Software in Hollywood

(1990 - 2001)

by Rudy Rucker

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29532 Words

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Journal Notes

1990 - 1997. Prehistory and Scripts #1, #2, #3.

I didn't take notes during the early stages of this, so I don't remember precisely how it all went.

I believe it started with a phone-call from a guy named Marc Lafia. He wanted to make a movie of my novel *Software*. Of course I thought this was a good idea. And then he said he was just a screenwriter, not a producer and he didn't have any money. I let him talk to my literary agent Susan Protter and eventually she got him to come up with some small sum, maybe two or five thousand dollars. He got the money from, I think, the producers Jeff Most and Ed Pressman of New Line Pictures.

In order to work out the deal, Susan hired on a Hollywood guy Steve Freedman as a subagent. For the longest time, Susan would say that she never could figure out exactly how it was she picked Freedman. At first she claimed she had his card floating around or something and mixed him up with somebody she actually knew. Later she admitted that he'd given her a cold call to offer his services and she'd accepted. The first option was signed on November 1, 1990, with a term of three years.

Eventually Lafia showed up at my house with his girlfriend. We walked up into the woods and sat around and talked. He was a curly-haired bearded guy, very enthusiastic. I remember him mentioning being glad that I was sober for the meeting, he'd thought I might be like Sta-Hi. "So compulsive." It had never crossed my mind before that Sta-Hi was compulsive, but of course Lafia was right. I was still in Virginia mode then, and not really Californianized at all.

Lafia came up with a script that I liked a lot, Script #1, as all he did was to type in all the dialog from the novel and make it into scenes. But the producers didn't like it. So then they got my fellow cyberpunk John Shirley to do a fresh Script #2.

The main thing I remember about John's script was that in the first scene he had Sta-Hi decide to get clean and sober. As I was still drinking and smoking pot, this annoyed me. But Most and Pressman didn't like John's script either, I seem to recall

John saying they thought it was too literary.

About this time the VR movie *Lawnmower Man* came out directed by Brett Leonard. And the buzz was that Brett was going to shoot *Software* next. The option got renewed. Brett wrote a new script, Script #3, but nobody would show this one to me, in fact I still haven't seen it. He was going to change the title to *The Immortals*, though around then a book or movie with that same name came out, I think it was about Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller. And then Brett's project died out. This would bring us up to maybe 1992.

The initial option was for three years. And even though Brett's thing was dead, Newline kept rolling the option over every year. It was amended Sept 23, 1993, Oct 7, 1994, Oct 31, 1995, Oct 31, 1996. And then Phoenix Pictures got involved and things heated up in the summer and fall of 1997.

August 22, 1997. Billups calls about the movie.

Well, I've been on vacation from Frank Shook since July 24. We went to Hawaii, Sylvia and me. And then when I got back I worked on fixing the downstairs bathroom for awhile and then I worked on getting the *Joy Of Hacking* notes ready for my CS 160: Software Engineering course.

I'm still sober! Lord, lord. I'm getting this deep calm feeling a lot of days.

Big excitement today as Scott Billups called again about his plan to direct the movie of my book *Software*. "Everyone's signed off on it except this one guy Steve Freedman," says Billups. "Well, yeah," I say. "He's my agent!"

Billups told me a lot of names. Dennis Hopper and Ann Margret for Cobb and Annie Cushing (Pop and Priscilla). Marlon Brando for the Mel Nast version of Cobb in Marineland at the end. The want to use a young woman (!) named Faruza Balk for Sta-Hi. Sid Mead who was the art designer for Blade Runner and Tron is signed to design Software. A guy named Wilson is writing the screenplay, he wrote *The Addams Family* and *Beetlejuice*. The producer is Mike Medavoy at Phoenix Pictures, which is backed by SONY.

Given that Marc Lafia's script was #1, John Shirley's was #2, and Brett Leonard's was Script #3, this would make Wilson's script be #4.

Meanwhile Freedman is trying to get me as good a deal as possible. Not only do they want options for Wetware and Freeware, they want the rights to the CHARACTERS. In case someone wants to make a series of like Cobb and Sta-Hi movies or TV shows. Toy merchandising a big factor as well, they're adding an extra robot called Gremmie.

Tonight I rented THE CRAFT, a teen witch movie with Faruza Balk in it, she has a really big mouth, une *jolie laide*. She fixes your attention. I thought I might object to it being a woman for Stahn, but I kind of like the idea. Maybe I would be jealous of any *guy* who got to do it. I'd thought I might object to this big change, but I don't think I do.

Thank god I'm clean and sober for this. I'd be a basket case otherwise. Stoned and gloating, burning it out, burning out the joy of it and ending up suicidal and strung once again, feeding my good fortune to the Imp Of The Perverse. And it's good that I'm feeling less inclined to try and control.

I always said that when I got my movie I didn't want to have a heart attack over it like Phil Dick did, if indeed that's what did give him his heart attack, it's just my perhaps unkind speculation that it was the making of *Bladerunner* that did him in --- he died a few months before it came out. I think I saw it in NYC when I went up there to get the Phil Dick award for *Software* in 1982, lo these fifteen years gone. Or maybe I saw it right before I went up. I remember being really surprised how very unlike his book *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep* the movie was. I didn't actually like the film that much at first, I thought it was too violent, and I think the ending was different from Phil's. But Phil's friend Ray Faraday said Phil had liked the new ending. So maybe he liked the movie and his heart attack had nothing to do with it. I always said I'd be "the new Phil Dick" someday and now maybe it is finally happening.

The one thing I do hope is that I can get Billups to use cellular automata in the movie. I'm going to send Billups that old instructional film I made about CAs.

Sylvia is more upset over them using a woman for Sta-Hi than I am, not that it's certain that's really what's going to come down. Maybe she's jealous, the way I might be of a young actor, maybe she's worried I'll be too attracted to what's her name, to Faruza Balk. I *am* attracted to her! Sta-Hi as a sexy girl! What a trip.

"Let go, let God" is my watchword for this wonderful but difficult passage ahead.

If I get some really nice dough I could pay off some of the house mortgage. That's the main thing I think of using the money for, for retiring some of that $400K debt. Then I could maybe refinance and have a much lower payment. The payment has to be beaten way down over the next ten years so we won't need so much income when we retire. Even if we sell this house and move to a condo in San Francisco, the condo would probably cost nearly as much as this house, so in any case we'd need to have beaten the payments down. Sylvia is calling me "the goose that laid the golden egg." She says she got that from Aline Kominsky talking about Crumb, I think Aline did a drawing of herself carrying Crumb/Goose under her arm.

Honk!

Quote from The Hollywood Reporter

Phoenix Pics loads 'Software'

Edward R. Pressman will produce and Scott Billups will direct Phoenix Pictures' "Software,' a futuristic story about a robotic war on the moon based on a Rudy Rucker novel.

The cyberpunk story centers on a 21st-century slacker who takes on a generation of super-robots created by his best friend and surrogate father.

Larry Wilson is scripting the project, with Jeff Most and Chris Hanley producing and Stuart Volkow co-producing.

The picture marks the directorial debut of Billups, who trained as a cinematographer under Oscar winner James Wong Howe and has made many TV commercials and music videos. Billups also cofounded the American Film Institute's media lab and created animatics for "Jurassic Park."

"It's one of the most substantial books in science fiction," Billups said. "And (unlike some other sci-fi projects), this is being made by a guy who has enormous respect for Rudy Rucker.

"Anybody who's a science-fiction fan will love this because both (he and Wilson) are almost at the stage of fanaticism about (Rucker) and his characters."

Wilson's credits include "Beetlejuice," "The Addams Family" and "Tales From the Crypt."

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In Hollywood with Rudy Jr., March 25, 1998

Touring the *Wild Wild West* sets on the Sony lot. A 3-story brothel being built out of wood inside an enormous thick-walled building that is a sound (proofed) stage. The guy giving us the tour says, "We wish they'd stock it and leave it."

We see the set of a TV sitcom pilot being filmed. Two women with perms and ballpoint pens and clipboards sit on high stools to one side. They are the script supervisor and the continuity supervisor. Script supervisor records any change between the script and what people do or say. The continuity supervisor watches exactly where people put things down, like coffee cups or sweaters, so that the continuity can be picked up again later. They struck me as really deeply symbolic, like the *Parcae* [The Fates in Greek myth].

Speaking of a video game, assistant producer Stuart Volkow mentions "twitch factor".

My director Scott Billups talked about heli-skiing. He showed us a video of Van Halen with an effect he called "point in time". He shoots a fleeting event (a water balloon bursting, in this case) from every angle at once with a battery of still cameras, then somehow sews the images together to give an effect of a camera panning all around this event in frozen time. So cool.

Rudy and I saw an art show at LACMA of a woman called Yayoi Kusama. Tens of thousands of stuffed polka dot cloth penises.

Phoenix pictures, we meet the studio head Mike Medavoy and the president Artie. Artie very Jewish and wise, the wisdom of the desert.

In the street after dinner with producer Jeff Most and Chris Hanley, my agent Steve Freedman is standing there in his shirtsleeves, his arms up high to the heavens. "It's happening, Rudy! Enjoy!"

June 5, 1998. Script #4 by Larry Wilson script flops.

Called Scott Billups. The company won't "bond" Larry Wilson's script because they don't think the script can be shot for the $20M budget. Larry's been paid, is raising his new baby, and is dropping off the project now. So the studio is looking for a new script writer. Scott said, "Jeff Most has these two guys..." Scott's normally booming

voice trailed off to nothing. Scott now has no control over who writes the script. The studio wants more chase scenes. They actually say that, "we want more chase scenes." That's like a book editor saying "I want worse writing" or "I want a chapter of boring filler." There is a guy named Adam Rifkin who Scott hopes they can use. "He could go off and do something in a month. It might not be like the book at all."

June 24, 1998. The New Script Writers.

Heard from Steve Friedman they found two new writers, Sokolow and Cohen. Credits include Toy Story, Money Talks, Tree. Supposed to do the script in 3 weeks. They have, get this, strict instructions NOT to read the book. To work only from the existing script. Thus begins the game of "Telephone." Turn "the One Mind" into "doody mine". Called Scott Billups, who is freaking out. "The guys aren't even going to read your book. It's fucked." Sokolow is the nephew of a NYC woman Sokolow who is a producer. Stuart Volkow is more philosophical. "Mr. Medavoy hated the Larry Wilson script. Hated it. Too long, too convoluted, too many effects scenes, too expensive. But Mr. Medavoy really wants to make the movie. They've spent a LOT of money on this already, we shot a minute with effects and live actors to see how it looks and what it costs. They gave a LOT of money to these new screenwriters. It's supposed to be a secret who they are because formally they're bound to another project and they're doing this in a moonlighting kind of way. No new input. They are not allowed to look at your book. We tried that and it didn't work. They're supposed to work only with the script and the notes." "Are the notes I sent you guys in there?" Long pause. "I think so. Yeah, sure they are." Meaning "No." I can only accept that I am powerless. Any movie is better than no movie, because with *any* movie I get (a) money and (b) publicity for my books.

July 20, 1998. Scripts #5 and #6

I called Stuart Volkow about the movie. He's looking at the new script (#5) by the new guys, and there is an alternate new script coming in from Larry Wilson on the 28th (call it #6). He says the script #5 is very different. "They fucked with the names, I don't know why they did it." Either Cobb or Sta-Hi is now called "Buck". They added a

ticking clock, I can't believe it, the down-ticking digital clock thing, sigh. "If we have two scripts that doubles our chances. We might go with one or the other or combine them."

July 22, 1998. Script #5, Cohen and Sokolow

Stuart Volkow sent me Script #5 by Joel Cohen and Alec Sokolow. I'd been anxious, but I read it and it's quite good, better than Wilson's which was kind of tangled. I called Scott Billups.

He'd been very high on the Wilson script before, but now he's totally switched allegiances to the new script. "I'm a happy guy." Of the Wilson script he now says, "I can't believe he gave me such drivel." He's optimistic and excited again. He says, "Wreck Hess likes it." Rick Hess is the head of production at Phoenix Pictures.

August 5, 1998. Cohen & Sokolow out, Wilson back.

Steve Freedman called me to say Jeff Most called him to say, "Don't read the Sokolow draft, we got a surprise draft from Larry Wilson and it's great. Everybody loves it: me, Scott, and the Phoenix group [meaning Medavoy]." They've ordered story-boards and effects budget on the movie. Steve says, "Jeff Most has no reason to call me except that he was happy. This is a good sign. He must have heard from Medavoy. They can see the movie." I ask "Is the decision on the script up to Most — or to Pressman?" Freedman says, "At the end of the day, it's Medavoy." I say, "So that $500K they gave Sokolow and Cohen is just down the tubes?" Steve goes, "It makes them more pregnant." Then he talks about what happens when the option runs out on Oct 31st. "When Oct 31st rolls along, they may just buy it. They won't be ready to shoot yet, and they may try and offer us $5K to keep the option alive, but we'll say, 'No, you're pregnant, you have to buy it'. You'll get $250K." I ask what "story-boards and effects budget" means. Cartoons of each scene by an artist. Figure out the cost of the special effects per scene. They're meeting tomorrow, Phoenix and the *Software* group, to go over the script. "We'll see how they feel coming out of the meeting. They'll talk about notes for another pass. Maybe soon start thinking about drawing up lists to think about the cast."

Stuart Volkow called. Says they like Wilson's better than C&S and everyone likes it a lot better. They want to have him continue. He described the new plot to me, and it seemed even more convoluted than before.

On Aug 7, I called Scott Billups to see how the meeting went. He says as soon as Medavoy read the new script he called him to say "I just closed it and I love it." He says "Larry hit one out of the park." He was tired out from arguing with all the producers. "Film-school people" he called them, "Prissy little development people." He says they're talking about a budget of $60 Million and he feels that will make the movie a "piece of shit" because the more money there is, the more producers there are and "everyone wants to see their little thing on screen." He wants to keep the budget down to $20 Million, "but they don't believe I can do it." He says "I'm gonna stay out of it. I'm saying you guys put the package together and I'll shoot it. There's three things now: the budge, the storyboarding and the casting. Once they have the budget and the story board in place they send it out for casting. I'm going to stay out of the casting. If there's something egregious I can change it, but I can't fight over every little thing, you know what I mean." He mentioned again that he has a three picture deal, says he can't wait to do *Freeware*.

August 13, 1998. Option renewal or purchase?

The option runs out Oct 31, and they've offered $10K to extend it for three months. Steve feels we should go say you have to purchase for $250K. Then either they do that or maybe they come back with a better option extension offer of like $50K for 6 months, with $20K applicable to the purchase price. I like this idea. He warns that "your friend Scott Billups will be calling you up saying, 'Come on, Rudy, you're holding the deal up.'" And I remember how Scott can ask and say, "He'll say, 'The movie's going down the tubes if you hang us up, Rudy, I've got another project I want to do, I'm going to have to walk off this.'" And there's this kind of anxious silence from Freedman and he says, "You gotta be ready for it." I call Susan, and she agrees with this strategy, in fact she claims it's her idea. She does point out that they are offering one thing, and extension, and we're asking for something else, a purchase, and they may say, "no, we won't do it." But if they really want to make the movie why not purchase it. I say to

Susan, "Tsimmis." She says "That means carrot." I say "I thought it mean trouble." She says no, "It means commotion. Like a stew. You're not just putting in the carrots, you're putting in all kinds of things." She says maybe we can call some of the $50K option a consulting fee so it's definitely not applicable to the purchase price.

August 19, 1998. Final Wilson script soon.

Stuart Volkow called. He was hinting around about the renewal. Was saying he would "argue for just another month if offers are out to cast and money to studios for CG characters". I wasn't clear what he meant. "Argue for who?" "That we should get a one month extension." I said I'd rather let my agents work it out, as that's what I pay them for. I did say we thought it would be nice if they just bought it now. He didn't say anything to that, did observe it would be a big job to renegotiate all the clauses if we got a whole new option. He wanted to know if the option lapses do the rights go back to me or back to Pressman. IMPORTANT QUESTION. I told him I thought to me, he said that's good.

He also said they put out an offer to Gail Ann Hurt to be the line producer, she's thinking about it. Said the budget is ratcheting up a notch, that the action sequences are adding cost, he thought now it's in the $25 M range. Said they had some artists doing models of the crater, the Dex penthouse, some bullet train tracks.

He said their lawyer Lindsay is talking to Steve.

He said that they should have the final script before I leave August 28. He said if the script is approved then the debate about extension vs. purchase could become moot as presumably they'd purchase.

I said I'm glad they keep sending me the scripts, that I enjoy working on them. He said it was good to have my input. We talked a little about the ideas I had for improving the current ending, I presented the ideas again in a clear form.

