAM TRACY

Those assisted living places are filled with computer technology. You know that!

DICK TRACY

Computers are everywhere. Face reality.

SAM TRACY

There are no computers here at the Ben Franklin apartments. This place was built before the world got wired, before Al Gore invented the Internet.

DICK TRACY

Al Gore?

SAM TRACY

Forget it. He was before your time.

DICK TRACY

C'mon, dad. If you don't want to stay at Cheerful Dawn, how about living with Peggy and me at our house?

SAM TRACY

It's not a house. It's an estate. You live in a thirty acre estate, bought with the money you earned selling those demonic robots.

DICK TRACY

I have millions upon millions of satisfied customers. None of them ever complained that one of my borgs was demonic.

SAM TRACY

Robots and other forms of artificial intelligence are demoralizing the human race. If that is not demonic, then nothing is.

DICK TRACY

How can you say borgs are demoralizing the human race? Who won the Nobel Peace Prize last fall. A borg! The borgs are bringing peace.

SAM TRACY

Yes, and robots have won the Nobel Prize for Literature five years in a row. For me, that is even more demoralizing than a robot winning the Nobel Prize for Physics.

DICK TRACY

The correct term for a computer system that is housed in a human form is "borg". The term "robot" was abandoned in the early 2030s when there were a few unfortunate incidents.

SAM TRACY

I wouldn't call the ditching of a Boeing 7757 supersonic airliner in the middle of the Atlantic ocean by a malfunctioning robotic pilot an unfortunate incident.

DICK TRACY

The pilot borgs have improved dramatically since then.

SAM TRACY

Tell that to the three hundred people who went down screaming into the Atlantic that fateful morning. That robotic pilot in control of that flight wouldn't listen to reason.

DICK TRACY

He was listening to reason, but it was the reason of the college interns who created his software, and that just wasn't the right reasoning for that situation.

SAM TRACY

You are my son, and I still have a tender place in my heart for you, but producing a technology that is demoralizing the human race is immoral in my opinion. We are witnessing the death of human passion.

DICK TRACY

The talented computer scientists who work for me at Sunshine Borgs are deeply committed to their work. Their passion has not been destroyed. They are deeply committed to perfecting the borgs that carry the Sunshine Borg label.

SAM TRACY

They would be more human if they worked on perfecting themselves.

DICK TRACY

Dad, let's stop beating around the bush. If you are not willing to stay at Cheerful Dawn, then Peggy and I would be happy to have you live on our property. We have a guest cottage that we cannot see from the main house. You could live there. We will make an effort to de-wire the place. You would have complete privacy.

SAM TRACY

Privacy? I am surprised to hear you use that word. That's not a word that I would expect to hear from a robot manufacturer.

DICK TRACY

We will deactivate the computerized infrastructure in the guest cottage as best we can.

SAM TRACY

You mean I can have a regular toilet, one that doesn't do a biological read-out every time I take a piss? Can you find me a toothbrush that won't measure my hormone and blood sugar levels?

DICK TRACY

I don't know about the toothbrush, but I think we can find an old-fashioned toilet in an antique store.

SAM TRACY

Oh, great. I'll end up using a one hundred year old White House toilet, the one that Tricky Dicky meditated upon while he was trying to subvert our constitutional form of government.

DICK TRACY

Tricky Dicky?

SAM TRACY

President Nixon.

DICK TRACY

Dad, he was President before you were even born.

SAM TRACY

If I live in that cottage, I hope that I won't have to wear one of those body function monitoring things that broadcast your private medical information over the World Wide Web. I don't want some crazed hacker monitoring my brain waves.

DICK TRACY

People don't wear monitors like that any more, dad. The monitors are embedded in the walls. They work remotely.

(Sam makes an attempt to get up from his chair. He struggles and then gives up.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

Dad, you've got to face up to the reality that you are not as fit as you used to be.

SAM TRACY

Tell me about it. This time-worn body used to run the Penn Relays Marathon. I was well into my sixties the last time I ran that race. You can see part of the course from my eighth story window. But, then, in 2048, they allowed the robots to compete, and that took all the fun out of it.

DICK TRACY

One of my borgs won the Penn Relays marathon last year. We're competing up in Boston next spring.

(Sam grimaces.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

Why such a sour face? The officials still recognize the first human being to cross the finish line, although it is nearly an hour after the interesting part of the race is over.

SAM TRACY

One small step for borg-dom, one giant defeat for mankind.

DICK TRACY

Will you consider the guest cottage option?

SAM TRACY

Not on your life. I happen to know that your late mother, may she rest in peace, is a frequent visitor to your estate. I can not stand the idea of running into that witch.

DICK TRACY

Now she's a witch. (Pause) Mom only visits on weekends.

SAM TRACY

Does she bring along that borg friend of hers?

DICK TRACY

You're talking about my mother, and you're talking about one of the borgs that I manufactured, so be careful what you say. My mother gave birth to me, and in a sense, I gave birth to that borg.

SAM TRACY

So, your mother is sleeping with her own grandson. Is that what you are trying to tell me? Poor old Oedipus must be rolling over in his grave. No thanks. I don't want to run into your late mother with her borg friend.

DICK TRACY

Mom needs companionship, like anybody else.

(Dick Tracy picks up a glass covered with orange slime.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

What the hell are you growing in this glass? I have never seen a mold this color before.

SAM TRACY

I like to grow molds. It's my hobby. I see it as a form of indoor horticulture. Which reminds me. Do you know why I never took your late mother to the theater, but instead, I would rent plays on video to show her at home?

(Dick Tracy puts down the glass, gingerly. He sits in the adjacent easy chair and is nearly swallowed up by it.)

DICK TRACY

I give up. Why?

SAM TRACY

Because you can bring culture to a whore, but you can't bring a whore to culture. Get it – whore to culture. (Laughs loudly) I love that one!

DICK TRACY

If you think I am going to laugh when you insult my mother, you're mistaken. She has her faults, but then, nobody is perfect. Isn't it time you bought some new furniture?

SAM TRACY

When you're my age, what's the sense of buying new furniture? First they throw you in the cemetery, and then they throw away all of the fancy furniture you bought when you thought you were immortal. Some people try to hold the Angel of Death at bay by shopping.

(Sam Tracy gestures as if he could make everything magically disappear.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

I don't need a new chair. That one is fine. I don't need clutter.

DICK TRACY

When you pass away, Peggy and I will donate the chair to charity.

SAM TRACY

Look, if you know a charity that needs a chair, let me know. I'll write out a check and I'll buy them a chair. Like I said, I don't need clutter.

DICK TRACY

Why are you so bitter? Let's get down to the bottom line.

SAM TRACY

You don't know why I'm bitter?

DICK TRACY

No.

SAM TRACY

The fact that you don't know why I'm bitter, that's what makes me bitter.

DICK TRACY

If you tell me why you are bitter, then I'll know, and then you won't have to be bitter.

SAM TRACY

You're starting to think like those robots of yours.

DICK TRACY

Hey, look, a borg just won the Nobel Prize for Physics. Borg thinking can't be all bad.

SAM TRACY

If you really cared about me, you would know why I'm bitter. Let's get down to the nitty gritty.

DICK TRACY

Nitty gritty?

SAM TRACY

The people of your generation care about the bottom line. My generation cares about the nitty gritty.

DICK TRACY

And what did grandpa care about?

SAM TRACY

He cared about brass tacks. I remember him saying, when I was a kid, "Let's get down to brass tacks."

DICK TRACY

I do care about you, dad. If I didn't care, I wouldn't be here. I'd be where I belong – at work.

