

PRESIDENT CARROLL

Setting: The Pentagon, 3AM.

Scenario: In the wee hours of the morning, the highest-ranking officials in charge of Project Resonance received a grave phone call. Information is being strictly contained, but it is known that something has gone very wrong. The situation is serious enough that President Carroll has called an immediate meeting with the officials for debriefing and counsel. The meeting includes the vice president, a four-star general, the Secretary of Defense, the director of the NSA, and two of the lead researchers on the project. Based on this, the president must then decide how to proceed. Among these powerful people is one Corporal Breckinridge, a young officer assigned to security detail at the Resonance lab, who has been brought in for questioning on the matter.

Project Resonance had not been much on your radar since the Israel scandal; you had the economy and foreign relations to worry about. Moreover, the endeavor was going well, with the autistic child subjects showing marked improvement. But just a few hours ago you received a bizarre and disturbing phone call. You were informed that the test subjects have broken out of Resonance's secure laboratory facility, and that this is a catastrophe of monumental proportions.

You are stunned. It is very strange to hear that a group of learning-disabled children could find a way out of a top-secret lab protected by military security, but strange does not make a matter of immediate threat. They are treating this escape like a national security risk, and one on which you must act now. What could be so terrible about this to put the country in such mortal danger?

You need to know exactly what happened, and why. If the nation is in as great danger as they say, you are going to need all the information, and that is why you have called these people to you. You will absorb their briefings and hear their advice, and then you must settle on the appropriate course of action for your country. The final decision rests on you.

VICE PRESIDENT RICHARDSON

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You hadn't heard much about this Project Resonance before now. You were vaguely aware that it was some military-funded research into a cure for autism that might have some side applications as a non-violent form of crowd control. That seemed worthwhile and harmless enough. But now you've received word that the test subjects have escaped from the testing facility and their current location is now unknown. The research team seemed to think this was a catastrophe on a national scale. You were shocked to learn that the autism treatment being tested on these kids was a retrovirus. This is the first you've heard of such a thing— these children were infected with a virus, and now they're loose in the city? What does that mean for the people who will now be exposed to them? And how could a lot of kids figure a way out of a heavily guarded military research facility?

You have accompanied President Carroll to this meeting in search of answers to these questions, and to assist in what way you can with the plan of action that must be made. Something must be done, but they're only children, for God's sake, children who have been harshly used by science. Their poor families must be terrified for them, and who knows what sort of trouble they could get into? You think you need a better idea of what this Resonance virus actually does, and what the consequences of this breakout could be. Serious wrongs have happened, but there must be some way to make them right, and to keep the American people safe from them.

Secret Briefing (A)

GENERAL ROSEN

Act 2 Scene 1
GAB

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You got the call a few hours ago. The test subjects in the Resonance project found some way to break out of their confinement at the lab facility and are now on the run somewhere in the city, and it's left the entire research team in a state of dithering panic. And you'd heard reports that things were going so well. You don't understand what all the uproar is about. Certainly allowing a lot of mentally deficient children to escape from their custody makes them all look like idiots, but this is an inordinate amount of panic even if their reputations are on the line.

It is strange that the kids managed it, however, given how much security you put on the project. You'll get to the bottom of this. Dr. Raines believes one of the military detail may have fraternized inappropriately with the test subjects and could possibly have knowledge of their activity. You charged the corporal to appear for immediate interrogation, and if the little grunt values having a career, you'll get all the information you need.

Now you just have to decide how to handle this. God knows the lab rats are acting like this is the end of the world, but you're going to see that the problem is handled in a competent manner— unlike the rest of this nonsense. This project spent millions of the army's money, and you are not about to let them sabotage your investment. You have some of the best detectives and riot controllers on the east coast at your command; you would like the president to allow you to set up a perimeter around the city and search until they find the runaway kids. You're sure that with enough manpower they can be found and brought back. At any rate, the virus they were testing on these kids was supposed to be formulated as a crowd-control measure; if it was so successful, couldn't they just use it to neutralize the children?

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The subjects have escaped. You are so horrified your brain can barely process beyond that one thought. The test subjects for Project Resonance, autistic children whom the virus seemed to have adjusted to normal thinking and relating patterns, have found a way to break out of the secure laboratory facility and are loose in Washington, DC.

You are surrounded by fools who don't understand the enormity of the situation. These children are far more dangerous than they realize. If they could orchestrate an escape as clean and precise as this one, they have far surpassed normal brain function; they would have to be smarter and more cunning than you ever could have anticipated. None of you foresaw the occurrence of such an effect. And now that they are out among the general populace, there is a huge risk of the virus spreading. Resonance is incredibly damaging to non-autistic people; you have seen evidence that they cannot bear the neurological assault of so many outside emotions flooding in. It blew out the entire nervous system of that one security officer, Lucas Hayward, when he was accidentally infected. If the subjects spread the contagion to others... who knows how many people will be left catatonic and lifeless from the sensory overrun.

