

**CYBEREYES**  
**By**  
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## Characters

Meg Patterson	smart attractive, late twenties woman who works as an accountant for a large corporation
Rusty Patterson	her 16 year old brother; a silent genius
Skeeter	a smart 16 year old who is not silent
Callie	Meg's friend from childhood. Quick tempered and honest to a fault
Agent X (Bob)	a self important, female, NSA Agent
Agent Y	an NSA with a realistic view of the world
Robert Harwell	Meg's boss
Coach Tiegue	a motivational coach
Sylvia Livingston	an auditor

## Production Note

While the play can be performed with as few as four actors (2W, 2M) or as many as eight, I believe it's best if the rolls of Meg, Callie, Rusty and Skeeter are not doubled. Two actors, one male, and one female, should play the other parts. The setting can be implied; however, if there are scene changes, the action of the play should not stop. One of the underlying themes in the play is the myriad ways technology impacts our lives; therefore, the use of technical elements such as projections of emails, texts, and computer images, could prove effective.

## CyberEyes

### Scene 1

Meg is seated. She is in the company of two Homeland Security Agents.

MEG

I really don't understand why I'm here. I haven't done anything wrong. I pay my taxes. I don't have any library fines. Look, if this is about that parking ticket I got last year, I swear-

AGENT X

We're NSA, we don't deal in parking tickets.

MEG

Well, we've covered all the bases. I assume I'm free to go.

Meg stands and moves to exit.

AGENT X

Sit down.

MEG

Listen, you have no right—

AGENT X

How long have you worked for VeriTel?

MEG

Six, no seven years. Is this about work? I mean shouldn't you be talking to-

AGENT X

You transferred here six months ago-

MEG

Yes, after my father-

AGENT X

So, your return hasn't been under the best of-

MEG

Look, I don't see how any of this-

AGENT X

Don't interrupt. As I was say-

AGENT Y  
(To Agent X)

Bob.

Agent X walks away, Agent Y takes over

AGENT Y

Cheetos?

MEG

I'm sorry?

He offers her a small bag of half eaten  
Cheetos.

AGENT Y

Would you like a Cheeto? I'm afraid it's all I have to offer, budget cuts you know.

MEG

No, no thank you.

AGENT Y

Right. Well then, Meg, can I call you Meg?

MEG

Uh, sure.

AGENT Y

Meg the reason that you're here is . . . well, we're concerned.

MEG

Concerned? About me?

AGENT Y

Not about you per se, but about many things.

AGENT X

Computer viruses, worms, Trojan horses, spyware, shipping fraud, stock fraud, online gambling, cyber porn, violation of intellectual property rights, data diddling, credit card fraud and espionage. The economy is fragile, terrorists lurk at every turn, sex trafficking is on the rise, cyber crime is at all time high and to top it off, young men today seems to be wearing their trousers quite low. Frankly it's a sign.

MEG

A sign?

AGENT Y

Bob.

MEG

What kind of sign?

AGENT X

A degeneration of sorts, a loss of control and certainly an obscene lack of patriotism.

MEG

Patriotism?

AGENT X

You are a patriot? Aren't you?

MEG

I never really thought mu-

AGENT X

You never really thought-

AGENT Y

Bob. Now, Meg, I know you're a patriot. Last July you wished everyone a Happy 4<sup>th</sup> on Facebook.

MEG

You read my Facebook?

AGENT X

Of course we do. Don't be naïve.

AGENT Y

(Clearing his throat and resuming the lead)

Now, Meg. That little impulse, that little recognition of your nation's birthday, a notification to all your friends to "have a good one," now that shows us that we might, we might be able to trust you to put your country first.

MEG

I'm happy to help in anyway-

AGENT X

It's your brother.

AGENT Y

Bob-

AGENT X

How well do you know your brother?

MEG

How well do I -- What kind of question is that? Look, if Rusty's done something wrong, I'm sure he didn't mean anything by it. I mean, he's just a kid. He turned 16-

AGENT X

-Last Wednesday we know. We've been monitoring his actives. It seems that Rusty likes to employ rather creative programming techniques.

AGENT Y

We just want you to keep an eye on him.

MEG

Spy? You want me to spy on my kid brother. Are you out of your mind? Look, I know Rusty can be a royal pain in the ass. Believe me nobody knows that better than I do. But he's had it kind of rough. Mom left years ago. [Beat]. Do you know where she is?

They shake their heads no simultaneously

And Dad died of a heart attack last spring. Too much high fat and junk food.

Agent Y returns a half-eaten Cheetos to the bag.

I came back to take care of him, and well, it's been rough. He spends most of his time playing video games. I know that it's not exactly –

AGENT X

(Overlapping)

It's not *exactly* video games. It's hacking. Your brother's a hacker.

AGENT Y

It seems your brother wormed his way into Cheyenne Mountain. Gave the boys on the hill quite a scare. We have no idea how he did it; and he won't tell us.

MEG

(She stands)

You interrogated Russ! Without me there! How could you?

AGENT X

Sit down!

She sits immediately.

Now listen up. Hackers are heartless bastards who have no respect for decency. They're responsible for identity theft, email tampering, compromising web security, destruction of property through the development of malicious code, and they are cowards to boot. You don't want Rusty to skip down the primrose path of felonious programming. As his legal

guardian, we're holding you responsible for his actions. If he so much as breaks through a firewall, it's going to be your—

AGENT Y

Bob. Calm down. You're giving me a headache. Listen, Meg. We don't want you to spy on your brother. We just want you to keep an eye on him. It's just his first strike, and we'd like to keep him on track. And while Agent Parsons here is a little, well, shall we say belligerent, essentially, he is correct. Ultimately, he's your responsibility. The penalties for treason, Meg, are quite severe.

MEG

Look, Rusty and I aren't on . . . speaking terms. I'm not sure-

AGENT X

-If convicted, it's unlikely he'd see the light of day again.

AGENT Y

Very unlikely.

AGENT X

Very unlikely.

## SCENE 2

Meg storms into the room and stares at Rusty. She has an unopened bag of Cheetos in her hand.