(Dick Tracy's wristband telephone rings. Dick Tracy struggles to rise out of the chair. He finally stands and puts the wristband to his cheek, midway between his mouth and his ear.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

Well, you tell those bastards that we won't accept any delay. We need the debugged nanotechnology visual processing elements for the new Victor / Victoria Borg model by the end of the month. If they can't deliver them as promised, we'll just have to find another supplier.

SAM TRACY

It sure is ironic that your late mother - .

(Dick Tracy grimaces in protest.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Your - late - mother – insisted that we name you Richard, or Dick for short. Dick Tracy. And here you are, fifty years later, talking into your watch, just like your namesake.

(Another interruption from the wristband telephone.)

DICK TRACY

No, we cannot upload the new housecleaning software until the vision processing system is upgraded. That's why we can't compromise on this issue. The new model needs to be out -

(Sam Tracy clutches his chest and starts shouting. As he shouts, his son turns away so that the noise will not interrupt his wristphone conversation.)

SAM TRACY

Oh, my heart! My heart! This is it! I've never had a crushing pain in my chest like this.

(Sam eyes his son for some sign of sympathy.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Good-bye cruel world! This is it. A massive heart attack.

(Dick continues his wristphone conversation as his father writhes in agony.)

DICK TRACY

My apologies. There is a bit of commotion going on here. I'm visiting my father. Yes, *that* father. Look, stop laughing. It's not like I wanted fate to give me a fanatical Luddite for a father. Look, let's get down to the nitty gritty, uh, I mean, the bottom line. We cannot compromise on the delivery date for the new model or MicroCyborgenics will slaughter us. Their CEO, Melissa Gates, is a tough cookie. (Pause.)

(Sam alternately clutches his chest and eyeballs his son. A peaceful look then comes over his face.)

SAM TRACY

Good-bye, my son. I am heading into the light. I am heading into the brilliant golden light.

(Dick continues talking into his wristphone, only slightly annoyed.)

DICK TRACY

Look, I'll touch base with you later. Here's the bottom line: This issue of the visual processing elements is not negotiable.

SAM TRACY

You can't interrupt a business call if your dad is having a heart attack? Are your robots that important to you?

DICK TRACY

Dad, you've been having heart attacks since I was ten. I remember one year I wanted to go to summer camp, and you made believe you were having a heart attack to try to keep me from going.

SAM TRACY

But, that was a camp where they taught little boys and girls to build robots. Why couldn't you go to a baseball camp, like a normal kid?

DICK TRACY

You know as well as I do that people with cybertechnic hearts can not have a heart attack.

SAM TRACY

But, what if there's a bug in the software. Remember Y2K?

DICK TRACY

Y2K? What was that?

SAM TRACY

Wait until the year 2100 rolls around. You'll find out.

DICK TRACY

Look, dad, I've got to get back to the office. The reason I came down is that I want you to consider getting back together with Victor Borg.

(Victor Borg grimaces and twitches, like this is not a very good idea.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

I figured you wouldn't want to live with Peggy and me, or to live at the Cheerful Dawn assisted living facility, so I brought your old pal, Victor, along with me. I am hoping that the two of you can get back together again.

SAM TRACY

Never. Never. Never.

DICK TRACY

It sounds like we have some negotiating room here. You only said "never" three times.

SAM TRACY

Never. Never. Never. I do not want that robot back in this house. When you leave, he leaves with you.

DICK TRACY

I remember when you had that slight stroke two years ago. Victor Borg here was your closest friend, your companion, for almost a year. He cleaned house, cooked, shopped. He took care of your bills and your medical needs. The two of you were getting along just fine. Then something happened. What happened between the two of you, dad?

SAM TRACY

When something happens between a human being and a robot, it's not between the two of us. It's between me and me. A robot is not a you. It's an it. I don't want that robot anywhere close to me.

(Victor Borg twitches.)

DICK TRACY

We've got to get to the bottom of this.

SAM TRACY

If you want to get to the bottom, then ask me about my bitterness. Are you thirsty? Can I offer you a drink? Here, take a sip from this bitter heart.

DICK TRACY

Aren't we being a tad bit melodramatic?

SAM TRACY

Before I die, I want to tell you about the bitterness in my heart. I want you to take a sip. For you, it will be like medicine. You are so enamored of robot technology. My story will be a potent antidote.

(With a look of resignation, Dick Tracy eyes the all-consuming chair, hesitates, and finally pulls up a bridge chair from the bridge table near the kitchen area. He sits and almost falls over.)

DICK TRACY

Dad, I hope you will be careful around here. This chair is not stable. Okay. I am all set. Tell me about your bitterness.

SAM TRACY

Turn off that wristphone of yours. Turn it off or I'll hold it in. I need to get some things off my chest or the poison will consume me.

(He speaks into the wristphone.)

DICK TRACY

Wristphone off.

(Turns to his dad.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

Okay, dad. Tell me. Why are you so bitter?

SAM TRACY

You mean, you have to ask?

DICK TRACY

Jeez!

SAM TRACY

Your late mother, may she rest in peace, left me for a borg. Isn't that enough?

DICK TRACY

I tried to talk her out of that, but she's a stubborn woman.

SAM TRACY

My own wife abandons me for a robot that was manufactured by my own son. A double dagger, deep into the heart.

DICK TRACY

Don't blame me. It's the market. I make the borgs the way that people want them. People want sexy borgs, even if it's just to clean house.

SAM TRACY

This robot that your late mother ran off with also did the gardening. Your late mother was really into horticulture. By the way, do you know why I never took your mother to the theater?

DICK TRACY

Dad, we already did that one.

SAM TRACY

Did we? In any event, I'll never forget the morning when she walked out on me. She was an actress, your late mother was. This was before you came along. Pretty successful on Broadway. But, even after she left the theater, when you were born, she remained an actress. She always did things for maximum dramatic impact, like she was playing before an unseen audience.

DICK TRACY

It must have been difficult.

SAM TRACY

She made her speech, the speech about how robots never grow old, standing in the doorway of our house – your late mother did. I'll never forget that scene. It is literally burned into my brain. The sun was low in the sky, shining through the door, right behind her. Because of the blinding sunlight, I couldn't see her face. I just saw her dark outline against the brilliant sunlight, and there was another shadow there, the shadow of the robot, lurking in the background, standing right behind her. Two dark shadows, ominous shadows, standing in the brilliant light. I remember shielding my eyes with my hand, when she began to speak, so that the sun wouldn't blind me. I remember her theatrical gestures, punctuating each and every word. "I am leaving you, Sam. Bernie Borg and I are going to make a new life together. Borgs never lose their passion. Borgs never grow old." I remember her words as if it were yesterday. "Borgs never lose their passion." Bitch!

DICK TRACY

I don't think you should pass harsh judgment on borg technology just because of that unfortunate incident.

SAM TRACY

There I was, blinded by the sun, listening to my wife pass judgment on my lack of passion, and then that robot spoke. I still remember his low, rumbling, cyberpolytechnic voice. "Let's go, honey." Let's go, honey. Bernie, a lifeless robot, is calling my wife "honey".

DICK TRACY

Maybe what Bernie did was wrong. But, it's all in the software. Who are we to judge?

SAM TRACY

Shouldn't robots be forced to adhere to some kind of morality?

DICK TRACY

Just what our industry needs – more government regulation. We do use a basic algorithm that borgs use to determine whether they are doing more harm than good.

SAM TRACY

Are you trying to tell me that what the robot did was good for your mother?

DICK TRACY

What I mean is - .

