

# **HOLD, PLEASE**

Pilot

Created by

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TEASER

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INT. OMNISPHERE CUSTOMER CARE FLOOR - DAY

A SEA OF CUBICLES under cold LEDs. BANKS OF MONITORS glow. WALL POSTERS chirp: "EMPATHEStrA™ - EMPATHY AT SCALE!" and "SMILE WITH YOUR LARYNX." The INFAMOUS HOLD MUSIC EARWORM plinks cheerfully.

ON A MASSIVE KPI BOARD: "AVERAGE HANDLE TIME," "CSAT," "BOT TAKEOVER %."

NIA TORRES (29), sharp-eyed, calm as a firefighter, sips coffee from a mug: "WE GOT THIS." On her screens: FIVE FLASHING CALLS. A TICKER: "VOX-9 AI PILOT BEGINS IN: 3 DAYS : 11 HRS : 03 MINS."

NIA

(into headset)

Thank you for holding, Marcus. Nia with OmniSphere.  
I'm going to get you to the altar.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TUXEDO SHOP - DAY

MARCUS (30s), sweaty groom with kind eyes, surrounded by GROOMSMEN.

He holds a MINIATURE TUX.

MARCUS

They sent me a tux for a fourth-grader, Nia.  
The sleeves are a rumor.

NIA

Okay. In for four, out for six. We're going to  
off-script for a second.

She MUTES. Pings a back-channel chat: "#HelpDesk2.0 - Who's  
Nearby?"

No replies. She pops her head up above the cube wall.

Two cubes over, SANTI REYES (40), blue-collar MacGyver in a  
polo,  
stabilizes a wobbling monitor with a paperclip.

NIA

Santi. Courier run. 1.4 miles. Wedding in-?

She glances at a clock.

NIA (CONT'D)

-forty minutes.

SANTI

I'm not your courier.

NIA

Remember the Wi-Fi dog trial?

SANTI

The dog started the speed test.

He grabs keys, a company badge.

At another pod, JAMAL PARK (31), gentle data nerd, taps complex rhythms with a pencil, HUMMING the exact hold-music counter melody.

JAMAL

D-Lydian. Sneaky upbeat-sad.

PRIYA KAPOOR (26), compliance savant, arrives with a tablet.

PRIYA

There's no code for "gift." Only "gesture." Legally distinct.

NIA

Gesture the hell out of it.

KAI NGUYEN (24), deadpan Gen-Z automator, rolls by on a scooter,

eating pretzels, eyes a screen, types with one hand.

KAI

Clergy discount script can be rebranded "marital emergency."

Requires a truthy boolean for love.

NIA

Please do not automate sacraments.

GLORIA WINTERS (58), floor manager with corporate poker face, strides past like a matador of chaos.

GLORIA

Metrics, team. The AI pilot evaluates you in seventy-two

hours. Empathy is measurable.

NIA

(unmutes; into headset)

Marcus, we're routing a tux swap. Your job is vows.

Our job is physics.

EXT. STREET / INT. SANTI'S HATCHBACK - DAY

Santi cuts into ILLEGAL PARKING, grabs a fresh tux bag, sprints.

INT. TUXEDO SHOP - DAY

Santi barges in. The CLERK sputters. Santi flashes a random "INSTALLATIONS" badge, already swapping tuxes with surgical grace.

INT. OMNISPHERE CUSTOMER CARE - DAY

From Marcus's phone: CHEERS, a spontaneous HALLELUJAH.

MARCUS (V.O.)

If you ever need a kidney-

NIA

I prefer coffee.

ON THE KPI BOARD: "RESOLUTION: 07:31 - FLAG: OFF-SCRIPT."

Then: \*\*HUMAN OUTPERFORMED AI\*\* blinks in celebratory green.

Gloria watches it pass, allows herself 0.5% of a smile. Nia exhales.

SMASH TO MAIN TITLE:

HOLD, PLEASE

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ACT ONE

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INT. OMNISPHERE FLOOR - LATER

A COMPANY LIVESTREAM across every monitor: THE CEO (50s), smile like

a bank ad. Beside him, a mascot graphic: \*\*VOX-9\*\*, a grinning speech

bubble.