MEG

Hacking! It had to be hacking. Why can't you be normal and just download a little soft porn? Then I'd be dealing with a computer virus and trying to convince you that it's wrong to objectify women. But no, you have to be creative and hack your way into Cheyenne Mountain. Rusty, this is serious. You could start World War III!

Rusty grabs the Cheetos bag that Meg has been waving and opens it. He stares at her and munches Cheetos.

Look, Rusty, I know things haven't been great between the two of us, but I'm doing the best I can. Maybe I should've stayed here instead of going out west, or maybe I should've come back sooner. But I'm here now, and quite frankly, I've all you've got.

Rusty eats a Cheeto mowing it down with his teeth.

Look, maybe if you'd talk to me, just occasionally, this would be a little easier.

Rusty eats two Cheetos at a time.

Rusty, this isn't easy for me either; things are really tough right now, everything at work is . . . stressful. You're not listening are you? You know, I wish you'd give me a clue, just one little clue about what it is you want from me.

Rusty begins throwing Cheetos up into the air so he can catch them with his mouth. Meg takes the bag and moves it away from him.

Dammit! Rusty!

As her arm moves back with the Cheetos bag, Skeeter enters wearing a hoody and a smile. He grabs the Cheetos and plops down on the chair while smacking **Rusty's hand in a rather elaborate handshake**

SKEETER

Dude! And the Megster.

MEG

Skeeter, do you ever knock?

SKEETER

Hey Megamonster, you're home early. The Dude and I were just heading down to the Skater's Paradise. The Rustzilla told me he needed to catch some air.

MEG

Well, the Rustzil – Rusty, is grounded for the rest of his life. I'm going to get supper ready. Skeeter, would you like to stay for dinner?

SKEETER

Are you calling out or applying heat?

MEG

I'm cooking. Meatloaf and mashed potatoes.

SKEETER

Uh, no.

Meg leaves.

Dude, sorry for you. Man, your sister should stick to take-out because Martha Stewart she is not. Here—

Hands Rusty the Cheetos.

Looks like that's all that's between you and starvation.



Dude, look. I scored. Two tickets to the Southeast Invasion. Tomorrow at 8, be there man. They have some old school jumps and ramps. Rumor is they'll open it to the public at midnight. Bring your board, man.

Rusty looks away.

What are you, man, five? Jeez, I can get it if a guy's P-whipped, but by his own sister? Cruel, dude. I'll cover the cash until you can come into some. Ticket's on me-

**They repeat their handshake.** Rusty starts working on his computer. Skeeter looks over his shoulder.

Hey, man. I thought you were banned from anything more than typing out your homework. That's some pretty sophisticated code. Dude, you should hack into our transcripts man and get us out of Mr. Fulton's chemistry class next year. I hear the guy is a total waste.

Rusty looks at Skeeter and nods. He keeps working.

Hey, look.

Skeeter shows Rusty a picture on his cell.

Talk about sweet; it's going viral. Trent posted it yesterday. You know Jamie's going to kill him. I mean, that bikini doesn't cover an-y thang. She's going to hit the roof. His love life's over. Trent is Toast. Burnt toast. Burnt Megalicious meatloaf on toast. I talked to her BFF Tanya and she said the girl is on the warpath. And you really can't blame her. You know, usually I'm down with a little techno fun, but Trent may have taken it just a little too far.

Rusty looks at the picture again.

Yeah, it couldn't have been sweeter if she was totally in the buff. I gotta say, that girl looks good. It's just like the man says, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever; its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness." Hey you know if Trent's not with Jamie any more, I could make a play

Rusty stares at him.

I know. I've got Lisa. Lisa's kinda cute, but Jamie, Jamie's a total babe.

Rusty turns away.

And a bitch, a complete bitch. Who dumped Trent. Which totally sucked; I mean she just changed her status on Facebook. Wicked. I know man, right. Which is why he posted those pictures. I get it. I get it. But man, with a body like that, who cares?

Rusty shows Skeeter the computer screen.  
Skeeter takes Rusty's remaining Cheetos and  
eats them. He freezes when he realizes what is  
on the screen.

Man, are you sure? Are you sure you want to do that?

Rusty shrugs. Lights change.

### Scene 3

Meg rushes in and in her rush to get to her  
desk, she bumps into Robert Harwell. He spills  
coffee on his shirt.

MEG

Oh, God. Robert I'm so-

ROBERT

Don't worry about it. It's just a little coffee.

MEG

I was running a little late and-

ROBERT

Meg, no worries, really.

She drops her purse.

MEG

Damn.

Robert helps her pick up the contents.

ROBERT

Here, you don't want to lose this.

He hands her a fob with a computer key.

MEG

God no. I can't tell you how many lectures security give you about that key and it's  
"gateway properties." Where did my house keys go?

ROBERT

Here.

Hands her the runaway keys.

Meg, breathe. Look, I know you've been under a lot of stress lately

MEG

-No, no. There's really too much to do here. I'm just beginning to get the hang of this accounting system as it is. You know, the basics are the same as the set up in L.A., but there are several nuances that I've yet to master.

ROBERT

There's a significant learning curve, no doubt, but once you've got it under your belt, you'll find that it's a pretty flexible program that allows you compile your data in a variety of different formats.

MEG

Yes, it just takes-

ROBERT

-Time. And focus.

(Pause)

How's everything at home?

During this speech, Robert checks the email on his cell.

MEG

Rusty's . . . well Rusty . . .he's fine. They didn't lock him up yesterday, although for the life of me, I can't tell you why. He's never been a typical kid. Even when he was little he marched to the beat of his own drum. He didn't talk till he was five and he only spoke because I had taken his radio out of his room to use downstairs. His first words were "put that back, now." I guess I should expect it. I mean the distance. I'm nine years older. But, we used to be close. Then I went to college and landed a job in Los Angeles right after I graduated.

She realizes he's lost attention.