August 26, 1998. Option renewed, Talked to Billups

News from Susan about the *Software* movie option extension. They won't buy the book from me now because if they do, that would trigger them having to pay Ed Pressman a large amount (couple of $ Mill?) in preproduction costs. They had a meeting

with Mike Medavoy of Phoenix and Pressman, trying to get Pressman to back off a little, but he wouldn't he said, "That's the way it is," Scott says, "Just like Walter Cronkite."

So we're giving them a four month extension for $25K, with half counting against the purchase price and half not. We get the extension money payable right now, instead of on Oct 31, just in case they change their minds. So we have to sign some papers. Susan is uptight because I'll be out of the country. She'll try and fax the paper to my English agent Stella Wilkins, whom I'll see 9/9.

I called Scott Billups to tell him about the extension, he hadn't heard this yet, so for once I was giving some news to someone in Hollywood. He said Larry Wilson is in Germany, working on the new script, incommunicado. Said they had a meeting with four suits and the suits gave him four "notes" for changes to the script. One note per suit. The notes were (1) make Cobb warmer, (2) give Sta-Hi more to do at the end, (3) give DEX more of a presence on the Earth, and Scott couldn't remember the fourth one.

Scott said they studio had been trying to get Gail Ann Hurt to be the line producer, to actually make it. She asked around to find a different director. Half of the ones she asked said, "You can't make this movie for $25 million," and the others said, "Hey, isn't Scott Billups supposed to be doing this?" I said "it would be a shame for them to screw you out of this after all the energy you've put into it." Scott says, "Hey, that's Hollywood. That's the way it is down here. That's why I don't live here."

Mike Medavoy has spent over a million on SOFTWARE now. I said to Scott, that Steve says, "That makes him pregnant." Scott says, "he's right, and that's exactly how we want Mike to be." Scott also said to say Hi to Rudy, Jr. He also mentioned his favorite hotel in Paris is a "gentleman's club" men only, the St. James Club, an old estate off Ave. Victor Hugo. Women can't stay, though there are "a lot of them leaving in the morning, if you get what I mean." Guys just happen to bring women back their rooms, I guess, rich playboys that they are. Scott thought it was cool. "Always princes staying there to pick up the tab for expensive meals, happy to hang with a Yank movie guy."

November 5,1998. Billups says Phoenix is Dying.

Volkow emails me that Ed Pressman and Jeff Most of New Line like the new Wilson script, which I haven't seen, script #6. But Mike Medavoy at Phoenix doesn't

like it. He has cold feet about the movie.

I called Billups who think Medavoy's Phoenix is going to go under. "He's had five flops in a row. He did 'Urban Legends' and 'Apt Pupil', which bombed. He listens to the people around him and they don't know what they're talking about. They hype this junk to him and they don't get *Software*, don't get the humor, don't get the science-fiction. We're trying to take it elsewhere. Trying to get it out of Phoenix. Ed Pressman wants to get it back. If it lingers with the company, they'll pull it under when they go down. Then we'll never be able to make it, with all the entanglements. Meanwhile I'm working on a new project, *City* by Clifford Simak. *Software*'s ready to go whenever they clear it. We've done the backgrounds, we have the robots, we've done an enormous amount of preproduction."

So, to sum up, the preproduction is done, they have a decent script, but it's entangled with Phoenix who may no longer have the will to proceed. The only hope may be that the original producers, New Line, can get *Software* back from Phoenix and find a different studio to do it. We'll see. I didn't really get paid yet, and have been spending as if I had...

I also asked Steve Freedman what he thought of Billups's negative take on Phoenix. Freedman says I shouldn't listen, that Billups is on his own trip. Maybe Billups is worried Phoenix isn't going to use him.

January 1, 1999. Cohen & Sokolow back. Medavoy wants to talk.

In the evening Stuart unexpectedly phoned me. "I'd feared the worst by now," I said, meaning I thought the deal was dead. But no, they have a new script by Sokolow and Cohen, it's stripped down, a basic action movie. Only they've stripped it so much that the techno hipness is gone. Cohen and Sokolow don't know anything about that stuff. (I seem to recall that in their first script they had Dex's soul stored on a *floppy disk*.) Also the Dex Mind character is muddled, who or what he is, what his motives are. Also the ending is a mess. And now, Stuart says, this is the moment for me to have an influence. "Mike Medavoy wants to meet with you. He wants to reach out. Face to face." Next Thursday. I'll fly down. Will I get money for helping? "That's a possibility. We could pay you to spend some time with Cohen and Sokolow, a few days,

a week — to sit with them and help them work on the script." He says Medavoy likes the big themes of the book, "Immortality, free will, what is the soul," also he likes the diversity of the kinds of robots. They need more story and richer character.

I wonder how much money they might offer me to do this? In a way, I would do it for very little if it would make the movie come out — because then I'd get paid me $200K or so. But on the other hand, Sokolow and Cohen supposedly got $500K for the draft that I'm now going to be helping with, so maybe I should get a lot for helping. $20K would be nice. I'll ask John Shirley. I guess I should talk it over with my Hollywood rep Steve Freedman as well. Am I supposed to give my literary agents a cut of "consulting" money? Probably. They might get me more.

January 4, 1999. Billups

Brad Fisher, assistant to Mike Medavoy called. They want me to come down to meet at 2 on Thursday. They're in Culver City, on Washington Blvd. I asked if Scott Billups is still involved and they said yeah, so I called Billups up.

Billups was kind of sour about the thing. "They just don't get it," he keeps saying. "They don't get the genre." He doesn't like what Sokolow and Cohen have done with the script. Sokolow is the son or nephew of one of Medavoy's biggest backers, back in NYC. They just got another quarter million to do the new script. "Make sure they pay you," Billups says. "How much?" "$50,000 for a week." So that's what I'll shoot for.

Billups was kind of putting Medavoy down. "He's surrounded by ass-kissing sycophant yes-men. I feel sorry for the guy. He's had 8 flops in a row. You're only allowed 6 and he's had 8. Ordinarily he'd be fired, but he's the head of the studio. But the people turning the taps are asking questions. *The Thin Red Line* is boring. Nobody's going to see it. He's distracted. He's got a brand-new trophy wife and she's running his ass off." "Is she pretty?" "Oh Rudy. Think what a hundred million can get you." "Is she blonde? Great body? Big lips?" "Whatever she didn't have, Mike bought her."

January 8, 1999. Meeting at Phoenix. I may write a script.

Yesterday I flew down to Phoenix in Culver City for the day. Culver City is one town further in from the ocean near Venice, a node in the LA megalopolis. The Phoenix

offices are in a tiny 3-story modern brick building across the street from the enormous SONY lot. I'd been invited for a meeting with studio head Mike Medavoy to talk about the script. Stuart Volkow had called me about the meeting and then Mike's secretary had called. He mailed me Cohen and Sokolow's script of 12/11/98 the day before and I had typed up a lot of comments on it.

I got there at 1, the meeting was at 2. I put the CAPOW.SCR screensaver on one of the Phoenix himbo (aspiring actor) guys acting as Medavoy's secretaries, then Stuart Volkow showed up and we had a coffee. Turns out Stuart is, not to put too fine a point on it, unemployed. And I'd been thinking of him as my influential producer. But he says he has a contract (I forgot to ask with who?) to co-produce *Software*. He and Jeff Most would be co-producers and Ed Pressman would be Executive Producer. But he's not even employed by Phoenix. Just acting as a go-between to stay involved.

When I excitedly told John Shirley about my trip, he was all, "Did they wipe off their hands?" Speaking of the producers. "What do you mean?" I asked. "After they finished jerking you off." Meaning that there was no reason to set much store in what they say. "Gibson consulted for six weeks on *Aliens 3*," says John, "And the only thing of his they used was an idea for a tattoo that looked like a barcode."

Stuart and I went to strip club after the meeting, Sylvia couldn't believe it, me in a strip club with my producer. "What a *sleaze-bag*!" Funny, as actually Stuart is like an accountant and, if the truth be told, it was my idea to go see the strippers.

Medavoy said he didn't trust Scott Billups's judgment anymore after the Wilson scripts, and that he wasn't going to be the director, just the special effects guy. Billups is apparently willing to go along with this, provided he likes the script they end up with. The new director is supposed to be Mark Goldblatt, who hasn't directed anything before, but is an old hand in Hollywood as, I think, a cinematographer.

Stuart wanted me to write up some story ideas right away, but my agents said I shouldn't do any more consulting till we figured out what they would pay for it.

February 13, 1999. I write notes on the Cohen-Sokolow Script #7.

I've been letting this blow-by-blow account slide. Let's catch up.

After our January meeting, I got Steve Freedman to start negotiating about how

much I get for consulting. This was linked to the question of how much for the option renewal as the option runs out March 1, 1999. Finally they came up with, I think, $10,500 for the option renewal and $5,000 a month consulting fee for me, with three months of consulting guaranteed and maybe more. This took till February 4 to iron out. I was impatient to have some more input, so I phoned Medavoy earlier than that and he sent me a January 19 revision of the hideous and moronic Cohen-Sokolow script, really a new script, this would be script #7. All these guys have ever done, evidently, is watch TV. Their idea of a line, whenever a line is needed, is to stick in a tagline from a TV commercial. "A mind is a terrible thing to waste," their Cobb says just before he gets his brain cut out.

I wrote a really detailed new story outline and scene by scene notes on the second Cohen Sokolow Script#7 and mailed that to Anne Rodman at Phoenix. 29 single spaced pages worth, insane I could write that much, it's like a fifth of a novel. Anne turns out to be a big power in this, she's the story editor. I'd thought she was just a glorified secretary when I initially met her, boy was I wrong. I had her give a copy to Stuart as well. Stuart had wanted me to send it to *him* and have him hand-carry it in, but I figure I might as well be contacting the power person directly. Mike was just coming back from Switzerland where, according to Stuart, he was talking to some of his investors, and is telling them all that *Software* will be made this year.

On Feb 9 I did a conference call with Mike and Anne and Stewart, and they don't really like my new story. They keep bringing back odd old ideas that come back like zombies no matter how many times I try to drive a stake through their hearts.

Looking at my story outline it has so little relationship to the original book. But I was trying to have something close to the script they had, as Medavoy said he didn't want to change much. But in conversation on Tuesday they're ready to change all kinds of things. They don't get at all the idea that my robots are as smart as people. They keep talking about mainframe computers. They want Cobb to die fighting. They want the person whose brain is eaten to be someone's kid brother so we feel enough sorrow about it. I can't seem to begin to explain to them that you don't need to feel sorrow at that brain-eating scene because it's supposed to be *funny*.

The conversation wasn't all that long as Mike was in a hurry. I'm kind of at a

loss what to do next. It's like I'm supposed to guess what color they're thinking of, when in fact they aren't thinking about a color at all.

February 19, 1999. Conference call on new story line.

On Tuesday, Feb 15, I put in a call to Anne Rodman to ask her what they wanted to do next. On Wednesday, Feb 16, she called me back and said she'd set up a conference call for Mike Medavoy, her, and Arnie Messner in 15 minutes. I suggested they include Stuart Volkow so they did.

Speaking of Stuart, I've been a little hazy about his status, but figure it's good to keep him involved as he's someone at my level that I feel I can talk fairly frankly to. Steve Freedman explained it to me later that Stuart is an independent producer who'll help produce the film if it gets made. Produce in the sense of organize, not produce in the sense of find money for. Stuart certainly doesn't seem wealthy, like I said before, he kind of seems like he's unemployed.

Anyway, we had the meeting and they seemed to be saying to forget about the Wilson scripts and the Cohen-Sokolow scripts, let's just go for it, throw out the preconceptions and try and get a workable story. Back in June, my old Swarthmore College roommate and now *LA Times* movie critic Kenny Turan predicted to me it would come to this and I didn't believe him. As Kenny put it, "Sometimes a script goes through so many rewrites there's nothing left to work with and they say, 'Hey, let's take a look at the book.'"

I asked if Cohen-Sokolow owed them more work, and maybe that wasn't the exact correct category question, but the answer seemed to be no. So I suggested they get a new writer and not let C-S work on it anymore. "You've gotten everything you can from them. They can't really help us because they have a basic contempt for science-fiction," I said. Arnie agreed. In these conversations, generally Arnie is the more readily outspoken. Mike is more hanging back and letting people say things and keeping his options open. Anne is quite opinionated about story ideas, but never says anything about business decisions.

They ended up asking me to write a new story outline for them, something like a treatment. They used some funny slangy word for what they were asking me to do. I

didn't quite catch the word, and when I asked what the word was, they didn't answer. I had a feeling they were thinking, "If you don't know, we're not gonna tell you." Maybe Stuart knows the word. Something like "boompf?" I asked for two weeks time, and said Steve Freedman still hadn't gotten the paperwork on our option renewal and my per-month consulting money, and that I'd need to have that in place before I could send them anything. Mike checked on another line and then said the papers were on their way.

Most of the conversation was about the story. I remarked that any story at all was fine with me as long as the movie incorporated my two basic ideas (1) that intelligent robots can evolve and (2) human software can be downloaded onto robot bodies. They said, oh yes, that's taken for granted, that's why we never even argue about it, those are some of the ideas that attract us to this book in the first place.

They kept talking about *Star Wars* as the model for what we want to do, and I finally asked what about *Bladerunner*? They said they didn't want to make a noir future film. They wanted something sunny and happy. Not dark. No seediness. They wanted to see heroism in a computerized milieu.

Here's some notes I wrote down while talking.

Set-up. What are they characters trying to accomplish? What do they look like? Who's doing what to whom?

In *Star Wars* the goal is clear from the first scene: blow up the Death Star. Defeat the evil Empire. We want action for a young male audience. The computers are the environment of the movie, not the focus.

Externalize what Dex is. What would a robot want? Not food, not shelter, not sex. Idea of an older generation of computers and a newer generation that wants control and power.

Have a clean clash and a clever way to get rid of the threat.

Have Cobb and Dex out doing stuff instead of sitting in a hotel waiting. Disperse the threat.

Arnie keeps pushing the idea of reforming Dex's slaves by programming them with a knowledge of human history and of how badly things like Nazism have turned out.

Stahn should do something valiant in the third act. Like a shoot-out with the Dalton gang.

At the start why not have Dex explaining to, say, eight treacherous Earthlings that if they help him take over they'll get a lot of power.

Anne Rodman: "We want the *Terminator 2* backstory with a happy ending."

Somebody (Mike?) suggested that we just have Stahn be Cobb's son. So then we don't need to waste time explaining why they're loyal to each other.

Anne wants Cobb to be like Obi Wan Kenobi, a sage in exile. Not a drunken buffoon.

So now I want to work on that.

That afternoon Phoenix got the papers to Freedman. I'm on the plane to NY to visit daughter Georgia, I'll get the papers there for signing. Freedman had some pal of his, Melanie Wiener, phone me up to try and make some kind of deal. It was a little unclear. I got a FedEx copy of script notes from Phoenix while were talking, so I bragged about that. She was all set to start giving me advice about the *Software* story, I'm like, "Well, I've already gotten so much advice about that one." We talked a little about the idea of turning "Rapture in Space" into a movie. She didn't actually seem to know anything about my work. A curious creature nosing out of the Hollywood thickets. Tapering snout, a long forked yellow tongue like a Komodo dragon's. I don't really trust Freedman much. He did notice that Phoenix had written in a line making half of the option/consulting money applicable to the eventual purchase price, and got them to take that out. That's the only kind of thing I really trust him for, asking for more money. He did say that maybe I should register my story outline with the Writers' Guild West when I send it to Phoenix, that way I'm covered for getting a credit. On the other hand he doesn't want me to call WGW myself because whoever I talk to will spread the word around, it'll get back to Phoenix, and maybe they'll get uptight. "We don't want to stir any pots at Phoenix." Crackling in the jungle underbrush.

February 19, 1999. *Working on the story in New York.*

I'm in New York, staying at Georgia's. Today in the Met I was looking at a show called "From Van Eyck to Bruegel," and they had the etching "The Rabbit Hunters," which is the only one of Bruegel's drawings that he himself turned into an engraving. He did the engraving of the plate himself, in other words, as opposed to having someone else

do it. Often as not, the other engravings of Bruegel's originals quite substantially dilute and alter the quality and essence of the image. At the very least the engravings by others always lose his particular quality of line. And it struck me that turning *Software* into a movie is a bit like making an engraving of a painting. And if I could do it myself, how wonderful.

On the subway I even started thinking that if I can get enough input on the script I might not even mind writing a novelization of it. I would not want to call it exactly *Software*, as I'd want the original "real painting" novel to stay in print. Maybe call the "simplified engraving" version *Software the Movie*.

Looking at all the crowds of people, I'm doing the exercise of putting my head in a space where I'm imagining the kind of movie that they would like to see. I finally "get" the notion of making a movie as simple and sunny as *Star Wars*. Why punish and insult people who simply want to be entertained. Slight worry that if I get too good at putting on this particular state of mind, it'll stick with me and I'll start censoring everything I write. Well, so what. Why not have a "late" style. Borges's late style was really simple tales.

