

SMARTVILLE, USA

Episode One

Written
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A tech billionaire's plan to modernize a fading
Florida town runs into resistance when locals fear
it's becoming too smart for its own good.

01B

8 June 2026

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"A town too smart for its own good"

SMARTVILLE, USA

"Episode One"

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. SHANGRI-PROXIMIA (SMART CITY) - DAY

A gleaming, impossibly perfect metropolis. Crystalline towers refract the sun. No smog. No noise.

A private helicopter descends onto a rooftop.

EXT. ROOFTOP HELIPAD - DAY

A small group of ARCHITECTS holds onto their hats and coats, whipped by the rotor wash.

The rotors slow.

ELIAS - 30s, tech billionaire, worn out behind the eyes - steps out.

He doesn't acknowledge them.

Walks straight through the group.

They hesitate, then hurry after.

INT. GRAND LOBBY - DAY

Elias walks through an impressive marble atrium.

The Architects scramble to keep up.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Welcome to Shangri-Proximia.

The lead ARCHITECT hurries alongside Elias, tablet raised.

LEAD ARCHITECT
We followed every blueprint, sir.
Every specification.

Elias nods. Keeps walking.

INT. MONORAIL PLATFORM — DAY

Elias and the Architects arrive on a suspended glass platform.

A sleek, silent train glides up to the platform.

The doors open.

Elias and the entourage step aboard.

INT. MONORAIL — DAY

Elias stares out the window as the city glides by.

LEAD ARCHITECT
(growing concern)
This is your vision, sir. We
didn't change anything.

EXT. PROMENADE —DAY

The monorail stops. Doors whisper open.

They step out onto a pale ceramic boulevard.

A fleet of white driverless EVs glides across an
intersection.

Elias considers the gleaming cars, the skyline. His jaw
tightens.

The Lead Architect watches, nervous.

LEAD ARCHITECT
What's your feeling, sir?

ELIAS
It's too clean. Too perfect.
(beat)
We built a city where nobody lives.

A stunned silence.

ELIAS
I hate it.

INT. ELIAS'S PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

A massive, minimalist penthouse. Cold. Empty.

Elias lies in a giant slab bed, staring at the ceiling.

His eyes widen.

Suddenly, he gasps. A full-blown panic attack. He sits up, drenched in sweat.

ELIAS

Shit.

INT. ELIAS LIVING ROOM — NIGHT

Pitch black. The only light comes from a vast LCD wall.

ELIAS sits in a white robe.

Eyes wide, consuming content at a lethal speed.

War footage, sitcom laughter, breaking news, cartoons collapsing into static - flickering in rapid succession.

He stops.

ONSCREEN: a scratchy, black-and-white film.

"The Grapes of Wrath".

The character Tom Joad stands outside a weathered farmhouse. Wind through dead grass.

TOM JOAD (SCREEN)

'... fella ain't got a soul of his own, on'y a piece of a big soul — that belongs to ever'body.'

Elias leans forward. The blue light of the screen in his eyes, but he's looking beyond the pixels.

He slides to the floor, crawling on his hands and knees until he's inches from the screen.

He reaches out, hand trembling, trying to touch the wooden facades of the 19th century.

ELIAS

(whispering)

...there you are.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM — DAY

Chaos. A rushed, frantic meeting. Assistants are shuffling papers, arranging card models of futuristic cityscapes.

Elias stumbles in, disheveled, clutching bits of crumpled paper and notes.

He stops at the head of the table. An uneasy silence.

ELIAS
I have an idea.

Silence.

Everyone waits.

ELIAS
How many smart cities have we
built?

MUNGO (LEGAL ADVISOR)
Seven. Excluding Almeida, which is
under construction.

ELIAS
And how many do we actually like?

Silence.

MUNGO
... all of them?

ELIAS
(sharply)
None of them. They're too clinical.
Too perfect. They don't feel lived
in.

He drops the papers on the table.

ELIAS
But what if we took a real town –
somewhere forgotten – and built on top
of it?

MIDGE (TECH LEAD)
You'd get another smart city.

Elias shakes his head.

ELIAS
No. You'd get somewhere with soul.
Somewhere people want to live.

Mungo and Midge exchange a confused look.

MIDGE
What are you saying?

ELIAS
Find me a small dying town, in the
middle of nowhere... And we'll
bring it to life.

Elias leans in, eyes alight with manic energy.

ELIAS
Smartville.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. THE STRATOSPHERE – USA – NIGHT

A fantastical grid of lights and highways – like a neural network.

The camera descends – toward Florida's Gulf Coast...

To a dim, sleeping town of gabled rooftops and wilted Palms.

One house-light glows.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM – PRE-DAWN

Fingers carefully button a PALE BLUE SHIRT.

A NAME BADGE – "FRANK TOWNSEND" is clipped to the shirt pocket. Adjusted twice.

Then once more.

On FRANK TOWNSEND – mid 40's. Handsome, but not vain. Perhaps the nicest guy in the world.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – PRE-DAWN

Frank walks a sleeping residential street.

Gabled houses. Overgrown yards. Sagging "FOR SALE" signs.

Beneath a streetlight: a REMOVAL TRUCK idles at the curb. Hazard lights blink.

RICKY ROBINSON – 30s – loads the last taped box into the back.

He turns, caught off guard.

RICKY
Hey, Frank.

FRANK
Moving on, then?

Ricky closes the back of the truck.

RICKY
Heading north. See what's there.

A house door closes.

Ricky's wife appears carrying a young child. Another walks beside, yawning.

Ricky helps them into the truck.

RICKY
I really thought we could ride it
out...
(passing child)
...but if we stay longer - we won't
have enough left to leave...

FRANK
So you go. While you still can.

Ricky nods, absorbs it.

RICKY
Thanks. For everything.

They shake hands. Firmly.

RICKY
(climbing in)
I'll send a postcard.

FRANK
Please don't. I got enough work
without you adding to it.

They share a smile as doors slam. The truck starts to roll.

Frank watches it go. Until it's gone.

EXT. MAIN STREET - SPRINGFIELD - DAWN

A cluster of locally owned shops with faded signs and peeling facades. Those not boarded up are quietly slipping into decline.

FRANK walks the empty sidewalk. Past a shuttered hardware store. A "CLOSED" sign taped crookedly in the window.

Then -

A warm light. The BAKERY.

Through the glass: people in aprons moving with purpose; flour hangs in the air like mist.

Frank taps on the glass. Points to his watch.

FRANK
(familiar)
What time do you call this!

Turning to leave, the door jingles.

SOPHIE - 60s, apron dusted with flour - hurries out. She presses a wax-paper bag into his hands.

FRANK
Please, no... I can't!

He relents, tucks the bag under his arm.

FRANK
God bless you, Sophie.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD POSTAL DEPOT - DAY

A ranch-style civic building. The words "SPRINGFIELD POST" chiseled into the facade like a commandment.

The early shift files in.

INT. SORTING AREA - POSTAL DEPOT - DAY

Beneath the buzz of fluorescent lights, four sorting booths stand in a row, their walls lined with pigeonholes crammed with mail.

The postal team sorts the morning mail.

IN THE FIRST BOOTH

RORY - more fat than muscle - sorts letters with one hand and sips coffee with the other.

COLETTE O/S
Hey, Rory. Got the tape?

Rory reaches under his station and pulls out a roll of red tape.

He passes it through the partition.

RORY
Who'd we lose?

The tape slides into -

COLETTE'S BOOTH

Colette - 30s, denim cutoffs and big blond frizz.

COLETTE

Dunno. Frank asked for it.

She leans out, into the next booth, holding the tape.

SIMON - 20s, wiry, headphones - dances as he sorts.

A hand waggles through the next partition.

FRANK O/S

Would you hurry it up?

COLETTE

Hey, Mr. Moves!

Simon turns mid-rhythm. Takes the tape -
and flips it over the partition.

SIMON

Heads up!

FRANK'S BOOTH

The roll clips a tray, knocking over a neat stack of letters. It
thuds to the floor.

FRANK bends, muttering as he gathers them.

FRANK

Jesus, Simon.

SIMON O/S

Sowrryy.

Frank peels a strip of tape. Carefully seals a pigeonhole.

He sits back. Takes in the view.