It's sweet of you to ask but I'm sure you don't need to hear every detail of my-

ROBERT

What? Meg. I'm sure he'll be fine. Kids go through rough spots. Listen, I want you to set up a training for the two new hires – protocols for expense submissions.

MEG

But I thought the reports on the overseas accounts were the first priority.

ROBERT

They are. I thought you could handle both.

MEG

Of course. I'll get right on it.

ROBERT

Great. I knew I could count on you. You're always so . . . dependable.

Robert leaves.

MEG

That's me. Miss Dependability.

#### Scene 4

A coffee shop. Callie and Meg enter with coffee and sit.

CALLIE

Good lord. I don't know why we come to this place. Ten bucks for two lattes. What a waste. And get this. They suck you in. Do you know that they've got this web page where you can collect badges for answering questions about the company? Collect enough badges and you get a free small coffee. No one comes in here and orders a small coffee. I think-

MEG

-So why are we here?

CALLIE

Where else are we going to go -- McDonalds? Please.

MEG

How's the new job?

CALLIE

Telex is fine. It's supposed to be the hottest new communications company on the East coast. Whatever. It's fine. Three days of training and corporate indoctrination presented by morons who wouldn't know how to order a box of pencils if their lives depended on it. Not that we use many pencils. Does anyone use pencils? It's all online. The security protocols are a bitch. Password protected doesn't even begin to cover it. If they get their way, they'll introduce retinal scans and urine tests by the end of the week. Office politics are about the same. There's this guy, Lester, who is the biggest Geek ever. He lives to play World of Warcraft and probably hasn't dated anyone but that blow up doll that he keeps in his closet-

MEG

He keeps a-

CALLIE

'Just guessing. And then there's Marion -- she spends half the day surfing for the latest news on Entertainment and Yahoo news. She's sure she's going to be invited to latest start

wedding of the century. She's in for a serious shock to the system, I'm afraid. Oh, and let's not forget, Ida. Who the hell gives their kid a name like Ida? Summer, Chastity, Moon Unit, I get. But Ida? Anyway, Ida is one of those cross every "T" dot ever "I" types. Talk about anal. She's read the company manual cover to cover and memorized the salient points. She quotes them when she feels the need. So the long and the short of it is "same bullshit; different day." But what the hell. They keep paying me. I keep showing up. Truth is, I don't know how they've got along with out me. Are you listening to a word I'm saying?

MEG

Hmm? Oh, sorry.

CALLIE

So, how's Rusty?

MEG

Same bullshit. Different day.

CALLIE

It could be worse. Instead of hacking, he could be building a nuclear bomb in your basement. Now that would be an *explosive* situation.

MEG

That's bad. Really bad. You think you're funny don't you. You're not.

CALLIE

I'm hysterical. You just don't have any sense of humor.

*Pause*

MEG

You know, I never expected it to be this hard.

CALLIE

You mean taking care of Rusty?

MEG

I was hoping that I wouldn't have to deal with a teenager until I had one of my own. Wait that didn't sound right.

CALLIE

I know what you mean. How's work?

MEG

Good. Busy but good. I think I've got the system down and am going through the mess that their last hire made. I'm working backwards and forwards – attacking the previous logs while trying to keep everything current. But there always seems to be things that just pop up and need to be handled ASAP. Just last week Robert-

Robert?  
He's my boss.

CALLIE  
MEG

Single?  
Don't get any ideas.

CALLIE  
MEG

Wouldn't dream of it.

CALLIE  
MEG

Anyway Robert added a new project-

CALLIE  
-You've got to nip that in the bud. Set your boundaries. You're their senior accountant. Not some

MEG  
Meg, he's the CFO. My boss, I can't just-

CALLIE  
You know that's your problem, you let people walk all over you.

MEG  
That is not my problem. Listen-

CALLIE  
Robert, Rusty . . . ok you let men whose name begins with R walk all over you.

MEG  
Rusty is not walking all over me. I just don't know how to . . .

CALLIE  
Get him in line?

MEG  
Connect with him. So . . . I got desperate and hired a motivational coach.

CALLIE  
You what?

MEG

I hired a motivational coach.

CALLIE

Right. And how did that work for you?

MEG

Tuesday, he came over to dinner and

Rusty and Motivational Coach Tiegue enter on opposite side of the stage. Rusty sits and pulls out origami paper and begins to fold it.

COACH

How's school?

Rusty remains silent.

Hey, Meg said you're into computers. Programing. Coding. You know I know my way around a few operating systems. 'Built my own computer when I was sixteen. Started back then with a MS DOS operating system. Then Unix. Open source you know; the only way to go. Everybody benefits. The key to programming, now, I'm sure you know this is pre-planning. You want to close the loop, clip any rough edges, keep it tight. You need a plan. You need strategy. I admire anything with strategy. Silence, now that's a strategy. It's a definite choice. A tactic. I can respect that. But Rusty, sometimes in business, when the tactics aren't working, you change them. So I just wanted to say, if you ever want to talk to you know, someone who's not family. I'm here.

Rusty shoves the origami figure he has created into Coach's face. It's unmistakably a rather obnoxious penis. Coach freezes in surprise.

MEG

I was desperate.

CALLIE

Obviously.

MEG

You're helpful.

CALLIE

Hey!

MEG

I knew you wouldn't approve.

CALLIE

Great. Now I'm the bad guy. Don't lay this on me.

MEG  
Look, I just need a little support.

CALLIE  
And I'm right here.

MEG  
(Mumbles)  
Disapproving as usual.

CALLIE  
What the hell do you expect from me.

MEG  
You know, a little sympathy would go a long . . .

CALLIE  
Support and sympathy are not going to solve you're problems, Meg. You need to take the bull by the horns here and take charge of your life.

MEG  
Great. Now you sound like Coach Tiegue!

CALLIE  
Thanks. Now I'm a failed motivational whatever.

MEG  
I didn't mean-

CALLIE  
(looks at her phone)  
Times up. Unlike you, I'm not head of a division and can't set my own hours. Got to go.

MEG  
You always do this! Anytime we even start to get to the bottom of problem, you-

CALLIE  
(sing-song)  
I'm not listening.