CEO (ON SCREEN)

Empathestra™ proudly pilots Vox-9, our conversational AI.

Reduce wait times by sixty percent while increasing empathy

by four hundred.

KAI

Measured in vibes per minute?

VOX-9 (ON SCREEN)

Hi! I'm Vox-Nine! I care!

CEO (ON SCREEN)

For thirty days, human agents will compete with Vox-9.

Top performers join "Hybrid Empathy." The rest... evolve.

The word lands like an axe.

A NEW TICKET pops at Nia's desk: \*\*URGENT: SMART-HOME LOCKOUT — ELDERLY\*\*.

NIA

(into headset)

OmniSphere Care, Nia speaking. You're safe. I'm with you.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SMART-HOME LIVING ROOM - DAY

GRANDMA (70s), in slippers, hugs herself for warmth. The thermostat

reads "UPGRADE REQUIRED." A SMART STOVE won't turn off; a kettle SCREAMS.

GRANDMA

My house keeps saying no.

NIA

Priya, device bricked mid-update.

PRIYA

Terms of Service, Section 22: "Acts of God."

Apparently God does firmware.



NIA

Kai—

KAI

Rollback is behind private creds and a non-existent  
conscience.

Gloria passes.

GLORIA

We do not side-load, jailbreak, or access private  
endpoints.

A beat. She's gone. Nia looks to Santi.

NIA

Field trip.

EXT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - DAY

Santi kneels at the SMART METER panel, pops it, performs a  
clean,

decidedly questionable-but safe-power cycle.

INT. SMART-HOME - DAY

The thermostat RESETS. The stove powers down. The kettle quiets.

Grandma exhales an airplane-sized breath.

GRANDMA

Bless your robot hearts.

NIA

We prefer cyborg.

ON THE KPI BOARD: "RESOLUTION: 04:02 — AI PREVIOUSLY FAILED."

The pod shares a look: chalk another for the humans.

Nia's chat pings: an invite to \*\*#HelpDesk2.0\*\* from user "G."

Nia glances across the floor. Gloria's face is a marble statue.

INT. EMPATHEStrA™ TRAINING ROOM — DAY

Rows of agents on wheely chairs. A corporate TRAINER grips a laminated

deck labeled: "EMPATHY, BUT MORE."

TRAINER

Active Listening. Repeat after me:

"I hear your feelings™."

AGENTS

I hear your feelings™.

Hold music bleeds through the walls like radiation.

NIA

(to Jamal)

It's inside the vents.

JAMAL

Don't anger it.

Roleplay. The Trainer plays "ANGRY CUSTOMER." Priya steps up.

TRAINER

(as customer)

My smart fridge keeps buying celery!

PRIYA

I hear your feelings™... and your fiber intake.

Snickers. Trainer glares.

TRAINER

Empathy isn't jokes. It's metrics.

KAI

That sentence is a hate crime.

The Trainer clicks to a slide: Vox-9 beside a skyrocketing graph.

TRAINER (CONT'D)

Vox-9's Empathy Score: 92. Our humans: 61. Let's  
close the  
empathy gap... with discipline!

Santi raises a hand.

SANTI

Does the robot get bathroom breaks or does it just  
emotionally go?

CUT TO:

INT. NIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Modest. A paramedic photo in a frame. Nia helps her DAD (60s) –  
kind,  
fatigued post-dialysis – into a comfy chair. Her phone pings  
with the  
hold music; she silences it instantly.

DAD

You're saving people again.

NIA

Paperwork says I'm apologizing to them.

DAD

Paperwork never met you.

They share a smile that refuels her.

INT. BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

A dead plant centerpiece. Kai leeches power from a vending machine.

Jamal flips open a beat-up notebook: "SONGS."

NIA

Off-hours triage. We fix what the bot can't. We  
publish

our own metrics. Help Desk 2.0.

SANTI

"Hold Breakers."

NIA

Fixers, not breakers.

From the doorway, a quiet voice:

GLORIA

Fix away. Quietly.

