

TERRARIUM by John Morrison

A teenage boy living in an underground bunker tries to escape, despite his robot caretaker's attempts to stop him.

Writer's reason: I've always loved sci-fi stories that are more about ideas and emotions than visual effects.

Intended audience: Probably skewed toward a younger demographic because of the sci-fi element.

Intended genre: Family drama crossed with sci-fi.

Adam: 15-year-old boy. Grew up in the bunker with his robot guardian Caretaker as his only companion. Pines for the life he reads about and watches in movies - he wants to be with other people.

Caretaker: A robot whose mission is to raise Adam, teach him, and protect him. Supposedly Caretaker has no emotions, but he has a desire to fulfill his mission, and so in a way he loves Adam.

2nd Draft  
Nov 11, 2009

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FILM 204-01  
Screenwriting

INT. TERRARIUM - DAY

The TERRARIUM is a huge indoor JUNGLE with many kinds of plants and a walkway winding through it.

ADAM (15) sits, BLINDFOLDED.

CARETAKER, a humanoid ROBOT who looks like a jumble of construction vehicle parts, steps in behind him and REMOVES the blindfold.

CARETAKER

Ta-da! Happy birthday, Adam!

A TABLE AND CHAIRS are set up on the walkway in the Terrarium, with DECORATIONS AND STREAMERS. On the table is an amazing BIRTHDAY CAKE with multiple layers and colours.

On the top is written "HAPPY 15th ADAM."

ADAM

Wow... that's one hell of a cake.

CARETAKER

I assume you'd like a huge piece?

ADAM

Hmm... maybe later, Caretaker.

CARETAKER

Adam, what's wrong?

ADAM

Nothing, I just... I guess I'm just full from all the chips and candy.

CARETAKER

Adam, tell me, what's bothering you? Is it the cake? I tried my best---

ADAM

No, no, the cake's great, it's just... In the movies there are always people at a birthday party.

Caretaker hangs his head sadly.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I mean you're a person, too - but you know, I just wish I had some friends my age.

## CARETAKER

I'm sorry, Adam. That's one present I can't give you. But I have a message for you. I was instructed to give it to you on your 15th birthday.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Adam and Caretaker sit on the couch, watching the VIEWSCREEN.

On the SCREEN appears GEOFFREY TOLLIVER(60), a dignified gentleman. He looks ill and coughs at various points during his monologue.

## TOLLIVER

Hello, Adam. I'm Professor Geoffrey Tolliver... your father. As I'm recording this message, you're only one year old. Your mother... she's passed away last month, and I don't have much longer. It's the radiation. We've kept you underground since the bombs went off, but we had to finish stocking the shelter, and fool that I was, I let your mother come with me. She was a strong woman, and insisted... but all that's done now. I thought we'd be relatively safe here, in the mountains, but it looks like there's nowhere safe.

There's a cut in the video, and now it shows a one-year old BABY lying in a CRIB.

## TOLLIVER (V.O.)

Say hello to your future self, Adam.

Tolliver's hand comes into the frame and makes the baby wave its little hand. The image cuts again, back to Tolliver.

## TOLLIVER

You're old enough now to know the truth about your situation, Adam. You'll have to stay in the shelter for the rest of your life. I've started reprogramming the construction robot who built the shelter. He will be a caretaker for

(MORE)

TOLLIVER (CONT'D)

you, and a companion. I'm sorry I couldn't do better for you, but this is how it is. You're the last of the family line, and I trust you to make the best of your life, such as it is. I'm sorry I couldn't be there to see you grow up. Goodbye.

The video ends. Adam sits, shellshocked.

CARETAKER

It's alright, Adam. I understand how you feel.

ADAM

If I survived, there must be others.

CARETAKER

There may be, but how could you find them? And this bunker can't sustain more than about three people. Let it go.

ADAM

I have to see if there's anyone out there.

CARETAKER

Your father didn't give you security clearance to leave the living quarters.

ADAM

So the doors won't open for me, so what? You can open them for me.

CARETAKER

Adam, I can't let you leave the bunker. And if you attempt to leave, I will be obligated to use physical force to stop you.

ADAM

You don't care at all, do you? No, why would you? You're only programmed to act like you have emotions, aren't you?

Caretaker has no answer for this.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
I thought so.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Adam is lying on his bed. He has been crying but now he lies silently, as if he's exhausted beyond tears.

He looks at the PHOTOS on his wall.

A girl. A crowd of people. Children.

A FAMILY.

He sits up, gathers his strength and stares at the picture again.

Then he goes to his closet and digs through a BOX of toys and electronic gizmos.

He finds what he's looking for- a small black cell-phone-like DEVICE.

He holds the device up to his mouth and triggers it.

ADAM  
Testing.

He pushes a couple of buttons.

RECORDER (ADAM'S VOICE)  
Testing.

Adan holds the RECORDER and smiles.

INT. TERRARIUM - DAY

Adam peeks around the corner.

Caretaker is gardening, unaware he is being watched.

Adam takes a deep breath, readies himself, and sneaks off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The message from Tolliver is playing on the viewscreen.

TOLLIVER  
...you're only one year old--

The video freezes.

Adam punches some keys.

On the viewscreen appears:  
LOGGING OUT USER ADAM

The screen returns to a blank desktop.

Adam punches some keys.

On the VIEWSCREEN appears:  
ACCESS DENIED

VOICEPRINT IDENTIFICATION PLEASE

Adam holds the RECORDER out toward the terminal and PLAYS IT.