Callie walks away

MEG  
What are you five.? Callie . . . Callie . . . Damn.

### Scene Five

Rusty is playing on a skateboard. Skeeter enters.



SKEETER

Whoa, man. I just saw your sister go into Vice Principal Deek's office. You are into some serious steaming hot doo doo. Everybody's talking about the grading fiasco.

Rusty flips Skeeter the bird.

Don't blame me, man. I'm just the messenger.

Rusty skates off. Meg enters from the opposite direction.

MEG

Rusty! Rusty!

SKEETER

It's no use. He's off . . . probably cleaning out his locker.

MEG

You know what's happened?

SKEETER

The whole school knows what's happened.

MEG

News travels fast.

SKEETER

Yeah. Ever since we started greasing the old wheel, information flows.

MEG

What do you mean?

SKEETER

A few of us chip in every month to pay off the assistant secretary. She keeps us informed of breaking news. 'Better than CNN -- Fast breaking and accurate. Up to the minute tweets.

MEG

You're kidding! Skeeter! Why are you telling me this?

SKEETER

You gonna tell?

MEG

No.

SKEETER

Then, why not?

MEG

Skeeter, this is serious! Did you know about it?

SKEETER

Yeah. I knew he was thinking about it.

MEG

And you didn't stop him?

SKEETER

No.

MEG

Why not!

SKEETER

Rusty does what he wants. Besides, it can be good to shake things up a bit. Grades are pretty arbitrary, man. So switching them around? Who knows, it could be awesome. Death to all capricious numbers! Where's your revolutionary spirit, Megasarus.

MEG

Skeeter. You're giving me a headache.

She turns to go and then-

Tell me, why do you hang out with Rusty?

SKEETER

He's my best friend.

MEG

Some best friend. He doesn't say a word.

SKEETER

He doesn't have to. I know what he's thinking. We've been hanging ever since first grade. You get to know a dude. Rusty's reliable. He's got serious principles, Megaphor. He wrote some wicked code that got this girl's . . . uh let's just say less than flattering pic off the net. That's no mean feat. Once an image's gone viral, well it stays viral.

MEG

Wow. That's really great. I . . . I don't know what to say.

SKEETER

Well, Megaperplexed, you just need to let things go. Breathe. You know-

MEG

Skeeter, I can't. Rusty's in big trouble. He's been hacking into . . . well, let's just say sensitive sites; now he's tampered with an entire school district's data base! I don't know what to do.

SKEETER

Why do you have to do anything?

MEG

You don't-

SKEETER

-It's just rough now. Rusty was really close to your Dad. And with your Mom, uh . . .

MEG

Running off-

SKEETER

Yeah, that – well, it can get a guy down. So, if you can just, well be there for a while, it might help.

MEG

Skeeter. You surprise me.

SKEETER

Yeah? Well, sometimes I surprise myself.

## Scene 6

Meg is working on her computer; Robert walks in.

ROBERT

Nice job on the employee training. I looked at the evaluations. Everything was organized, thorough and well presented.

MEG

Thanks.

ROBERT

That's the good news.

MEG

Uh oh.

ROBERT

I received a letter from corporate. They want all of the financial records put on their main servers by the end of the month.

MEG

You're kidding. I've got to get the end of the year financial report to the board in two weeks. And there seems to be a discrepancy in the off shore accounts, particularly the ones in the Caymans and Jamaica that I'm trying to track down.

ROBERT

Are you sure it isn't a software problem. I thought you mentioned this new system has a few bugs.

MEG

I thought the problem was in the programming, but the more I research those accounts, the less they add up; no pun intended.

ROBERT

Listen, why don't I get the IT guys to do a diagnostic on the software. It should take a few days, during which you can get those files backed up. That way, you'll know if your problem is financial or just a computer glitch.

MEG

I really don't think it's a computer glitch, though. Look.

Robert walks over to her screen. He begins to read.

ROBERT

Meg, this could easily be a software problem.

MEG

You think?

ROBERT

I do. Listen, it's getting late. Why don't you go home and start fresh tomorrow. I'll call IT.

MEG

Yeah, I just want to-

ROBERT

How's Raleigh? You had to take a day off last Thursday to go down to his school.

MEG

-Oh, right. Rusty. He's suspended and it looks like they might expel him. I tried to ground him, but he pretty much comes and goes as he pleases. I'm at my wits end, to tell the truth.

ROBERT

Right. You know, my younger sister was quite a handful when we were growing up. Hung out with the wrong crowd, wild parties, the whole deal. Really drove my parents crazy.

MEG

What happened to her?

ROBERT

Mom and Dad got her involved with some kind out outward-bound group. It really turned her around. She teaches second grade now. The kids love her. You should look into it.

MEG

Yeah, thanks. I will.

ROBERT

Go on now. I'll close everything down.

Meg shuts off her computer.  
She reaches to take her fob.

Oh, Meg, before you go. I just wanted to ask you a quick question about your impression with Caroline McGee.

MEG

The new hire in marketing?

ROBERT

Yes. Her supervisor has noticed that she's been a bit distracted. How was she during training.

MEG

Fine. She was engaged. She answered several questions and participated in the group activities.

ROBERT

(Handing Meg her purse)

Great. Good to hear that. Probably just getting use to a new place. Sorry. I didn't mean to keep you. See you tomorrow.

MEG

See you tomorrow.

Robert watches her leave. He sits down to Meg's computer and begins to type. **After a minute, he takes out the fob her has stolen from Meg, turns on the computer, and begins to type.**

## Scene 7

Meg is at the coffee shop. Agent Y enters.

MEG  
What are you doing here?

AGENT Y  
You could start with hello.

MEG  
Are you following me?

AGENT Y  
Only occasionally. How's it going?

MEG  
Peachy.

AGENT Y  
Glad to hear it.

(Silence)

Is Rusty doing well in school?

MEG  
Why, I'm surprised you'd ask. I assumed that his teachers would be faxing monthly reports.

AGENT Y  
Weekly, actually. He was doing well until they expelled him.