February 23, 1999. Putting a divine element into the story line.

I finished my *Software* story outline at night on Sunday, February 21, after being out with Michael and Georgia at a Greenwich Village "rent party" where they had jazz in someone's loft, very mellow, very much a classic Village scene, integrated, hipsters galore. They have it every week, it's called Sunday Sessions. That afternoon on the subway, it occurred to me I should put in a cosmic force of good, a divine spark that Cobb has access to, and when I thought that, I swear I saw the man in the paper subway ad wink at me. A miracle, like a religious icon painting that smiles. And then I couldn't think what I could get away with calling this good Higher Power, can't use *that* recovery-group-associated name certainly, nor can you really say "God," in a movie like this as that phrase has all the baggage of organized religion on it. And then at the Sunday Session, Georgia's boyfriend Michael was talking to me about some music tracks he and a friend had been putting together with synthesizers, and he was saying how it seemed like random thing kept coming together in just the perfect way, and I said something like

"That's the cosmic harmony," and he said, "Oh yes, what you call the One." He knew this old usage of mine from reading *Infinity and the Mind* recently, but I'd kind of forgotten about it, and now here it was back at me right when I needed it, of course I should call's Cobb's divine force the One.

So it really felt magical Sunday night working the One into the story line, and the more I worked on it, the simpler and purer the story got. I finished it about 2AM and I was so excited I couldn't go to sleep till nearly 4AM. It was a relief Monday to drop it in the mail to Steve Freedman on Monday, it feels like a winning lottery ticket I should get redeemed. We'll see.

[See "*Treatment for* Software*, March 2, 1999*," reprinted below in this document.]

March 3, 1999. Waiting for the option renewal.

I'm in limbo now, waiting for the last signatures on the option renewal. Steve Freedman went back to get the words changed so that the money they pay me isn't applicable against purchase price. Also he wanted to fix it so that if the project goes down the tubes I would have the right to re-submit my written notes to a later producer.

Meanwhile I'm champing at the bit to show them what I think is a great new story line. I corrected the typos and sent it to Steve with a "March 2, 1999" date on it, also sent it to Stuart Volkow and told him not to show it Phoenix yet but, in Freedman's opinion, Stuart already has by now shown it to Medavoy, and who could blame Stuart from using this chance to ingratiate himself to Phoenix as an insider with a special connection to Rudy. I kind of wanted Stuart to do this, informally, to get them whipped up enough to finish the deal.

Freedman frowned on this action of mine, he feels the fear should all be on the side of Phoenix. That they need me because they've spent a million and don't have a story yet, and now the other producer, Ed Pressman, phoned him yesterday and saying what's happening, why isn't Phoenix working with Rudy, is Rudy all right? But maybe it was my sending the story to Stuart that got Pressman whipped-up enough to get on the phone.

I told Steven it was hard to sit back and wait because I am so hungry for the next

big adrenaline rush, that this addictive. "That's why you need to get involved with several projects at once," he says. He's been urging me to try and start a development project with Melanie Weiner. "Why not lots of projects," he urges, "It doesn't cost you anything. You have plenty of ideas." Maybe he's right. I might phone Melanie again to talk about a treatment derived from "Rapture in Space." We'd cut back on the porno aspect and drop the ball-sack pregnancy. Just focus on Gen-Y-ers in space.

March 8, 1999. Freedman's advice on the Treatment.

He calls with "a few initial thoughts". Long long pauses. "Let's see. Well I'll start right at the top. (grunt). Let's see. (Forty second pause)."

It's an effort for me to be patient and listen to this pinhead, but I manage, and he has some good ideas, I'm too uncharitable. He actually has read the treatment.

Freedman mentioned that Phoenix's new candidate for director, Mark Goldblatt, directed *The Punisher*, and is an excellent editor who's worked with James Cameron.

On March 10, I check with Anne Rodman, and she says she's only gotten my outline today (?). In any case, she's busy with another project right now, and Medavoy is in Japan, so I won't hear from them till next week.

March 18, 1999. Medavoy unsure. Nicolas Myer.

I talked to Medavoy yesterday briefly. He liked the "first two pages" of my story outline, which was the page with my list of their Requirements and my outline of the first scene. The rest he wasn't so sure about, hadn't had time to read it closely. Will talk to me again early next week. Says he's really on it still, he's spent a million and needs to come up with something.

He said he doesn't want me to try and tailor the story to what he wants, but to just go ahead and do it my way. This seems a bit oxymoronic. Given that all they've done is make suggestions, which I've now incorporated into a story that I've written my way to include their suggestions.

He said he might get a guy to work on a script with me, a man named Nicolas Meyer, an older guy, he did a *Star Trek*, did *Somewhere in Time*, he might direct as well.

Said he was trying to get help from Pressman, no help, but Pressman said maybe

Jeff Most would help.

Talked to Susan, she was in a frenzy because they did too much withholding on my consulting check. Talked to Freedman, said he'd straightened that out. He's heard of Myer. Seemed to think the guy was a little old and out of it. But thought he might work well with me, if that's what happens.

Medavoy wants to fax me something, I told them to use Fed Ex. (Came by regular mail a few days later, turned out to be a book review of some books on AI.)

"It's not yet really a movie," says Medavoy about my story outline. "I want to get Nick Myers on it." "And I can get his input?" I say. "No, he's going to get your input. I sent it to him. We don't need anything more from you right now." So, again, it's back to wait and see. The ball's out of my hands.

June 17, 1999. Trevor Sands story for Script #8.

Late in May I called Medavoy and he said they'd found a writer they really liked, a young guy called Trevor Sands. He's about 25, comes from Chicago. That's a real 1930s-style writer name. He's working on the script for Brin's *Startide Rising*. "Trevor Sands." No credits yet, but he had a story pitch they thought was great. They'll show it to me later.

So early in June I call Freedman and he says Trevor has some eight weeks to write a script, and he, Freedman, has gotten hold of Sands's story pitch that he can fax me, but I shouldn't tell anyone I've seen it.

The story pitch or treatment comes in and its by far the very worst version of the story yet. It's about NATO troops in the year 3000, with a big character called General Clarke. They're bombing the Moon to influence the evil Dex robots who are fighting the good rebel robots. It's like a take on the Kosovo bombings. Like these Hollywood guys only remember whatever it was they saw on television *that same day*. The evil army of the bad robots is called "the One," which was my name for God in the book, oh my brothers. Instead of a brain-eating scene there's a scene where someone with a needle sucks Stahn's soul out of his head for ten minutes, then injects it back into him. The Little Kidders are scum-of-the-earth "cyberpunks," though maybe that's kind of cool to use cyberpunk for the bad guys. I console myself with the thought that probably this

script too shall pass.

I mentioned this to my screen-writer friend John Shirley and then he called me back and said he'd talked to one of the producers, Jeff Most, and Most simply said that everything is still open and in flux. But don't tell anyone he talked to me.

They always say that, "Don't tell anyone I told you this," and then they tell whatever you tell them to whoever will listen. Like high-school gossip.

At this point I guess I hope they do make Sand's script, just be filming *something* at last. But I do also hope very much that they'll let me show them how to fix it and put the important stuff back in — the robot evolution and the brain taping.

Talked to Freedman about this, he was gently suggesting that maybe brain-eating is something people would laugh at instead of get into. *Sigh*. Could sucking the soul out through a needle be made to work? Oh *sigh* I suppose I could make up an explanation for it. Damping down the brain circuits, like that.

Let go, let God.

July 12, 1999. Billups says Phoenix shelved **Software**.

Scott Billups calls. He says Mike Medavoy had a heart attack, but is back at work in a limited way. To reduce his workload and schedule, Phoenix has cleared off a bunch of projects. They've shelved *Software*.

Billups says he still wants to make it, he says he's written a script that may be bought by a company called Dark Horse through an agency called CAA. He gives me some background.

After Shirley's script, Billups wrote a sixty page version of a script and sent it to Ed Pressman, and that's how Pressman got involved. Then they brought in a name writer, a series of them, and we've been getting nowhere. While this was going on, Billups wrote a script of his own due to his frustration. He claims it has no overlap with the scripts by his friend Larry Wilson, though I tend to doubt this. But he needs for this to be true, because Wilson's scripts are owned by Phoenix.

I ask who Dark Horse is, and Billups says he did the effects for Pamela Anderson's movie *Barb Wire* for Dark Horse. Here's how that happened. Billups, a writer named Adam, and a producer named Brad brought a project called "Really Big

Bucks" to 20th Century Fox. Fox game them one millions "pay or play," which means that if they don't get to "play" and make the movie, they get the "pay" of a million. Like money to go away. And that's what happened. And then Scot, Adam and Brad were flush and they called Todd Moyer at Dark Horse and said, "We've got a little money, you got any movies we can make for you?" Todd says, "We've got *Virus*, *The Thing*, and *Barb Wire*." Scott and the boys has just met Pammie the night before at a party so they jumped on *Barb Wire*. They pitched it to Propaganda, who said they'd budget 5 mill for the film. They started work, then Pam went to Cannes in her leather bustier and Propaganda raised 27 mill for *Barb Wire*, so they fired Adam and Brad, and brought in a "sicko music-video director coke addict" to finish it. Billups stayed on for the effects.

Anyway, recently Billups had asked Phoenix if he could try and sell his script, even though Phoenix still owns the *Software* option. Arnie Messner gave him permission provided that (a) he offer it only to one person, and (b) the price for that person to buy the option from Phoenix is a million dollars. Requirement (a) is because if they shop it around, that means the projects "in turnaround," and if it's in turnaround that makes it look doomed and flawed.

Although Billups wanted to go straight to Dark Horse, he figured he could technically show it to "one person" while getting a little more feedback and buzz by showing it to CAA, which is the agency Dark Horse uses. CAA can't shop it yet, but now they can comment on it to other possible purchasers. CAA gave the project a "three-star" rating. That's three out of five, but according to Billups, three is very good.

At this point Dark Horse likes it but doesn't want to come up with the million Arnie wants.

Billups was excited to hear that the current option expires on, I think, this September 1, 1999. So then *Software* would be free? But then Billups remembered that of course as long as there's a chance of someone else doing the film, Phoenix will renew the option with me.

Writing this up, it occurs to me that if we come to that point, this would be a chance for Freedman and I to really play hardball with Phoenix. Because if Phoenix is only renewing my option in September so they can sell it for a mill to someone else then can't I ask them for really a lot? Because if we don't agree on terms, then the option

lapses and Phoenix gets nothing, right? I'll have to check this reasoning with Steve, there's probably a hole in it.

July 13, 1999. Freedman says Billups is out of the loop.

Talked to Freedman. He's like, "Scott is so ... out of the loop on this. Yeah Medavoy had heart surgery, but so what. They've paid Trevor Sands 100 K to write the new script, why wouldn't they wait and read it? If Dark Horse wants to make an offer on the condition of the option coming open, fine let them do it. But at this point we need to just see if Phoenix will still do the movie."

August 19, 1999. Trevor Sands Script #8. Option renewal.

Medavoy called and said the new script is on it's way. I said "I heard you had a health problem." "Not really a health problem. I had open heart surgery. But I'm feeling fine." He says they'd like my input.

Meanwhile Susan P. and Freedman call, Phoenix wants to renew the option. There opening offer is we should give them the extension for free. Susan and Steve plan to ask for $25K for 6 months, or they can have 12 months for $35K.

The script showed up by UPS yesterday and I read it. First reaction: it rocks. I'm really pleasantly surprised. It's not totally gauche or stupid. It's cinematic. It flows. I was turning the pages fast. It has a big ending.

This morning I called Medavoy's office tell Mike that the script rocks. He's not there yet, so I just leave a message with his himbo. Then Freedman calls and tells me, "Whatever you do, don't talk to Medavoy today, let me make our deal first, they're offering $25M for a year and I'm trying to get it higher. If you talk to him I'll kill you." "What do I say when he calls back?" "Screen the call. Don't pick up." So then an hour later the phone rings and I pick it up without even thinking about it, and it's Medavoy. I say, "My agent told me I shouldn't talk to you until we work out the option." He sighs. "Okay. Whatever you like." But of course I can't resist saying something. "I really liked the script. It rocks." "That's what I needed to hear. I mean why would I want to renew the option if the script's still no good? I needed to hear if you liked it or not. If you didn't like it, then maybe we've already spent enough money on this. I used to be an

agent. Agents are good at stopping things from happening." "Fine. You know, I do have some tweaks for the script, but I'll talk about those after we get our deal worked out." "I'd be surprised if you didn't have some tweaks."

So who knows if Freedman was right. Maybe Medavoy wants to get me worried/stoked so I'll take a more lowball offer. I'm a babe in the woods here for sure.

September 3, 1999. Option all set, I faxed my suggestions.

By the way, on August 20, when I mentioned to Freedman that I'd told Medavoy that "my agent told me not to talk to you," Freedman was really upset and practically hung up on me, but then called back, asked for a blow-by-blow of the conversation, and ultimately decided it was okay.

We got $35K for a year for the option renewal, with half that money applicable to the purchase price (meaning that I'd get a little less when the purchase it). Just like last time, Freedman pushed for more and more, trying to make less of the money applicable, and finally Ed Pressman's colleague Jeff Most snaps and phones Susan and tells her that we're going to break the deal with our demands. That happened last February too. Seems like a rule of thumb might be that if Jeff Most hasn't called Susan, we haven't asked for enough yet. Freedman says if they actually buy the movie, I'll get something like $340,000, according to the latest revision of our agreement.

Looking at the option agreement, I see these dates: Initial option agreement: November 1, 1990, amended Sept 23, 1993, Oct 7, 1994, Oct 31, 1995, Oct 31, 1996, Oct 10, 1997, Oct 10, 1998, Feb 3, 1999, Sept 1, 1999. Expires Sept 1, 2000.

Now that I sent back the signed option agreements, I went ahead and faxed my script suggestions to Medavoy, though I'm sure if I asked Freedman, he'd tell me not to do it yet. But I want to get my input into the hopper before they make any final decisions about what to put into the second draft.

December 8, 1999. The search for a director.

Freedman sent me this list of directors who are possibilities. I talked them over with him, but don't remember which is which.

1) John Moore : Sega Dreamcast "Apocalypse" ads. He's repped by

Rose/Bowen UTA and is being pursued by studios (Fox into attaching him to big film).

2) Michel Gondry

3) Anthony Hoffman

4) Chris Cunningham

5) Larry Guterman (attached to CATS & DOGS at WB).

January 27, 2000. Steve Beck for director.

Freedman called. "Steve Beck," he says. Beck wants to direct the movie, he's read Trevor Sands's script and all my books. He lives in Mill Valley and has some connection with Industrial Light and Magic. He's made only TV commercials. His most recent is a Blade Runner style commercial for some financial institution, maybe Merrill-Lynch, set in a metropolis.

In the next couple of weeks he's supposed to write up an outline of how he would shoot the movie, how he would make it his own. If Phoenix likes it, they make a deal with him and look for funding. Also they get Sands to write a new script with Beck's input.

I remember Queen Mu at Mondo had a hippie boyfriend named Steve Beck who was interested in computer graphics, I don't think this could be the same guy, though you never know.

March 13, 2000. Steve Beck Attached as Director.

Got some email from my producer Stuart Volkow who, to keep body and soul together while waiting for the deal, has moved to South Miami Beach to work for an Internet startup. "Trevor has begun a rewrite, Steve Beck has a deal in place."

So I called Freedman, and he called back. "Director attached," he said. "Director attached. Like 'Access denied.'" I asked, "Is this the Steve Beck associated with MONDO? The acidhead?" "Acidhead?" he says finally, though it takes him a while to recognize the quaint old word. "There was a MONDO Steve Beck who phoned me up when Brett Leonard made Lawnmower Man. Gotta be a different guy."

They're giving Beck just $12,500 now to keep him on. Sands owes them a rewrite, which Beck is orchestrating, and that should come in about two months. In May.

May 4, 2000. Beck takes an interim project.

Steve Freedman called to say that Trevor Sands finished Act I of the new screenplay, but that he hadn't been able to see it. Meanwhile, Steve Beck's taken on a director's gig that he'll do before *Software* (if and when he does *Software*). It'll be a cheapie horror movie for, I forget the producer's name, something like Joel Silver, I think he produced the *Matrix*. So Beck will get some good direction experience, he's never directed a film before, just commercials. In the meantime I happened to talk to Queen Mu, and no, this isn't the same Steve Beck. "At the end of the day," Freedman tells me, "at the end of the day, Rudy, what matters is the script. That's all that matters at the end of the day." He loves that expression.

May 22, 2000. Word from Trevor Sands about the Script #9.

