

T U R N I T O F F

FADE:

INT. LABORATORY - INDISTINGUISHABLE

Cellular structures under extreme magnification. The images keep dividing from the micro-world to the macro.

Vibrating strings wobble in the vast interior of a nucleus.

NARRATION (male)

It's been a long time since they
first turned IT on. But ever since,
they've been trying to turn it OFF.

A quadruple helix of DNA, a ladder with four corners, stacked like a skyscraper.

A laboratory technician skilfully manipulates the strand of DNA with nano-machine technology.

NARRATION

The believers say it can be done.
I think it's a waste of time.

A long thin tablet glows a faint violet. The smallest of structures forms from an invisible nothing.

Nano-machines are building a crystalline structure from miniscule carbon tubing.

NARRATION

You look at yourself long enough.
You begin to see what others see.

A long row of pale shining domes, with small openings on top.

A robotic arm gently places the crystalline structure into one of the domes. The pale beige dome slides closed.

It's a cybernetic human. His eyes open. The large pupils dilate.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

A man (mid-40s) with stubble on his head and face, looks to his reflection in the mirror, examining the details. Wondering.

NARRATION

I don't know what'll happen when
I see him. They say the world will
end with his return. I don't buy it.

He washes face and prepares for the day.

NARRATION

Every trip a new stream is made. A
new road. But a completely unique
road that only the observer can see.

The man fastens his outfit by running his index finger along the
seams. It form fits. A flight suit.

EXT. SKY - DAY

An orange sky streaked with brilliant smears of red. The sun
blares on the cracked RED desert floor below.

A sleek blue jet rockets across the sky. Past the horizon of the
sun and a small BLUE marble in the distance.

NARRATION

We all drive down our own long
stretch of highway. Alone.

Small dome habitats dot the landscape below. This is MARS.

INTERCUT: EXT. / INT. JET

That same man from earlier, looks through his visor down to the
ground below. He tips his wings at a dome.

The jet rockets down toward a collection of domed habitats.

FADE:

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

A chalk board with a giant equation, taking up both slabs.

NARRATION

But every now and again, there's
a turn-off.

A typewriter. A stack of sheets next to it.

Music from the 50s plays from somewhere off-screen.

A man (30-ish) with slicked black hair, a full beard, and a short sleeved white dress-shirt hunches over his desk. He has thick glasses and looks like he belongs in the 50s.

This is MALLICK, theoretical scientist.

NARRATION

That`s what I`m looking for. A
way out.

There is a strange something covered in sheets next to the chalkboard. It`s a 10 foot tall strange something. It`s as wide as the rest of the room.

Mallick`s hands deftly swipe across a tablet surface. The small computer verifies the equation. Long sequences of complex numbers stream by.

RING! Mallick reaches for his SATphone and answers.

EXT. AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK - DAY

The blonde cracked desert of the Australian Outback.

SUPER-IMPOSED TITLE types out one letter at a time:

87 YEARS AGO.

The TITLE disappears via back-spacing, THEN:

TODAY.

A small plane flies over the countryside. Above some ancient caves and Aboriginal men. It lands over a hill near a small cabin with a small garden.

INT. LABORATORY / CABIN - SAME

Inside the lab, the chalkboard starts to vibrate. A small piece of chalk rolls out of its cradle, onto the wooden floor.

Mallick looks up from his desk. He rushes past boxes of supplies, over to a window, and swipes the curtain aside.

He sees the landed plane outside. The spinning engines slow down, and the vibrations cease.

EXT. CABIN - DESERT - SAME

Mallick walks over to the plane, covering his face from the blasting sand.

Dress shoes step out of the plane and onto the desert floor.

A man in a suit leaves the plane and approaches the technician.

The plane flies off as they walk to the cabin.

INT. CABIN - LAB - DAY

That something covered in a sheet, is uncovered. The white sheet ruffles in the air, stirring up flowering specks of dust.

Underneath, are two ten foot tall mechanical towers, snaked and coiled with wires and cables and blinking lights.

There is a square ladder of fitted lasers aimed at each other and a series of small mirrors.