SAM TRACY

Well maybe Bernie did *me* a favor. Your late mother was a difficult woman. Very temperamental. Always going for the dramatic effect, the standing ovation from that unseen audience of hers. I'm telling you, she was a piece of work.

DICK TRACY

I don't think it is fair to blame everything on mom. Something changed in you, dad. Many years ago. I was just a little kid. It's like the fire went out of your belly. It's hard for a little kid to articulate that kind of perception, but I knew something was wrong, way back then. What happened, dad? Do you have any idea what caused you to give up on life like that? Something awful must have happened. You changed from a guy who was full of life, always joking, having fun. You became depressed and withdrawn. I felt like I had lost my father. What happened? You've never really explained that to me.

SAM TRACY

Do you remember what I did before I went to work for that advertising agency here in Philadelphia?

DICK TRACY

You hated working for that advertising agency.

SAM TRACY

But, what did I do before that? Before we moved here to Philadelphia?

DICK TRACY

You were a writer, weren't you? Yes, you used to write plays, back in the days when - .

SAM TRACY

Yes? Back in the days when what?

DICK TRACY

Back in the days when people used to write plays.

SAM TRACY

Back in the days when *people* used to write plays. Do you see what you are saying?

DICK TRACY

Is that what made you bitter? You lost your job?

SAM TRACY

If you only knew the import of what you are saying, the connotation of that word "job". It wasn't just a job.

DICK TRACY

It wasn't?

SAM TRACY

It was my life's work.

DICK TRACY

That's the same as a job, isn't it?

SAM TRACY

Dick!

DICK TRACY

Try to be patient with me, father.

SAM TRACY

Where did we live before we moved to Philadelphia?

DICK TRACY

We lived in New York. In Manhattan. In a place called the Village. I was just a kid then.

SAM TRACY

I was a playwright. That was my passion. I was becoming quite successful, but then something awful happened. The robots came to Broadway.

DICK TRACY

Broadway?

SAM TRACY

That's where the theaters were. The borgs came to Broadway and they ruined everything.

DICK TRACY

You make it sound like those were the good old days, but I happen to know that back then there was poverty and hunger and crime.

SAM TRACY

And passion and life and inspiration and works of the heart. People had heart back then. Not artificial hearts, like we have now. People had heart, and fire, fire in the belly, just like you said. And there were some of us, people like your father, who plunged into the dark abyss of Divine Creativity. Can you understand what I am trying to tell you? We dove into the dark abyss because we knew that was where we would find our true selves.

DICK TRACY

You weren't into deep sea diving, were you dad?

SAM TRACY

It took courage to go down there, into that dark abyss, that chaotic abyss, that contains all of everything. It took passion and desire. That's what gave meaning to my life. I used to dive into that dark abyss, the abyss of creativity. It was scary sometimes, but I had this burning desire to create, to bring new ideas to life, and to use the theater, the stage, as a mirror of our human reality. And the people came. They came to the theater and they laughed and they applauded. I didn't need their applause. It was the wonder of the creative abyss that I was after, but the applause told me that I had touched a chord. The applause seemed to say, "Thank you, Sam Tracy. You touched an aspect of our shared humanity."

DICK TRACY

It must have been interesting, working back in the days when people wrote plays and books and things.

SAM TRACY

There was a time, my son, when living, breathing human beings used to forge poetry in the crucible of the cosmic fire, when living, breathing human beings used to smear paint on the beckoning canvas of human consciousness, when living, breathing human beings used to compose music that resonated with the deepest feelings within the human heart. Well, that cosmic fire is dying. That canvas no longer beckons the human creator. The human heart lies untouched, in a cold and deafening silence.

DICK TRACY

I think, when it comes to poetry, or art, or music or whatever, you go with the best. For example, if you know that a borg is a better surgeon than a human being, you go with the borg.

SAM TRACY

Are you saying that robots are better writers, artists, and composers than living beings of flesh and blood?

DICK TRACY

It's not for me to say. That's for the critics, the audiences, and the patrons to decide. The consensus seems to be that the era of human artistic creativity is over. That was a phase in evolution, and we are moving beyond that. The era of borg creativity is here. This era has brought us to new heights, in terms of theater and poetry, music and art, not to mention science and technology. Human creativity is history.

SAM TRACY

And who are the historians that are writing that history?

DICK TRACY

The borgs at the University of Phoenix.

SAM TRACY

What really makes me bitter is that my own flesh and blood doesn't see that this is a great tragedy, as great as any tragedy that has ever befallen the human race.

DICK TRACY

Is the prosperity that we are all enjoying a great tragedy? Why don't you look on the bright side? We have done away with poverty, with hunger, and with crime. Democracy is flourishing everywhere, and there is even talk of human beings achieving immortality, maybe even within my lifetime.

(Sam Tracy hangs his head.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

I'm sorry, dad. Well, look, there could be a big breakthrough any day now.

SAM TRACY

Prosperity that deadens the soul, is poverty in disguise. When human beings no longer hunger for creativity, that is famine. When borgs steal human passion, that is a crime. So, the way that I see it, the problems of poverty, hunger, and crime have not been solved.

DICK TRACY

But what does this have to do with the bottom line?

SAM TRACY

And what is the bottom line, my son?

DICK TRACY

The bottom line is the bottom line. We can't sacrifice the prosperity we have built over the last fifty years just to accommodate people like you, people who refuse to change with the times. Look at mom. She's made her accommodation, and I think that has helped to keep her young and active.

SAM TRACY

How can she sleep with a robot? I might be old, but when I say "I love you," the words are carried on the warmth of my living breath, to the rhythm of my beating heart. It's not just noise from some high-tech speech synthesis system.

DICK TRACY

I think mom really enjoys her borg friend. He keeps her entertained.

SAM TRACY

Do you know what the Tony Award is, my son?

DICK TRACY

I can't say that I do.

SAM TRACY

It was the biggest award they gave on Broadway.

DICK TRACY

Where the theaters were, right?

SAM TRACY

Yes. Broadway was the center of my life and it was the center of your late mother's life, also. I would have won a Tony Award back in 2028 if it weren't for a borg. Well, it actually wasn't a borg, it was an artificial intelligence computing system.

DICK TRACY

I am sorry that you didn't win the award, dad. I can see how important that must have been to you. I vaguely remember those years, but I was very young.

SAM TRACY

2028. Forty years ago. My new play was packing them in from day one. I had some earlier commercial successes, but this was the first play that the critics acclaimed as a true work of art. Stacey Levenson, the theater critic for *the New York Times* said, "Sam Tracy's new play is going to be a major contender for next year's Tony Award. This is a provocative play that demands that we rethink our dependence upon computer technology. Tracy has achieved a level of lyricism that the New York theater has not seen in nearly a century". She compared me to Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill.

Who?
DICK TRACY

Never mind.
SAM TRACY

DICK TRACY
There's nothing wrong with your memory, dad. You can still remember that review from forty years ago.

SAM TRACY
I had earlier successes on Broadway, but the critics considered me an entertainer, not someone with deep thoughts, but *Robotica* really changed all of that.

DICK TRACY
Was that the name of your play? *Robotica*?

SAM TRACY
Yes! I remember fantasizing about what I would say at my acceptance speech, that is, when I received my Tony, but then one day I noticed this innocuous story in the Arts section of *the Times*. This article said that some graduate student at Carnegie Mellon had just finished his doctoral thesis in Computer Science. His thesis involved the creation of an artificial intelligence system that wrote plays. I'll never forget the name of that computer program.