MEG  
And you must also know the school board is thinking of pressing charges.

AGENT Y  
You should've called us, Meg.

MEG  
What, so you could come and arrest him?

AGENT Y  
I thought we had an understanding. You said you'd keep an eye on him.

MEG  
What am I supposed to do? Chain him to the radiator and take away his computer. I have a full-time job. Remember?

AGENT Y

Problems at work?

MEG

A few. What do you care?

AGENT Y

All I'm saying is that if you didn't have a handle on the situation, you could give us a call. You can call me, Meg. I can help.

MEG

You're kidding right? You interrogate Rusty, you threaten me, and now you want to be my best friend?

AGENT Y

Meg, look, I know we got off to a rough start. One of the downsides of the job. Our scope is pretty huge, you know. It's not just looking for terrorist under every rug, although there are plenty of terrorists; it's not easy tracking possible criminal activity over cyber space. The worst part of the job is the politics, and public perception that this office exists to spy on American citizens. In fact, the opposite is true. One of the threats to citizens is a lack of security online. The ability of foreign companies to gain trade secrets through the back door – a Trojan horse and . . . Listen, I just want you to know that I realize you're trying to keep it all together. It's not easy working fulltime and bearing the responsibility for a teenage boy. If you need help, with anything, if anything comes up, I just want you to know you can call. Why are you smiling?

MEG

Does Bob know you're here?

AGENT Y

(smiles)

Actually, she doesn't. This wouldn't be her choice of tactics.

MEG

But it's yours?

AGENT Y

You could put it that way.

MEG

Well, if things get too hot for me to handle, I'll give you a call.

Meg starts to walk away.

AGENT Y

Meg, tell Rusty its strike two.

**Scene 8**

Meg and Callie are play cards. There's an empty bottle of wine on the table.

Gin.

CALLIE

You're cheating.

MEG

I am not. You're just a sore loser.

CALLIE

Rust and Skeeter walk in and head for the door. Skeeter stops when he sees Callie.

Hey! Long time no see. Callie o Lily of my-

SKEETER

Skeeter, do yourself a favor. Quit while you're ahead.

CALLIE

Whoa. I sense some serious hostility stemming from some deep-seated unresolved-

SKEETER

-Where are you going?

MEG

We're going down to Compu Serv. There's a few parts the Rustmeister needs.

SKEETER

Rusty, I swear to to god, if you-

MEG

Wow. Megahysteria. Rusty's just increasing his speed and boosting his memory.

SKEETER

The last time Rusty increased his speed and boosted his memory, the grades of 1,912 students were compromised.

MEG

To be more accurate, they were reordered. Life is random, man.

SKEETER

What's the word, Megainquisitor?

Rusty motions to Skeeter to go.



MEG

Be back by 10.

SKEETER

No problemo.

They leave.

CALLIE

Are you kidding? You let them walk out - just like that?

MEG

What am I supposed to do?

CALLIE

Meg, he's getting ready for his next project – whatever that may be.

MEG

No-

CALLIE

--You need to confiscate his laptop.

MEG

Are you kidding? That's his only means of communication.

CALLIE

Meg, the way Rusty is communicating is anti-social at best. He's going to be sent away. Is that what you want?

MEG

No that's not what I-

CALLIE

Then do something!

MEG

You've got all the answers, don't you? God, I swear, Callie, why don't you take a break. It's got to be exhausting knowing the right thing to do at every moment.

CALLIE

Well, it's a helluvalot better than sitting on your ass waiting for life happen to you. Could you be more passive?

MEG

Passive! I've done nothing but work to hold us together. And it's not like I'm getting any help along the way. You have no idea what I'm up against. God it is so easy for you.

CALLIE

I'm at a dead end job and make barely enough to scrape by and things are easy for me.

MEG

Why don't you apply some of that fine advice about taking the bull by the horns and get a better job.

CALLIE

Like I haven't tried! I'm not like you, Meg. I don't have your math skills. God, if I had your skills, there'd be no stopping me. But you, you don't even appreciate it! Yeah, you've got some trouble with Rusty. But you earn twice what I do, you have a great job – and look at this place. It's not exactly a dump.

MEG

You're jealous. I can't believe it. You're actually jealous.

CALLIE

What if I am? If you weren't so self-centered you might have-

MEG

Oh my god, that is the pot calling the kettle black.

CALLIE

There isn't a self-centered bone in my body.

MEG

You are kidding . . . fine. Fine. Let's forget about. Just play.

CALLIE

Fine.

They play gin. Callie draws. Meg draws. Callie draws. Meg draws.

I got fired.

MEG

What? When.

CALLIE

Last week.

MEG

Why didn't you call me?

CALLIE

You were busy. Rusty. Work. I didn't want to bother you.

MEG

Callie, don't take this the wrong way, but what did you do?

CALLIE

I can't believe this! Why do you think I did anything!

*Meg waits*

I wrote a few unflattering comments about his management style in a few emails.

MEG

A few-

CALLIE

-Forty-six. Forty-seven if you count the one I sent to my mom.

MEG

You sent them from work?

CALLIE

They were on my yahoo account; technically, I guess I was physically here when I sent them but-

MEG

And they fired you? For that! Wait – that's got to be illegal.

CALLIE

Apparently not.

MEG

Wait, wait. I don't understand.

CALLIE

The company has a non-disclosure clause that all employees sign. It was in my contract.

MEG

Those clauses are about not telling company secrets.

CALLIE

Well, apparently, legal decided that airing the company' dirty laundry violated the clause. I got caught. I'm out.

MEG

What did you say?

CALLIE

I was talking about my boss and I got a little . . . descriptive.

MEG

How descriptive? I said that I couldn't imagine how a prepubescent asshole who couldn't find his dick with a flashlight managed to land a position in a company with assets of over 517 million dollars.

MEG

Wow.

*Pause.*

What are you going to do?

CALLIE

Join the Peace Corps.

MEG

You're kidding, right?

CALLIE

Of course I'm kidding. I'm not cut out for the Peace Corps; they frown on people who believe in justifiable homicide.