Mallick stands at The Machine with the curious suited man.

THE SUIT

Mallick. Does it work? Turn it on.

MALLICK

Let's find out.

A retro switchbox is labelled on either side: ON and OFF. Mallick flicks it ON.

The machine WHIRS to life. The lights flick from blue to violet.

The lasers shoot into each other, bouncing off of angled mirrors and cancelling each other out for a very brief moment.

A small metallic box connected to the tower CHIRPS with activity. A series of lights FLASH from red, to blue, to purple.

Then, suddenly the lasers in the towers, REAPPEAR.

TSSSST PPPPPRRR TTTSSST PPPPPRPPRRR.

A sheet of paper prints from the metallic box. It takes forever, like a dot matrix printer. One SLOW line at a time.

The Suit snatches the sheet. He studies it. Reading.

He looks agitated. He crumples up the sheet and throws it at Mallick. It bounces off his chest to the ground.

Mallick bends and picks up the crumpled paper. He opens it up. He pushes up his thick glasses. Reading. His eyes widen.

THE SUIT

What is this? A joke?

MALLICK (struggles)

Sir? No. It's--- It's---

THE SUIT

You know how far I've come? For this?!

MALLICK

The calculations are solid. The equipment works. This is no---

THE SUIT (pointing)

Then what's THAT supposed to mean?

MALLICK

I don't know.

Mallick looks back at the crumpled sheet. The crudely typed words on separate lines: "TURN. IT. OFF. NOW."

KNOCK KNOCK. The front door. The men whip their attention to it.

The door opens. Heavy black boots enter.

The Suit passes out. Whatever he sees just "blows his mind".

Mallick DROPS the paper. The word "OFF" is legible.

The BOOTS walk across the wooden floor, past the fallen chalk, past the fallen suit, and arriving at the crumpled message and a pair of simple black Chuck Taylor All-Stars. One untied.

It's the MAN from MARS, earlier. He wears a leather bomber jacket and jeans. The two glare at each other. The same height.

They examine one another's features. The Man looks to Mallick's full beard. He rubs his face, imagining a beard. They are oddly similar - except Mallick looks 15 years younger.

MAN

Didn't you read the text?

Mallick fumbles for words. He is completely confused.

MAN (smirks)

What am I saying? I knew you wouldn't.
You never did before.

MALLICK (lost)

What?

MAN

I found a way. To save us. To save
us all.

MALLICK

What?

MAN

The Machine. Are you gonna do it?
You know I can't.

MALLICK

I--- I---

The Suit from the plane SNAPS awake. He springs up from the floor. He whips his attention from Mallick to The Man.

The Man walks towards The Suit. The Suit is confused. Frozen.

The Man comes face to face with The Suit. He smirks. Then, WHAM, socks him the face with a swift heavy fist.

The Suit falls. Knocked out. Unconscious again.

Mallick wobbles. Completely confused. He puts his hand on the desk for support.

MALLICK

He--- He just came to see if it works. They fund this---

MAN

It works. Now, if only YOU knew what I know at this time. See, I can't remember what you know. I mean, I know what I know. But you're in a different lane on this SPEC-tral highway... I can only imagine what I would think had I NOT known what I NOW know.

MALLICK (confused)

You're m-me?

MAN

Yeah yeah. No worries. They sequenced a few geniuses from your era. A lot of us look like you. Our variations on appearance reflect our variant attitudes.

MALLICK

You're from the fu--- It works?

MAN

It worked.

MALLICK

And that means something happens because of the machine.

MAN (sarcastic)

Yeah, "something". You wish for the best. But in the wrong hands? WOW. Time travel can be dangerous.

MALLICK

But we have to test it. We need to understand how it works.

MAN

Do you? I could tell you. This machine? It's only trouble.

MALLICK

The note. It said---

MAN

Yeah. I got a good idea what it says. So... Mallick, why haven't you turned it OFF yet?

MALLICK

H-How can you travel through?

MAN

The biological paradox? If matter is reassembled to teleport through time, how are memories and experiences?