Half the pigeonholes are sealed with red tape.

Empty houses. Vacant lots.

Routes gone dark.

Rory and Colette drift in from their booths.

RORY

Who'd we lose?

FRANK
(rueful)
The Robinsons.

They peer at the freshly sealed slot.

COLETTE
(softly)
Another one gone.

THE MAIN DOOR BURSTS OPEN

ROSIE — a stocky asian woman — wheels in a trolley of boxes.

ROSIE
Listen up, everyone. ATTENTION
PLEASE!

The team emerges from Frank's booth.

ROSIE
As ya'll know, Mike's back from
California.

Grumbling.

ROSIE
Which means changes. Right now, we
got a situation.

She opens a box. Produces a GOLDEN FLYER.

ROSIE
You put one of these in every mailbox.
Even if there's no mail — you mail a
flyer.

Frank takes one. Reads.

FRANK
"Smartville: Smart town, smart
people."

He looks at Rosie.

FRANK
What is this?

ROSIE
It's called hope. A golden ticket
outta shitsville.

CUT TO

EXT. SPRINGFIELD — DAY

Frank cycles down a maze of quiet streets and shady pathways, arriving at —

EXT. TOWN CENTER — SPRINGFIELD — DAY

On a corner stands ARNIE'S ELECTRICAL — a sun-faded glass-fronted shop selling new and used electrical items.

Frank opens his TOP BOX, and retrieves three letters.

ON THE MAIL: Stamped in bold red — URGENT.

Frank steps up to the door, BANGS.

 ARNIE O/S
Who is it?

 FRANK
It's me. Frank.

Bolts unlock. The door inches open.

ARNIE, a mid-30s IT geek, peers out, eyes darting.

He grabs Frank's arm. DRAGS him inside.

INT. ARNIE'S ELECTRICAL — DAY

The place is cluttered. Everything on "Sale."

Frank watches Arnie secure the door from the inside.

 FRANK
What's going on, Arnie?

 ARNIE
Makin' sure they don't turn up.

 FRANK
Who?

 ARNIE
People. Are those for me?

Arnie takes the letters, flips through them —

 ARNIE
Ah, not these guys...
 (another)
And these guys.

He shoves them back toward Frank.

ARNIE
Could you hold 'em?

FRANK
Arnie, they're going to figure it out eventually.

ARNIE
One week. That's all I need.
(beat)
That and a miracle.

Frank takes back the letters. Offers up a GOLDEN FLYER.

FRANK
There's your miracle. Right there.

Arnie takes the flyer, curious.

ARNIE
(reading)
"Smartville - big investment coming to Springfield..."
(upbeat)
You think they'll invest in retail?

FRANK
Maybe.

Frank turns the flyer in Arnies's hand, taps the back.

FRANK
There's a meeting. At the Town Hall tonight.

ARNIE
I should go. Introduce myself.

Frank moves to the door. Arnie unbolts it.

ARNIE
This could fix a lot of problems.

FRANK
It sure could—

Frank is pushed out into the street.

The door slams behind. Bolts slide back into place.

FRANK
(through the letter slot)
'Have a day, Arnie.'

EXT. VINNY'S HOUSE — DAY

Frank freewheels up to a badly painted house and hops off.

The TRASH CAN is full; more trash on the porch.

He raps on the door.

FRANK

Vinny? You there?!

The door opens to reveal VINNY — an old man with snow-white hair.

FRANK

Morning, Vinny. How are you?

VINNY

Pretty good, thanks.

(confused)

Who are you?

FRANK

Frank, remember?

VINNY

Oh, Frank. Sure. Got a fuzzy head this morning.

Frank hands Vinny a letter, then takes hold of the trash can.

FRANK

You need to put it in the road, or they won't empty it.

Vinny follows Frank as he drags the trash into the road and spins it around.

FRANK

Simple. See?

Vinny nods, pointing out Frank's USPS badge.

VINNY

United States Postal Service.

FRANK

You remember that, right.

Vinny straightens up, RAISES his right hand.

VINNY

I, Vinny Brown, do solemnly swear—

Frank raises his right hand and joins in.

VINNY / FRANK
... to support and defend the
Constitution of the United States
against all enemies, foreign and
domestic... so help me god.

Frank climbs on his bike. Pushes off.

FRANK
See you later, Vinny.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

A modest family home swallowed by overgrown gardenia and palm.

The front door opens to reveal NANCY, a middle-aged mom still in her robe.

Frank offers up the mail. Nancy takes it, hesitates.

NANCY
There better not be any letters for
you know who—

FRANK
Relax. I took them out - as agreed.

Nancy softens, flips through her mail.

As she reads, her daughter PAM - an 11th-grade teenager with purple hair and EAR-PIERCINGS - pads across the hall.

PAM
Hi, Frank.

FRANK
Hey, Pam.
(back to Nancy)
Where's Sammy?

NANCY
At the Marina. Keeping an eye on
things.

FRANK
He's a good kid.
(then -)
Oh, and this...

Frank roots his mailbag, hands Nancy a GOLDEN FLYER.

NANCY

*"Smartville. A smart town for...
smart people?"*

(confused)

Is this a joke?

FRANK

Big investment's coming.

(as though it mattered)

From California. There's a
meeting. The town hall, tonight.

NANCY

Well, forgive me if I don't attend.

I got a job and two teenagers—

(shouts inside)

HURRY UP, LADY — IT'S MY TURN!

Her voice starts a nearby DOG BARKING.

Frank turns, wary.

FRANK

Is that Perry's Dog?

NANCY

Uh-huh. Was barking all night.

(re: Frank's bike)

Be careful. You know how it likes
tires.

EXT. PERRY'S HOUSE — DAY

Beyond a chain-link fence: a ramshackle house with a yard and
outbuildings. Frank cautiously peers around a palm.

A DOG — big, muscular — chews on an old radial.

With one eye on the dog, Frank eases open the MAILBOX, slides
in the mail, and closes it.

CLICK!

The dog LOOKS UP, rubber in its teeth.

FRANK

(backing away)

Easy now. Mail's delivered.

Frank leaps onto his bike — pedals hard.

THE DOG jumps to its feet and bounds alongside the fence,
into a Hibiscus bush.

Frank hangs a hard right down a shady path – looks back as –
The dog BURSTS FROM THE BUSHES – snapping at the rear wheel.

FRANK
(through gritted teeth)
Not today, buddy.

Frank swerves into a yard, pedals through a patch of gardenias, and emerges on another pathway.

Ahead: a weathered footbridge over dark water.

He pedals madly over THE BRIDGE. Tires hammering the wooden planks.

The dog keeps pace. Teeth snapping at air and rubber.

FRANK PUSHES HARDER toward –

EXT. WATER INLET – BAYOU – DAY

Frank veers off – down a grassy slope into a narrow inlet stream.

Without slowing, he lifts his legs and lets the bike coast.

WHEELS SLICING THROUGH WATER.

He rolls up the far bank and climbs off – wet.

The dog stands on the opposite bank, tail whipping.

FRANK
(breathless)
You'll never catch me, pal.

The dog barks once.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE – DAY

Elias, Mungo, and Midge have procured a private rail carriage.

Elias sits by the window. The Florida landscape slips by.

ELIAS
I like the train. Feels analog.

He picks up a large leather-bound DOX from the table.

ELIAS
Like this book. It's real.

MUNGO

Yeah, we wanted to keep things
low-key.

(explaining)

That way, if anything goes wrong,
nobody's the wiser.

ELIAS

Nothing's gonna go wrong. This is
destiny.

Elias looks out the window, imagining.

ELIAS

Smartville will be the greatest
thing I ever created. A future
with soul.

(beat)

Who's our man on the ground?

Midge flips through the dossier. Stops on a page showing
photos of a substantial old man in a yachting blazer.

MUNGO

Councilor Ford. Super pliable.
Like a human pencil balloon.

ELIAS

So we sell the idea to Ford, and he
sells it to the town?

MIDGE

No. That's where the other guy
comes in.

Midge flips the page:

FRANK: USPS uniform, holding a parcel like a newborn baby.

MIDGE

Frank Townsend. Age 42. Won Tampa
Mailman of the Year five years in a
row. Springfield loves this guy.

Elias studies Frank's face.