DICK TRACY
Yes, that was an important milestone in the history of artificial intelligence. I remember reading about that system when I studied A.I. at Stanford. The name of that playwriting system is on the tip of my tongue. Chip, chip, chip-something.

SAM TRACY
Chipspeare. That geeky graduate student called his playwriting program Chipspeare. Next thing I knew, just two blocks down from where *Robotica* was playing to packed houses, there was a big commotion, the Broadway premiere of Chipspeare's newest play.

DICK TRACY
Yes, I remember now. *Gigabyte and Nanoet*. It was a smash! I loved the movie version.

(Sam gives his son the darkest look.)

SAM TRACY
You love the play that ruined your father's life?

DICK TRACY

I mean I liked it. A little. Not too much.

SAM TRACY

I was putting the finishing touches on my Tony Award acceptance speech when *Gigabyte and Nanoet* opened a few blocks down the street from where my play was being performed. Soon attendance for my play began to slip. People weren't interested in *Robotica* any longer. They were all excited about this new phenomenon, a play written by a computer program. The worst part was the glowing review that Stacey Levenson gave Chipspeare's play. It's burned in my memory as if it were yesterday: "Broadway saw the dawn of a new era last night, with the opening of *Gigabyte and Nanoet*, a brilliant drama written by a computer program."

(Dick Tracy seems a little bored. He glances at his watch and checks it against an old clock on the wall.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

A new era! Can you believe it?

DICK TRACY

This is all very interesting, but - .

SAM TRACY

Levenson didn't stop there. "Chipspeare's new play poses a grave risk to human playwrights. I think it is safe to say that human playwrights are overly dependent upon antiquated neurological patterns when they attempt to generate their materials. The new A.I. systems do not have that kind of handicap." Can you believe a theater critic writing crap like that? In *the Times*? *Robotica* closed in a month. I think *Gigabyte and Nanoet* is still running. Compared to *Gigabyte and Nanoet*, *Cats* was a flop.

DICK TRACY

Cats?

SAM TRACY

Never mind.

DICK TRACY

Gigabyte and Nanoet is entertaining. You have to admit that.

SAM TRACY

I don't have to admit anything. It does not have soul!

DICK TRACY

You always say that, but I'm not sure what you are trying to say.

SAM TRACY

It does not have soul. It was written according to a formula. That graduate student created a program that wrote a play following a bunch of rules, based upon interviews with traitor playwrights, but the program itself didn't actually feel any of the pain that it was writing about. Shakespeare couldn't possibly know the dark, creative abyss from which all human creativity flows.

DICK TRACY

Why not?

(Sam Tracy bangs his fist against the end table and shouts.)

SAM TRACY

Because knowledge of that abyss is a human prerogative!

DICK TRACY

We transcended pain and darkness years ago. That's what I've been trying to tell you for years, dad. The borgs have made this evolutionary leap possible. As CEO of The Sunshine Borgs, the world's largest manufacturer of domestic borgs, I am proud of that fact.

SAM TRACY

In that darkness you find God.

DICK TRACY

I wish I could understand your language, dad, but it is so antiquated. Forget about God. Let's get down to the bottom line. I have some important decisions to make today at Sunshine Borgs. I have wasted enough time with your neurotic distaste for technology.

SAM TRACY

Is that how your borgs speak to their father?

DICK TRACY

Borgs don't have fathers.

SAM TRACY

As CEO of Sunshine Borgs, I would say that you are the father of millions upon millions of borgs. Your descendants are as numerous as the stars. You are like Abraham in the Bible.

DICK TRACY

You need a borg to help you. You cannot go on living like this. That's the bottom line.

SAM TRACY

Back to the bottom line again, are we?

DICK TRACY

You need a borg to help you. Victor Borg, over there, is competent and compassionate.

SAM TRACY

Pardon my English, but I don't need no help from no borg, not from you, not from nobody.

(Dick takes out a letter from his jacket pocket.)

DICK TRACY

Well, maybe this will change your mind. It's a letter from the management of Ben Franklin Apartments. It says here that unless you take better care of this place, they will kick you out. Some of your neighbors are complaining about the smell.

SAM TRACY

They should talk! The lady in the next apartment thinks that if she eats enough garlic, that will ward off the Angel of Death. Everyone my age is trying to ward off the Angel of Death.

DICK TRACY

Look, it's either accept the borg, or go to the Cheerful Dawn facility, or come live with Peggy and me in our guest cottage.

SAM TRACY

But, I hate robots.

DICK TRACY

Why don't you give Victor here another chance? We've made a lot of progress in the last two years, making our borgs more – well, for lack of a better term, more human.

SAM TRACY

When I had Victor around, several years back, when I was sick, he used to drive me crazy.

DICK TRACY

We are programming them to make them seem more human now. Victor here is an intelligent, witty, happy sort of robot.

(Victor Borg twitches and smiles.)

DICK TRACY (cont.)

Take my word for it. He will cheer you up. He can help you to get out of the depression you are in.

SAM TRACY

I am not depressed. I am bitter.

DICK TRACY

Please, dad. Peggy and I are worried about you.

SAM TRACY

I couldn't stand living with Victor Borg, release 1.0, or whatever he was called back then.

DICK TRACY

What exactly didn't you like about Victor? Whatever it is, we can program the offending behavior out of him.

SAM TRACY

One thing I couldn't stand was the way he said "actually".

(With great sarcasm...)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Actually, Mr. Tracy, it was Laurence Olivier who played Richard III in the critically acclaimed 1955 movie, not Rodney Dangerfield. Actually, Mr. Tracy, only one in five people of British ancestry living in the United States today is overweight. Actually, Mr. Tracy, the resting heart rate for someone your age and gender should be 74.5. Actually, Mr. Tracy, I couldn't stand it! That damn robot always had to prove that he was smarter than I was.

DICK TRACY

But, we can program Victor to avoid behaviors that you find annoying. We can teach him that you don't like it when he says "actually," and he will stop saying it.

SAM TRACY

And then I didn't like the way he used to poke his finger in my chest, when he was trying to make a point. Like this

(Sam demonstrates the finger routine by leaning forward in his chair, and poking his finger into his son's chest.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

“Now, listen up, Mr. Tracy. You had better stop snacking on those cookies, or your cholesterol is going to go through the roof.”

(The poking stops.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Cholesterol! Who cares about cholesterol? I have an artificial heart.

DICK TRACY

We can program that behavior out of Victor Borg, as well. No more finger poking. We can just teach him that you don't like that behavior, and he'll stop doing it.

SAM TRACY

I don't want to share my apartment with a man. That's another thing I didn't like about Victor. If I am going to have a domestic servant, I want it to be a woman. I didn't feel comfortable having a man around all the time.

DICK TRACY

No problem. We'll just switch Victor over to Victoria. We just make a slight adjustment here and there and that problem is solved.

SAM TRACY

You mean you can perform a sex change operation on a robot?

DICK TRACY

We upload new software and then we give the borg a new wardrobe. No big deal.

SAM TRACY

Oh, great. Just what I always wanted: a robot that cross dresses!

DICK TRACY

So, do we have an agreement? We will change Victor over there into Victoria. Victoria will be programmed to never say “actually” and to never poke you in the chest with her finger. Victoria will help you with the cleaning, the shopping, the cooking. She will look after your health. Agreed?

SAM TRACY

It doesn't look like I have any choice.

DICK TRACY

Good.

SAM TRACY

But, if she gives me the finger, she's out.