MEG

Oh, hon. I'm so sorry.

CALLIE

Don't be. Look, to tell the truth, I've been really unhappy here for a long time -- long before you came back from Los Angeles. I wouldn't take back one thing I said in those emails. Not one thing. We're under paid, overworked and completely micro-managed. Not one of the managers here knows how to back off and let someone just do their job. And they don't listen.

(She pauses for a breath)

Besides, "he wall color is dreadful. One of us had to go.

MEG

If you need a loan, I can . . .

CALLIE

Things aren't desperate yet. I've got to go. The search begins tomorrow.

She gets up to leave.

You know, the real reason I didn't call is . . . well, I just didn't think you could be there for me.

MEG

Callie! You know I would of-

CALLIE

-And I thought . . . I thought if I called and you didn't come over, well that would be it. I just couldn't take losing a job and my best friend in the same day.

Callie leaves.

**Scene 9**

An official looking woman is staring intently at a computer file.

MEG

Uh, hello.

The woman stares intently at a laptop and doesn't respond.

MEG

You're at my desk.

No answer.

And my computer. How did you get into my computer?

Again, no answer.

Hey!

Without taking her eyes off the screen, the auditor hands Meg a card, she reads:

"Sylvia Livingstone, Internal Acquisitions and Account Payable Protocols." Well, Sylvia Livingstone, can you tell me who gave you permission to-

Robert enters.

ROBERT

I did, Meg. I hope you don't mind. Ms. Patterson is doing an audit; even our auditors get audited -- it's routine, nothing out of the ordinary, right Ms. Livingstone?

Ms. Livingstone looks up in disapproval; she starts to speak but changes her mind.

MEG

Robert, why didn't you tell me-

ROBERT

We discussed at the department meeting weeks ago, Meg. You cancelled because of Rusty's . . . uh school situation. Look, it's no big deal. This happens every year. It's always a little nerve racking but it's never —

SYLVIA

A problem. I found a problem. It seems that there is a discrepancy in the shipping files. VeriTell Industries reports receiving 14,513 containers from our overseas distributors last quarter.

MEG

That's correct.

SYLVIA

I'm afraid not. Invoices from the ports in Virginia, Pennsylvania and North Carolina put the number of shipments purchased at 17,012, a difference of

MEG

2,499.

SYLVIA

Which begs the question-

MEG

Where are those missing containers?

SYLVIA

I was going to say, why is there a discrepancy? Each of those containers represents valuable goods; the estimated cost to the company, factoring in manpower, fuel, loss of material, and not to mention my time, exceeds over six million dollars.

ROBERT

Ms. Livingstone, I have great faith in Meg, I'm sorry Ms. Patterson. I'm sure that she will be able to reconcile the differences in the records. Ms. Patterson is tops in her field, but she's been with this office less than a year. If you'll just give her a couple of weeks-

SYLVIA

In one week, my office will need concrete evidence on the location of those containers and their contents, or this will become a judicial matter. If you'll excuse me.

MEG

A judicial . . .

ROBERT

Meg, I'm going to need your full attention here. Work has to come first, now. Your career is on the line, not to mention. . .

MEG

Not to mention-

ROBERT

If the company is missing a several million dollars, Meg, they'll prosecute.

MEG

You don't think that I-

ROBERT

-No, no of course not! I just want you to understand how serious this is. Meg, I'm behind you one hundred percent. Anything you need, name it. I can pull Denise off that redistribution project-

MEG

Robert, thanks. I'll take you up on it when I need it. Right now, I just need a little time.

ROBERT

Time is the one thing you don't have.

MEG

That and 2,499 containers.

### Scene 10

Meg storms in. Rusty plays a video game and eats Cheetos.

MEG

Great.

She takes the controls the video game and stomps on them until it breaks.

Now that I've got your attention. I thought I'd tell about my day. I know you're dying to hear all about it, so well, I'm not the kind of girl to hold out, so here it is. I'm under suspicion of theft. Grand larceny to be precise. No real problem, right. Twenty years with time off for good behavior. I'll be out by the time I'm forty-five, fifty at the most. I mean fifty's the new thirty right? Oh, and you. You're going up the river for sure. Hey, wait. We can be pen pals. There will be lot's to talk about. We can compare the quality of our jump suits. Oh, and the food.

She grabs the Cheetos bag.

This will be it, for both us. No, wait, I take it back. Maybe this is all they'll serve a diet of high fat, high carb food that will kill us sooner to make room for futures thieves and hackers. You'll grow rusty, Rusty. Get it. I'm hysterical. Callie would be impressed. Oh, and that's another thing. You would think that your best friend would return your phone calls even if she unemployed. Especially if she's unemployed. It will probably take

her at least another month to get over the fact that she was honest with me. For once. Then, it will be all too late. Hey, why don't you send her an email. She's not opening mine. It might be your last chance to use a keyboard for a while. Once you go up river, as they say, there will be no computers for you. What will you do? Left to rely on good old-fashioned communication for entertainment. Now that would be hell wouldn't it? I wonder what circle of hell hackers go to? Or embezzlers. Do you know?

Rusty just stares at her.

No? Too bad. Hey, I bet Skeeter would know. Where's Skeeter when you need him? Ok, now I have descended from the sublime to the ridiculous.

You know, Rusty. Things are just a little desperate here. This is so utterly ridiculous. I came back here to help, and things have gone from bad to worse.

I need something – anything --I'm not talking about a miracle, but how about "I'm sorry life is shitty right now, Meg, but I'm sure it will be better tomorrow."

She looks at him expectantly. He looks away.

No? Well, I should have known better. I'll say one thing for you, Rusty, you're not a liar.

**Meg leaves. Rusty stares after her.**

### **Scene 10**

Meg searches through her computer and a series of Excel spreadsheets that line her desk. Robert enters.

ROBERT

How's it going?

MEG

I've been through these documents line by line. I can't find a damn thing.

ROBERT

It's got to be there somewhere. Maybe tomorrow when you're fresh.