ELIAS

It's perfect.

(beat)

If Frank buys in, everyone buys in.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. TRAIN STATION – DAY

A beaten-up yellow taxi, one door painted red.

Reclined in the driver's seat is BRODIE – early thirties, unshaven, wearing shorts and a plastic golf visor.

A sharp knock on the window. Brodie jerks awake, adjusting his seat.

BRODIE
Sir, yes, sir! No worries—
(climbing out)
Where you headed, traveler?

Brodie stands toe-to-toe with Elias, Mungo, and Midge.

Elias removes his shades. Studies him.

ELIAS
I'm Elias Benjamin. I'd like you to
drive us to the USPS depot in
Springfield. Could you do that...
(reading the license)
... Brodie?

Brodie opens the back door to reveal a well-worn interior.

BRODIE
At your service, Sir.

INT. BRODIE'S TAXI – ON THE MOVE

Brodie drives along, occasionally checking his rear-view.

Elias sits in the back, between Mungo and Midge, studying the cracked vinyl and the duct-taped meter.

Elias whispers something to Mungo, who nods slowly, then –

MUNGO
Listen, Brodie – may I call you
Brodie?

BRODIE
Brodie, Bro. Your choice, man.

MUNGO

Brodie, I doubt you're aware of this, but...

(leaning forward)

Big investment is coming to Springfield. You might want to think about upgrading your fleet.

BRODIE

Fleet?

(laughs)

I got two cars - one working.

MUNGO

We could help with that. Do you have a business card?

BRODIE

(brightly)

I got a wallet sticker.

INT. VEHICLE PARK - DEPOT - DAY

Rory waits at the Depot entrance as Frank coasts in.

Frank parks his bike. Unlaces his wet shoes.

RORY

I was about to send a search party.

(seeing him)

The hell happened?

FRANK

Perry's dog... chased me in the Bayou.

(looking around)

Where are the bikes?

RORY

Had orders to put 'em away.

Rory gestures to four waist-high Cardboard SHIPPING CRATES.

RORY

— those arrived this morning.

FRANK

The e-bikes are here?! Oh boy - I gotta remove my bell.

RORY

Forget the bell. We're needed inside.

INT. SORTING AREA — DEPOT — DAY

The team stands in a loose semicircle.

MIKE — prematurely bald, married and promoted to depot manager — stands beside a cardboard shipping crate.

MIKE
(addressing team)
Alright, team. As some of you know,
I've been spending time in California
on a special project. I couldn't say
much then... but the embargo is
lifted.

He steps aside, gesturing grandly to the crate.

MIKE
Springfield Postal, I give you the
future of delivery.
(grabs the cardboard shell)
The Smart Mail Delivery Vehicle...
(beat)
"S-Mail."

Mike tears open the crate.

There, resting on a wooden pallet, is a WHITE DELIVERY DRONE —
like a kiddie-sized USPS truck, with six rubber wheels and a
blacked-out cockpit.

A confused silence.

RORY
Where are the e-Bikes?

MIKE
Forget e-Bikes. We're going
remote-control.
(proudly)
First depot in the country.

FRANK
So no more bicycles?

MIKE
(selling it)
No more bicycles. No more flat
tires. You just sit at the
controls... let it run the route.

A loud CLUNK.

The SMail's roof opens. An articulated arm unfolds.

At the end of the arm: A white MECHANICAL HAND gives a perfect THUMBS-UP.

SMAIL (A.I. VOICE)
I am an autonomous delivery vehicle
by UA Robotics.

The mechanical hand turns.

Points at Rory.

SMAIL (A.I. VOICE)
You are scheduled to become a
transitional node.

A stunned silence.

EXT. POSTAL DEPOT — DAY

The taxi pulls up outside the USPS depot.

Brodie hands Mungo his Wallet Sticker. Mungo hands over a carbon business card.

MUNGO
Our accountant will be in touch. In
the meantime, consider rebranding.
Uniforms. Logo.
(imagining it)
Maybe... "Go-Bro Taxi."

Midge hands over a twenty. They all climb out.

BRODIE
(staring at the twenty)
Fares twenty-five.
(as they walk away)
Plus tip!

INT. CANTEEN — DEPOT — LATER

Frank is trying to calm a crisis meeting.

FRANK
Wait, everybody, just wait.

The room settles. Tense.

FRANK
Nobody's losing their job. And
nobody leaves, okay.

A few reluctant sighs.

FRANK

We owe it to ourselves to at least try.

(beat)

So we go back out there... and embrace the future.

A knock at the door.

Mike is there, looking at Frank.

MIKE

There are some people from California to see you.

Frank straightens up, confused.

FRANK

To see me?

MIKE

Yeah. You.

INT. ROSIE'S OFFICE — DEPOT — DAY

Rosie sits at her desk, busy.

MIKE O/S

This way, Frank. It will only take a minute.

Through the glass, she watches Manager Mike lead Frank into his office.

Mike catches her watching. Closes the blinds.

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE — DEPOT — DAY

Frank is seated.

Mike, Mungo, and Midge stand against the back wall. Elias stands at the window, looking out.

Frank glances around. Waiting for someone to speak.

Then -

ELIAS

What did they think of the SMail?

FRANK

Surprised. We all were. They'll come around.

ELIAS

The right man for the job.

Frank looks to Mike, confused.

FRANK

What job?

Elias turns from the window. Starts walking in.

ELIAS

I have a vision, Mr Townsend—

FRANK

Please. Call me Frank. Everyone calls me Fra—

ELIAS

—to transform Springfield into a prosperous, twenty-first-century smart town.

Frank nods along, like he's agreeing to weather.

FRANK

Sounds great. And it's not like the town doesn't need it, right, Mike?

No response.

Frank looks to Mungo, then Midge, anxious.

FRANK

Boy, do we need it...

(then-)

What does this have to do with me?

Elias pulls over a chair. Turns it towards Frank.

Sits close.

ELIAS

I need your help to make it happen.

Frank sits back slightly.

FRANK

I—I'm a mailman. I deliver ma—

ELIAS

You're more than a mailman. You're the glue that holds this community together.

Frank starts to respond. Doesn't finish.

ELIAS

People look to you for guidance. If you embrace change, they will.

FRANK

Geez. Well, I--I don't know about that—

ELIAS

I do.

Elias stands. Moves back to the window

ELIAS

(energized)

And I'm not just talking about Springfield.

He gestures outside. To the world beyond.

ELIAS

Together, you and me, will transform every small town in America.

Beat.

Frank glances to Mike.

Mike shrugs.

Frank shifts slightly in his chair.

Looks to Elias.

FRANK

Sir, is this real?

Elias exhales. Adjusts his jacket.

ELIAS

I'm the tenth richest man in America.

(beat)

Believe me, it's real.

Elias turns toward the door. Nods to Mungo.

ELIAS
Town hall. Tonight. Seven o'clock.
(beat)
Just think about it.

Elias walks out. Mungo and Midge follow without a word.

Beat.

Rosie appears in the doorway.

ROSIE
Frank? Everything okay?

Frank hasn't moved.

FRANK
I don't know.

INT. VINNY KITCHEN - EVENING

Vinny stands beside the oven, holding a spanner.

Frank, wearing old blue overalls, lies on his back, head under the sink.

FRANK O/S
It's blocked. The whole goddamn...
(banging)
-blocked.

He slides out. Checks his watch.

It's 7:00 PM.

FRANK
Hand me the spanner.

Vinny hands him the spanner.

VINNY
So? Y'a going... or what?

Frank thinks about it. Then thinks a little longer.

VINNY
Well?

Frank slides back under the sink.

INT. TOWN HALL — EVENING

A packed town hall.

Familiar faces. Workers. Families. A tense crowd.

Onstage, COUNCILOR FORD stands behind the lectern.

FORD
(improvising)
... so what we're looking at here
is a phased community integration
framework—

A murmur from the crowd. Ford pushes on.

FORD
—alignment of services, investment—

MAN O/S
What does that mean?

Ford laughs awkwardly. Tries to recover.

FORD
It means... it means economic gain
through infrastructure—

The confusion spreads.

MAN IN CROWD
In English!

Laughter from somewhere in the hall.

ELIAS AND MUNGO stand in the wings. Watching.