RECORDER (TOLLIVER'S VOICE)  
I'm Professor Geoffrey Tolliver...

Adam flicks the RECORDER OFF.

A beat, and on the viewscreen appears:  
WELCOME, PROFESSOR.

Adam smiles in triumph. But after a quick glance over his shoulder, he gets down to business.

Adam types on the keyboard.

Graphics appear on the screen.  
CHANGE SECURITY SETTINGS

ADAM'S SECURITY CLEARANCE:

living quarters only

Adam types and the graphic changes.  
ADAM'S SECURITY CLEARANCE:

total access to restricted zones

Adam hits one last key.  
NEW SETTINGS SAVED

Another moment of triumph for Adam!

Then he punches some more keys as various MAP GRAPHICS flash on the screen.

The last graphic says:  
PRINT

Adam grabs the MAP and rushes to the DOOR.

Opens it and checks for Caretaker.

Then he's off.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Adam walks down the hallway at a brisk pace, consulting his MAP.

He stops by a DOOR. Glances around furtively.

He puts his thumb on the PRINT-READER.

The door CLANKS unlocked.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

BOXES of SUPPLIES are piled along one wall.

RADIATION SUITS hang in a row along the other wall.

Adam opens the door and enters.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A KNOCK on the door.

CARETAKER (O.S.)

Adam?

Caretaker opens the door and peeks around it.

CARETAKER

Are you here?

Seeing no-one, he opens it wider and enters. He looks around to be sure, then leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Caretaker enters and looks around.

CARETAKER

Adam?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Adam, now wearing a RADIATION SUIT, pulls a CART piled high with CRATES of supplies.

He stops at a LARGE DOOR and presses his thumb to the PRINT-READER.

The door OPENS and he pulls the cart into the ELEVATOR.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Adam looks at the control panel and punches a button.

The elevator DOORS CLOSE and the elevator HUMS into operation.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Caretaker RUNS down the hall at a furious pace.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator arrives at its destination.

Through the reinforced-glass VIEWPORT, Adam can see a sheltered HANGAR AREA with a bay open to the OUTSIDE. This bay is too far away to see much outside.

INT. HANGAR AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The elevator DOORS OPEN with a WHOOSH as the air pressure equalizes.

Adam pulls the cart out into the hangar area.

He pulls the cart to the back of a huge tank-like VEHICLE.

Then he starts loading the crates into the back of the vehicle.

But suddenly the ELEVATOR BEGINS TO MOVE. Adam can see it through the viewport on the elevator door, heading back down.

Adam is momentarily panicked, but then he springs into action.

Taking a WRENCH from the back of the vehicle, he runs to the elevator door and SMASHES THE CONTROL PANEL.

SPARKS shoot out.

AN ALARM RINGS.

FEMALE COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)  
Danger. Airlock controls have been  
compromised. Entering Lockdown  
Mode.

The door makes a heavy THUNK noise.

Adam breathes a sigh of relief.

But then he hears a series of METALLIC CLUNKING NOISES.  
They're getting louder as they approach.

Caretaker appears in the elevator viewport, climbing up the  
elevator shaft.

CARETAKER  
Adam! Stop!

Adam reaches to a button on the radiation suit to trigger  
the COMMUNICATOR.

ADAM  
You're too late, Caretaker, you  
can't stop me! By the time you  
over-ride the computer I'll be  
gone!

CARETAKER  
Adam, you know what's out there.  
Nothing good can come of this.

ADAM  
I have to risk it. If there are any  
survivors out there, I have to find  
them or none of this means  
anything.

Caretaker pauses, looks away for a moment, then looks back  
at Adam.

CARETAKER  
You said I don't have any emotions.

ADAM  
I didn't mean it, Caretaker, I---

CARETAKER  
That's alright. My decision-making  
algorithms probably don't feel the  
(MORE)

CARETAKER (CONT'D)  
 same as your emotions. But Adam - I  
 was programmed to care for you.  
 Without you, I have no purpose.

ADAM  
 I'll find survivors, Caretaker. And  
 when I do I'll be back with them.  
 And Caretaker?

Caretaker tilts his head.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
 I need you to expand the bunker so  
 it can support more people. So  
 we'll have enough food and fresh  
 air for our new family. That's your  
 new mission, Caretaker. That's your  
 purpose.

CARETAKER  
 I understand. Be careful, Adam.

ADAM  
 (smiling)  
 If I was careful I would have  
 stayed inside. But I'll do my best.

He climbs into the vehicle and STARTS the engine.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
 Keep the home fires burning.

CARETAKER  
 Good luck, Adam. Come back soon.

ADAM  
 Until we meet again.

Adam GUNS the engine and drives the vehicle OUT THE HANGAR  
 BAY.

Caretaker watches him go.

EXT. ROCKY MOUNTAINS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A paved ROAD leads out of the HANGAR BAY, which is hidden  
 among the rocks.

The vehicle follows the winding road down the mountain and  
 off into the sunset.

CARETAKER (V.O.)

He's on his way now. So make signs,  
leave signals in the cities and at  
landmarks, and help him find you.  
Because when he does, you'll be  
coming back here, where there's  
food, shelter, and safety. You'll  
be coming home. Message repeats  
now...

CUT TO:

CU degraded video image of Caretaker.

CARETAKER (CONT'D)

...This is Caretaker 40561,  
transmitting from an underground  
bunker in the Rocky Mountains...

THE END.