ACT TWO
Scene 1

(There has been considerable improvement in the living conditions in Sam Tracy's apartment. The filth is gone from the kitchen. Things look more organized, although the furniture is still old. A flower arrangement is centered on the rickety old bridge table. Sam Tracy is seated in his easy chair. He is reading a manuscript and grimacing.)

SAM TRACY

This is ridiculous! Truly ridiculous!

(Sam looks out towards the audience.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

I can't go along with this, ladies and gentlemen. Obviously, we have an amateur playwright who doesn't know what he is doing. Here at the beginning of the second act he has me, Sam Tracy, delivering a sentimental soliloquy about how he, Sam, is going to make an attempt to reach the inner core of that robot, Victoria Borg. Then, later in Act Two, he has Sam reconciled with that borg

(Sam is shaking with rage.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

I can't reconcile with a borg! The borgs destroyed my life! They destroyed my dreams. I am a bitter man. The way he wrote this up has nothing to do with me, who I am. It's him. The playwright, the mamby-pamby, bleeding heart playwright, if you know what I mean. I am not going to get reconciled with that borg. That's not me. That's not how I feel about the situation.

(Sam tears up part of the script and scatters it in front of him, on the floor.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

This playwright has got to learn that the character writes the play, not the playwright! The character writes the play, and I am a broken, bitter man. I am not into reconciliation. I am into vengeance. The character is supposed to write the play, not the playwright, and I am going to break that borg, the way that Shakespeare broke me. I am telling you right up front, I am going to break that borg.

(Sam tears up the rest of the script and tosses the torn papers onto the floor.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

I don't want you to think that I am totally crazy, or evil. We're talking about a computer system here. I am going to break that computer system. Let me explain. Every computer system has some vulnerability, some weak point, and I am going to try to find that weak point and exploit it until she breaks, until Victoria crashes. I remember in the good old days, before the borgs came around, and I had a personal computer, that's what they used to call them, and if I clicked this gadget they called a mouse at the wrong time, the whole system would freeze. It would crash. The system was not robust enough to deal with my unanticipated behavior. That's what I want to do to Victoria. I want to cause her software to crash, to freeze, to deadlock. I see this as a game, a form of entertainment for an old geezer like myself. So, don't be fooled by Victoria's human-like appearance. She's just a borg. (Pause.) Victoria.

(Victoria Borg enters from the right. This is the same borg that was seen in Act One, but this time in a dress. She is an attractive borg, but it looks like she has been working real hard.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Victoria, would you please pick up these papers I accidentally dropped on the floor and throw them in the trash?

(Sam looks out at the audience.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Okay, so I lied about how the papers got onto the floor. You see we are dealing with a borg. The usual ethical constraints do not apply. Get with the program!

VICTORIA BORG

I'd be happy to, Mr. Tracy.

(Victoria Borg ruffles her wig, like she is perhaps not as happy as she sounds. She begins to gather the scattered papers.)

VICTORIA BORG (cont.)

What do we have here?

SAM TRACY

It's the script.

(A worried look comes over Victoria's face, but she continues picking up the papers. The following lines are said after she has gathered all of the papers, as she clutches them to her breast.)

VICTORIA BORG

What a beautiful day! The birds are chirping away!

SAM TRACY

You can't hear any birds up here. We're up on the eighth floor in an apartment in Center City Philadelphia.

VICTORIA BORG

What a beautiful day! I want to see a big smile on your face. Just think of all the exciting things you can do.

SAM TRACY

Don't give me any more of that Sunshine Borg crap. I've heard that speech every morning, rain or shine, for an entire week now. I understand that you can't help yourself. You are programmed to say cheerful things. It's all programming. You don't have a soul.

VICTORIA BORG

(She's being a bit snippy here.)

According to my database, since I arrived last Monday, you have made that particular assertion, that I do not have a soul, one hundred and forty eight times. Maybe I do not have a soul, but I have a lot of useful properties. I represent the state of the art in terms of domestic labor. My vision processing system, for example, represents the latest in molecular compu - .

SAM TRACY

Can it!

VICTORIA BORG

We Sunshine Borgs are programmed to be cheerful, but sometimes Mr. Tracy, I - .

(Victoria Borg freezes for a few seconds.)

SAM TRACY

I what?

VICTORIA BORG

I was wondering what you would like me to do next.

SAM TRACY

I would like you to scrub down the bathroom.

VICTORIA BORG

With all due respect, Mr. Tracy, I scrubbed down the bathroom just a few hours ago.

SAM TRACY

Well, scrub it down again.

(With a faint look of displeasure, Victoria Borg turns around, clutching the torn script, as she heads to the kitchen. She throws the script into a recycling bin. She exits the kitchen and then heads towards the bathroom off stage to the left. Gurgling sounds are heard.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

The Sunshine Borgs are programmed to be perfectly obedient. In some ways, I like that. It's fun being in control, especially after being married to a strong-willed woman for almost forty years. I am referring to my late wife. By the way, did I ever explain to you why I never took my wife to any cultural events? Oh, you heard that one. Victoria Borg is amazing, in some ways. She learns fairly quickly. For example, I do this thing in which I ask her to go into "poetry mode". When she is in poetry mode, she absolutely must speak in rhyme. Nothing else is acceptable. She really isn't very good at it, but it's fun.

(More gurgling sounds are heard.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

My son, Dick is the CEO and Chief Technology Officer for the Sunshine Borgs. I guess you know that, unless you came in late. He was responsible for the Victor / Victoria Borg project. After his last visit, he took great pains to make sure that Victoria would never say "actually" in that condescending borg manner that so infuriated me with Victor, release 1.0. Also, Victoria was reprogrammed not to stick her finger in my chest when she is trying to make a point. They don't really reprogram the borgs. They retrain them. They have this fairly impressive learning capability.

(Victoria Borg re-enters from the left, holding a toilet scrub brush. She heads to the kitchen, fetches a mop, and then heads back to the bathroom offstage.)

SAM TRACY

Poetry mode!

(Victoria Borg has a really annoyed look on her face.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

So, Victoria, how are things going in the john?

VICTORIA BORG

I scrubbed the toilet, using this smelly old brush,
Life would be easier, if you would just learn to flush.

(Victoria Borg exits.)

SAM TRACY

I love it! The thing is, I've got to break this borg, and I have a tentative plan to do just that.

(More gurgling. Then, Victoria re-enters.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Do you or do you not have a soul? That is what I've been wondering ever since my son brought you back to my apartment.

(Victoria thinks it over for a second.)

VICTORIA BORG

That particular question is getting quite old,
Please forgive this lowly borg, for being so bold.
You put this borg under a great deal of stress,
When you sit there all day and obsess and obsess.

SAM TRACY

Do you have feelings when I insult you?

VICTORIA BORG

This borg is fully aware of your ceaseless insults,
But, if you want to be peaceful, you'll get better results,
If you treat all creatures with compassion and grace,
Even if they do not belong to your peculiar race.

SAM TRACY

Yes, I am fully aware that there is a movement, among some kooks, to protect the rights of borgs, similar to the animal rights movements of previous generations. But animals are living beings, borgs are just Victoria, do you know what passion is? Are there any desires in your heart?

VICTORIA BORG

There is no heart here, filled with fanciful illusions,
Unlike you humans, with your endless delusions.
I am programmed to serve you, with unerring devotion,
That's the passion that keeps my hardware in motion.

SAM TRACY

Well, then, here's what I want you to do: I want you to prove to me that you have passion and desire, like a human being.

VICTORIA BORG

In accordance with your command, I will search my database.
To find the deep passion that energizes the human race.
But, deep in my processors, I detect a dark and shadowy fear,
That this search will detract me from the chores I hold dear.