MUNGO
Where the hell is Frank?

Elias checks his Watch.

ELIAS
... I don't know.

The room erupts. People push forward, waving golden flyers.

PEOPLE IN THE CROWD
What does this mean? — *HOW WILL IT
HELP US?* — Is this really going to
fix Springfield?

FORD
Please – if we could all just—

FORD backs up as the crowd threatens to overwhelm the stage.

Then—

From the back —

A shout:

VOICE O/S
Frank's here!

A shift in the room. People turn.

FRANK, still in his overalls, moves through the crowd.

Mungo sees him.

MUNGO
That's him.

Elias watches Frank coming through the parting crowd – like a real-life Tom Joad.

He climbs onto the stage. Gestures to the lectern.

FRANK
(to Ford)
May I?

Ford ushers him forward, relieved.

Frank steps up to the lectern. Waits for the Crowd to settle.

FRANK
Alright.

The room quietens.

VOICE IN CROWD
What's going on, Frank?

FRANK
I'm not going to pretend I
understand what was just said.

A few small laughs – release.

FRANK
But I do understand this town.

Silence. You could hear a pin drop.

FRANK

People are leaving. Work is
leaving. Shops are closing.

Frank looks out at the crowd. Silent. Hopeful.

FRANK

And something's being offered here.
A chance to raise your families.
Stay.

COLETTE AND ROSIE watch from the stalls.

COLETTE

He's good.

ROSIE

Too good.

FRANK

I know people are scared. Hell - I'm
scared too. But doing nothing's
already costing us everything.

A murmur of agreement.

Someone calls out:

VOICE O/S

So what are we doing?

Frank looks out at familiar faces - Arnie, Nancy, Sophie...

He hesitates.

FRANK

We give it a try.

Silence.

Someone starts clapping.

The applause spreads through the hall.

Elias watches from the wings. Smiling. The final piece
sliding into place.

COUNCILOR FORD seizes the moment. He steps up to the lectern
and gestures eagerly for Elias to join them center stage.

The applause grows. Cheering.

COUNCILOR FORD
(into mic)
Beautiful, Frank! Let's hear it
for Frank Townsend!

The cheering grows louder.

Ford wraps an arm around Frank's shoulder, pulling Elias close to form a united front.

COUNCILOR FORD
Okay, Ernie! Let's get a picture!

ERNIE, a local reporter, steps to the front of the stage, raising his camera.

FLASH.

Frank blinks.

Caught between Ford and Elias.

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY – EVENING

The sound of bowling pins. Balls returning. Ambient chatter.

While Frank waits for his return ball, Rosie and Rory sit on moulded plastic seats, browsing the front page of the gazette.

RORY
So what's the deal, Frank? Are
they paying you?

FRANK
C'mon. I'm doing it for the town. For
Springfield.

Rory lowers the paper. Looks out across the lanes.

IN THE FAR LANE: a group of women in matching shirts – the name NIGHTINGALES – embroidered across the chest.

Amongst them, releasing a smooth strike, is MARIE HOLDINGS – a mid-forties, natural beauty whose age becomes her.

Her friends cheer.

RORY
(squinting)
Hey... isn't that—?

ROSIE
... Marie Holdings. Back in town.
(louder; to Frank)
Hey. Frank. You gonna say hello?

Frank stares at the ball return.

FRANK
Why would I?

ROSIE
C'mon. It's been twenty years!

FRANK
Then a little longer won't kill me.

The ball arrives. Frank grabs it, steps into the approach.

RORY
Say, weren't you guys going steady
in high school?

ROSIE
Don't distract him while playing.

FRANK
Here it comes—

Frank holds the ball between both hands.

Eyes forward. Breathes In.

And -

MARIE O/S
Hi, Rosie... Rory.

Frank freezes. Twenty years collapse in an instant.

He turns to see Marie standing behind him.

MARIE
Frank.

Frank nods once, unsure what to do... or say.

Then -

FRANK
So... you finally came home.

MARIE
I did. I came home.
(a smile)
Been back a while.

Frank smooths his shirt. Finds his footing.

FRANK
Is that all? Or was there something
else you wanted?

Sensing friction, Marie looks to Rory and Rosie.

MARIE
Actually, there is. I hope this
isn't too forward, but... the girls
and I were wondering if we might
join the league.

Frank blinks. Pins clatter somewhere far off.

MARIE
We thought it would be fun if we
had another team to play against.

RORY
You mean the competition league?

MARIE
Right. We got a name. Full roster.

RORY
I don't see why not—

FRANK
Whoa. Hold on a minute.

Frank sets down his ball. Steps out of the approach.

FRANK
You can't just join like that. There's
a process. This league's been going for
twenty years. It's not some 'drop-in'
where you pick up where you left off.

MARIE
What's that supposed to mean?

FRANK
It means you can't just show up
with some fancy name and a—

Frank's eyes flick down to the name embroidered on Marie's
chest. He catches himself.

FRANK
—a matching shirt and expect to
slot right in.

Marie crosses her arms. Firmly.

MARIE
What happened to the guy on stage —
talking about “bringing everyone
together?”

FRANK
He’s here. Had you been around the
last twenty years, you’d know that.

Beat.

MARIE
So that’s a no?

FRANK
Yeah. It’s a no. Get your own
league.

Marie holds his gaze for a moment. Then about-turns and
walks back to her team.

The Nightingales close ranks around her.

MARIE
(to her team)
Can you believe that?

Frank watches. Doesn't move.

ROSIE
Nice work, Romeo.

FRANK
(defensive)
What?

ROSIE
Now I gotta wait another twenty
years for the rematch.

INT. ELIAS' ROOM — HOTEL — EVENING

About as nice a room as you can get in Springfield: Double
bed, ensuite, plus a cosy TV seating area.

Mungo and Midge sit on the small sofa, waiting.

ELIAS O/S
I don't wanna look "out of towny"
when we go walkabout.

REVEAL ELIAS

In front of a tailor's mirror, wearing denim overalls and a cotton shirt.

His personal stylist kneels beside, adjusting the hem.

STYLIST
That's a genuine 1930's bib overall
like he wore in the movie.

Elias pulls on a cloth cap and considers his "Dustbowl" look.

ELIAS
What do you think, guys?

MUNGO
Looks great — listen, can we
discuss logistics? I got two
hundred construction guys arriving
in twelve hours and no blueprint.

ELIAS
We don't need a blueprint.

Elias slips on a shabby, oversized denim jacket. Turns left,
then right.

ELIAS
Let's go velour for the boys... if
we all wear denim, we'll look like
the Dalton Gang.

TIME CUT:

EXT. MARINA AND FUEL STOP — LAKE MOHA — DAWN

A rundown, ROADSIDE MARINA SUPPLY SHOP on a Florida lake.
Unused boats, one fuel pump, and a weathered dock jutting into
the water.

SAM — a teenager in overalls and a crew cut — pops the lock
off the gas pump.

A LOW RUMBLING builds.

Sam looks up.

A CONVOY OF TRUCKS AND CONSTRUCTION VEHICLES rolls past.

Then another convoy. Then another.

EXT. JUNCTION — MAIN STREET — DAY

Elias walks down Main Street.

Beside him: FOREMAN DIRK — 60s, hard hat, looks like he eats nails for breakfast.

Behind them, a small entourage of architects and aides struggles to keep up.

ELIAS
...don't touch the buildings, okay?
Go subterranean if you have to...
But don't touch the buildings.

FOREMAN DIRK
Got it.

ELIAS
And I want 6G on every lamppost.

FOREMAN DIRK
Okay.

ELIAS
And reroute the drainage. It smells.

FOREMAN DIRK
Noted.

SOPHIE steps from the bakery. Starts sweeping the sidewalk.

Elias veers toward her. Hand extended. Smile on.

ELIAS
Hello. I'm Elias Benjamin.

She shakes his hand. Confused.

ELIAS
Beautiful shop, madam. Very obliging.

He lets go. Walks on.

Another shop. Another person. Another handshake.

ELIAS
Elias Benjamin.

SHOPKEEPER

—??

ELIAS

Lovely window display. Keep it
exactly as is.

He moves on. The entourage scrambles.

They reach a crosswalk. VINNY stands near the curb. Waiting to
cross.

ELIAS

Can I help you?