My SF-writer friend David Brin sent me an email in which he mentioned that Trevor Sands is also working on a script of a film of his book *Startide Rising*. I asked if he could put me in direct touch with Trevor, and then Trevor sent me a couple of emails. The first said he'd finished the new script and that it was more adult and darker than the last one. He says only about 5 pages of Script #8 are in it, so let's call this one Script #9.

Some of Trevor's remarks: "The great debate between Cobb and Dex has been expanded and is much more philosophical. The character of Stash has been juiced up to "hero" status, It's my hope that you'll find our overhaul of your story to be a positive injection of cinematic steroids, as opposed to a train wreck of commercialism and sell-out fluff." This sounded pretty good, though I was of course concerned that this twenty-something screenwriter's philosophical notions of robot consciousness might not match the Kurt Gödel analysis of the question which I in fact based *Software* on.

So I wrote "It's surprisingly rare for an SF movie to be internally consistent and scientifically logical, and when it is, the film is that much better. As an SF writer and computer science professor I'm skilled at spotting and fixing flaws in science and logic." And I said that I hoped Medavoy would make good on his promise to let me work with the director so that I could feed in some science and logic fixes. I also said, "Of course, I do realize that your job is hard enough without trying to handle direct input from me. Too many cooks etc. And I'm also aware that the main goal of all this is to make a

movie!"

Trevor wrote back enthusiastically. He says he wants to make "Software the DEFINITIVE movie about our future with intelligent machines." But now we have to wait for Beck to read the new script. Beck's busy right now because "He's presently deep into preproduction on his first feature, which is a $20 million dollar horror film called *13 Ghosts*, produced by Joel Silver at Warner Bros.(this is good, by the way, because if the movie turns out well it will qualify him to direct the $80-100 million dollar effects-heavy mega-movie Software will be)." Boy are these Hollywood types enthusiastic!

Trevor also says, "we've had to update much of the tech-talk and computer lingo to jive with a web-savvy post-Bill Gates audience," which makes me uneasy.

So now I'm trying to get hold of Script #9 from Phoenix.

August 7, 2000. Phoenix doesn't like Script #9.

I got a call from Brad Fisher. He used to be Medavoy's receptionist but now he's an assistant producer. They don't like Trevor's new script. "Disappointing." They think Trevor was listening to too many "voices in his head" when he wrote it. Trying to please everyone. The characterizations are kind of lost now. They feel its first act is good but the second act is just unrelated action sequences. Sounds like a classic bad movie. The issue is still the motivation of Dex and what he plans to do. Fisher says Mike Medavoy is worried maybe we'll never get it fixed, which casts fear into my heart. On the other hand what they say could partly be a way to jerk me around a little so as to lower my expectations for the optional renewal price come October. They are going to send me the new script and want me to come down to Hollywood next week to talk things over. Trevor is willing to do another rewrite for free. It would be nice if they'd let me "have a pass" as they phrase goes. Hand me the files on disk and let me do a full rewrite.

Thinking about how to give Dex a motive, I wonder if I should go into *Wetware* and use some of that. He wants to make a race of bio-engineered people. That would get a bit more out in front of the current technology curve.

August 10, 2000. Sands Script #9 Sucks.

So I got to see Trevor's new *Software* script myself and it's terrible, the worst yet, nothing but identical characters yelling and shooting in a big concrete tunnel, worse than *Hollow Man*, even. No more robot evolution, no more brain-eating, generals and colonels calling the shots, and the enemy is a 1970s mainframe talking on a big screen. Not that there weren't one or two nice touches, but as Medavoy said awhile back, all that is just the trimming on the tree. We need the tree. A funny thing Trevor did was to label the script "Draft #710".

Phoenix knows it sucks, at least, and they're flying me down (first class with a limo pickup!) to Hollywood to talk things over with them next Friday. I'm hoping they'll let ME write the next version of it (which will be #10), maybe with John Shirley. John and I wrote a story together last month, so I know I could work with him. So now I'm trying to work up a good description of my new version to bring to the meeting. They've spent well over a million by now and they might pull the plug. It all seems kind of unreal by now. In any case, it's more fun to think about than my software engineering book! And, hey, did I mention that I get to fly FIRST CLASS? Hog heaven.

I was going to email Trevor a bunch of suggestions about his script, but Friedman said I shouldn't bother contacting him, so I didn't send it. As he put it, "They're bringing YOU in for the meeting, not HIM. Who cares about Trevor now. We've already seen what he can do. It's unusable."

August 17, 2000. I Write a New Treatment

This week's been kind of intense. I worked up a new treatment that seems good. A nice clean line of action, not much like the book, but it has all the good stuff.

I'll offer to change the name "Boppers" to "Cobbers," in case they really care about that, but I'd really prefer not to.

I divide the Boppers into two castes, the High Boppers and the Low Boppers. Many of the Low Boppers have red "slave-cubes" in their chests that make them slaves of High Boppers. I made the High Boppers(formerly called Big Boppers) be in robot bodies too, so you can see them — this way Dex isn't a face on the screen. (Act I) Dex wants to take over Earth by spraying the atmosphere with a wetware virus that puts his

personality onto people. But he needs the "activator boot code" from Cobb. So three of his friends jet to Earth and give Cobb and Stahn shuttle tickets. They hook up with (human now) stewardess Misty on the shuttle. She went to high-school with Stahn. On the moon, Cobb gets a new body, but it has a slave-cube linked to Dex. Des tries to make him kill Stahn, but he kills himself. His ware goes into the communication web. (Act II) Stahn and Misty escape, pass through Dex's lab and see Dex testing a rat and a clone, the virus works, they're Dexes too. The clone captures Misty, Wagstaff tunnels up and saves Stahn. But Misty gets caught by Dex (Act III) Stahn's with the rebel Low Boppers. They see Dex's tanker ship of wetware virus take off towards Earth. They call a General on Earth and he says he's going to bomb the Moon to get even before the tanker wipes out his personality. "Give us 15 minutes!" Ticking clock! Dex has eaten Misty's brain, she's a robot and almost traps Stahn. But then they reverse the slave-cube and Dex has to fly down and blow up the ship himself. They use the last dose of wetware virus to put a copy of robot-Misty onto a fresh human-Misty. And now Cobb downloads off the web into Dex's spare body. Happy ending.

I wanted to send it to Medavoy's assistant, but my agent Freedman said I should just pitch it verbally and make them pay me for the written treatment. And then he got really manic I guess it was, saying that we didn't need Medavoy, that *Software* was such a big and great project that we could walk and get another producer. "We're on the high ground, Rudy," goes Freedman. "They have to listen to us. I guarantee you'll get a writing deal. They'll pay to see a treatment. Medavoy is lost. I know this guy. He has no idea what he's doing."

[See "*Treatment for* Software, *August 20, 1999*," reprinted below in this document.]

I sent Freedman a copy and then he called me up in the evening and started making what I thought were really stupid suggestions. Like I should tear it apart and start over already. He didn't like it that much. And meanwhile I've convinced myself that it's tweaked just perfect for the level of the producers. So the next day I tell him to lay off on the suggestions and he backs off.

We're going to try and get a deal to write the new script. I would work with John Shirley, I talked it over with him and he's into it. John and I just wrote an SF story

together last month and it went really well, we sold it the same day we finished it. So I think it would be cool to work with him. Also he's sober like me, which is a good sane thing to be around. I'm pretty excited about the meeting, but keep reminding myself it may not go at al like I'd hope.

Freedman is coming to the meeting with me tomorrow. He says he's not leaving the room until Medavoy gives him a deal for the option renewal, a treatment and a script. A "step deal." "They're not gonna be able to get me outta there, Rudy. I'll sleep there if I have to!"

August 21, 2000. Failed Pitch to Medavoy; Another Treatment

So on Friday I fly down first class and a limo picks me up at LAX and the driver's talking about the Business (as did the limo driver on the way back to the airport that afternoon), she's happy to hear I'm going to a script meeting.

At Phoenix, Steve Freedman pulls up just as I get there. He's more feral, more weasel-like than I remembered. He's wearing a good Hollywood shirt, a, like, Mexican kind of white shirt hanging out. I'm wearing black silk pants, black silk sportshirt, black silk jacket and wraparound black shades. Mr. Cyberpunk. Seeing Steve and remembering all the manic things he's been saying on the phone, I start thinking of the Seinfeld show when Jerry and George go to CBS to pitch their idea for a sit-com series. And I'm telling Steve to keep his mouth shut in the meeting and not be throwing in extra story ideas. I'm gonna get enough of those from Medavoy the producer and probably from his assistants as well. But at the end of the meeting, Steve will talk to Medavoy and try and work on our deal.

So we go inside, it's my third time here, a little three-story brick building across from the SONY lot (SONY does distribution for Phoenix), and Steve's never been inside. In fact, I now learn, he's never laid eyes on Medavoy, despite all his gossip about Medavoy's movie-making skills. We have to cool our heels in a side room for a half hour, chatting with Brad Fisher, the guy who moved up from being Mike's receptionist to being an Assistant Producer. Mike's stuck in a meeting, running a little late. "So who's he meeting with?" I ask. "Arnold Schwarzenegger."

I'm like *whoah*. The Terminator! Right here! He'd be perfect for the villainous

evil robot Dex. Arnold is starting in film called *The Sixth Day* that Phoenix is releasing in November. I'm so impressed. I switch seats with Freedman so I'm facing the hall door and I can see Arnold walk by. He's short, as the big stars always are. He glances over, checking us out. He's gone into the elevator with his body-guard before I can really react; the rest of the day I'm kicking myself for not running over and handing him a paperback copy of *Software* that I happen to have brought along. Oh well. Maybe I'll see him again. "I'll be back."

Fisher is kind of trying to get me to give him the pitch, but I'm feeling like I should hold back, not leave my game in the locker-room. Actually it probably would have been a better idea to practice the pitch on him before Mike. Fisher says Trevor Sands has been doing some work for free, he's rewritten the second act of his terrible last script, hoping to amend it. I feel totally harsh towards Trevor, I've cut him off (in my own mind), and hope he has no further role in the film. But Fisher's kind of into Trevor, Trevor is wooing Brad, asking for advice, sending in free rewrites. I'm a little worried about this as now (in my own mind) I'm competing with Trevor for the gig (though in reality, I'll eventually realize, there's no way they'll ever let a raw novelist write a screenplay).

Finally it's time to go in with Mike. It's him, me, Freedman, Brad, and another assistant producer named Nick Mortenson. Nick appears to be wearing foundation makeup and lipstick. Or maybe he's made of plastic. My focus is on Medavoy of course. I'm coming on pretty strong. He's starting to tell me how worried he is about the project, how he's embarrassed to have spent over a million and having nothing to show for it, not even a decent plot line, how he'd like the film to be something I could be proud of and he could be proud of, how he wants it to be intelligent, how he'd like someone intelligent to work on it, and I interrupt, "I'm you're man." He goes on. "Maybe, but you can't just go back to the book. And it can't be too complicated. Those earlier treatments you did, they didn't work. They were confusing."

So I ask if I can pitch and I'm going really well (in my own mind) and I dunno, maybe ten minutes go by and I'm still in the first act, and Mike says, "Tell me the second act before I have to kill myself." No coddling here. I need to get better at pitching. And of course, really, I guess my second and third act were still weak. So I can barely tell

him the second act and he doesn't even want to hear the third act, and I insist he listen for one more minute while I rush through it.

And he's totally not into the tanker-full-of-mind-virus idea. "Hard to make that work." And then he tells how he's envisioned the movie. A simple thing, really, not that it's all that clear. A thriller. Strike at the spaceport. He seamlessly works in some of the ideas I just said, like the thing of having two castes of boppers in different bodies. So seamlessly I can't tell if he'd thought of them before or if he's just picked them out of me that fast. But if he's taking stuff from me that's good, no?

And then he drifts, terrifyingly, into stuff about the military. "Big base on the Moon. Like the Pentagon, but it's, I dunno, why not the Octagon." I'm so flabbergasted I don't understand. "Octagon?" "Like the Pentagon where the military is. I was just there last week. They have two war rooms now. For a two-front war. One with a map of Europe, the other with the Far East." I glance over at Steve while Mike is talking and Steve is grinning ear to ear with his head nodding yes like a plaster dog with its head on a spring like people used to set in the rear windows of their 50s cars.

To try and forestall this, I argue that I don't want big military in the movie. He doesn't care that much about it, though. Whatever works. But he doesn't want to spend any more money till he knows what he's doing next. If I can write a treatment he likes, and write it for free, then he'll think about it, and maybe let me write a script. I mention about working with Shirley, they like the idea that he wrote *The Crow*.

And then Mike is hustling us out, and I say to Steve, "Did you want to say something to Mike, Steve?" As in, *stay in the office till we get a deal, like you said you were gonna do*. And Steve is all shrugging. "No, nothing." And I'm like "Are you sure?" And Steve finally goes, "Who do you see directing this?" and Mike says, "Who do *you* see?" And Steve says some name I don't know, James something. (By the way, nobody said much about Steve Beck, though I think someone said they thought his suggestions to Trevor had been destructive and had ruined Trevor's second script. According to Freedman, Beck's "attachment" fee only amounts to $25K, so it would be easy enough to let him go.)

So then we're outside and I have the feeling I kind of blew the pitch, so I'm taking it out on Steve. "What happened to your staying in the office till we get a deal?"

And he's like mortally offended. "Are you kidding? Didn't you hear me? I said 'James Something' to him. Put the idea in his head. Planted a seed." And Steve isn't willing to say that I did well. Just, "It's up to you to get the deal. It's all up to you."

So we walk across the street and have lunch in the SONY cafeteria, a couple of Hollywood losers, Steve and me, cheering ourselves up with thick sandwiches and staircase wisdom. Mike had wanted the threat to be more concrete and specific than a tanker. So I start rapping about a flying hypodermic needle, picking up the toothpick from my sandwich and zooming it around, menacing Steve with it, and he's laughing hard and says, "If you put that in, Medavoy is going to throw your treatment out the window." So, perverse character that I am, I immediately I decide, yes, this must be the new wrinkle I need, and in the rewrite I do over the weekend, I make the threat a robot mosquito (rather than a hypodermic), and the thing is programmed to sting the President to put Dex's personality onto the President.

After lunch I talk with Steve some more, this is the longest I've ever seen him, so we're getting to know each other a little. It turns out his father was in the Business as well, a not-too-successful agent. Steve is like Willy Loman Jr., only the Hollywood version, a small-time agent who's a small-time agent's son. Native guide. He certainly seems pretty clear on the protocol. And, in the end, he was right for me not to have sent Mike the treatment before the meeting. Given that Mike didn't like my ideas as I pitched them, and was going to ask for a treatment anyway, it was better to hold off. Though I do think Steve leans too much towards holding off. He seems a little bipolar, manic on the phone, but then sinking unable to follow through on his hyper plans and promises. But whether or not I get the deal truly is up to me alone.

Before the limo comes to take me back, I go back into Phoenix and chat with Brad Fisher for fifteen minutes, trying to get his take on the meeting. He doesn't have a definite take, since he hasn't talked to Mike yet. He wants me to look at Trevor's latest and make comments, but I refuse, at least for now. He reads me a paragraph or two from it, his voice filled with wonder, about Cobb making a software copy of himself. He's being taken in by the bauble (a bauble in fact lifted from me) though, and what we need, as Mike told me the last meeting back, is the tree to hang the baubles on. The baubles are easy, the tree is hard. I don't actually tell Brad this, I just think it.

And then over the weekend I churn and grind and scheme and come up with what I think is a much better treatment. This time I do another thing that Mike had mentioned, to not be telegraphing what's going to happen, to not be explaining, to just have things happening and to have Stahn discovering things, and working things out. Thriller. And Sunday evening, just to get the monkey off my back for awhile I fax it down to Phoenix. And phone Mike's secretary Monday morning to make sure the treatment really got there, and yes, it's in Mike's box, and maybe sometime this week he'll read it, and maybe he'll like it, and why shouldn't he, given that it's perfect (in my own mind).

[See "*Treatment for* Software*, August 20, 1999*," reprinted below in this document.]

September 2, 2000. Medavoy rejects my treatment. Option expires.

So I didn't hear and I didn't hear, had some phone-tag, they lost my number, like that.

On Aug 31, Freedman tells me that Phoenix "thinks" the option expires September 1, while all along Steve's been telling me it expires at the end of October. I dig out the agreement, PANIC, it expires September 1. I'm furious, in full control-freak mode, how could you, inexcusable incompetence, like that.

On September 1, Medavoy sends a short fax, "Thanks for sending me your 'Software' treatment, but it just doesn't to it for me. At this stage I'm not sure how we're going to proceed with this project, but I will of course keep you informed."

I hope they're just fucking with me. Maybe this first-class limo trip was just to soften me up for the renewal. Pretend to listen to me. They're going to go with Trevor's god-awful script. Maybe they like wanted to tell me that, but I didn't listen, I was too full of myself and MY plan for the movie.