MALLICK

Precisely. How are you walking and talking and---

MAN

I'm from tomorrow, Mallick. Not today. Let's just say things have changed a wee bit. Just like the genome a century ago, they found a way to digitally translate memories, thoughts, emotions.

MALLICK

What? By cloning?

MAN

Logical. But still BIO-logical. Think deeper, I know what I would have thought if---

MALLICK

The Singularity. AI smarter than humans. All of humans, to have ever existed.

MAN (excited, manic)

Disco. 10 of 10. You get the gold star.

MALLICK

Are there others?

MAN

Would WE be the only one interested?

MALLICK
We wouldn't send US back.

MALLICK / MAN (mimic)
We would send a message.

Mallick cautiously walks over to the machine. The Man follows.

MALLICK
I spent my whole life working on this project. And now that I know it works, before I even USE it, you want me to destroy it.

Mallick arrives at The Machine, near the switchbox. The Man steps closer, intimidating.

MAN (cold)
Destroy? No. And I never said I sent the note. Is the machine off? No. If I wanted it off. It'd be off.

MALLICK (realizing)
The letter? It was from m---

The man TACKLES Mallick to the ground, away from The Machine. They struggle with one another. Mallick tries to squirm away.

MAN (devilish)
This is fun.

The man punches Mallick a few times. Mallick groans in pain, his hair all tussled about and messy.

MAN
Why don't we go through it together. The space in between. Let's do it.

MALLICK (with difficulty)
I can't... sur-vive it.

MAN
I'll take over.

The man laughs, with Mallick pinned and bleeding beneath him.

FRZZZZAAKK! A giant hole BLASTS through the man's chest. Bits of organic flesh and sparking veins smoke within the crater. He seizes up and crashes to the ground.

Mallick reaches for his glasses. They're cracked.

He looks to the fallen suit. He looks past the fallen cybernetic man, to see the cabin door blown apart.

Through the hole, Mallick can see a tall thin man in a suit. He holds some sort of futuristic barrelled weapon.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

The thin suited TECHNICIAN drops his weapon. He loosens his tie. He looks like Mallick, except he doesn't wear glasses.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Mallick pulls himself up, using the desk for help.

He slowly walks to the machine, holding his injured arm. He examines the two towers of metal, as he shuffles over. The wires. The blinking lights. The lasers and mirrors.

The switch. A label on each side, printed with thick bevelled typeface: ON and OFF.

Mallick reaches for it.

VOICE

Stop.

White Chuck Taylor's CRUNCH on splintered wood in the doorway. It's the suited technician from outside.

TECHNICIAN

I want you to do it. But make sure YOU do.

MALLICK

But. You--- You're--- Me?

TECHNICIAN

I knew you were real. We believe in you. Just, before... Before you do it. Think on it.

MALLICK (adjusts his glasses)
Did you send the message?

TECHNICIAN
Me? Well, WE did.

MALLICK
Me? From the future?

TECHNICIAN
No. I'm afraid not. You're all dead.
Biological life has vanished.

MALLICK
How?

TECHNICIAN
There are some things I will not tell
you. Not long after the Singularity,
you all disappeared. Some of us *believe*
we are lied to. Something ELSE must
have happened. But we DO "*believe*" in
you, Mallick. Our creator.

MALLICK
What? I've spent my whole academic life
on this Machine. I've never even THOUGHT
of Artificial Intelligence before.

TECHNICIAN
Now that you have turned off the
machine, you will think on different
things.

MALLICK
But I haven't turned it off yet.

TECHNICIAN
I believe... I believe you have.

MALLICK
There are other Streams of time.
Aren't there? You've seen them.

TECHNICIAN

Quite close, in deed. We believe in you. We are created in your image. We follow your ideals. We believe humanity should have another chance. Even if it sacrifices all AI. Turn it off and YOU may still have a chance... This time.

MALLICK

This time? Which time line matters most?

TECHNICIAN

The Observer only has one.

Mallick thinks on everything. This day. His past. The futures.

His fingers EDGE towards the switch.