VINNY

Waiting for the man.

Elias turns to Dirk.

ELIAS

Give me twenty dollars.

Dirk hands Elias a bill. Elias holds it out to Vinny.

ELIAS

Be on your way now.

Vinny looks at the money, then Elias. Crosses the road.

Elias watches him go, then POCKETS THE MONEY.

ELIAS

(to Dirk)

And put in new crosswalks—those AI
ones – with the light projection.

FOREMAN DIRK

(eyeing Elias's pocket)

Sure.

Then –

FOREMAN DIRK

And the people?

ELIAS

What about them?

FOREMAN DIRK

Do we move them out? Relocate?

Elias looks at the street. The baker. Vinny.

ELIAS

Oh no. They can stay. If they want to.

He shrugs. Smiles.

ELIAS

I'm okay either way with it.

Elias steps into the middle of the street.

Opens his arms.

ELIAS

Look at it. That's soul—
You see it, Dirk?

Dirk looks at the street — the faded signs and closed doors.

FOREMAN DIRK

(sighs)

I'm trying, Elias. God knows I'm trying.

INT. REALTY AGENT'S OFFICE — CONTINUOUS

A drab real estate office. One desk. One sales agent.

SARAH THOMPSON peers out between the acrylic window display showing properties and commercial lets.

Two strange men in black suits are checking her listings.

Beyond, just across the street, a group of people hurries after a man in overalls and a cloth cap.

As they approach her shop, she rushes back to her desk. Tries to look casual.

The door CHIMES open.

Elias enters first. Mungo and Midge close behind.

SARAH THOMPSON

Hello. Welcome to Springfield. How can I help you?

Elias steps to the desk. Friendly. Relaxed.

ELIAS

We're interested in buying property in Springfield.

SARAH THOMPSON

Well, you've come to the right place.

She pulls out a folder. Opens it.

SARAH THOMPSON

What properties were you interested in?

ELIAS

Everything.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. VEHICLE PARK — DEPOT — DAY

Mike and the postal team are gathered around a SMail. Their first training session.

MIKE opens the SMail's roof. Everyone peers inside.

MIKE
(pointing)
This half is for mail, the half for
flyers. You load back to front, in
route order.

Mike gestures to Frank's stack of sorted Mail.

MIKE
May I, Frank?

FRANK
Sure.

Mike takes Frank's mail and begins loading it into the slots.

MIKE
(reading names)
We start with Vine Street — Ms
Alder, Vinny Baines, Bobby Goodwin—

FRANK
Hold on. That's wrong.

MIKE
That's how we do it, Frank—

FRANK
No, I messed up.
(explaining)
Bobby's mail goes to Sam at the
Marina. That way, Nancy won't see
it and get upset.
(off Mike's look)
It's complicated.
(to the team)
Life's complicated, right?

COLETTE
Right.

Mike is about to resume when Frank reaches in - pulls another envelope.

FRANK
That's Marge. Special delivery.

MIKE
There is no 'Special delivery.'
It's a drone!

FRANK
It's from Marge's boy. USS Gerald
R. Ford? First deployment?

MIKE
—?

Frank leans in and swiftly rearranges the letters to his liking.

FRANK
Special delivery goes here. Robby
goes there.
(offers back the stack)
Oughta do it.

MIKE
(snatching mail)
As I was saying. You load from
back to front in route order!

INT. CONTROL ROOM — DEPOT — DAY

A newly installed control room. Four desks with dual screens.

Frank, Rory, Simon, and Colette stand around Mike - a 'first day of school' look.

Mike holds up a headset. Places it on.

MIKE
Headset. You talk through it. You
listen through it.

LATER:

Everyone is seated at their consoles. Headsets on.

MIKE
The left screen is your camera.
Press the red button to talk.

INTERCUT

Rosie stands in the parking lot facing the training SMail.

MIKE (SMAIL)
Testing. One, two, three testing.
Can you hear me, Rosie?

Rosie gives him a ONE-FINGER SALUTE.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM.

Everyone chuckles. Everyone except Mike.

MIKE
Alright, alright.
(beat)
Now take hold of your Joystick.

Each takes hold of the JOYSTICK mounted to their desk.

MIKE
It's just like a video game. Totally
foolproof.

EXT. PARKING LOT — DEPOT — DAY

The parking lot is laid out like a test track. Orange bollards mark a course.

Four Smails wait in single file.

Mike's training SMail darts ahead, weaving through cones.

MIKE (SMAIL)
Point the stick where you want to go.

It spins a tight 360. Stops.

MIKE (SMAIL)
Now your turn. One at a time.

Frank's SMAIL inches forward. Stops.

Colette's Smail shunts into Frank's. CRUNCH.

Simon veers off, scattering cones.

Rory reverses straight into a parked car.

CRASH!

THE CAR ALARM WAILS.

RORY (SMAIL)
What a complete F'ing...

MIKE (SMAIL)
TAKE A BREAK, EVERYONE!

INT. CANTEEN — DEPOT — DAY

The team mingles in the canteen.

Rory sits opposite Frank, quietly nursing his drink.

RORY
I'm not sure, Frank. I preferred
my bicycle.

FRANK
C'mon. It's your first day.
You're doing great.

EXT. PARKING LOT — DEPOT — DAY

The parking lot is now empty. No Cones, nothing.

The four Smails appear. Moving in a straight line.

They arc into a curve. Forming a perfect circle.

Simultaneously, they all stop. Rotate in place like a
synchronized ballet.

MIKE (SMAIL)
Beautiful. Absolutely Beautiful.

INT. CONTROL ROOM — DEPOT — DAY

The team is gathered around one console. Frank sits at the
controls, warming up.

MIKE
Now listen up. It's zero hour.
Today, you stop being mail carriers
— and become SMail pilots. The
first in America.
(heartfelt)
Remember this moment. Someday
they'll make a movie about you.

Mike rubs his hands, excited.

MIKE
Ready, Frank?

Frank puts on his aviators. Grabs the joystick.

FRANK
Talk to me, Goose.

EXT. ARNIE'S ELECTRICAL - DAY

Main Street has been overtaken by trucks, cranes, and construction crews.

Arnie stands outside his shop, trying to make sense of it all.

MEEP MEEP

He turns.

A SMAIL approaches fast. Brakes in front of him.

Arnie steps back as its camera tilts up.

FRANK (SMAIL)
Hey, Arnie.

ARNIE
Frank?

Arnie watches the SMAIL's roof open, and the mechanical arm retrieve his mail.

He takes it, stunned.

ARNIE
Say, Frank. Think you could put a word in for me?

FRANK (SMAIL)
Sure, Arnie. *Have a day.*

The SMail shoots off. Arnie stares at his mail.

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nancy is outside her house, dragging a trash can to the curb.

The SMail trundles towards her. Stops.

MEEP MEEP

FRANK (SMAIL)
Hey, Nancy.

NANCY
Frank? Are you in there?

FRANK (SMAIL)
I'm at the depot. Remote control.
(beat)
Have a day!

She watches it trundle off. Looks down the empty street.

NANCY
First, my husband. Now my Mailman.
(shouting)
Hello?! Is anybody OUT THERE?!

EXT. STREETS VARIOUS

The Smail speeds around a corner. Zips across a crosswalk.
Skids to a stop at the corner of VINE STREET.

INT. CONTROL ROOM — DEPOT — DAY

The team peers at the LIVE FEED of the VINE STREET sign.
Frank lets go of the joystick. Hesitant.

FRANK
Maybe this isn't a good idea.

MIKE
Why not? You know the route.

FRANK
Perry's dog lives down here.

MIKE
SMails don't hurt dogs.

FRANK
It's not the dog I'm worried about.

Mike addresses the room.

MIKE
Pay attention. This is good training.

Frank takes a breath. Guides the drone forward.

EXT. VINE STREET — DAY

The SMail creeps along the pavement. Approaches Perry's gate.

The camera pans right. Looks into the yard.

Just a HALF-CHEWED TIRE. The Dog is nowhere.

INT. CONTROL ROOM — DEPOT — DAY

Frank presses the BLUE BUTTON.

CLICK.

On the LIVE FEED: the arm extends to the mailbox. Deposits the mail. Retracts.