I feel deflated now, weary. I think screenwriting isn't for me. Writing a novel, that's where it's at. I'm working hard on letting go of the thing, turning it over to God, as we say in recovery, and trying to resist "taking it back."

Even though the option has expired now, I'm still imagining they will renew it. And if not, oh well. I'll just work at SJSU a little longer than I'd been planning to.

I've been stressing out like mad over, I now realize, a will-o-the-wisp. The best I

can hope for is to get more money from them. Time to relax and enjoy the life I have. E.g. the new novel I'm starting. *That's* reality.

I may hear more next week, tho. (Obsessive flicker of taking it back.)

September 6, 2000. Medavoy calls.

So now we're in the no-option limbo. Steve Freedman wants to do what he does best: nothing. He presents this as a strategy. "I won't return their calls. I'll be under the action. They'll be getting more and more worried. They'll think we're shopping it around." *Whatever* and *as if*. I suggested that maybe he really should shop it around, but this conflicts with his core strategy: do nothing.

Meanwhile Medavoy phoned and said I was free to walk, with their blessing. (Again I'm hoping this is only a mind game, to get me anxious.) But, he adds, maybe just maybe the film could still be made. He's going to write up his ideas for how he thinks the film should go and fax them to me. He says he's sure I could write it, if I want to. He wonders when I'll be down around LA again. I said I wouldn't want to do any more work unless we had a deal. So maybe he'll fax me something.

October 22, 2000. Nothing Doing. Marty Shapiro.

I still haven't heard anything more from Phoenix, it looks more and more like the deal might be dead. I wish I had realized that the option was about to expire when I took my meeting on August 21. I feel Freedman gave me bad advice and didn't follow through. I haven't heard from him since September 6 either.

Trevor Sands emailed a note saying Brad Fischer wouldn't answer his calls and asking if I knew what was up, but I didn't answer as (a) I don't have anything to tell him, and (b) I really don't want him to write another script, so there's no point in encouraging him.

I decided this is a good time to switch to a new movie agent, and got in touch with Marty Shapiro, who is the film agent for Bill Gibson, Harlan Ellison, and John Shirley. He's a partner in a real agency, he's not a lone wolf, you phone him up and talk to a secretary. And you can send him email and he answers.

April 4, 2001. Dead As a Doornail.

So I fired Freedman and signed on with Marty Shapiro, and Medavoy told Shapiro to forget it, and Shapiro didn't bother showing it to any other producers, and the thing is dead as a doornail. I don't think about it much anymore. Maybe it'll start up again one of these days. Over the ten years of renewals I guess I must have gotten maybe a hundred fifty thousand out of it, and the ride was interesting.

May 17, 2001. **The Sixth Day** *Stole My Ideas.*

The capper. Mike Medavoy sent *The Sixth Day* into the theaters for Phoenix the same month he cancelled his option on my *Software*. I rented *The Sixth Day* last week, and, in my opinion, it's a rip-off of the ideas in novels *Software* and *Wetware*. At least it seemed that way to me.

The central *The Sixth Day* idea of taping someone's brain software and then loading that personality onto a tank-grown clone of the person is straight from my books. It happens in *Wetware*. And in *Software*, it is a flash of light that puts Cobb's mind onto his new body, just as in *The Sixth Day*. These are not at all "obvious" ideas that were "in the air;" in fact it took me years of thought and effort to come up with them.

The fact that the villain in *The Sixth Day* was called "Drucker" seems almost like someone was driven by a Raskolnikov-like obsession to confess his crime! "Yes, I killed the old woman with an axe! Yes, I stole Dr. Rucker's ideas!"

Whether this is egregious enough to be actionable is something I couldn't decide about. I'm no Harlan Ellison, not a guy who loves conflict. And I don't want to seem like some nut suing George Lucas because the nut once said the word "Star". I didn't want to make myself a pest that Hollywood wouldn't want to deal with again.

I asked John Shirley what he thought and he suggested I get in touch with Jeff Most. I did, and Jeff wrote a neutral, pleasant note back, and I dropped it at that. What the fuck. I got some good money along the way, got to see a bit of the Biz.

Eventually, a movie will happen, I might as well go on thinking that.

My Software *Treatments*

Treatment for Software*, March 2, 1999*

Requirements

We worked out some requirements for a new story line in a conference call on, I believe, Wednesday, February 16. The conference call included Mike Medavoy, Arnie Messner, Anne Rodman, Rudy Rucker and Stuart Volkow. Rudy agreed to write up a new story line based on the newly clarified requirements.

Let me say here that I found this particularly conference call very productive. I feel the requirements make good sense, both artistically and commercially. I think *Software* can be a great and successful science-fiction movie, and I think I've managed now to work all of our requirements into an outline for a nice, tight plot. I hope Phoenix will consider letting me turn this story outline into a fully visualized treatment and then into a full draft of a screenplay.

As I understand them our basic requirements are as follows.

- We have two basic science ideas to include. First, intelligent *robots can evolve*. And second, it is possible to extract a human's brain software and then *copy the human onto a robot* body.

- *Star Wars* is the model for what we want to do. We want something sunny and happy and heroic. Not dark. No seediness. We want an uplifting action film for a young male audience.

- In *Star Wars* the goal is clear from the first scene: blow up the Death Star and defeat the evil Empire. We want an equally clear story line. We want a clean clash and a clever way to get rid of the threat.

- We want something like the T2 backstory with a happy ending.

- The computers are the *environment* of the movie, not the *focus*. We want heroism in a computerized milieu.

- We need a clear set-up. What are they characters trying to accomplish? What do they look like? Who's doing what to whom?

- Have Cobb to be like Obi Wan Kenobi, a sage in exile.

- Have Stahn be Cobb's son, so we automatically know they'll be loyal to each other.

- What would a robotic mind like Dex want? Control and power.

- Open with Dex explaining to a group of treacherous Earthlings that if they help him take over they'll get a lot of power.

- Have the bad guys actively doing stuff, not just sitting in a hotel waiting for the good guys to attack.

- In the third act we want a big show-down, like a shoot-out with the Dalton gang. Stahn should do something valiant in the third act.

- Reform Dex's slaves by giving them a human knowledge of goodness.

Act 1 (3/2/99)

A bopper factory on the Moon. Since air is not necessary for the boppers, the factory is open on the sides, it has a roof but no walls, and you can see the mountains of the Moon and a black starry sky with Earth in the background. At first there's no dialogue, just a long shot looking around this big factory which is run by bopper robots. A few of the boppers, along the edges of the factory, are dark and insect-like, like cockroaches, they are soldiers of Dex. The worker-boppers running the machines come in a variety of shapes, some humanoid. Many of them have specialized hands that are tools. As we continue looking around the factory, we figure out that what the boppers are making is more robots. This is how boppers reproduce.

Two of the worker boppers catch our attention: RALPH and WAGSTAFF. RALPH is boxy, with skin that's large, flickering gray and blue pixels. He might be humanoid in shape, but have boxy arms and legs and chest like an old-time cartoon robot. RALPH is sincere, honest, not overly bright. A regular guy, who happens to be a robot. I see John Goodman doing Ralph's voice. Ralph seems not be in good health, big patches of his skin are black and covered with static. Ralph moves with a limp. He was one of the very first boppers. WAGSTAFF is like a snake, with rings like a coral snake,

mostly yellow and green. He has a drill-bit in his tail. WAGSTAFF has a characteristic way of speaking, hip and slangy, rebellious, with a bit of a feedback hum to his tone. A slightly comic wiseacre, but with a hard core of revolutionary spirit. In terms of personalities, WAGSTAFF is a bit like R2D2, while RALPH is more like C3PO. I see a black actor doing Wagstaff's voice.

Wagstaff sets the factory controls to produce a new body for Ralph. Ralph protests that he can't afford a new body yet, but Wagstaff insists that Ralph deserves one.

A scolding image of their boss DEX appears. DEX is the "Big Bopper" who owns the factory. Rather than having one single body, DEX is in the network, in the very substance of his factory. We will most often see him simply as an image on a view screen, but in this first scene we have him appear as a very large hologram that pops out of one of the factory machines. The hologram DEX is big and scary, like a Transformer action figure, very much the menacing cartoon Japanese robot. Shiny black and gold. As DEX gets angrier and more bullying, his image gets larger. I see using a computer-altered image of Marlon Brando for Dex. Dex will repeatedly pop up on view screens, a bit like the old computer character Max Headroom.

Dex says Ralph doesn't have enough credit to afford a new body. But Ralph can have a new body if he agrees to "join the team" and become part of Dex. Ralph agrees and a new body appears. It's just like a shinier version of Ralph's present body except that it has a bright red glowing cube attached to the chest. This is a "Dex-link" that will make Ralph effectively Dex's slave.

Wagstaff gets in an argument with Dex and leaves, tunneling down into the Moon's surface, saying he's going to work to get rid of Dex and the other Big Boppers who are conglomerating and taking over more and more of the Moon. Dex's holographic body gets sucked back into the machinery of his factory and Ralph gets back to work. The red Dex-link of his chest talks to him, telling him to work faster.

<u>Office in a Florida factory called Chore Boy Appliances, Inc</u>. DEX is talking to a group of six Earth BIGWIGS who are his stooges. A MANUFACTURER, a POLITICIAN, an EVANGELIST, a NETWORK TYCOON, a GENERAL, a SCIENTIST.

A window in the office looks out onto a production floor where exceedingly

docile human workers are manufacturing small household robots, things like intelligent vacuum cleaners.

Dex is a wall-screen image, the image of him is like a giant video of a monster robot in a featureless white room. Dex explains how he's been doing acquisitions and diversifying, and that he's taken over most of the boppers on the Moon. There were a few other Big Boppers like him, but he's already wiped them out. We can see a few pieces of broken up monster robots on the ground at his feet. Dex now runs all the Moon's factories, the air-filled Disky tourist dome, the Luna Ritz Hotel and the Earth-Moon shuttle ships. There are a few pesky robot rebels but they're being dealt with.

Dex asks the Bigwigs how they're doing in helping his quest to interface with the rich information structures on this marvelous wet planet Earth. He's well on his way to taking over all the boppers and now he wants to take over the humans too. Like Hitler opening up a second front of war.

Thanks to his researches into the human brain, Dex has developed a hypnotic thought-loop for humans. It's incorporated into something they call the Training Video. Any human who sees it gets a Dex-link process set up in their brain. It's a little like the way in Greek mythology showing someone the Gorgon's head would turn them to stone. It's also a little like a tune or an ad jingle in your head that you can't forget.

The BIGWIG MANUFACTURER says he's already using the Dex-link Training Video to install a Dex-link right into the brains of his workers in the Chore Boy household robot factory where this meeting is being held. No more union problems, no sick days, no coffee breaks.

The BIGWIG EVANGELIST says he's started a new religion called Personetics. He's using the Training Video on his followers.

The BIGWIG POLITICIAN says he's using the Training Video to set up a Dex-link to promote unprecedented loyalty in his campaign workers.

The BIGWIG NET TYCOON says he can show the Training Video to all of the users of his computer network services provider, which is called Meta Net.

The BIGWIG GENERAL points out that all hell will break loose if they don't get everyone on Earth at once.

The BIGWIG SCIENTIST says they need to break down all of Earth's computer

firewalls and get the image on every TV and computer screen in the world at once. They can use Meta Net as a base, but they need to crack every system on Earth at the same time. And only one man knows how to do this. "We have to get Cobb Anderson to work for us. The man who designed the boppers in the first place. One way or another he has to help us."

Meta Net office cubicles. STAHN is an eager young guy who longs for love and adventure. He has a rebellious streak. The same yearning as Jim Carey in the *Truman Show*, but played a little younger, hipper, and smarter. I see a young Johnny Depp type in this role, probably a new actor. Stahn has a job doing things at a computer screen in a big office, let's say he's a programmer. The company is Meta Net, they're in the business of satellite communication. Some new employers have bought out the company he's working for and they want him to watch a special Training Video on his screen. Stahn notices the other workers who've seen the Training Video are acting like zombies, with no ambition other than being good workers. He refuses to watch the film. They fire him and say he's a trouble-maker just like his father Cobb Anderson. Stahn heads home.

Cobb's bungalow. COBB Anderson in his rundown bungalow near the Florida beach. COBB is a middle-aged actor who's made up to look older in the early scenes. COBB is a little sad and beaten-down, but with a spark of deep wisdom. He is hooked into a divine, cosmic "Force" that he calls the One. I see William Hurt or Harrison Ford in this role. Cobb invented the boppers, but he designed them for freedom. Government and big business got mad at him about this and he's not allowed to use a computer at all anymore. He can't even use a phone, they're all programmed to reject his voice.

Cobb is watching TV. On the TV screen, boppers are rioting on the Moon, fighting the dictatorial force of Dex. Stahn comes in. They talk about the problems with Dex on the Moon. "Too bad the government won't trust me to program anymore," says Cobb. "I think I could stop Dex. After all, I invented the boppers. They're supposed to be about freedom. I could remind them of what matters." Stahn tells about getting fired, how there's something fishy at his office. Cobb says that on top of everything, he got turned down for a new heart today. He may not live much longer. There's a knock at the door.

Cobb's bungalow, and the beach. It's MISTY. She's young, pretty, blonde,

athletic, smart, with attitude. A young Heather Locklear type. Misty went to high-school with Stahn, they haven't seen each other for a few years. She's a stewardess on the Earth-Moon shuttle. She brought a message for Cobb from Dex, who now runs her shuttle.

Misty plays the message, it's a talking hologram like the message from Princess Leia in *Star Wars*, it's the bopper Ralph telling Cobb to come to the Moon and get immortality. Ralph says Cobb can help make peace between Dex and the boppers. Ralph says he works for Dex now, and that Dex is good. Cobb wants to think it over for a minute, to meditate on the will of the cosmic One.

Stahn and Misty take a walk on the beach. Stahn says he just got fired for not watching a special Training Video that his Meta Net employers wanted to show him. Misty says she and the other stewardesses had to watch the Training Video, but she was able to stop up her ears and keep her eyes closed. She knows some robot rebels on the Moon, and they'd warned her not to watch or listen to the Training Video. Misty says if Cobb does come up to the Moon, he should be sure to help the rebels and not Dex. She says Ralph works for Dex. She says that if Cobb does come to the Moon he should help the rebels and not Dex.

Back in the bungalow, Cobb says he doesn't like the offer. Cobb says he'll take his chances down here on Earth, he's not going to the Moon on Dex's terms, he's not going to take a chance of helping Dex. Misty leaves, taking Cobb's refusal back to Dex.

"I wish we could go to the Moon," Stahn tells Cobb.

"We may still do it," says Cobb. "But let's do it on our own terms. We need money for the trip, and money for my new heart. Let's go to the casino. I've taught you enough. We can win. Even if I can't use the phones, I'm still allowed to gamble."

Video gambling casino. Stahn and Cobb are there, Cobb gambling bigtime. He's good at the machines as he's such a roboticist. Cobb gets into a high-stakes adventure game and starts winning big. Stahn is in the game, too, helping Cobb. They're playing an interactive game a little like the video games Doom, Quake, and Half-Life.

Video gambling casino, back room at the casino. There are a gang of five boppers called the LITTLE KIDDERS who work in the casino, three "men" and two "women." The Little Kidders boppers are slaves of Dex. They look like three greasy

Southern bikers and their two slutty girlfriends. They have soft plastic skin that they can form to look like anything they want. One of the "female" Little Kidders forms her face and body to resemble Misty, then beckons to Stahn from across the room. Stahn is fooled, he leaves the game, deserting Cobb, and hurries over to the bopper he thinks is Misty. He quickly realizes his mistake, as the bopper doesn't act like Misty at all. But before he can go back to the game, the sexy robot Little Kidder tells Stahn she can arrange for him to go to the Moon. Stahn is intrigued enough to go off with her to a back room of the casino, where the LITTLE KIDDERS tie him up and get ready to eat his brain.

Video gambling casino. Cobb is winning big in the casino. Suddenly there's a kind of flicker in the computer system and he totally loses. If Stahn had been there he might have been OK. He's angrily looking for Stahn. Stahn screwed up. And then a hologram of Dex appears within the video game. He shows an image of Stahn in the back room with the Little Kidders. If Cobb won't come to the Moon, the Little Kidders are going to eat Stahn's brain.

Act 2 (3/2/99)

Aboard a passenger space-shuttle. Cobb and Stahn on the shuttle to the Moon. The Little Kidders are on the flight too, as escorts. The real Misty is the stewardess, she's friendly to Cobb and Stahn, but cautious as Dex is watching everything, popping up on lots of screens.