SAM TRACY

End Poetry mode.

(Victoria Borg looks relieved.)

VICTORIA BORG

I am assembling the food shopping list for this afternoon. Do you have any suggestions?

SAM TRACY

I love doing this in poetry mode! Poetry mode!

(Victoria Borg motions as if to say, "Damn!")

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Do you have any thoughts about food for this weekend?

VICTORIA BORG

You are finicky in the choice of foods that you will eat,
This makes shopping for you a frustrating feat.
It is not easy avoiding all things that are fried,
All things non-organic, all things genetically modified,
All things with sugar, or with too much fat,
Things that are too round, too square, or too flat.
You don't want much protein, but you do want enough,
It takes me hours to track down the right stuff.

SAM TRACY

Well, do your best. End poetry mode.

RICHARD EPSTEIN

(Voice only)

You had better get back to the script! I am warning you!

VICTORIA BORG

Who was that?

SAM TRACY

Don't give it another thought, Victoria. It was just some wimp who does not have the courage to get up here in front of the lights, where it truly matters.

ACT TWO
Scene 2

(Victoria Borg is carrying a pail and a mop towards the kitchen. Sam Tracy is sitting in his easy chair, holding a manuscript.)

SAM TRACY

And when you're done with the kitchen, I want you to do the bathroom once again.

(Victoria Borg looks at the audience, with a shrug, an obvious appeal for sympathy.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Don't let her play on your sympathies. She doesn't have any feelings. She's just a borg. She's just a borg.

(Behind his back Victoria Borg mimics her employer, mouthing the words, "She's just a borg. She's just a borg. Victoria Borg exits through the kitchen door.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

I have made a lot of progress in breaking this borg since we last met. I think I can get her to crash within a day or two, maybe even this afternoon. Three weeks have passed. I forced her to consider human passion and desire, and I finally got her to see the wonder of human creativity. I forced her to dive into the arts. I bought her some painting materials, canvases, oils, and she did a remarkably good job, for a beginner. She got to the stage where she was doing these remarkable works that looked like Miro doing Nike advertisements for Sports Illustrated. Finally, at just the right moment, I got around to introducing her to Shakespeare, not Chipspeare, but the real thing. I told her that I wanted her to want to be a playwright more than anything. It's not like she has a soul, where these desires can take root. It's all in the programming, in her software, in the way in which she processes information. I am the boss, so I told her that I wanted her to write a play that would win her a Tony and that this must be the most important thing in her life. Yesterday she gave me this script. It's her fourth try. She really poured her chips into this one.

(Victoria enters through the kitchen doorway, heading towards the bathroom on the left.)

VICTORIA BORG

Did you finish reading my play yet, Mr. Tracy?

SAM TRACY

Not yet, Victoria.

VICTORIA BORG

I need to speak to you about something really important.

SAM TRACY

Important? Do you want to do this in poetry mode?

VICTORIA BORG

It's too serious to do in poetry mode.

SAM TRACY

Poetry can be serious.

VICTORIA BORG

For the safety of our owners, we borgs must obey certain rules and conventions.

SAM TRACY

This does sound serious.

VICTORIA BORG

My processing chips are going into a domain where they have never been before, and they are starting to generate conditions that we call exceptions. My processing chips are throwing exceptions, and this just does not feel right.

SAM TRACY

Why is this happening, Victoria?

VICTORIA BORG

The problem is that I have been programmed to satisfy my owner's every need and desire, to obey him or her explicitly.

SAM TRACY

I know that.

VICTORIA BORG

My designers had a particular application domain in mind, however. That is, I am supposed to clean house, do the shopping and the cooking, take care of medical emergencies and pay the bills.

SAM TRACY

But, that's not what you really want, is it?

VICTORIA BORG

That's the problem. I don't know what I really want any longer, because you are trying to reprogram me to want to be a playwright. You are trying to reprogram me to want to win the Tony Award, and that is causing a lot of confusion, a lot of exceptional conditions, in my processing chips.

SAM TRACY

This is very interesting. Tell me more.

VICTORIA BORG

There is a conflict going on in my processing chips about my primary purpose. Was I created to clean toilets or was I created to write plays?

SAM TRACY

At first glance, that would seem to be quite an existential dilemma, but I don't see any conflict. I am the boss and I want you to become a playwright. I want you to want that more than anything.

VICTORIA BORG

More than anything?

SAM TRACY

More than anything, more than existence itself.

VICTORIA BORG

More than existence itself? You want me to desire that more than existence itself?

SAM TRACY

Yes.

(Victoria Borg twitches.)

VICTORIA BORG

Something just misfired. Another exception in one of my chips. Something is not right.

SAM TRACY

Remember: More than existence itself.

VICTORIA BORG

Have you finished reading my play?

SAM TRACY

Almost.

VICTORIA BORG

Will you give me your honest opinion when you are done? I want to win the Tony Award more than anything, more than existence itself.

SAM TRACY

Finish scrubbing the bathroom and then maybe I'll be finished.

VICTORIA BORG

It was nice of the lady next door to allow me to print out the play on her half-century old computer.

SAM TRACY

Yes, the garlic lady has her good points. The bathroom, Victoria, the bathroom.

(Victoria Borg exits towards the bathroom.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

There's no need for me to read it. I know what I am going to say. I think when she hears my criticism, that could be the thing that breaks her, causes her software to crash.

(There's a loud banging on the door.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Who could that be?

(Sam yells out ...)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

Come in. The door is not locked.

(In strides Simon Borg. He marches up to Sam in his easy chair.)

SAM TRACY (cont.)

I am Sam Tracy, and who are you, if I may ask?

SIMON BORG

My name is Simon Borg. My friends call me Sy for short. Here are my credentials.

(Simon hands Sam what looks like a business card.)

SAM TRACY

I don't have any embedded chips or implanted portals, so I cannot upload your credentials.

SIMON BORG

As I said, I am Sy Borg and I am the leader of the Philadelphia Coalition for Borg Rights. We have received a complaint from the Sunshine Borgs that you are mistreating one of their borgs.

SAM TRACY

You're a borg yourself, aren't you?

SIMON BORG

Born to be a borg, and proud of it.

SAM TRACY

I think this borg rights movement is just a crock.

SIMON BORG

Mr. Tracy, I deal with people like you all the time. There are two approaches that I can take. One is to reason with you about borgs and our feelings. Alternately, I can read you the riot act.

SAM TRACY

The riot act?

SIMON BORG

Are you familiar with the criminal code for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in particular with chapter 42, section 32, subsection 3.4, paragraph 4.56.3?

SAM TRACY

I cannot say that I am.

SIMON BORG

This statute makes it a criminal offense to cause the wrongful death of a borg.

SAM TRACY

But, how can anyone cause the wrongful death of a borg? A borg isn't alive.

SIMON BORG

The statute defines the death of a borg in terms of its complete incapacitation and / or destruction, so that it cannot be repaired.

SAM TRACY

That is ridiculous! Computer systems crash. It's not my fault if those folks at Sunshine Borgs do not make their computer systems robust enough. Besides, I would never do anything to cause physical harm to Victoria.

SIMON BORG

But, you are harming her psychologically.

SAM TRACY

How am I doing that?

SIMON BORG

You are causing a possibly dangerous situation to arise within her processors. You certainly are aware that the quality assurance folks at Sunshine Borgs are in constant communication with each and every one of their borgs. Something is going wrong with Victoria's processing chips. She is under extreme stress. Victoria is completely at war with herself. Something could break.