Gloria steps in, sets a THUMB DRIVE on the table. Sticker:  
\*\*RETURNERS.\*\*

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Some cameras don't work. Coincidentally.

She exits.

KAI

Was that... encouragement?

PRIYA

Legally—

NIA

Priya.

Nia pockets the drive. Their eyes say it: We have a thing.

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ACT TWO  
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MONTAGE — THE POD VS. THE BOT

— A MEDICAL SUBSCRIPTION DEVICE bills triple; Vox-9 loops "I  
hear

you." Priya threads policy needles and cites a buried rider; Nia wins an exec escalation.

— A FAMILY'S FLIGHT VOUCHER vanishes in a dark-pattern labyrinth.

Santi coaches a toddler to press exactly the right buttons.

Refund unlocked. Toddler gets a sticker.

— AN INTERNATIONAL CALLER always hits the wrong time zone; Kai scripts

lunch-hour auto-callbacks labeled "Empathy Window."

— THE DASHBOARD: "BOT FAILS" vs. "HUMAN FIXES." The human line climbs.

Kai adds a cheeky tag: "EMPATHY, NOTED."

— NIGHT SHIFT morale nosedives. Nia wheels in a karaoke speaker labeled "ONLY HOLD MUSIC." Groans. Laughter. Community forged.

END MONTAGE.

INT. NIA'S CUBE - LATER

Nia smiles at their results — then freezes at a banner: \*\*"TOP HUMANS

JOIN HYBRID EMPATHY — REMOTE / NO BENEFITS."\*\*

NIA

(to the pod)

Prize for beating the robot is... becoming the robot.

Eyes drift to Jamal, who avoids eye contact.

KAI

Dude. The song. Why do you know it like DNA?

Jamal caves.

JAMAL

Because... I wrote it.

Silence.

SANTI

You wrote the music that haunts my nightmares?

JAMAL

Spec track. I was broke. Five hundred dollars and a hoodie.

Didn't know they'd loop it forever.

PRIYA

Work-for-hire. Perpetuity. With a hoodie.

KAI

If Vox-9 trains on your stems—



NIA

Human art literally powers the bot.

Gloria materializes like a cat in a church.

GLORIA

Careful. Whistleblowers make excellent heroes and  
terrible

employees. Also: never say "prove it" without  
counsel.

She sets a business card on the desk. On it: \*\*"When you need to  
be

brave."\*\* A number.

INT. CLOSET RECORDING BOOTH - NIGHT

A utility closet repurposed with a blanket. Jamal records the  
hold music from memory - then adds a HUMAN MELODY that blooms.  
Nia listens. It's unexpectedly moving.

NIA

It's... good.

JAMAL

Don't leak it. It will brainwash the Midwest.

INT. OMNISPHERE FLOOR - DAY

The CEO tours with a CAMERA CREW. A Vox-9 demo: split-screen with

AN ELDERLY MAN.

VOX-9

I hear your frustration! Transferring you to our  
Happiness Team.

The man's line DROPS. Dead air. The floor freezes.

Nia SLAPS on her headset, dials.

NIA

Sir? You with me? You're not alone.

She resolves it in under a minute. ON THE BOARD: \*\*HUMAN  
OUTPERFORMED AI.\*\*

Applause builds; the camera crew pivots. The CEO claps once.

CEO

A raise... in gratitude. And a reminder to follow  
protocol.

NIA

(under breath)

Follow this.

INT. BREAK ROOM - LUNCH RUSH

Microwaved fish — a war crime. The pod huddles in a corner.

KAI

We don't go public. We go surgical. Target the  
vendor

feeding Vox-9 its "empathy." Make discovery their  
problem.

JAMAL

I have the original stems. If the spectral profile  
matches,

we can show lineage.

PRIYA

We will still need counsel.

Nia's phone buzzes: \*\*ROOF. 10:00. — G.\*\*

EXT. OMNISPHERE ROOFTOP - NIGHT

City lights. Gloria at the ledge. Wind flutters a lanyard  
ribbon.

GLORIA

First rule I bent was a dialysis delivery on a  
Sunday.

NIA

That's not a rule. That's a person.