The Disky dome, the surface of the Moon, a sublunar rebel base. On the Moon, in the domed city of Disky, Ralph is waiting as Dex's emissary to greet Cobb. But Misty gets Stahn and Cobb away and they ride out to the rebel bopper base. Wagstaff explains how Dex is eating some people's brains and how he's enslaving others by showing them the Training Video. He says Dex wants Cobb to help jimmy the Earth's computer networks so every screen in the world shows the Training Video. Cobb says he thinks the force of the One can counteract Dex's evil. But now the rebel base comes under attack.

Sublunar rebel base, Disky dome, Spa Dex. Dex's troops and the Little Kidders capture Cobb, Stahn, and Misty and take them to Spa Dex, a lunar resort in the Disky

dome which includes a hotel and a hospital. Dex talks to them from the wall screen.
Cobb says he'll go willingly if they don't hurt his son.

Streets of Disky, lunar hotel complex. Stahn and Misty escape, and try to save
Cobb, but they arrive too late and see Cobb being started up on a robot body in an
operating room of the Spa Dex. Cobb looks the same, only much younger and fitter.

Disky dome, moon spaceport. Ralph and the new Cobb go to Earth as passengers,
and Stahn, Misty, and Wagstaff stow away on the same ship.

Act 3 (3/2/99)

Office in the Florida Chore Boy factory. Cobb and Ralph are with the same evil
Bigwigs from the first act, in a glassed-in office with a view over an assembly line where
human workers are now making bopper robot bodies. Dex is on a wall-screen.

Dex says that thanks to what he's learned from assimilating Cobb, he's going to
be able to have his bopper slaves break into all the communications networks at once
tonight at 6 PM. They'll use the Meta Net offices as their base of operations. Starting at
6 PM, every computer and TV screen on Earth will start showing the Training Video
around the clock until every human is enslaved. He tells the Bigwigs that now Cobb can
show them the ultimate pay-off for working for Dex.

Cobb opens the door in his chest, revealing that he's now on a bopper body that
belongs to Dex. The Bigwigs look a little nervous. They realize now what all the bopper
bodies being made in the factory are for.

Cobb grimly insists he likes it. But we see struggle in his face.

The Little Kidders get to work eating the brains of the Bigwigs.

Earth spaceport, streets of Florida. The customs guards find Stahn, Misty and
Wagstaff. The guards have all seen the Training Video and are slaves of Dex. Stahn,
Misty and Wagstaff escape the guards and go to Cobb's bungalow to hide out and
regroup.

Streets of Florida. Cobb's bungalow is bugged of course, but for the moment the
Little Kidders are still busy finishing off the Bigwigs. Dex sends Cobb and Ralph to
capture Stahn, Misty, and Wagstaff. The two boppers can run in really big leaps. On the
way, Cobb gets in touch with the One and frees himself. He stops Ralph and manages to

communicate the message of cosmic harmony and goodness to Ralph, and Ralph too is free.

Cobb's bungalow. Stahn, Misty and Wagstaff at Cobb's bungalow. The door bursts open. It's Ralph and Cobb. They have to rush to Meta Net and try to stop the broadcast of the Training Video.

The Meta Net offices. Lots of action and fighting. The fighting should in some ways be reminiscent of the fighting scenes in action video games like Doom, Quake and Half-Life. Cobb dies nobly, turning the tide of the physical battle. Misty and Stahn are exposed to the Training Video, but thanks to what Cobb has taught him of the One, Stahn is able see the Training Video and channel its negative energy into a positive force. He transmutes the Training Video into something positive and brings back Misty. And then he and Misty manage to have the Meta Net send out the good version of the message, instead of the original enslaving Training Video. Thanks to what Stahn learned from Cobb, the original Training Video has become a message of peace and good will and freedom. At the same time Ralph sends a message of liberation to all the enslaved boppers on the Moon, and Dex completely loses his power.

Cobb's bungalow. Misty, Stahn, Ralph and Wagstaff have a copy of Cobb's software and a blank bopper body. They put the software on the body and Cobb is back. Everyone's happy, but then an image of Dex appears on the TV. He says he'll be back, only next time he's going to use wetware instead of software.

Treatment for Software, *August 20, 2000*

Summary

Some themes of the movie: the blurring of the line between machines and humans, the question of whether we will rule machines or the machines will rule us, the notion that intelligent machines can evolve, and above all, the idea that the human mind is like *software* that kind be moved from body to body.

The movie is a science-fiction thriller with an intelligent, slightly humorous tone. There are memorable effects and a lot of action. There is drama, romance, and redemption, with a positive resolution.

The heroes are old Cobb and young Stahn and Misty. The villain is a robot named Dex.

The movie is about Cobb, Stahn and Misty preventing some evil robots from starting to program humans via the genetic code, just as humans in the past have programmed computers.

Themes

The emotional touchstones of the movie are the following:

• Fear and resolution: Will technology will rob us of our humanity? It doesn't have to if we don't act like machines.

• Wonder: Look at all the amazing things that the future can bring!

• Adventure: We want to see Stahn succeed in his battle against evil.

• Romance: We want Stahn and Misty to get together.

• Redemption: We want to see Cobb make good for past mistakes.

The robots on the moon are called Boppers; there are two warring factions, the friendly Low Boppers and the evil, decadent High Boppers who want to invade Earth. The leader of the High Boppers is a robot called Dex, who is the robot equivalent of a

mad scientist. Dex is an individual robot, humanoid in appearance, and *not* a face on a screen.

The key SF ideas to be unveiled during the movie are these:

• Intelligent robots will evolve.

• People can become robots. That is, robots can "eat" a brain to extract the software and make a mechanical copy of a person.

• Robots can become people. That is, bioengineering will provide a way to load a computer-stored personality onto a human body.

• The pay-off: people can get new bodies — by moving into a robot body and then back into a human body.

The Human Characters

Cobb is an aging genius in exile and in failing health. Cobb is a little sad and beaten-down, but with a spark of deep wisdom. Cobb invented the evolving moon robots, and they're named Boppers after him. Cobb deliberately designed the Boppers to be free agents, unwilling to obey human commands. Government and big business got mad at him about this and he's not allowed to use a computer at all anymore. His pressing issue is that he's had several heart attacks, could die soon, and can't afford good medical care.

Stahn is Cobb's orphaned nephew. He's an eager young guy who longs for love and adventure. He has a rebellious streak and doesn't tend to fit in. He's likes messing with computers and calls himself a cyberpunk, but in fact he's not all that good at it. He's in his mid 20s and is driving a cab. He's waiting for his life to begin.

Misty is young, pretty, athletic, ambitious, the same age as Stahn. Se went to high-school with Stahn, they haven't seen each other for a few years. She was class president, and she was in with the jocks-and-cheerleaders crowd, while Stahn was an outsider. She was always a little curious about Stahn, even though he didn't fit into her plans. She's working hard as a stewardess on the Earth-Moon shuttle. She'd hoped by now to have met a successful guy to get serious with, but it hasn't happened.

The Robot Characters

The moon robots are called "Boppers."

The Boppers break into two castes, the "High Bopper robots" and the "Low Bopper robots." Think aristocrats vs. peasants, or tycoons vs. workers. The High Bopper robots are in control of the Moon's economy and have begun literally enslaving the Low Bopper robots, who are now in a state of open revolt.

All the Boppers, both High and Low, are roughly the size of humans, and many are humanoid in appearance. The High Bopper robots can afford flashier bodies than the Low Bopper robots, but that's the only difference.

Many of the Low Bopper robots are slaves who are completely controlled by High Bopper owner robots. The slave robots have glowing red cubes plugged into their chests, these are like modems used by the owner robots to control them. The red control cubes are called "slave cubes".

Dex is the robot who is the leader of the High Bopper robots. Let me emphasize that Dex is a humanoid robot and not a face on a screen. He's the mad scientist of the Boppers. Think Darth Vader with no human inside. But more quirky and decadent. Dex has THREE HIGH Bopper ROBOT friends who feature in a number of scenes; they resemble two biker guys and a punk girl, although they are obviously machines and not humans.

Wagstaff and Ralph Number are the two main characters among the Low Boppers,. They'll be roughly like C3PO and R2D2 in *Star Wars*. Wagstaff will be fairly serious and into leading the rebellion against the High Boppers. He'll be glossy and new-looking. All business. Ralph will be older, dented (he was in fact one of the very first Boppers), and kind of quirky. They are leaders of the impending revolt of the Low Bopper robots against the High Bopper robots.

The Threat

Dex and the High Bopper robots want to invade Earth. Why? Because they find the Moon is sterile and dull, the Earth is rich and wonderful. So why aren't they on Earth already? Their mechanical bodies don't do well on Earth. The sophisticated Moon-evolved processors of the Bopper bodies require very cold temperatures, and when they

come to Earth they need to keep cooling of by stepping into bulky refrigeration units.

The poor-but-honest Low Bopper robots like it on the Moon. Life on the Moon is what the race of Boppers has evolved for. They don't share the High Bopper robots' obsession with invading Earth at all. If anything, the Low Boppers are more interested in going further out into space.

How do the High Bopper robots plan to invade Earth? Dex will to use a biological "wetware virus" to move robot software into human bodies. It's a short-lived virus that has *triple*-helix DNA. The third DNA strand is programmed with a robot mind's entire personality. Dex refers to this DNA code for a robot's mind as "wetware." Being infected by the wetware virus has the effect of copying a robot's personality onto a human host. The original robot survives, but now the human permanently has the same personality as the robot.

The movie's ticking clock will start when Dex sends a tanker ship towards Earth to scatter the wetware virus into the Earth's atmosphere. The wetware virus will put the triple-strand DNA robot software into every cell of every human and animal on the planet.

But Dex can't finish off the design for his wetware virus without a missing piece of information from Cobb, the long binary string known as the "activator boot code." Cobb knows it by heart, and he's never written it down. Once Dex gets this information from Cobb, the invasion can proceed.

Act 1 (8/20/2000)

We start in a factory on the Moon where robots are building robots. We see a fairly inexpensive-looking robot being made. His two robot "parents" eagerly await him; they've paid for his body and in return they're allowed to copy a blend of their two software programs onto the new-born robot. The parents are worker robots; from their conversation we learn that there are two factions of the Moon robots, the plainer worker ones and the fancier boss robots. Boss robots own the robot-building factory.

The parents are pleased with the newborn robots abilities; he's a little smarter than them. We learn that over the years, the robots' self-reproductive process has allowed them to evolve to become as smart as people. The new robot is to be indentured

as a servant to a boss robot named Dex. A red cube is plugged into his chest as a marker of his servitude.

We follow the new worker robot's point of view as he walks by the Moon spaceport. The worker robots are on strike. Trade with Earth has stopped: we see piled crates of the Moon's main export, which is tank-grown human organs. Two worker robots named Wagstaff and Ralph Numbers are haranguing the crowd. And then the boss robots violently attach the strikers. The cube on the new worker robot's chest glows and a voice in his head tells him to move on. He proceeds to the home of his new employer: Dex

Like the other boss robots, Dex has a much fancier body than the worker robots. In his tower near the organ tank factory, Dex has a little biotechnology workbench. He's been experimenting with programming the genetic code. He has a large, pressurized tank of tropical fish and he's gotten to the point where he can program them in a rudimentary way. He injects a fish with something that causes the fish to start swimming in right-angle turns and to then peck out a message like "My name is Dex" on a keypad. But after a minute or two of this, the fish dies.

Three of Dex's boss robot friends come to visit him, and he tells them a bit about his plan to start programming the human genome. "People programmed robots," he says. "Now the robots will program people." He does another demonstration of his technique, this time on a dog, with the dog struggling to make sounds like speech before suddenly dying.

Dex's friends ask why does Dex want program humans? His answer: first of all for a kind of revenge. To do to the humans what they've done to the robots. Second of all, having humans run simulations of robot personalities will be a next step in evolution. Thirdly Dex wants to be able put a copy of his personality down onto a flesh body in the rich milieu of planet Earth. "I won't personally experience it," says Dex. "But an exact copy of me will have the experience. That's just as good."

The catch is that, in order to get his "wetware programs" to work, Dex needs a special secret software code from Cobb Anderson, the designer of the original Moon robots. The secret code is called the "activator boot code," and without it, Dex can't properly program himself onto wetware. It's a long string of zeroes and ones that Cobb

knows by heart and has never written down.

Dex's three boss robot friends agree to get Cobb to come to the Moon. For the sake of secrecy, they'll go talk to him in person, even though robots are forbidden by the humans to set foot on Earth. The boss robots take off for Earth, using rockets in their legs.

Cobb is sitting on a beach in Florida drinking sherry from a bottle in a paper bag and watching the sunset. He has the scar of a heart operation on his chest. Behind him are cheap government-built houses for old people. He's talking to a woman friend his age. A chopper goes by dropping a parachute with bundles of food for the old people, who scurry after it. This is what Social Security has come to. The woman takes off through the cheap houses, running after the food drop. Cobb waits on the beach, he can't run, his heart is on the point of pooping out. And he can't afford treatment.

The chopper circles around and unexpectedly lands not far from Cobb. A Secret Service agent in shades and a black suit walks over and hassles Cobb. Earth's radar picked up some robots flying down to the Earth, but they evaded an attempt at interception. It looks as if they may have landed in some swamps nearby. The agent asks if Cobb knows anything about it. It comes out in their conversation that Cobb served time for treason for having designed the original Moon robots to evolve out of human control, and that the man who led the persecution of Cobb is the President now. Cobb doesn't know anything; the agent leaves.

Stahn is a slacker who drives a Mr. Frostee ice-cream truck. As night falls, the three bad robots flag Stahn down near a swamp. They're not doing at all well in Earth's warm temperatures and wet, bio-rich air. They're getting gnats in their system, mold on their chips. They're like fish out of water. Like a laptop on a sandy beach. They're lost, and they don't dare use any kind of radio link to get information. Stahn thinks they're cool-looking, and he likes that they're forbidden to be on Earth. They want to ride in back, in the freezer, they don't like the heat. They ask Stahn to take them to Cobb, and Stahn happens to know where Cobb lives.

At Cobb's house the three bad robots lie to Cobb and tell him he's needed as a peacemaker between the warring robot factions. They also promise to give Cobb a new heart if he comes to the Moon. Stahn is there for the conversation. He says he wants to

come too. A beat, and then the bad robots say yes. They don't want to leave a witness. They give Cobb and Stahn shuttle tickets, fake IDs, and film-thin plastic masks that mold their faces into different shapes.

On the shuttle to the Moon, Stahn hooks up with a stewardess named Misty. He went to high-school with her, admiring her from afar. Misty was an ambitious class-president and too good for an outsider like Stahn. But she was always a little interested in him. And her stewardess job seems not be leading anywhere. She and Stahn agree to have a dinner date on the Moon.

On the Moon, Stahn and Cobb check into a room in the Luna Palace Hotel. Dex comes to call and tells Cobb he's actually going to do better than give him a new heart, he's going to give him an entirely new body. A robot body. Stahn is shocked at the notion, but Cobb is pleased with the idea. "It's the logical next step," says Cobb. "My mind is software. All I need is new hardware for it. And I don't care if I have to stay on the Moon forever. I'm sick of Earth that prick of a President." Dex picks up on the resentment. "You'll make peace on the Moon," Dex tells Cobb. "And then the President will see how great a man you are. We'll teach him a lesson."

Dex's three bad robot friends arrive with a new robot body for Cobb in a crate. It looks quite a bit like the old man, though at present its inertly lying there. Stahn asks how the transfer process will work. Will it just be a matter of running a wire from Cobb to the new body? "I'm afraid not," says Cobb. "A brain isn't make of chips. The information storage is mostly in the wiring of the neurons, and in molecules of the cells. Extracting the information will be an — irreversible process. Get out of here. You don't want to watch." "Aren't you scared?" "Hell yes, I'm scared. But I was going to die soon anyway. This is my shot at immortality. Beat it, Stahn. Go on your date. By the time you get back tonight, I'll be a new man." "Not really a man," says Stahn doubtfully. "Something better then," says Cobb. "The next step."

Stahn goes for a dinner date with Misty in the restaurant across the marketplace from the Luna Palace Hotel. They have a romantic conversation. Their waiters are worker robots.

Intercut their date with the sight of Dex and his three friends are extracting Cobb's software from his brain. At first they're probing him with wires taped to his

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head, showing him slides, asking him questions. But then they actually take out his brain and microtome it to map out its detailed physical structure, and as soon as they analyze each slice, the puree it to extract and analyze the memory RNA molecules. It's a disturbing sight, almost as if they're eating his brain.

On his way to the bathroom, Stahn makes his way into the restaurant kitchen and learns that most of the workers are in fact slaves of a boss robot sitting back there in air-conditioned comfort. The waiters have glowing red cubes in their chest. These are called slave-cubes, and a robot with slave cube must obey the boss who's linked ot the cube.