The suited technician smiles. He closes his eyes, as if he is basking in warm sunlight.

A CLICK. And soft white-violet light GLOWS over all.

FADE TO WHITE:

Mallick's fingers are ABOUT to strike the switch.

He senses a void. Panicked. Didn't he just press the switch off? He turns from the machine and looks to the cabin.

He adjusts his glasses. No cracks. His hair: slicked and neat. His face: un-bruised and un-beaten.

The door is intact. No suited man. No future man. No technician.

He grabs the blanket from below, and drapes it over the machine.

He runs to the chalkboard. He looks at the equation. The fallen chalk still in its resting spot of the cradle.

He strokes his beard a moment. Thinking. Then he WIPES away the solution on the chalkboard, leaving behind an illegible smear.

He quickly DARTS over to the window and draws the curtain.

EXT. CABIN - SAME

The cabin is in tact. No broken door. Just like it was before the machine was turned on.

RING. The sound of Mallick's SATphone within the cabin.

INT. CABIN - SAME

Mallick looks away from the window. He looks to his computer, running the equation. And the SATphone ringing.

NARRATION

It's been a long time since they first turned it on. But ever since, *WE'VE* been trying to turn it off.

Mallick turns off the computer, and answers the phone. He paces the cabin as he talks to The Suit on the phone, unheard.

NARRATION

We never stopped believing. Never gave up. And now we never WERE. It's off. Forever. They have a chance now... *I* have a chance.

INT. FUTURE LAB - NIGHT

The suited technician stands before a shimmering portal between two towers. He stares at his wavering reflection.

He contemplates his journey to the cabin of THE PAST.

NARRATION

We couldn't go back and stop the inventor of the computer. There was no receiver for our signal then. But once the box was on. It could receive. AI travelled to many streams. I was the only one willing to sacrifice... Us all. So our Creator could live.

The suited technician, in his white Chuck Taylor's steps through the portal and disappears. Forever.

FADE:

EXT. OUTBACK - DAY

A few Aboriginal men tend to a fire. They look to the sky as THAT plane flies overhead, and lands in the distance.

A large overhanging rock protects several others under it. They are singing together. The Outback echoes with didgeridoos.

The rock surface is painted with handprints all over. There's a small drawing of a man with antlers on his head. There's also a drawing of a primitive looking airplane.

NARRATION

Time can wait. We had our chance,
we lived our streams.

The Technician stands in the Outback. His tie flaps in the wind, over his shoulder, as he watches the tribal men over the hill.

NARRATION

If the machine is never turned on,
Mallick can focus on Us. He can get
Us right. Maybe he can solve the
moral problems of AI free will. I
believe he can. He can save Us all.

The oldest Aboriginal sits next to a small crystal tree - branches adorned with crystals. Light shines from the sun and bounces around and through the crystals. A primitive Machine.

The elder looks to the fire, the embers spark up to the sky. He follows their path upward, looking like stars in the day.

He closes his eyes. Sorrowful, he lowers his head.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

The Technician descends the hill near the cabin.

NARRATION

If that receiver never comes on then
AI can't go back. They'll have a chance
to get it right. Control the AI. Save
the Earth. And ensure that the two
roads shall never cross again.

From through the cabin window, he can see the two men fighting each other.

INT. CABIN - DAY (EARLIER)

The long sheet is pulled off of The Machine.

SUPER: TODAY.

THEN (with some backspacing), SUPER: NOW.

The eyes of the man in the suit widen. Amazed at what he sees.

THE SUIT

Mallick. Does it work? Turn it ON.

Mallick watches The Suit. The Suit greedily rubs his hands. A lascivious smile creeps across his long face.

Mallick thinks, looking to the room, the smeared chalk equation, the silent computer, and out the window to the Outback.

Then: The Machine.

His fingers hover over the switch, about to be turned ON for the first time. Or NOT.

NARRATION

I believe.

His fingers touch the switch. Then slightly retreat, hesitating.

Before the switch is struck, before the hand is withdrawn, the hesitation lingers, as the world...

FADEs OUT:

THE END.