MEG

I've been working on this for five days; I haven't slept. None of this adds up. I don't see how tomorrow's going to be any different.

ROBERT

You're giving up?

MEG

I don't see any other possibilities. I'm out of options.



ROBERT

So am I.

MEG

What?

ROBERT

Ms. Livingstone stopped by this morning.

Sylvia Livingston enters on the other side of the stage. She paces. Robert walks to her.

Mrs. Livingstone, thank you for coming.

SYLVIA

I'm not accustomed to being kept waiting, Mr. Harwell.

ROBERT

I -

SYLVIA

Never mind. I sent the information on the accounting discrepancy and the missing containers to our forensic accountant. They have not been able to establish a clear money trail, with one exception. It seems that the last transfer of funds for one of those container shipments occurred on March 12<sup>th</sup>. An electronic footprint was traced back to Meg Patterson.

ROBERT

You're saying you only were able to track down an illegal transfer for one shipment. What about the other missing containers?

SYLVIA

We can't trace it. Fortunately for Veri-Tel, we have enough evidence to bring this case to the authorities. I imagine it will be in their hands before the end of the week, after which there will be charges and of course, the company will prosecute.

ROBERT

And there's no doubt in your mind that Ms. Harwell is responsible.

SYLVIA

None at all.

Robert returns to Meg who has watched the entire scene. Sylvia exits.

ROBERT

Meg, I have to let you go.

MEG

Robert, if you fire me, it's the same as if you believe that I'm guilty.

ROBERT

Are you?

MEG

Are you kidding me?

ROBERT

Meg, you're the only one with access to that account. I want to believe you. But the evidence seems-

MEG

What the hell would I do with a few thousand shipping containers?

ROBERT

I have no idea.

MEG

What happened to "we're in this together?"

ROBERT

Please don't make this more difficult than it already is.

MEG

Difficult for who?

ROBERT

I'm sorry it had to end this way. Security will escort you downstairs in ten minutes. If I were you, Meg, I'd hire a good lawyer.

**Scene 11**

Meg's apartment. Skeeter has Meg's head on his lap; she has a wet rag over her eyes. Rusty stares at her. Callie enters.

MEG

What are you doing here?

CALLIE

Rusty sent me a text. . . You look awful.

SKEETER

Megamistake here tied one on after she got dumped – and canned. Man, that is one seriously bad day. (Patting her head). It's ok Megagirl. You're goin' be just fine. We all occasionally slip into the abyss; remember, Nietzsche said "if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."

CALLIE

Skeeter. Shut up.

She walks over, props Meg up, pushes Skeeter off the chair.

You're enjoying this a little too much. Rusty, go get some ice and wrap it in this rag. And make a pot of coffee.

Rusty goes to the kitchen.

SKEETER

Callie, uh, I hate to tell you this but coffee doesn't make you sober once you're drunk.

CALLIE

The coffee's for me. And, making it will give Rusty something to do. He looks worried.

Meg groans

I must say, you're handling this rather badly. You'll find another job.

MEG

I'm under investigation for grand larceny. Not something I want to post on Linked In. I'll probably be arrested any minute now.

CALLIE

You should've called me.

MEG

I've been trying to get in touch with you for the last three-

CALLIE

-Shut up. I'm here now, aren't I?

MEG

Just in time to say I told you so as my life goes straight to hell. Thanks.

CALLIE

You're welcome.

MEG

Oh my God, Callie, if something happens to me, will you take care of Rusty?

Rusty enters with coffee. Callie takes it from him.

CALLIE

Rusty can take care of himself. He can bunk in with me if you . . . Look, just don't worry.

MEG

This is all my fault! How could I have trusted that evil son of bitch!

SKEETER

Because you were a moron. Happens to the best of us, Megatron.

MEG & CALLIE

Skeeter!

MEG

Callie, what do you think?

CALLIE

I have no idea.

MEG

I think . . . I think that Robert's behind all this. He's been embezzling from the company. I just couldn't put it together before now. I don't know exactly how he did it, but he manipulated data to make it look like I was cooking the books. Now that I'm locked out of the computer files, we'll never prove it.

SKEETER

Too bad you can't hack in.

MEG&CALLIE

Skeeter-

CALLIE

Wait. Rusty.

MEG

Oh no. That NSA prick told me that if Rusty got caught hacking again they'd lock him away somewhere.

**Rusty immediately opens his laptop and waits for Meg to let him help.**

CALLIE

Rusty, can you do it? Can you get in without getting caught?

MEG

Rusty can't get into Robert's computer or mine online. You need a "SSH key; a random number generator -- provided by the company that changes every few minutes. It's a shield against hacking.

CALLIE

Do you have yours?

MEG

Yes, it's in my purse. But it's worthless. I'm sure they've de-activated my login.

Rusty grabs Meg's purse. He begins rummaging through it.

SKEETER

If Rusty can't hack in from here, Meg, then we've got to go to your office.

MEG

Rusty not going to be hacking in. It's too risky. And besides, I can't get in. I'm sure they deactivated my card. I'm banned from the building.

Rusty takes her card, looks at it and then begins typing.

CALLIE

Is there anyone there who owes you a favor?

MEG

No. There's just no way.

Skeeter reads over Rusty's shoulder

SKEETER

Megalucky you are reactivated.

MEG

You're kidding! Wait. No. I won't risk it. Look, I'll get a good lawyer.

**Rusty grabs Meg's keys out of her purse.  
He stands at the door staring at her.**

CALLIE

Looks like someone's made up his mind.

MEG

Rusty, no. Callie, if he's caught, he could go to jail!

CALLIE  
(Quietly)

Meg, if we don't figure this out, no lawyer is going to be able to keep you out of jail. Rusty's lost enough family members for one lifetime. It's the only options, Meg. I'll drive.

Rusty tosses Callie the keys. Meg, Rusty and Callie leave.

SKEETER

Alone again, naturally. Cruel.

## Scene 12

Meg and Rusty enter the office.

MEG

There it is.

Meg punches in several codes; she and Rusty enter the office and go to the computer. Rusty begins to work.

Meg paces.