Stahn realizes Dex will make Cobb his slave. He and Misty hurry across the marketplace to warn Cobb before it's too late, but boss robots keep getting in their way to slow them down, but Ralph Numbers appears to help them make it to the hotel.

Act 2 (8/20/2000)

Cobb wakes up from the operation, looks over his new robot body, and is elated. His mind is powerful and he can link into masses of data on the web. The blood and the remains of his flesh body have been cleaned away, Dex's sinister friends are gone. Dex is sitting in a corner of the room watching him.

Now Dex reveals his true colors. He demands that Cobb tell him the activator boot code so he can realize his plan to program the human genome and put robot personalities onto humans. "You'll get sick of the Moon, Cobb," Dex says. "But if you give me the activator boot code, I can program you back onto a human body." "No," says Cobb. "It would be wrong. And it would start a terrible war." "I'll tell you what," says Dex. "You give me the code and the very first person I take over will be the President. Earth will unilaterally disarm. Robots and humans will be free to merge. It's the next step!" A thoughtful beat, but Cobb still says no.

"All right then," says Dex. "I'll have to make you." There's a clicking in Cobb's chest and a rectangular red line lights up. Cobb feels at the line and a little door swings open. There's a glowing red slave design a wetware virus to put the robot's programs onto humans. Cobb says he won't help — and gets an ugly surprise. There's a slave cube hidden inside a door in Cobb's chest. Memorable scene. Whenever the cube lights

up, Cobb is under Dex's control. Dex gives a command, Cobb's chest glows red, and Cobb regurgitates the information, a long sequence of zeroes and ones that comes out of his mouth sounding like a fax tone. Even though he's in a new robot body, Cobb is under Dex's control. Dex runs off to add the finishing touch to his wetware virus.

Stahn and Misty appear, too late to give any warnings. Cobb starts telling what's happened and how they have to stop Dex, but then the red slave cube on his chest lights up. Since the little door is closed, you see the light as a rectangular red line around the edges of where the door seamlessly fits into his chest. Dex is checking back in on him. And now all of a sudden Cobb is trying to kill Stahn and Misty --- Dex is making Cobb do it lest the two spread the word about the invasion. Fight scene. To keep himself from having to kill Stahn, Cobb, in a moment of will, throws himself off a balcony and shatters on the ground.

Stahn and Misty escape into domed, pressurized tourist area of the Moon city near the hotel, a wonderfully sleazy bazaar with robots dealing all sorts of strange things. One of the Low Bopper dealer robots is Ralph Number; he was one the very first Bopper robots; people are paying to have their pictures taken with him. Ralph is talking to his Low Bopper robot friend Wagstaff.

Dex's three bad robot friends pursue Stahn and Misty through the marketplace, knocking things over. Chase scene. Finally Stahn and Misty are all but cornered, and there's no escape but to go out through the bubble wall and into the vacuum of the Bopper quarter in which the robots live free of any air. They manage to get two robot-made spacesuits from the colorful old Low Bopper robot hawker Ralph Number. They escape through an airlock out into the Bopper quarter on the lunar surface.

In the distance they see Dex's tower. The best plan seems to be to go there and to try and stop him from attacking Earth. But now the three bad robots pick up their scent again. Chase scene. Misty and Stahn run through the robot factory from the first scene where the Boppers are, as always, building new robots.

When they finally shake their pursuers and get a moment to themselves they realize they're running out of air. Ticking clock! They're not too far from the "pink-tank" factory, a pressurized air-filled buildings in which cloned, blank-brained human bodies are grown in tanks to be harvested for organs to sell to ailing Earthlings. Next to

the pink-tank factory is in fact Dex's tower. Stahn and Misty get in among the pink-tanks where they can breathe. And then Misty hears Dex's voice. The factory connects in with Dex's biotech lab. They creep close and watch him.

Dex already has his wetware virus functional. He injects it into a rat. It's a Dex-RAT now. The rat stands up on his hind legs and begins talking in Dex's voice. Now Dex takes a blank-brained clone out of the organ tanks and gives it the wetware virus. Dex's personality fills its brain. The human Dex-CLONE begins talking in Dex's voice as well, the Dex-rat and the dripping, tank-fresh human Dex-clone and Dex standing there congratulating each other, all in the same voice. They have acquired Dex's personality from the wetware virus. Memorable scene.

Stahn makes a lunge for Dex, risking all on the chance to kill him. Fight scene. Stahn manages to knock out the clone and is on the point of killing Dex, but then the gets hold of Misty. He gets Stahn to throw over his weapon. And then Dex laughs and gets ready to shoot Stahn. Just then, the rebel Low Bopper robot Wagstaff tunnels up through the floor and saves Stahn, taking him off to the rebel robot headquarters. Dex's THREE HIGH Bopper ROBOT henchmen have appeared and are laying down a fierce wall of fire, and Misty must be left behind.

Stahn asks Wagstaff how he knew to come. "Cobb sent me," says Wagstaff.

"But he's dead!" says Stahn. And then he hears Cobb's voice talking to him like Obi-Wan Kenobi. Cobb is alive as software inside the communication web.

Act 3 (8/20/2000)

From the rebel Bopper base, Stahn sees a tanker ship take off towards Earth at a very high velocity. He knows it's loaded with the wetware virus and will be reaching Earth's atmosphere in a few hours. Ticking clock! The only way to stop the ship is to send someone after it. But the High Boppers have automated sentinel cannons to control the airspace above the Moon, and if any of the rebels tries to fly after the ship, they'll be shot down and, even worse, Dex will be able to find and attack the rebel base.

Stahn is with the Low Bopper robots Wagstaff and Ralph Number. Stahn tries some of his computer-hacking skills to disable the sentinel cannons, and succeeds only in bringing on an attack by the High Boppers. Fight scene.

The Low Boppers lose the skirmish with heavy casualties, though Stahn and a platoon including Ralph Number and Wagstaff survive. They are holed up in the rebel base, with the High Boppers outside, not yet ready to try and come inside.

They go to the communications center and check the progress of the wetware tanker. It's getting close to Earth, moving in an oddly darting and weaving pattern, almost like a smart enemy in a videogame. "Someone has to warn Earth," says Stahn. "Let me do it." He manages to get through to a GENERAL. They've already noticed the incoming tanker and have been trying to shoot it with smart missiles. But they can't hit it. It's smarter than the missiles. We see the tanker darting around like a thing possessed. And now when Stahn tells the general that the tanker holds a virus that will take over the minds of everyone on Earth, the general gets furious. "We're going to launch everything we've got at Einstein. Even if we go out, the Moon's going to be a cinder."

"Good going, Stahn," says Ralph Number, "Now let me talk." "It won't matter that much to the High Bopper robots if you blow us up," Ralph Numbers tells the general. "Their personalities will have already made it to Earth. For them the Moon is a piece of crap to leave behind, but for the Low Bopper robots it's home. Don't launch yet. We can still find a way to stop the tanker." "You have fifteen minutes," says the general. Double ticking clock!

The only hope for humanity and the Low Boppers is to capture Dex and somehow make him send someone to blow up the ship. The remaining Low Boppers infiltrate Einstein through a secret tunnel, pop up and launch a frontal assault on Dex's tower as a distraction. Fight scene. Meanwhile Stahn, Wagstaff and Ralph Number infiltrate the tower by way of the pink-tank factory.

Stahn hears Misty calling to him and finds her locked in a room. He's overjoyed because she looks fine. But she's stand-offish and a bit odd acting. "It's only that I'm so worried," she says. "Let me take you to Dex's room. You can surprise him. Leave your robot friends behind, they're too noisy."

Stahn and Misty creep up and open Dex's room. Yes, he's staring off into space, monitoring his inputs from the distant wetware tanker. Stahn walks up behind him, raises a gun to his head — and then suddenly Misty snatches the gun out of his hand and sticks

it in his back. Dex chuckles.

A line of red light is glowing in Misty's chest. She's not human-Misty, she's robot-Misty! Dex has eaten her brain and replaced her by a robot replacement! Misty is under tight Dex control, she has a gun in her hand, she's going to shoot Stahn.

Misty is flirting with Dex and saying that she's glad to be in with him. She says she'd *voluntarily* kill Stahn even if she wasn't under Dex's control. Intrigued, Dex says he'll temporarily release his control over Misty to let her prove her loyalty. "If you'll help me, you'll be my Empress," says Dex. "And by the way, don't think of trying to shoot me. You'd never hit me. I'm too fast." The red light in her chest goes off. A long pause, with Misty standing there holding the gun to Stahn's head. You can see on Stahn's face that he's uneasily remembering how ambitious Misty is. "All right, Dex," says Misty. "Here we go."

But then Misty whips open the door in her chest, and Stahn pulls out Misty's slave-cube and they physically overpower Dex, Misty holding Dex's arms pinioned. But how to stop the tanker? Simply killing Dex will do no good.

Stahn hears Cobb's voice. "Reverse the slave-cube's polarity," says Cobb's voice "It's a two-way switch." Stahn jiggers the slave-cube and then Misty puts it back in her chest and now Dex is under her control.

Time is almost running out. At Misty's command, Dex uses his experimental-class leg rockets to blast off at an unheard-of speed. He overtakes the wetware-virus-laden tanker just outside Earth's atmosphere and smashes into it, destroying it in a great ball of flame. Memorable scene. On the Earth, the GENERAL gives a grin of relief and calls off the missile attack on the Moon.

There's one remaining dose of the wetware virus in the lab. Misty and Stahn pick out a new tank-grown human body for her. Misty says she feels like she's looking for the perfect prom-dress. "Only this time you're going with the right guy," says Stahn. And then they find that the tanks have already speed-grown a clone of Misty's old body. "This is the perfect body for you, Misty. You already were perfect." They use the virus to put Misty back into human flesh. Memorable scene. Misty is a human again. And the virus isn't contagious, she's like a regular person now. But what about the robot Misty? She's still alive, watching a little jealously from the side. "Which of us do you like

better?" she asks Stahn

Before he can answer there's a sudden crash and squeal. It's the Dex-RAT and the Dex-CLONE, coming out of the darkness. Fight scene. Human-Misty is scared of the rat, but robot-Misty stomps it flat. "Sister!" they say to each other and give a high five. But now the Dex-clone has Stahn by the neck. It's dragging him off, and there's nothing they can do. But wait! Out of the shadows appears a Dex-like robot and — kills the Dex-clone.

Who's the mystery robot? It's Cobb, who's managed to download himself off the communications net and down into a spare robot body Dex had in his closet. Cobb likes it this way and plans to stay on the Moon as the Boppers' new leader. "Only if you can beat me in the election," says robot-Misty. Stahn and human-Misty head back to Earth together. Happy ending.

Treatment for **Software***, August 21, 2000*

Summary

The movie is a science-fiction thriller with an intelligent, somewhat humorous tone. Some themes of the movie: the blurring of the line between machines and humans, the question of whether we will rule machines or the machines will rule us, the notion that intelligent machines can evolve, and above all, the idea that the human mind is like *software* that can be moved from body to body.

The heroes are old Cobb and young Stahn and Misty. The villain is a robot named Dex.

These days people program robots. Dex wants to turn the tables. He wants robots to program people. Cobb, Stahn and Misty stop him.

In Act I, Cobb, Stahn and Misty go to the Moon. Cobb's software is transferred to a robot copy, with Cobb's flesh body being destroyed as part of the software extraction process. Stahn discovers that Dex will control Cobb's new body.

In Act II, With Stahn's help, Cobb heroically destroys himself. Yet Cobb lives on as software in the robots' version of the Web. Stahn and Misty discover that Dex has now learned to program the human genetic code. Misty is captured by Dex and Stahn escapes to the rebel robots' base.

In Act III, Dex launches a drone to Earth containing a tiny mosquito-like device that stings the President and implants Dex's personality. The President prepares to kill off much of the human race. In cyberspace, Cobb's software does battle with Dex's software and conquers him. Misty has been taken over by Dex as well, but Stahn and Cobb save her. And then they remove Dex's personality from the President. The rebel robots conquer the bad robots. Stahn and Misty return to Earth together, and Cobb stays on the Moon in a new robot body.

Act 1 (8/21/2000)

We start in a factory on the Moon where robots are building robots. [Note made

1/2/2004. Looking back at this, it occurs to me that in the novel Software, there aren't "robot factories." It's all decentralized. Would be nicer to do this as a scene in a craft-robot's studio, like the scene where Ralph is rebuilt.] We see a fairly inexpensive-looking robot being made. His two robot "parents" eagerly await him; they've paid for his body and in return they're allowed to copy a blend of their two software programs onto the new-born robot. The parents are worker robots; from their conversation we learn that there are two factions of the Moon robots, the plainer worker ones and the fancier boss robots. Boss robots own the robot-building factory.

The parents are pleased with the newborn robot's abilities; he's a little smarter than them. We learn that over the years, the robots' self-reproductive process has allowed them to evolve to become as smart as people. The new robot is to be indentured as a servant to a boss robot named Dex. A red cube is plugged into his chest as a marker of his servitude.

We follow the new worker robot's point of view as says good-bye to his parents and walks to his new job. The robot quarter has no air, and is exposed beneath empty space. It's like a futuristic prairie town beneath a great black sky that has Earth floating in it. Off to one side is an air-filled dome with the hotel and marketplace for the human tourists. Near the dome is a spaceport. And beyond the spaceport is a big building with a tower.

The worker robot stops to watch some excitement at the spaceport. The worker robots are on strike. Trade with Earth has stopped: we see piled crates of the Moon's main export, which is tank-grown human organs. Two worker robots named Wagstaff and Ralph Numbers are haranguing the crowd. And then some boss robots violently attack the strikers. The bosses have rockets in their legs and can fly, while the worker robots can only run and leap. The workers scatter. The cube on the new worker robot's chest glows and a voice in his head tells him to move on. He proceeds to the home of his new employer Dex. Dex lives in a tower next to a factory where organs are grown.

Like the other boss robots, Dex has a much fancier body than the worker robots. In his tower near the organ tank factory, Dex has a little biotechnology workbench. He's been experimenting with programming the genetic code. He has a large, pressurized tank of tropical fish and he's gotten to the point where he can program them in a rudimentary

way. He injects a fish with something that causes the fish to start swimming in right-angle turns and to then peck out a message like "My name is Dex" on a keypad. But after a minute or two of this, the fish dies.

Three of Dex's boss robot friends come to visit him, and he tells them a bit about his plan to start programming the human genome. "People programmed robots," he says. "Now the robots will program people." He does another demonstration of his technique, this time on a dog, with the dog struggling to make sounds like speech before suddenly dying.

Dex's friends ask why does Dex want program humans? His answer: first of all for a kind of revenge. To do to the humans what they've done to the robots. Second of all, having humans run simulations of robot personalities will be a next step in evolution. Thirdly Dex wants to be able put a copy of his personality down onto a flesh body in the rich milieu of planet Earth. "I won't personally experience it," says Dex. "But an exact copy of me will have the experience. That's just as good."

The catch is that, in order to get his biological "mind-virus" to work, Dex needs a special secret software code from Cobb Anderson, the designer of the original Moon robots. The secret code is called the "activator boot code," and without it, Dex can't properly program himself onto the human genetic code. The secret code is a long string of zeroes and ones that Cobb knows by heart and has never written down.

Dex's three boss robot friends agree to get Cobb to come to the Moon. For the sake of secrecy, they'll go talk to him in person, even though robots are forbidden by the humans to set foot on Earth. The boss robots take off for Earth, using rockets in their legs.

Cobb is sitting on a beach in Florida drinking sherry from a bottle in a paper bag and watching the sunset. He has the scar of a heart operation on his chest. Behind him are cheap government-built houses for old people. He's talking to a woman friend his age. A chopper goes by dropping a parachute with bundles of food for the old people, who scurry after it. This is what Social Security has come to. The woman takes off through the cheap houses, running after the food drop.   Cobb waits on the beach, he can't run, his heart is on the point of pooping out. And he can't afford treatment.

The chopper circles around and unexpectedly lands not far from Cobb. A Secret

Service agent in shades and a black suit walks over and hassles Cobb. Earth's radar picked up some robots flying down to the Earth, but they evaded an attempt at interception. It looks as if they may have landed in some swamps nearby. The agent asks if Cobb knows anything about it. It comes out in their conversation that Cobb served time for treason for having designed the original Moon robots to evolve out of human control, and that the man who led the persecution of Cobb is the President now. Cobb doesn't know anything; the agent leaves.

Stahn is a slacker and casual computer-hacker who drives a Mr. Frostee ice-cream truck. As night falls, the three bad robots flag Stahn down near a swamp. They're not doing at all well in Earth's warm temperatures and wet, bio-rich air. They're getting gnats in their system, mold on their chips. They're like fish out of water. Like a laptop on a sandy beach. They're lost, and they don't dare use any kind of radio link to get information. Stahn thinks they're cool-looking, and he likes that they're forbidden to be on Earth. They want to ride in back, in the freezer, they don't like the heat. They ask Stahn to take them to Cobb, and Stahn happens to know where Cobb lives.