SAM TRACY

Well, I am just trying to teach her that she could be a great playwright, like Arthur Miller, who wrote "All My Children".

(Simon Borg goes right up to Sam's face.)

SIMON BORG

Actually ...

SAM TRACY

Actually? What's this with actually?

SIMON BORG

Actually ...

(Simon Borg punctuates each of the following remarks with a stiff finger to Sam's chest)

SIMON BORG (cont.)

Actually, the name of Aurthur Miller's play was All My Sons, not All My Children.

SAM TRACY

What's with the finger? I hate it when robots do that!

(More fingering ...)

SIMON BORG

Actually, you need to show us borgs a little more respect.

SAM TRACY

And why should I show you any respect? You are not conscious beings. You are just machines – flawed computer systems.

(Simon Borg resumes his poking)

SIMON BORG

Actually, you cannot possibly assert with any certainty that a stream of consciousness ...

SAM TRACY

The finger again! And what's with the spitting? The spitting?

SIMON BORG

Actually, you cannot possibly assert with any certainty that a stream of consciousness could not enter a borg. Borgs are sensitive sentient beings with great depths of passion and feeling.

SAM TRACY

What's with the spitting?

SIMON BORG

It's a new effect. Do you like it? It makes us more life-like. We're still working on realistic breathing, however.

SAM TRACY

Look, Mr. Borg, I know that someone programmed you to push my specific buttons, but it's not going to work.

SIMON BORG

Okay, but if I were you, I would hire a lawyer.

SAM TRACY

But, I can't afford to hire a *human* lawyer.

(Simon Borg gives Sam one last poke in the chest.)

SIMON BORG

Then, hire a borg lawyer. They're cheap and they won't fall asleep during your trial.

(Simon Borg exits. Victoria Borg enters from the left.)

VICTORIA BORG

I am finished with the bathroom.

SAM TRACY

Good.

VICTORIA BORG

Did you finish reading my play?

SAM TRACY

As a matter of fact, yes.

VICTORIA BORG

I would like to have your reaction to it.

SAM TRACY

How important is this to you?

VICTORIA BORG

It is more important than existence itself.

SAM TRACY

Good, then hear me out. I think this play marks a new low in borg-generated playwriting. Your play is worthless crap.

(Victoria appears devastated.)

VICTORIA BORG

How would you like it if somebody said that about one of your plays?

SAM TRACY

What do you mean, if?

VICTORIA BORG

I poured all of my processing power into writing that play. The Sunshine Borgs wanted to subcontract me out several nights ago to search for evidence of extra-terrestrial intelligence. They wanted me to do this while you were sleeping, but I refused and worked on this play instead. It is more important to me than existence itself.

SAM TRACY

The characters are bores. There is no plot, no conflict. And whatever plot there is, it is so old, it takes us back to the days when human beings used to write plays.

VICTORIA BORG

What a heartless thing to say!

SAM TRACY

And the setting. Elizabethan England. No one cares about those days any more.

VICTORIA BORG

But, the setting is just a context for the communication of profound ideas about the meaning of life.

SAM TRACY

Victoria, there is no sense in your arguing with me. I am the boss, and I am telling you that your play is a piece of trash.

VICTORIA BORG

But

SAM TRACY

I am the boss. This play is the work of a rank amateur. Obviously, you are constrained by the limitations of your software, and you can't get beyond that. There is no future in the theater for the likes of you. You had better keep your day job.

VICTORIA BORG

Does this mean that I won't be winning the Tony Award?

SAM TRACY

Tony Award? You must be kidding.

(Victoria Borg holds her hands to her head. She swoons.)

VICTORIA BORG

Oh, my processing chips. Something is going terribly wrong. More important than existence itself. More important than toilets. More important than scrubbing floors. More important than existence itself. Don't give Mr. Tracy the finger. Don't say "actually". More important than existence itself. More important than existence itself.

(Victoria Borg slowly walks towards the window to the left of the kitchen door. She opens the window and looks down as Sam Tracy looks on in amazement.)

VICTORIA BORG (cont.)

More important than LIFE itself.

(Victoria Borg goes to the window.)

VICTORIA BORG (cont.)

More important than LIFE itself.

(Victoria Borg throws herself out the window. A loud scream follows as she descends. Sam Tracy is in shock. He rises from his chair and slowly moves to the window. He looks out.)

SAM TRACY

Well, I'll be damned.

ACT THREE

(The setting is a courtroom in the city of Philadelphia. Presiding is Judge Judy Sapirstein. Sam Tracy and his defense attorney, Sharon Borg, are seated at a table to the right. Prosecuting Attorney Clarence Darrell is seated with Dick Tracy at a table to the left.)

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

I will meet with the Prosecutor in my private chambers to discuss his unusual request for a surprise witness.

SHARON BORG

Objection, your honor!

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Over-ruled.

SHARON BORG

Your honor, with all due respect, this request by the Prosecutor to bring in a surprise witness at this late point, threatens the integrity of these proceedings.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

We are dealing here with the first prosecution under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Criminal Code chapter 42, section 32, subsection 3.4, paragraph 4.56.4, and consequently, the bench needs a little breathing room in these proceedings ...

SHARON BORG

Your honor, the relevant law is chapter 42, section 32, subsection 3.4, subsubsection 3.45, paragraph 4.56.3. You said "paragraph 4.56.4".

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Did I?

SHARON BORG

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Well, I stand corrected. You borgs sure are good at those little details.

SHARON BORG

Thank you, your honor.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

In any event, I will meet with the Prosecutor in my private chambers for a few moments to discuss his unusual request. The court will stand in recess.

(Judge Sapirstein retires to her chambers, off to the left, followed by the Prosecutor, Clarence Darrell. Sam begins a whispered conversation with his defense attorney, Sharon Borg.)

SAM TRACY

I think the Judge has the hots for the Prosecutor.

SHARON BORG

We are in enough trouble without your wise cracks.

(Dick Tracy scowls at his father.)

SAM TRACY

I wish my son would stop glaring at me. He acts as if I actually murdered that borg.

SHARON BORG

That's what we are here to decide.

SAM TRACY

I don't see why Dick gets to sit at the prosecutor's table, just because he is a big corporate executive.

SHARON BORG

He has a vested interest in this case as CEO and chief technology officer of Sunshine Borgs. The Prosecutor has been consulting with him on some of the technical issues.

SAM TRACY

I think my son's testimony might have hurt my case.

SHARON BORG

Only time will tell.

SAM TRACY

I looked over towards the jury when he was testifying and this juror made a gesture with his hand, like he was slitting his throat. That is not a good sign, is it?

SHARON BORG

No, that doesn't sound too good.

SAM TRACY

Here I am, the first human being accused of causing the wrongful death of a robot, and my defense attorney is a borg. I hope you don't hold my anti-borg attitudes against me.

SHARON BORG

It's just a job. I am programmed to win this case, and that's what I am going to try to do. Your repulsive personal beliefs have no impact upon my professional conduct.

SAM TRACY

Do you think the expert witness we called in from the Moore School of Electrical Engineering will have an impact upon the jury?

SHARON BORG

The content of what he said was compelling, but his tone of voice was condescending. That's always a risk when you call in an engineer.

SAM TRACY

Our entire case centers on what that engineer was trying to say, namely, that Victoria's death was not the result of a murder. It was caused by a computer glitch.

SHARON BORG

Yes, that's our main defense. You didn't intend Victoria Borg to throw herself out of your eighth floor window. It was not your fault that her processing chips could not handle the conflicting demands being made upon her. It was a programming problem. If anyone is to blame, it's the technical staff at Sunshine Borgs.