The camera casually pans down to reveal —

THE DOG. Teeth bared. Growling.

RORY
I swear that dog's grown.

MIKE
(mild panic)
Okay, Frank. What do we do?

FRANK
Run.

Frank grips the joystick. Shoves it forward.

EXT. STREETS — ON THE MOVE — DAY

Frank's SMail shoots along Vine Street.

The Dog bounds alongside, behind the fence.

The SMail power-slides right, down a shady path as—

The Dog BURSTS from the bushes, barking.

The SMail cuts across a yard, through gardenias, and emerges on another pathway.

Ahead: The narrow footbridge.

The SMail hits THE BRIDGE, and for one crazy second, is airborne.

It touches down in a cloud of dust.

The dog bounds after.

EXT. WATER INLET — BAYOU — DAY

The SMail speeds down a grassy slope.

Into the water.

SPLOOOSH!

Sinking slowly.

FRANK (SMAIL)
You^{ooo}-s'tupid^{ooo} ∞ ∞

Gurgling bubbles. Then nothing.

The dog sits on the bank. Barks once.

INT. CONTROL ROOM — DEPOT — DAY

Silence.

The team stares at the LIVE FEED.

Small fish swim across the screen.

FRANK
Please — not Marges letter.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATER INLET — BAYOU — LATER

Elias and Midge stand on the bank watching a crane hoist the SMail from the water.

It swings through the air, dripping wet. Tangled in weeds.

It touches down on the opposite bank where Frank and Mike are waiting.

FRANK
(ruefully)
Maybe I'm not cut out for this.

ELIAS
Nonsense. You did great.

FRANK
I drove in the water!

ELIAS
It's your first day. Nobody did
better on a first day, right, Midge?

Midge shrugs - "Sure."

ELIAS
What's more, you taught it right
from wrong.
(upbeat)
That's why you're here. To train it.

FRANK
(confused)
I thought I was here to deliver
mail.

Elias and Midge exchange a look.

ELIAS
Sure. That too.

Mike pops the roof. Water pools inside. He fishes out a
handful of soaked envelopes. Hands them to Frank.

Frank flicks through. Ink bleeding. Paper curling.

He stops on the LETTER TO MARGE FRANKLIN.

Holds it carefully.

FRANK
(softly)
That's a shame. Real shame.

MIKE
Maybe deliver by hand?

Frank looks at the letter. Then Elias.

ELIAS
C'mon. What's a little water? It's
just a letter, right?

MIKE
He's right. Go. Get it over with.

INT. MARIE'S OFFICE - CLINIC - DAY

An older couple sit opposite Marie.

The man slowly takes the woman's hand — like they just heard some bad news.

Marie slides a box of tissues forward.

MARIE
We'll get you through this. Right
treatment, steady care...
(a warm smile)
... you're going to be just—

LOUD BANGING outside

Something heavy is being moved out in the lot.

Marie looks toward the window.

EXT. CLINIC — DAY

A DELIVERY TRUCK is parked outside the clinic.

Four men maneuver a sleek-looking GLASS CUBICLE inside.

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE — CLINIC — DAY

CONNIE, a junior doctor, watches Marie speak into her phone.

MARIE
... No, I did not agree. You asked
if I'd object to having one
installed, but at no point did I—

She stops, distracted by something unfolding in reception.

MARIE
Can I call you back?
(she hangs up)

INT. RECEPTION — CLINIC — DAY

Councilor Ford and Mungo stand in reception, watching WORKMEN install the AI CUBICLE.

ERNIE — the local reporter — snaps a photo. FLASH!

MUNGO
...this is the first of two. Plus
one outside. So people can get a
consultation, day or night.

Marie steps from her office.

MARIE
May I help you?

Ford turns. Blank.

COUNCILOR FORD
—??

MARIE
Dr Holdings. This is my clinic.

Ford brightens.

COUNCILOR FORD
Dr Holdings. How nice to meet you.
(gestures)
I was just learning about your new
AI Doctor. Fascinating technology.

MARIE
I disagree. But since it's their
only option - at least let them use
it. You have five minutes.

Marie walks back to her office. Closes the door. Firmly.

Ford and Mungo exchange a look.

EXT. CLINIC - DAY

Frank arrives at the Clinic holding Marge's WET LETTER.

He takes a deep breath. Pushes inside.

INT. RECEPTION - CLINIC - DAY

MARGE FRANKLIN - 40s, a proud Black woman with as much hustle
as grace - sits behind the main desk.

Frank approaches. Places the wet letter in front of her.

FRANK
I'm so sorry, Marge.

Marge calmly closes a file. Turns her attention to the letter.

MARGE
Why's it wet, Frank?
(she stares at it)
They sink my boy?

FRANK
(quickly)
No! The drone sank. The letter
got wet. He's fine - well, I guess
he's fine.
(backpedaling)
Maybe check?

Marge eyes Frank as she tears it open. Slides the letter out.
Some ink has run. But the words are still there.

FRANK
And—?

Marge raises one hand, scanning for good news.
Then —

MARGE
(smiles)
All good. He's fine.

Frank deflates. Lets out some air.

FRANK
Whew. That was close.

MARGE
Thank you, Fra—

COUNCILOR FORD O/S
FRANK TOWNSEND!?

Frank and Marge freeze.

COUNCILOR FORD strides over, booming with confidence.

COUNCILOR FORD
Get over here, Frank. Meet your
new AI doctor.

FRANK
Actually, I was just—

Ford already has an arm around Frank. Steering him toward the
cubicle.

MUNGO
Let's get a photo with Frank.

COUNCILOR FORD
Great idea. Hey, Ernie — let's get
some of Frank in the cubicle.

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE — CLINIC — DAY

Connie watches Marie pace her office.

MARIE
We send it back—that's what we do.

CONNIE
Agreed.

MARIE
We have too many C-plan patients to
think about—

Marie stops. Peers through the partition.

SEEN IN RECEPTION: Frank talking to Councilor Ford and Midge.

MARIE
Is that Frank Townsend?

Connie moves to the partition. Quickly closes the blinds.

CONNIE
It's him.
(peeking out)
He's using the AI Cubicle.

MARIE
That's a terrible idea.

INT. AI CUBICLE — CLINIC — DAY

Frank sits inside the Cubicle, puzzling the screen.

AI DOCTOR
Tell me your problem.

FRANK
I don't have a problem. I'm hiding
from Marie.

AI DOCTOR
Who's Marie?

FRANK
Marie Holdings. The doctor?
(reminiscing)

FRANK (Cont'd)
I've known her since high school.
Though I doubt she remembers.

AI DOCTOR
So she's suffering cognitive
decline?

Frank looks to the screen, concerned.

FRANK
She is?

AI DOCTOR
Was that a confirmation?

FRANK
I was talking about my relationship
with Marie Holdings.

AI DOCTOR
Are you in a relationship with your
doctor?

INT. MARIE'S OFFICE - CLINIC - DAY

Marie and Connie watch through the blinds.

MARIE
(steels herself)
I have to go out there.

CONNIE
Stay professional. No eye contact.

INT. RECEPTION - CLINIC - DAY

Frank's still in the cubicle. Ford and Mungo nearby.

Marie bursts from her office. Marches over.

MARIE
(clapping hands)
Okay, that's enough! I'd like you
all to leave.

Marge springs to action - hustles over.

MARGE
You heard the lady. Outta the pool
- party's over.

Marge herds Ford, Mungo, and Ernie toward the exit.

Marie knocks on the glass cubicle.

MARIE

Frank? Would you come out, please?

The door inches open.

FRANK

I'm having a private conversation.

MARIE

It's a consultant, not a therapist.

Frank steps from the cubicle. Hesitates.

FRANK

Marie.

MARIE

Frank.

Marie turns, hifalutin. Walks back to her office.

INT. CONNIE'S OFFICE - CLINIC - DAY

Marie joins Connie by the window.

OUTSIDE, Councilor Ford climbs into his Limo. He sees them watching. Smiles.

CONNIE

Someone oughta wipe that smug smile
off his face.

Marie looks at Connie, an idea forming.

CONNIE

(feeling self-conscious)
What? What?!

MARIE

I could do that.

CONNIE

Do what?

MARIE

Run for Councilor.

CONNIE

You could try.
(being optimistic)

CONNIE (Cont'd)
50% of voters in Springfield are
women.

MARIE
Actually it's 56%.

CONNIE
That much? Huh.
(beat)
No wonder I can't get a date.

MARIE
(pacing now)
If we win the female vote... and
those who don't want change...

Marie stops.

It clicks.

MARIE
We could win.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. AI CROSSWALK – DAY

A NEWLY INSTALLED CROSSWALK: Touch-screen. Flashing lights.

Vinny ambles up. Hunts for the WALK BUTTON.

AI CROSSWALK
(beeping)
You may cross the road.

VINNY
But I didn't press the button.

AI CROSSWALK
(still beeping)
You may cross the road.

Vinny starts crossing the road. The beep gets faster. STOPS.

AI CROSSWALK
Please wait.

Vinny stops in the middle of the road, confused.

VINNY
You want me to wait – or keep
going?

AI CROSSWALK
Please wait.

INT. PATROL CAR – MOVING – DAY

DEPUTY TRAVIS – mid-forties, family man – cruises along,
elbow out the window in routine-patrol pose.

Ahead, a FIGURE in the road.

A car speeds past. Horn blaring.

PASSING DRIVER
Outta the road, dumbass!

VINNY
Up yours, turkey!

Travis stops beside Vinny. Smiles.

DEPUTY TRAVIS
Hey, Vinny. How's it going?

VINNY
Great. Who the hell are you?

INT. POLICE STATION — DAY

A small town police station on a slow weekday.

VINNY is by a VENDING MACHINE, eating candy.

Frank stands at the intake desk talking to Deputy Travis.
They talk quietly, so Vinny can't hear.

DEPUTY TRAVIS
... he was walking in the road,
Frank. It's not good.

FRANK
(signing form)
It's the new crosswalk. He'll get used
to it. I'll take him home.

Frank walks over and takes Vinny's arm.

FRANK
Hey, Vinny.

VINNY
Hi, Frank.
(offers candy)
You hungry? I got plenty.

Frank guides him toward the exit.

FRANK
'C'mon. Let's get some real food.
You like chicken?

VINNY
I love chicken.

EXT. SUPERMARKET — MAIN STREET — DAY

Silver trucks line the street.

Men in cherry pickers install devices on lampposts.

Diggers excavate a trench.

OUTSIDE THE SUPERMARKET

Workmen maneuver a sleek-looking checkout inside.

INT. SUPERMARKET — DAY

Sound of drilling and construction.

Nancy sits behind the Manual-Checkout, a face like thunder.

Several feet away, THE MANAGER watches workmen install the first AUTO-CHECKOUT.

MANAGER

What happens to the old one?

WORKMAN

When these are up and running...
we rip it out. Throw it in the
trash.

Nancy listens like they're talking about her.

FRANK AND VINNY appear from an aisle with a basket of food.

FRANK

Hey, Nancy.
(to Vinny)
You remember Nancy, right?

VINNY

Sure.

Vinny leans in. Snags a Kiss.

They watch Nancy slide groceries across the scanner, then turn to consider the construction work.

FRANK

So...
(upbeat)
They're putting them in, then?

NANCY

(beeping away)
Uh-huh.

VINNY

Putting what in?

FRANK

New checkouts. Fully automated.

VINNY
Fully Automated?
(to Frank)
So what will Nancy do?

Frank and Nancy exchange a look.

FRANK
Nancy will do something more—
(struggling)
... managerial. Like a supervisor.

VINNY
What's the point of a supervisor
if you got automation?

Nancy SLAMS stuff into bags.

NANCY
Yeah, Frank. What's the point?

EXT. TAXI RANK — DAY

A run-down taxi rank.

A CAR TRANSPORTER lowers the first of two YELLOW ROBOTAXIS
into the lot.

Brodie and Colette stand nearby, watching.

COLETTE
(arms crossed)
So let me get this straight... some
guy you picked up at the airport
gives you two Robotaxis?

BRODIE
Yeah.

COLETTE
Why?
(doubtful)
Who just gives away self-driving
cars?

BRODIE
He wanted to invest.

COLETTE
In a shitty one-car setup?!
(she turns on him)
What did you do, Brodie? You sign
something you shouldn't have?

BRODIE
I signed nothin'. Nothing!

Colette stares at the Robotaxi. Points at the door logo.

COLETTE
Then who the hell is "GO-BRO
Taxi?!"

INT. ARNIE'S ELECTRICAL - DAY

Arnie, phone under his chin, rifles through paperwork.

ARNIE
(into phone)
I have the money, I just need—

A LOUD BANGING at the shop door.

ARNIE
Can I call you back?

He hangs up. The banging continues.

ARNIE
Alright, alright! I'm coming.

Arnie moves from his office toward the front door.

Reaching it, he hesitates.

Through the glass:

MUNGO and MIDGE in black suits, peering inside.

Arnie freezes.

MUNGO
Mr Arnie?

ARNIE
I ain't opening the door, Okay.
Speak to my lawyer.

Arnie backs away, ducks behind a REFRIGERATOR.

ARNIE
(mumbling)
This wasn't meant to happen. All
that sales tax bullshit.

Mungo stoops, speaking through the MAIL SLOT.

MUNGO

Mr Arnie? I represent Elias
Benjamin. We'd like to offer you a
franchise opportunity.

Arnie falls silent. Unsure he heard him correctly.

ARNIE

A what?

MUNGO

A franchise opportunity?

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE — DAY

A Yellow Robotaxi pulls up outside the entrance. The driver
door opens, and Brodie climbs out.

He moves to the rear door, tries to open it — it won't budge.

ROBOTAXI

Step away from the vehicle, please.

Brodie steps back. Watches the door open automatically.

Elias climbs out. Strides into the hotel without breaking
pace.

Brodie watches him go.

BRODIE

Would you like a—
(too late)
... receipt?

INT. FOYER — HOTEL — DAY

Elias strides across the foyer to the main desk.

Behind the desk: MR BERRY, the desk clerk.

ELIAS

I'm expecting Councilor Ford.
Would you send them to my room?

MR BERRY

Certainly, Mr Benjamin.

Elias turns and walks toward the elevator.

Passing —

PAM — (Nancy's daughter), 17, in a maid's uniform, dusting a table.

As Elias enters, she stops mid-swipe. Watches him closely. Her dusting clearly has nothing to do with cleaning anymore.

The elevator doors close.

PAM
Mr Berry? I'm going to go dust the
fire escape.

DESK CLERK
Okay, Pam. You do that.

INT. ROOM 519 — HOTEL — DAY

The room is clean. Bed made up.

The door SWIPES OPEN and Pam slips inside.

She creeps to the connecting door, presses an ear to the lock.

She listens. Fascinated.

INT. LOUNGE — FRANK'S HOUSE — DAY

Frank is in his kitchen, cooking.

Vinny's in the lounge, looking at framed newspaper cuttings.
He stops to consider a framed photo of a USPS postal team.

VINNY
Were you a Mailman, Frank?

FRANK O/S
I am a mailman.

Frank appears from the kitchen. Joins Vinny.

VINNY
(remembering)
That's right. You deliver my mail.
(studying photo)
You're good at it.

FRANK
I had a good teacher.

Frank points out an OLDER MAN, center frame.

FRANK
Recognize him?

VINNY
Can't say I do.

FRANK
It's you. Nineteen-ninety-nine.
(points to a younger man)
That's me - I was seventeen. You
showed me the ropes - how to talk
to people. You also taught me how
to bowl.

VINNY
(with disgust)
I hate bowling.

FRANK
You're good at bowling. There, see?

Frank points to another photo: a BOWLING TEAM with a trophy.

FRANK
Tampa Bay Postal League. We won
three years in a row.

VINNY
Would you look at that?
(matter-of-fact)
Still, I can't be standing around
here all day - I got work to do.

Frank follows Vinny into the hall, then gently coaxes him
back - like he's done this a thousand times before.

FRANK
Sure. But let's eat first.
(casually)
You like Chicken?

VINNY
I love chicken.

They share a smile.

FRANK
I know, Vinny. I know you do.

INT. FRANK'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The food is finished. Vinny sits at the table watching Frank
wash dishes.

VINNY

Were you ever married, Frank?

Frank pauses thoughtfully, then continues washing.

FRANK

No.

VINNY

Must get lonely. Living alone.

He collects Vinny's plate. Washes it madly.

FRANK

I get along.

VINNY

Oh, sure... You get along, but
that's no life.

FRANK

Do you mind?
(getting irate)
I just cooked you a meal.

The washing up continues.

VINNY

I lived alone.
(distant)
You make it your life, but it's no
life.

Frank stops with the dishes. Stares out the window.

Everything Vinny says rings true.

VINNY

People. That's what's important.
People.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY – EVENING

VINNY'S FACE – filled with surprise as:

Rosie, Rory, Colette, and Brodie greet him with hugs and
kisses. The attention is both overwhelming and confusing.

AT THE BAR

RORY AND BRODIE sit at the bar browsing the Springfield
Gazette.

INSERT: NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "WHAT'S UP DOC?"

PICTURE: Councilor Ford stands beside the AI Cubicle. Frank peers out, lost.

BRODIE

This Ford guy sure gets around.

RORY

Like a cheap mailshot. The hell is that thing, anyhow?

BENNY — the owner, janitor, handyman, and every other hat in the place — is currently behind the bar, pouring beer.

BENNY

According to Frank, it's an "AI doctor." You sit inside, and it tells you if you're sick.

RORY

What's wrong with a real doctor?

Benny tops the beers.

BENNY

Nothing... If you can afford one.

IN LANE ONE

FRANK AND COLETTE watch Rosie remind Vinny how to bowl.

COLETTE

What do you know about this Mr Elias?

FRANK

Very smart man — knows all about the future.

COLETTE

Did you know he gave Brodie two electric cars?

FRANK

(surprised)
He did?

COLETTE

Two Robotaxis. Worth a hundred thousand dollars. Each.

BACK AT THE BAR

BRODIE AND RORY are talking turkey.

BRODIE
It's totally self-driving. Better at navigation... parking - hell, it's even better at conversation than me.

BENNY - now wearing his bookkeeper's hat - is adding up receipts.

BENNY
This calculator's better at conversation than you.

RORY
So what do you do? Just sit back and let it drive?

BRODIE
Pretty much.
(a beat)
I tried driving... but it's real picky.

Someone rolls a STRIKE!

CHEERS, followed by the FOUL ALARM.

BENNY
(slams calculator)
For Christ's sake!

LANE THREE IS FLASHING

Marie raises her arms in despair.

MARIE
Benny, can we turn that off? It's ruining the game.

FRANK
Those are the rules, Marie.

MARIE
It's killing the mood.

FRANK
Bowling isn't about Mood. It's about focus.

Marie wanders over.

MARIE

It's a neighborhood league, Frank.
The tech's ruining it.

FRANK

Yeah, we all know what YOU think
about technology.

MARIE

Why are you defending it? What is
it with you and this Elias guy?

Frank suddenly notices people watching.

FRANK

Mr Elias is trying to help the town
expand its possibilities.

MARIE

Is that what he's doing for you?
"Expanding your possibilities?"

FRANK

(struggling now)
From what I understand... he's
trying to create an efficient,
friendly mail service.

MARIE

We already have an "efficient
friendly mail service."

(beat)

It's called YOU, Frank!

Frank opens his mouth to respond. Hesitates.

MARIE

Well —?

FRANK

(firm)
THE TECH STAYS, OKAY!

They lock eyes.

Beat.

VINNY O/S

(far away)
Frank?

MARIE

Vinny needs you.

Eyes still locked.

VINNY O/S
Can I let go the ball now, Frank?

Frank snaps out. Turns.

Vinny is still holding a 6KG ball.

FRANK
Oh-shit.

Frank moves quickly, taking the weight.

FRANK
You okay?

VINNY
I guess.

Frank massages Vinny's hand. He looks back – Marie is gone.

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY – NIGHT

The Neon glow of the BENNY'S BOWLS sign.

Frank and Vinny make their way across the lot.

VINNY
Who was the lady?

FRANK
No one important.

VINNY
Really?... 'Cause I coulda sworn I saw
Cupid put an arrow right through the
pair a' yours.

Frank smiles despite himself.

FRANK
I wish you and your dementia would
pick a gear and stick to it. You're
driving me crazy.

VINNY
(mock alarm)
Help! I hear wedding bells!

Vinny chuckles as they walk off.

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE — MORNING

A yellow robotaxi waits outside the hotel entrance.

BRODIE — wearing the only suit he has — leans against the door. He looks sharp from ten feet away. Up close, the suit is tired.

The lobby doors open, and Elias, Mungo, and Midge step out.

ELIAS
(offers hand)
Congratulations, Brodie.

Brodie wipes his hand on his pants. Shakes Elias's hand.

BRODIE
Thanks. What's the occasion?

ELIAS
You... becoming CEO of our
transportation hub.
(then —)
C'mon, guys — let's go.

Brodie is about to climb in when Mungo takes him aside.

MUNGO
It's okay, Brodie. We'll take it
from here.

BRODIE
You don't want me to drive?

MUNGO
The meeting is at an *undisclosed*
location.
(pats Brodie's shoulder)
Go get yourself a massage. Hell,
maybe treat yourself to a beer.

Brodie watches the three men climb into the back of the car.

BRODIE
How long?

MUNGO
Two hours. Tops.

The doors close softly. The car pulls away without a driver.

Brodie stands outside the entrance. Superfluous.

EXT. LAKE MOHA — DAY

A vast freshwater lake in a beautiful setting.

Far off, a trail of white dust traces the path of the yellow Robotaxi speeding along a sandy track.

INT. ROBOTAXI — CONTINUOUS

Elias stares out the window. The lake flashes through trees.

ELIAS
Did you remember my headphones?

Midge reaches into a bag. Pulls out a pair of HEADPHONES.

ELIAS
Are they charged?

MIDGE
100%.

ELIAS
Good, because I don't want to hear it.
None of it.

Elias takes the headphones.

ELIAS
Just be mindful.

EXT. JETTY — LAKE MOHA — DAY

The Robotaxi stops beside a newly installed steel jetty.

Elias, Mungo, and Midge climb out and walk the length of the jetty where —

Councilor Ford is waiting beside a large inflatable boat.

Handshakes are exchanged.

COUNCILOR FORD
Welcome to Lake Moha.

EXT. DINGHY — LAKE MOHA — DAY

The dinghy cuts hard across open water. Spray. Engine roar.

Ahead — on the far bank: cranes, raw earth, steel framework.

Mungo signals. The engine drops. The boat settles.

They drift, facing the construction site.

Mungo is about to speak, when —

ELIAS

Wait.

Elias pulls out his headphones. Takes his time fitting them. Happy they're secure, he turns away, facing the water.

COUNCILOR FORD

(watching Elias)

Does he know what we're about to discuss?

MUNGO

(low)

He knows what he needs to know.

Ford nods. That's enough for him.

MIDGE

He likes to keep the vision pure.
Can't have the plumbing touch the dream.

Mungo slides a slim folder across the bench. Opens it.

Spreadsheets. Site maps.

A highlighted line: MUNICIPAL CONSULTING FEE.

MUNGO

Down to business. We start with the Freshwater lake. Pump the water into the data center to cool hardware. It's a ten-year extraction lease. After which time water levels are negligible.

Ford's eyes lock on the numbers.

COUNCILOR FORD

So I'm left with a dry hole?

MIDGE

Not entirely. The bed's sitting on high-yield minerals. Sodium. Nitrates. Semiconductor supply chain. You get a twelve percent royalty on extraction.

Ford's finger traces the figures. Checking the math.

MUNGO

When the minerals are gone, you
rezone. Turn it into a landfill.
State subsidies. Fixed annual payout.

MIDGE

Finally, when it's full of trash, we
seal it over... like it never happened.

They look out over the calm, blue water. Some flamingos land.

Elias pulls off one headphone cup.

ELIAS

The flamingos. They'll be okay?

MUNGO

They'll move on, Elias.

Elias nods. Puts the headphone back on.

Mungo slides a pen across the folder.

MUNGO

What do you say, Tom? You like it?

Ford doesn't look up. Just signs.

COUNCILOR FORD

What's not to like?

FADE OUT.

END EPISODE ONE