You must impress upon the president and the other project officials that the children must be recaptured, and locked down for study. You put years of your life into this project and have come so far, you cannot allow things to go all to ruin now. You want them to impose an immediate quarantine on the city to cut off further spread of the virus, and to recapture the children before they move too far. It is the only hope you have to contain the damage, and return the subjects to study so this madness can be stopped.

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You threw your support behind Project Resonance early, hoping to develop the new crowd control technology before any foreign military powers did. Therefore you have a great investment in it turning out to your satisfaction. Things seemed to be progressing well, until you received word that all the autistic child test subjects had somehow managed to break out of the secure facility in which they were being kept.

You are very displeased that this was allowed to happen. It is extremely unprofessional, not to mention terrible for public relations, that a possible threat to the public be associated with the project. You must speak with the scientists involved to determine the nature of the possible risks. In the meantime, this colossal problem will have to be dealt with. Keeping this mess quiet is a top priority. The only solution you can think of is to round up the children, and probably their families as well, and place them into secure quarantine until the extent of the damage is known. This will prevent any further spread of possible ill effects as well as silence any critical voices who could publicly condemn the research. Damage control will be much easier if you don't have angry citizens breathing down your neck about dangerous government science projects. You intend to advise the president of the threat this could pose to public opinion if the facts of this massive screw up become generally known.

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You were shocked early this morning to receive a phone call informing you that the autistic child test subjects in Project Resonance had broken loose of the facility just a few hours prior, and you are beginning to think things may be graver than some realize. You and several other project executives are assembled here to advise President Carroll about how to handle the situation. But you realize you aren't entirely sure just what the situation is. Some of the others seem to think this was just a colossal mistake on the parts of the researchers and their laboratory security, allowing a lot of child test subjects to break out and get lost in Washington, DC. But you are concerned about what their current status is, given the treatments they have undergone. You know that the Resonance retrovirus was designed to alter minds. You not only want clarification on what it did to the minds of these autistic children, but what effects it has on regular people's minds as well. If they are out and loose in the city, what will that mean for the people they might come in contact with?

The subjects must be recovered, and the extent of the damage they caused must be determined immediately so that it may be dealt with. An antiviral must be engineered immediately in the event that they have passed on the contagion, and the children must be recaptured for a different course of study. Clearly there is something more going on with them than the research team anticipated, and whatever that is, it must be pinpointed and handled. You are beginning to fear that the security of the nation may depend on it.

Secret Briefing (A)

DR. RAINES

Act 2 Scene 1
IBC

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The subjects have escaped. All your work, all the advancements you had made, now would seem to everyone to have brought about nothing but catastrophe. The children, much improved after all your success, had found some way to break out of the secure laboratory facility and are now loose somewhere in the city.

How could this happen? You wracked your brain for some explanation. The only thing you could think of was that there had been that one soldier on the military security detail whom you'd noticed making excessive conversation with the test subjects as they'd grown more capable of normal interaction. Corporal Breckinridge was the name, you think. What if that one had said something to them that shouldn't have been said, or had some knowledge of their plans? You had General Rosen bring in the corporal and arrange for an interrogation in front of the other Resonance officials. If there is any useful information to be had from this irresponsible grunt, you'll get the truth of it.

Still, the greater problem remains. What are you going to do about the escaped children? The consequences of this could be catastrophic. To have broken out of the secure facility means that the subjects are capable of more brilliance and cunning than any children should be— something far beyond the normal brain function that was the goal of Project Resonance. Who knew exactly what else they might be capable of? More immediately, the virus was known to be extremely dangerous to the non-autistic; their nervous systems could not handle the flood of outside sensory information. You remember how that useless guard Lucas Hayward that accidentally became infected had gone completely catatonic from it. If the children passed on the virus to the outside world, it would spread like wildfire and destroy anyone in its path.

If the public knew that this happened, they would shut you down immediately and your reputation would be ruined; you would never work in government science again. Everything you've worked for would be for nothing. The only chance of you keeping things under wraps is if you can engineer an antivirus to counteract what may have been spread by the children. You're certain you can accomplish it if need be, and it may be the only way to keep your reputation, and all your achievements, from being lost forever.

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You don't know why you're here. You think something bad happened at the lab, but your shift ended hours ago. You are on the military security detail assigned to the testing facility for Project Resonance, where most of your job is keeping the autistic kids from acting out and hurting themselves. And lately they seem so much better, now that their treatments have progressed. You've been doing your best to be kind to them, talking to them and answering all their questions about you, the people around them, the testing facility, and everything. You want to encourage them, since they're finally starting to act normal.

But that's the sum total of what you know about them. Now you're sitting in front of not only the most powerful people on the project, but the most powerful people in the world— a general, the lead researchers, even the president and vice president. They want to interrogate you about something regarding Project Resonance. But what could you possibly know about it that these people would want to learn? You remember when a fellow security officer, Lucas Hayward, died in a freak lab accident, but that's the only problem you've ever seen on your watch. What's happened that has everyone so... terrified?