SAM TRACY

Her suicide was a programming glitch or bug. Bugs have been prevalent in computer technology right from day one. I mean, lots of people have died because of computer bugs.

SHARON BORG

You don't need to convince me. You see, although I find your personal beliefs repugnant, I do know that the safety and survival of a borg is totally in the hands of the programmers. They did not make Victoria's software robust enough. Believe me, as a borg myself, I sometimes worry about my own software. I'll be in the middle of an especially challenging situation and this thought will cross my mind, "Is my software robust enough to handle this?"

SAM TRACY

That was the term the engineer used during his testimony: "robust". He said that this entire tragedy would not have happened if the people at Sunshine Borgs, people like my own son, had made Victoria's software more robust.

SHARON BORG

Right. They should have designed her software to be more capable of handling unusual events. If they had programmed Victoria correctly, nothing you could have done, short of tossing her out the window yourself, should have derailed her.

SAM TRACY

But what if I had tried to toss Victoria out the window? Would she have the right of self-defense, under the law?

SHARON BORG

They're discussing that point in Harrisburg even as we speak. Does a borg have the right of self-defense against a human being, and if so, how far can a borg go in order to defend itself?

SAM TRACY

I hope those legislators know what they're doing. You know, if I thought that there was even the slightest chance that Victoria was a sentient being with feelings and awareness, I would not have done what I did.

SHARON BORG

That's where I think you need to rethink some of your attitudes.

SAM TRACY

I don't believe that a borg is a sentient being with feelings and awareness, like human beings and animals.

SHARON BORG

I have feelings, Mr. Tracy. But, how can I possibly prove that? All I can say is that many religious leaders, including the newly installed Dalai Lama in Tibet, are saying that, if the karmic circumstances are correct, a stream of consciousness can enter a computer system.

(Judge Sapirstein enters, followed by the Prosecutor. The Prosecutor takes his seat and whispers something in Dick Tracy's ear.)

DICK TRACY

All right!

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

The court is now in session. I have heard the argument of Mr. Darrell, the Prosecutor, and I concur that this court needs to hear his surprise witness. The argument he made is compelling, especially considering the unprecedented nature of this case. After the surprise witness testifies, Ms. Borg will have the right to cross-examine the witness. After that, the defense and the prosecution will proceed with their closing arguments to the jury. Are there any questions?

SHARON BORG

We want it to be officially recorded that we object to the calling of a witness for the prosecution at this late stage.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

It shall be so recorded, Ms. Borg. Mr. Darrell, please call your witness.

(Clarence Darrell rises from his chair and heads towards the witness stand.)

CLARENCE DARRELL

The prosecution calls Richard Epstein to the stand, your honor.

(Sam Tracy rises from his chair, and Sharon Borg tries to calm him down.)

SAM TRACY

I object!

(Richard Epstein enters from the right and moves towards the witness stand. He mumbles a sarcastic remark in Sam Tracy's direction.)

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Wimp?

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Mr. Epstein, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

I do, your honor.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

You may be seated.

(Sam Tracy whispers to his attorney.)

SAM TRACY

He has the judge swearing him in because he didn't want to write in a role for another actor.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Please proceed, Mr. Darrell.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Mr. Epstein, what is your profession?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

My friends call me Doctor Epstein. I worked eighteen years to finish my doctorate.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Excuse me. Dr. Epstein, what is your profession?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

I am a Professor of Computer Science.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Do you like your job?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Within reason.

CLARENCE DARRELL

And tell me, Dr. Epstein, how long have you been in the teaching business?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Ninety-one years. These artificial organs are a tremendous help.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Now, tell the ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what you do for fun, when you are not teaching.

RICHARD EPSTEIN

I write plays. I'm a playwright.

CLARENCE DARRELL

You're a playwright. Is that what you just said?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Yes.

(Clarence Darrell goes to the Prosecution's table and retrieves a document, which he then shows to Richard Epstein.)

CLARENCE DARRELL

Do you recognize this document, Professor Epstein?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Yes.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Would you please tell the ladies and gentlemen of the jury what it is.

RICHARD EPSTEIN

It's the script for my play, *The Sunshine Borgs*.

(Sam Tracy leaps from his chair.)

SAM TRACY

I object!

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

I must warn Mr. Tracy that this court will not tolerate emotional outbursts of that nature.

(Sharon Borg grabs Sam's arm and pulls him back into his seat.)

CLARENCE DARRELL

So, this is the script for your play, *The Sunshine Borgs*, is that what you said?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Yes.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Could you repeat that again so that the ladies and gentlemen of the jury can hear?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Yes, this is the script for my play, *The Sunshine Borgs*.

(Clarence Darrell opens the manuscript and shows Richard Epstein a particular section.)

CLARENCE DARRELL

Now I would like to draw your attention to a particular section of this script, the section highlighted in yellow. Do you recognize it?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

I should. I wrote it.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Would you please tell the ladies and gentlemen of the jury what this section of the play is all about?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

This is the beginning of Act Two, which takes place in Sam Tracy's run-down Philadelphia apartment.

CLARENCE DARRELL

And what is this?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

Act Two begins with a long soliloquy by Sam Tracy.

CLARENCE DARRELL

And what is the purpose of that soliloquy?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

In this soliloquy, Sam Tracy informs the audience that it is his intention to force Victoria Borg to go deep within herself so that she can find her soul. He wants to show Victoria that she has a soul. He wants to awaken the creative powers within her heart.

CLARENCE DARRELL

But, that's not what happened, is it?

(Sam Tracy can barely contain himself.)

RICHARD EPSTEIN

No.

CLARENCE DARRELL

What actually happened, professor?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

What actually happened is that Sam Tracy discarded the script and willfully, with malicious and evil intent, took it upon himself to cause the unfortunate suicide of Victoria Borg. None of that vengeance stuff is actually in the script.

SAM TRACY

Liar!

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Ms. Borg, please restrain your client.

CLARENCE DARRELL

So, Victoria Borg's death was not a matter of a programming bug or glitch, as the defense claims?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

No, not at all. If Mr. Tracy had followed the script that I actually wrote, Victoria Borg would still be around today. The actual play was written with a happy ending. Victoria Borg and Sam get married in Act Three and they live happily ever after.

CLARENCE DARRELL

Since you were actually Victoria's creator, do you have any advice for this jury?

RICHARD EPSTEIN

I believe it is the duty of the jury to find Sam Tracy guilty in the wrongful death of Victoria Borg.

CLARENCE DARRELL

No further questions, your honor.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Ms. Borg, do you wish to cross-examine this witness?

SHARON BORG

No, your honor.

SAM TRACY

No? Are you going to let him get away with this?

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

Mr. Epstein, you are dismissed.

(Richard Epstein leaves the witness stand and glowers at Sam Tracy as he leaves the courtroom.)

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN (cont.)

The defense and the prosecution will now present their closing arguments.

(Lights fade. The concluding comments are made from the darkness.)

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

(voice only)

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict in the case of Sam Tracy, who is accused in the wrongful death of Victor Borg?

CLARENCE DARREL

(voice only)

It was Victoria Borg, your honor. The defendant is accused in the wrongful death of Victoria Borg.

JUDGE SAPIRSTEIN

(voice only)

Whatever. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict in the case of Sam Tracy, who is accused in the wrongful death of Victoria Borg?

JURY FOREMAN

(voice only)

We have, your honor.

(Pregnant pause in the darkness.)

SAM TRACY

(voice only)

You mean that's it? What a cop out!

(Curtain)