MEG

If we get out of this . . . I'm going to learn to cook, I swear Rusty. And we'll figure something out so that you can do whatever it is you do without coming to the attention of Homeland Security, NASA, the CIA, FBI and KGEB.

She paces.

You know, we should take a trip. Just you and me. You can play whatever you want on the radio, and you don't have to say anything. Not one word. I won't even ask. Remember, remember when we were kids, Dad wanted to rent an RV and drive out to the Grand Canyon? Mom got a video from the library on New Mexico, The Land of Enchantment, and we watched that instead. Who knew she'd have a mid-life crisis and become a perpetual traveler? Well, we could do a little traveling, too. I mean, why not? I'm unemployed and you've been kicked out of school. I still have credit cards, which means we have money-

Rusty gets up and motions for Meg to look at the screen.

I don't understand. Rusty, there's nothing here. That's just the account for the company that owns the . . . oh my god, it's a dummy account. Virtual contains paid for electronically to account that feeds into . . . you found it. It's a record of everything. Containers, off shore accounts, the breached files; it's all here. How did you-

Rusty moves her out of the way and types a single line. He hits enter

Rusty, what are you . . . where did you send it?

Meg leans over Rusty shoulder and reads the screen. She gasps in amazement.

Oh, my god, Rusty! How did you-

Rusty places finger over Meg's mouth.

RUSTY

Shhh. Megachill.

He smiles at her broadly.

### Scene 13

Interior of the Interrogation Room

AGENT X

Have a seat.

MEG

I don't understand why I'm here! Why aren't you arresting Robert Harwell? He's probably halfway to Dubai by now. Rusty sent you -

AGENT Y

--A document that detailed his criminal activity. The paper trail is quite clear. Robert Harwell embezzled sixteen million dollars. Not the largest embezzlement case we've worked, but significant. Rusty located and tracked down a cyber trail of shell corporations in several countries. Not surprisingly, none of those countries have an extradition agreement with the U.S. The records indicate he had accumulated well over twenty-eight million dollars in all.

MEG

Then why don't you arrest him?!

AGENT Y

We already have.

MEG

What?

AGENT X

After your brother gave us the information we needed we picked up Robert. He made to the airport and was traveling light. The prosecutor believes she has a strong case against him. He'll most likely be denied bail as is an obvious flight risk. I feel confident saying that Robert Harwell is going to go to jail for a very, very long time.

MEG

What I don't understand is how Rusty knew to mail it to you?

AGENT Y

Uh, Meg, Rusty was never a person of interest.

MEG

I don't-

AGENT Y

You were.

MEG

Me!

AGENT Y

VeriTel has been worried that they may have been the victim of a cybercrime. They suspected the Chinese. That's where we came in. The money trail led to someone much closer to home. Often it's the person responsible for accounts payable and receivable who embezzles or sells information. But this time, the culprit was farther up the chain.

MEG

Rusty was spying on me?!

AGENT Y

No, Absolutely not. We gave Rusty the same option we gave you. Watch out for you or there would be consequences. He yielded to our influence only to protect you. Rusty was sure that you weren't involved, which he demonstrated in a rather colorful fashion. His hacking provided us with a convenient excuse to bring you in.

MEG

Why didn't you just ask me about Harwell?

AGENT Y

We were afraid your relationship with your both might have been . . . personal.

MEG

Brilliant. Look, if that's everything-

She get's up to leave.

AGENT X

'Just a moment. There is one problem.

MEG

What is—

AGENT X



--Your brother.

MEG

You just said—

AGENT X

We can't leave him unsupervised. While we appreciate his help with this matter, his ability to get into Harwell's account shows remarkable skill. We weren't making up the part about his technical promiscuity. He has hacked into several protected sites which is a violation-

MEG

Look, I promise I'll-

AGENT Y

Meg, we'd like to offer Rusty a job.

AGENT X

I'll get him.

Agent X exits.

MEG

A job?

AGENT Y

He could work for us. Consider it a paid internship. We could arrange morning classes at the high school and he could work for us in the afternoon. He can earn credit toward graduation.

Rusty enters. Agent Y addresses him.

Good. Rusty, we were wondering if you would like the opportunity to join us here at the NSA.

Rusty flips off Agent Y.

MEG

Uh, just in case you need a translation – that means no.

AGENT Y

But as you are his guardian, Meg, I believe it would behoove you to talk to Rusty about joining us. It's in his best interest.

MEG

(With new found confidence)

No, it's in your best interest. Listen up. I think it's time that you leave Rusty and me out of your plans. We're going out of town for a couple of weeks and when we get back, he'll be very busy getting his G.E.D. and applying to universities. I'm sure there's a place out there that will appreciate his highly developed . . . research skills. And if you put any pressure on

him, any pressure at all, I'm not going to get a lawyer, I'm going straight to the press. And you all have had enough bad press to last a lifetime.

Rusty stares at her, surprised.

AGENT Y

Meg-

MEG

Can you see the newsflash – teenage boy persecuted by NSA. CNN, FOX, Yahoo news, the Huff Post.

AGENT Y

I see your point. Well, thank you both for your service to your country.

MEG

Let's go, Rusty.

Meg goes toward the exits. Agent Y watches her go. Rusty joins her. **He repeats the opening of his and Skeeter's elaborate handshake. Meg returns the gesture flawlessly. They leave.**

## Notes

Skeeter's line, "a thing of beauty is a joy forever; its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness," is from John Keats's poem, "A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever."

Skeeter's line, "alone again, naturally," is taken from a 1972 song "Alone Again Naturally" by Gilbert O'Sullivan.

Callie's line, "Besides, the wall color is dreadful. One of us had to go," is a paraphrase of Oscar Wilde's last words. The exact phrasing of Oscar Wilde's final remarks is listed in a variety of different ways.

The computer fob is about the size of a thumb drive. It is usually attached to a picture ID that can be worn as a badge. The fob allows a person access to the computer; people then who do not have specific access to information would not be able to gain it without the fob. Unless of course, there was an excellent hacker around who could get around the encryption.