At Cobb's house the three bad robots lie to Cobb and tell him he's needed as a peacemaker between the warring robot factions. They also promise to give Cobb a new heart if he comes to the Moon. Stahn is there for the conversation. He says he wants to come too. A beat, and then the bad robots say yes. They don't want to leave a witness. They give Cobb and Stahn shuttle tickets, fake IDs, and film-thin plastic masks that mold their faces into different shapes.

On the shuttle to the Moon, Stahn hooks up with a stewardess named Misty. He went to high-school with her, admiring her from afar. Misty was an ambitious class-president and too good for an outsider like Stahn. But she was always a little interested in him. And her stewardess job seems not be leading anywhere. She and Stahn agree to have a dinner date on the Moon.

On the Moon, Stahn and Cobb check into a room on the tenth floor of the Luna Palace Hotel, a structure with hallways that are balconies along the outside of the building. Dex comes to call and tells Cobb he's actually going to do better than give him a new heart, he's going to give him an entirely new body. A robot body. Stahn is shocked at the notion, but Cobb is pleased with the idea. "It's the logical next step," says

Cobb. "My mind is software. All I need is new hardware for it. And I don't care if I have to stay on the Moon forever. I'm sick of Earth that prick of a President." Dex picks up on the resentment. "You'll make peace on the Moon," Dex tells Cobb. "And then the President will see how great a man you are. We'll teach him a lesson."

Dex's three bad robot friends arrive with a new robot body for Cobb in a crate. It looks quite a bit like the old man, though at present its inertly lying there. Stahn asks how the transfer process will work. Will it just be a matter of running a wire from Cobb to the new body? "I'm afraid not," says Cobb. "A brain isn't make of chips. The information storage is mostly in the wiring of the neurons, and in molecules of the cells. Extracting the information will be an — irreversible process. Get out of here. You don't want to watch." "Aren't you scared?" asks Stahn. "Hell yes, I'm scared," says Cobb. "But I was going to die soon anyway. This is my shot at immortality. Beat it, Stahn. Go on your date. By the time you get back tonight, I'll be a new man." "Not really a man," says Stahn doubtfully. "Something better," says Cobb. "The next step."

Stahn goes for a dinner date with Misty in a restaurant across the marketplace from the Luna Palace Hotel. The hotel and the marketplace are in a domed, pressurized tourist area of the Moon city near. Stahn and Misty have a romantic conversation. Their waiters are worker robots.

Intercut their date with the sight of Dex and his three friends are extracting Cobb's software from his brain. At first they're probing him with wires taped to his head, showing him slides, asking him questions. But then they actually take out his brain and cut it into thin slices to map out its detailed physical structure, and as soon as they map each slice, they puree it to extract and analyze the memory RNA molecules. It's a disturbing sight, almost as if they're eating his brain.

Meanwhile at the restaurant, Stahn makes his way into the restaurant kitchen and learns that most of the workers are in fact slaves of a boss robot sitting back there in air-conditioned comfort. The waiters have glowing red cubes in their chest. These are called slave-cubes, and a robot with slave cube must obey the boss who's linked to the cube.

Stahn realizes Dex will make Cobb his slave. He and Misty hurry across the marketplace to warn Cobb before it's too late.

Act 2 (8/21/2000)

Cobb wakes up from the operation, looks over his new robot body, and is elated. His mind is powerful and he can link into masses of data on the robots' version of the Web. The bloody remains of his flesh body have been cleaned away, Dex's sinister friends are gone. Dex is sitting in a corner of the room watching Cobb.

Now Dex reveals his true colors. He demands that Cobb tell him the activator boot code so he can realize his plan to program the human genome and put robot personalities onto humans. "You'll get sick of the Moon, Cobb," Dex says. "But if you give me the activator boot code, I can program you back onto a human body." "No," says Cobb. "It would be wrong. And it would start a terrible war." "I'll tell you what," says Dex. "You give me the code and the very first person I take over will be the President. Earth will unilaterally disarm. Robots and humans will be free to merge. It's the next step!" A thoughtful beat, but Cobb still says no.

"All right then," says Dex. "I'll force you." There's a clicking in Cobb's chest and a rectangular red line lights up. Cobb feels at his chest and a little door swings open. There's a glowing red slave cube in there. "Tell me the activator boot code," says Dex. Cobb opens his mouth wide and regurgitates the information, a long sequence of clicks and hisses that comes out of his mouth sounding like a fax tone. "And now I have work to do," says Dex. "We're going to teach the President a lesson." He leaves the room and walks along an open balcony to push an elevator button. The elevator is slow in coming, so Dex impatiently jumps off the balcony and jets across the marketplace towards an airlock that leads out to the robot quarter.

Stahn and Misty emerge from the elevator and hurry along the balcony to Cobb's room. For the moment Cobb isn't under Dex's control. Cobb starts telling them that Dex double-crossed him and made him a slave, and that Dex is planning to take over the President and then invade Earth, and that they have to stop Dex, but then the red slave cube in his chest lights up. Since the little door is closed, you see the light as a rectangular red line around the edges of where the door seamlessly fits into his chest. Dex is checking back in on him.

And now Cobb starts trying to kill Stahn and Misty — Dex is making Cobb do it lest the two spread the word about the impending attack on Earth. The fight spills out

onto the balcony, and Cobb is choking Stahn, with Misty fruitlessly clawing at his back. "Don't do it, Cobb!" shrieks Misty. "Remember who you are!" In a brief moment of will, Cobb lets Stahn fling him off the balcony. He has no leg rockets. There's an odd instant in which Dex tries to make Cobb's body desperately try to climb up through the air, like a cartoon character who realizes he's stepped off a cliff. But Cobb drops the ten stories to the ground and shatters. Apparently he's dead.

Dex tells his three bad robot friends to go after Stahn and Misty. Stahn and Misty hurry through the marketplace near the hotel. It's a wonderfully sleazy bazaar with robots dealing all sorts of strange things. The three bad robots are chasing after Stahn and Misty. They find a temporary hiding place in the booth of a colorful old worker robot hawker Ralph Numbers. Ralph already knows what's happened. "You're Cobb's friends," he says. "Cobb made us free, but not to enslave humans. We have to help Cobb stop Dex." "Cobb is dead," says Stahn. "Not necessarily," says Ralph. "Yes, he lost his new body. But I suspect his software is still around." "What can we do against Dex?" asks Stahn. "Use your human ingenuity," says Ralph. "You have an advantage over the rest of us. You're immune to the magnetic fields that Dex uses to protect his tower."

Meanwhile the bad robots are working their way through the marketplace, systematically tearing down ever single structure, looking for Misty and Stahn. They're in the next booth over now. Ralph gives them a couple of transparent light-weight slip-on spacesuits. "Run," he says. "But remember, there's only a half-hour's worth of air. Try and make it to the organ tanks by Dex's tower. There's air in there."

Stahn and Misty are all but cornered, and there's no escape but to go out through the bubble wall and into the vacuum of the robot quarter in which the robots live free of any air. In the distance they see Dex's tower. But now the three bad robots are on their tail. They chase them through the robot factory from the first scene where the robots are, as always, building new robots.

When they finally shake their pursuers and get a moment to themselves they realize they're running out of air. They make their way to the factory with the organ tanks. It's a pressurized air-filled building in which cloned, blank-brained human bodies are grown in tanks to be harvested for organs to sell to ailing Earthlings. Next to the organ-tank factory is Dex's tower. Stahn and Misty get in among the organ-tanks where

they can breathe

Right inside the factory, Stahn notices a new-looking little rocket, a tiny drone vehicle aimed at Earth. He pries at it curiously, and manages to make a copy of its control software. Later he'll figure out what it's for. But now Misty hears Dex's voice. The factory connects in with Dex's biotech lab. Stahn and Misty creep close and watch Dex.

Dex has now gotten his genetic programming to work. Dex injects something into a rat, he's talking to himself, he calls his serum a "mind-virus." The rat is a Dex-rat now. The rat stands up on his hind legs and begins talking in Dex's voice. Now Dex takes a blank-brained clone out of the organ tanks and injects it. Dex's personality fills its brain. The human Dex-clone begins talking in Dex's voice as well, the Dex-rat and the dripping, tank-fresh human Dex-clone and Dex standing there congratulating each other, all in the same voice. They have acquired Dex's personality from Dex's mind-virus. It's not that they're in mental contact with Dex, it's that they're independent copies of him. But of course they agree on everything.

Stahn makes a lunge for Dex, risking all on this chance to kill him. Misty manages to knock out the Dex-clone with a kick and Stahn is the point of shooting Dex, but then the Dex-rat bites Misty and she shrieks and suddenly the Dex-clone gets back up and gets hold of Misty. Dex gets Stahn to throw over his weapon. And then Dex laughs and gets ready to shoot Stahn. Just then, the rebel worker robot Wagstaff tunnels up through the floor and saves Stahn, taking him off to the rebel robot headquarters. Dex's three bad robot friends have appeared and are laying down a fierce wall of fire, and Misty must be left behind.

Stahn asks Wagstaff how he knew to come. "Ralph and Cobb sent me," says Wagstaff.

"But isn't Cobb dead?" asks Stahn again. And then he hears Cobb's voice talking to him. Cobb is alive as software inside the robots' version of the worldwide Web.

Act 3 (8/21/2000)

Stahn is with the rebel robots Wagstaff and Ralph Numbers in the mouth of a cave leading down into the rebel robot base. Stahn is worried about Misty. And they're

wondering what Dex is going to do. "That little drone ship I saw," says Stahn. "I bet that has something to do with it."

He gives Ralph Numbers his copy of the ship's control code. "It's programmed to fly to Earth," says Ralph. "Right towards the White House." Just then Stahn spots the drone ship taking off from the organ-tank factory with an unheard-of velocity.

The only way to stop the ship would be to send someone after it. But the boss robots have automated sentinel cannons to control the airspace above the Moon, and if any of the rebels tries to fly after the ship, they'll be shot down.

Stahn tries some of his computer-hacking skills to disable the sentinel cannons, and succeeds only in bringing on an attack by the boss robots. The rebel robots lose the skirmish with heavy casualties. Ralph Numbers is killed. There's a lull in the battle and the rebels retreat into the tunnels of their base. Wagstaff produces a new Ralph Numbers body from storage and downloads the Ralph Numbers software onto it, and then Ralph is as good as new, although with a gap in his recent memories. The boss robots are outside the base, getting ready to try and come inside.

Stahn, Ralph and Wagstaff check the progress of the little drone-ship that Dex launched. It's getting close to Earth, moving in an oddly darting and weaving pattern, almost like a smart enemy in a videogame. "Someone has to warn Earth," says Stahn. "Let me do it." This time his hacking is successful and he manages to get through to the phone on the President's desk in the Oval Office.

The President is a smarmy man with a deep prejudice against robots, a kind of racist. He's furious when Stahn mentions Cobb's name. The military has already noticed the incoming drone and have been trying to shoot it with smart missiles. But they can't hit it yet. It's smarter than the missiles. There's a General in the office with the president. And now Stahn tells the President that the drone ship probably holds a dose of mind-virus targeted specifically for the President. "We should going to launch everything we've got at the Moon," says the General. "I know their defenses are supposed to be impregnable. But, by God, we'll wear them down."

"Please don't do that," interrupts Ralph Numbers. "We want peace with Earth. It's only one of us who's taken this act. A terrorist named Dex. We'll try to kill him now. And meanwhile we'll help you hit the drone ship. We have a copy of its program.

Let me talk to one of your smart missiles." The General patches Ralph in to one of the missiles and now the missile homes in on the drone and blows it up. But right before the explosion, a small object the size of a mosquito detaches itself from the drone and flies down towards Earth. The audience sees the mosquito, but the characters don't notice it.

"You have half an hour to finish off this Dex character," says the President, wiping his brow. "And if you don't, our attack on the Moon will begin. It'll be war." The President issues a warning to the citizens to begin taking cover. For if there's war with the Moon, the Moon robots will be shooting back.

Stahn, Wagstaff, Ralph and the rest of the rebel robots head back into the robot's city through a secret tunnel. The rebel robots launch a frontal assault on Dex's tower. They're managing to kill some of the boss robots fighting them. And more and more worker robots are joining the rebel cause. They're pulling the slave-cubes out other robot's chests. But Dex's tower is surrounded with powerful magnetic fields that make it impossible for the rebel robots to enter. Stahn sneaks inside Dex's tower by way of the organ-tank factory. It's all up to him.

Stahn has to fight and kill the Dex-rat and the Dex-clone. And then he's in Dex's tower. He hears Misty calling to him and finds her locked in a room. He's overjoyed because she looks fine. But she's stand-offish and a bit odd acting. "It's only that I'm so worried," she says. "Let me take you to Dex's room. We'll surprise him."

Stahn and Misty creep up and open Dex's room. He's seemingly preoccupied, alternating between glaring down at the battle outside and staring at a monitor that shows a view of the mosquito's progress, seen from the viewpoint of the mosquito. It's flying through trees getting closer to the White House. Stahn walks up behind Dex, raises a gun to his head — and then suddenly Misty snatches the gun out of Stahn's hand and sticks it in Stahn's back. Dex chuckles.

And now Misty speaks in Dex's voice. Dex has already infected her with the mind-virus! She's had her genetic code programmed to run a simulation of Dex. A copy of Dex is inside her mind along with her own personality. But the Dex in her mind is calling the shots. She's going to execute Stahn.

The President steps out his balcony to smoke a cigarette. And the little robot mosquito finds its way down and stings him. The President swats at the mosquito,

misses, and then his expression changes. He goes back into the Oval Office and addresses the General. The mosquito follows him inside, still watching. "Call off the plans to attack the Moon," he says. "But they haven't killed Dex yet," protests the General. "Don't worry," says the President. "I don't think Dex is a problem anymore." "Then should we sound the all-clear signal?" asks the General. "Tell people it's safe now?" The President gets an odd look. "There's too many people," says the President slowly. "Prepare to launch on them." "On — on who?" says the General. The President chuckles. "How about China and the Mid-East for openers. A two-front war like you fellows have been preparing for so long." "Yes, sir," says the General. "We'll be ready in ten minutes."

Dex on the Moon is watching this on his monitor. He's smiling. "I couldn't have said it better myself," he says. Then his attention turns back to Stahn and Misty. "Let's kill Stahn now," says Dex.

Misty is talking to herself in two voices, her regular voice and Dex's voice. She's flirting with the Dex in her head and saying that she's glad to have him. She says she'd *voluntarily* kill Stahn even if she wasn't under Dex's control. She says she and the Dex in her head should be a true team. The Dex in her head is intrigued, he says he'll temporarily release his control over Misty to let her prove her loyalty. A long pause, with Misty standing there holding the gun to Stahn's head. You can see on Stahn's face that he's uneasily remembering how ambitious Misty is. "All right, Dex," says Misty. "Here we go." Misty aims the gun at the Dex robot behind the desk and blows it's head off. And then the Dex in her head is back in control, wrestling with Stahn. The gun flies across the floor.

Dex's voice comes out over a loudspeaker in the room. "That was futile, Misty, says the voice. I always keep a freshly updated software copy of myself on the Web. And I have a fresh body right here in this closet.

A door in the wall opens. There's a fresh new Dex body in there, not yet animated.

"Stop him, Cobb!" shouts Stahn.

We cut to a cyberspace battle between the Web software versions of Cobb and Dex. They fight it out. Cobb wins, essentially because the richness of his human

experience makes him stronger than Dex. He comes up with a "stop code" that makes the Dex software terminate itself.

The new Dex robot twitches into life. Stahn is scared, but now the plastic of the robot's face changes to look something like Cobb, and it speaks in Cobb's voice. "It's me, Stahn. Ready for me to clean Dex out of your head, Misty?" Misty says yes and no at the same time. Cobb opens his mouth and chirps a kind of fax-sound and all at once Misty is her old self again.

Back in the Oval Office, the president is just about to issue the final launch command. The phone on his desk rings. He doesn't want to answer it, but the General picks it up. "It's for you, Mr. President. It's Dex."

The President, smiles, picks up the phone. On the other end is Cobb on the Moon. Cobb chirps out the stop code, and the President is restored to normality. "Abort the launch!" he shouts to the General. Then the President looks back at the phone. "Who — who's this?" he says. "It's your old whipping-boy Cobb Anderson," says Cobb. "Don't say I never did you any favors. The Moon robots want nothing but peace." "All right," says the President.

Meanwhile the rebel robots have won out completely. The boss robots have been crushed. The worker robots are ready to live peacefully. Cobb steps outside and they cheer him. He's going to stay on the Moon. Stahn and Wendy embrace, ready to head back to Earth together.