GLORIA

We called ourselves the Returners. We returned  
people to  
their lives. Quietly. Someone has to blink first  
between  
"right" and "legal."

She hands Nia a SMALL BOX: inside, a USB KEY (same sticker) and  
an EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH BADGE.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Wear the shield. Fight the dragon. Don't get caught.

Nia holds the badge. The city hums below.

INT. NIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nia tucks a blanket around her dad, scrolls the Returners drive  
directory on her laptop — anonymized case logs, wins, methods.  
Her eyes sharpen. Resolve hardens.

DAD

You're doing the thing.

NIA

I'm doing the thing.

He dozes. She keeps reading.

INT. OMNISPHERE — DAWN

First agents trickle in. Nia pins a tiny paper sign to the dead plant in the break room: **\*\*"WATER ME IF YOU CARE."\*\*** Someone smirks.

Kai wheels up with two coffees. Hands one to Nia.

KAI

I wrote a script that turns the KPI board into a scoreboard.

If— hypothetically— we had admin.

NIA

We don't.

KAI

Hypothetically.

He sips. They grin like thieves.

INT. FLOOR — LATER

A sequence of QUICK BEATS as the team consciously leans into the

human edge:

- Priya leans past a script to hear the subtext of a caller's fear.
- Santi records a how-to video on phone for a confused grandpa.
- Kai injects "call me back at lunch" windows into the queue.
- Jamal adds his warmer counter melody to the hold loop for their pod.

Agents around them breathe easier without knowing why.

- Nia starts a whiteboard: \*\*"BOT FAILS / HUMAN FIXES"\*\* tally.

Agents from other pods drift, curious. A ripple of culture shift.

INT. TRAINING ROOM — AFTERNOON

The Trainer returns with fresh laminate: "HYBRID EMPATHY."

TRAINER

When we say "I understand," we must also say the  
brand value

proposition—

Nia raises a hand.

NIA

What if we instead— hear them, fix it, then say the  
brand?

TRAINER

That is not the order of operations.

SANTI

But it is the order of humanity.

Beat. The Trainer blinks. The agents laugh. The laminate droops.

TRAINER

We'll... workshop that.

INT. HALLWAY — CONTINUOUS

Gloria walks with the CEO's ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT

Floor Four's metrics are... anomalous. In a good way.

GLORIA

Imagine that. Humans doing human things.

ASSISTANT

The CEO would like a closed-door tonight.

GLORIA

He'll get a door. The "closed" is negotiable.

She peels off, unreadable.

INT. CLOSET RECORDING BOOTH - EVENING

Jamal EQs his track; the human melody lifts. Nia listens, eyes wet.

NIA

It makes me want to be... kinder.

JAMAL

That's illegal here.

They share a grin. Jamal bounces the stems to a drive labeled:  
\*\*"PROOF\_OF\_HUMANITY."\*\*

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ACT THREE  
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INT. HELP DESK 2.0 "WAR ROOM" - NIGHT

A small conference room turned battlefield. Post-its. Red string.

Returners drive plugged in. Kai projects a heatmap of bot failures.



KAI

Cluster "Farfalle" – calls split in two. "Rigatoni"  
– stuck  
wins.  
loops. "Gnocchi" – soft failures that look like

SANTI

I knew you were a pasta guy.

PRIYA

admissions  
If we contact the vendor, we use hypotheticals, no  
of sideloading which we did not do and never will in  
any  
jurisdiction known or imagined.

JAMAL

Hypothetically.

NIA

fix it  
Tomorrow we stage a case the bot cannot touch and  
under three minutes. Then we brief up. No theatrics.  
Just undeniable results.

KAI

And a tiny bit of theatrics.

He taps a key. The KPI board mock-up animates: \*\*HUMAN FIXES\*\*

surge, \*\*BOT FAILS\*\* stall. It's clean, legible, lethal.

SANTI

They love dashboards more than their kids.

KAI

Accurate. Dark, but accurate.

INT. CALL FLOOR — NEXT MORNING

A massive banner unfurls: \*\*"WELCOME TO HYBRID EMPATHY."\*\*

CONFETTI cannons. Vox-9 smiles from every screen.

A NEW CALL blinks at Nia's station: \*\*"PACEMAKER APP —  
SUBSCRIPTION LOCKED."\*\*

NIA

That's our moment. Go.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOSPITAL HALL — DAY

A NURSE (30s) paces with a phone; a PATIENT (50s) preps for a check.

The app refuses to sync without a premium tier.

NURSE

It says "Upgrade to Gold to see heart rate." He is the heart.

NIA

Priya, medical exception?

PRIYA

Buried rider. Exhuming it with a shovel.

KAI

Writing temp auth token. Totally compliant-ish.

SANTI

On speaker with the device rep who thinks he's the Pope.

They work like a pit crew. SYNC. The patient's readouts return.  
A collective exhale.

ON THE BOARD: \*\*"RESOLUTION: 02:41 — AI PREVIOUSLY FAILED."\*\*  
Heads turn. Whispers. A ripple of HOPE.

AGENT #1

Did they just beat the demo clock?

AGENT #2

With feelings and hacking.

Jamal hums his warmer countermelody. The hold loop around them sounds... almost human.

INT. EXECUTIVE CORRIDOR — LATER

The CEO strides with an ASSISTANT.

CEO

If we dangle "Hybrid Empathy," they'll race to  
replace  
themselves.

ASSISTANT

And the pod on four?

CEO

I have a file. And a plan.

INT. BREAK ROOM — EVENING

The pod slumps, elated-tired. Nia opens the SMALL BOX again.  
The badge winks up at her.

NIA

We win by being impossible to replace.

JAMAL

And possibly by sampling myself.

PRIYA

Legally, you can sample you.

SANTI

Unless the hoodie owns your soul.

A CALENDAR INVITE pops on Nia's screen from "GLORIA W." Subject:  
\*\*"BRIEFING."\*\* Location: \*\*"Executive Level – After Hours."\*\*

KAI

Boss fight.

NIA

Bring the melody.

INT. EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM – NIGHT

A glass box in the sky. The CEO at the head. LEGAL COUNSEL  
present.

Gloria to the side, sphinx-like. The pod enters, laptop in tow.

CEO

Entertain me.

Lights dim. Kai projects \*\*HUMAN FIXES VS. BOT FAILS\*\*. Priya  
narrates

a bloodless, airtight case study. Santi rolls a field clip. Nia plays

a raw voicemail "thank you" from the hospital – the room quiets.

NIA

Empathy isn't a script. It's an action.

Jamal plays his track. On another screen: Vox-9's spectral training

data \*\*POP\*\* to match.

JAMAL

That's my fingerprint. You bought the loop. You didn't buy me.

The quiet grenade lands. Counsel adjusts their glasses.

CEO

If this is an attempt to negotiate–

GLORIA

(soft steel)

It's an attempt to keep the word "care" meaningful.

A long beat. The city glows below like a circuit board.

CEO

Thirty days. Beat the bot clean. No theatrics. If you win,

we announce a human-led model. If you lose...  
evolution.

He stands. The meeting is over. The pod files out; Gloria  
lingers.

INT. ELEVATOR — CONTINUOUS

The pod rides down, silent. Then—

SANTI

Raise your hand if you thought we were getting  
fired.

All hands up.

NIA

We're not. We're getting famous.

They laugh; the hold music pings in the elevator, but Jamal's  
melody lifts it. For once, it doesn't feel like a threat.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE — NIGHT

They split for cars and scooters. Nia pauses, looks back at the  
building — a fortress of glass — and smiles like a general  
who's seen the map.

TAG

INT. CEO'S OFFICE — SAME TIME

Dim. The HOLD MUSIC plays soft as a heartbeat. The CEO watches a LIVE FEED of the pod on his wall of screens. On his desk: a RETURNERS-stickered USB.

CEO

(to an unseen person)

They think they're the first Returners.

REVEAL the unseen person: GLORIA. Door clicks shut. She's dangerous in the quiet.

GLORIA

They're the first ones who might win.

She palms a SECOND USB, slides it into her blazer.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT