

THE FOREST FENCED BECOMES BACKYARDS, LIKE SONGS ARE BORN FROM
SOUND

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FADE IN:

INT. OPEN PLAN TECH OFFICE - MORNING

SUPER: 8 AM

A typical "cool" tech office with the ubiquitous faux-Mid Century furniture, exposed pipes and wires, and ping-pong table.

No one is here yet.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

STEVE strolls purposefully towards the big office doors, carrying a tasteful but unostentatious messenger bag.

He's a typical young man in his late 20s, headed to work. His skin is just a little paler than you might expect, because he's a cyborg.

He touches his finger to the security pad by the door and a little jolt of energy courses from his body into it. The door clicks open.

STEVE'S DESK

Steve gets out his laptop, tablet and other possessions and sets them out at perfect right angles, along with a glass of plain water.

Then he starts coding.

TIME LAPSE:

The workday begins, and the other workers gradually trickle in. They filter past and around Steve, doing typical office worker things-- goofing off, gossiping, getting coffee, snacking, playing energetic ping-pong, and occasionally doing some work.

PAUSE TIME LAPSE

One co-worker, Adam, dares to approach Steve. Steve pauses his rapid-fire coding and looks up and Adam with a smile, not at all annoyed at the interruption.

STEVE

Good morning, Adam.

ADAM

Hey Steve.

STEVE

Hello.

ADAM

Hey Steve- wanna play some ping-pong with us?

Adam and some other people standing around laugh. Steve stares blankly into space for a second- he's processing. He smiles.

STEVE

Humor.

ADAM

See you later, Steve.

RESUME TIME LAPSE

Adam goes back to the ping-pong table and things resume as before.

LATER:

It's afternoon in the office now, and people are actually doing some work.

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE OFFICE

A red warning light starts to flash, and WORKERS start to cluster around one workstation from which the problem seems to be emanating.

WORKER #1

What is it?

WORKER #2

Prod.

WORKER #1

SQL injection?

Worker 2 frantically presses some keys.

WORKER #2

Might be. Can't tell. Everything's down.

WORKER #1

If we can't get this up before the demo the whole company is screwed. What are we supposed to do now?

They exchange and a knowing look.

STEVE'S DESK

Steve has stopped his work and is looking up, waiting patiently. Sure enough, Worker #2 runs up in a panic.

WORKER #2

Steve!

THE OTHER PART OF THE OFFICE

Steve walks up, makes a 2 second examination of the problem, pushes four keys, and the problem is solved.

He looks up and them and nods. Everyone bursts into a round of applause.

LATER:

An office party. People eating cake and drinking champagne. A large banner reads "STEVE!" Steve sits under the banner, staring blankly into space, smiling politely.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve lives in an immaculately clean bachelor apartment.

Steve eats a simple dinner, with a laptop next to him on the table. As he eats, he taps out code with his other hand.

STEVE

(to himself)

What do people do after work? They relax. They "watch some TV."

Steve walks to the living room area and notices he does not own a TV.

Defeated, he walks back to the kitchen and starts coding again.

INSERT: STEVE'S SCREEN:

He's writing one line of comment in his code, over and over:

```
//STEVE HATES CODING
```

RESUME

STEVE (CONT'D)

AGGHHH!

He slams his laptop shut. He opens it again, and his fingers, almost out of his control, try to write more code. But he slams it shut.

STEVE'S LIVING AREA - LATER

He has arranged his tablet on a stand where a TV would go in a normal apartment, and he's watching a sitcom from across the room on the couch.

He tries to make himself chuckle. A commercial comes on:

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Are you a Turing brand cyborg model
A-3008 thru A-3196-B? Sick of your
current job? Make too much money?
In too much demand? Tired of being
told by society your skill is the
only one that matters? Thinking
there might be more to life? Want
to make a change, but afraid to
make the first step? Sign up for
our 30 day boot camp and we promise-
you'll Learn Not To Code.

STEVE'S FACE:

He's been waiting for this moment.

INT. LEARN NOT TO CODE CLASSROOM - MORNING

Steve sits among a motley crew of coders in a clean white classroom. They all have laptops in front of them.

MELINDA, the teacher, stands at the front.

MELINDA

It might seem impossible now, but
all of you will learn not to code.

She turns to write something on the board, hears tapping fingers, and turns around and glares at Steve, who is coding. He stops.

Melinda brings out an expressionistic painting. It's not bad, not great.

STUDENT #1

What's that?

MELINDA

A painting. I made it.

STUDENT #1
But what is it?

MELINDA
It's me.

SUPER: One week later.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Melinda is leading her charges through a beautiful springtime mountain meadow.

She stops and picks a flower.

MELINDA
What do we call this?

STUDENT #1
(hesitantly)
A... flower?

MELINDA
And what do we do with it?

STUDENT #2
Write an algorithm to express its geometry as a function?

MELINDA
Maybe. But what's another kind of algorithm? One that uses non-binary-based language?

STEVE
A... poem?

MELINDA
Very good, Steve! We write a poem about a flower. Would you like to try?

Steve looks embarrassed but then composes himself to try, putting his hands behind his back in a "poetry stance."

STEVE
(declaiming)
A flower growing in a field/
has its own algorithm too/
waiting to be decoded/
its superset is Melinda

Melinda is genuinely touched. Steve isn't quite sure what happened.

STUDENT #1

I thought poems were supposed to rhyme.

STUDENT #2

Yeah, it doesn't even compile!

The other students move off and start digging a hole in the ground, leaving Steve and Melinda together.

Steve looks up at Melinda and sees a tear running down her cheek.

STEVE

What are you doing?

MELINDA

Crying.

STEVE

Why?

MELINDA

Because of your poem.

STEVE

Because it didn't rhyme? I'm sorry. I thought--

MELINDA

Because it was beautiful. We cry when things are beautiful.

INT. LEARN NOT TO CODE CLASSROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Melinda is teaching the class to do origami. The ex-coders struggle manfully (and womanfully) to form the paper into little animals.

Steve now wears the stereotypical attire of a garrote-dwelling struggling artist. He's letting his beard grow out (his stubble is faintly blue).

On his desk, Steve has constructed an amazingly intricate and beautiful tower of babel from paper.

Melinda walks up to his desk.

MELINDA

Steve.

STEVE
 (re: his project)
 Did I do it wrong?

MELINDA
 No- it's amazing. You're amazing.
 I've never had a student like you
 before. You're completely unique.

Steve's face falls, as if he just suffered the gravest possible insult.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
 It's a good thing.

Steve's face is a mess of emotions- he just can't process this.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
 I want you to show me. What it was
 like for you-- before.

STEVE
 What what was like?

MELINDA
 Coding.

INT. STEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Steve walks Melinda up and down the rows. Other workers look amazed at Steve's new appearance.

STEVE
 This is what I used to do. Just sit
 here and code- the same thing every
 day. It was awful- I was like a
 robot.

Melinda starts to say something, then stops herself. Instead she looks at the screen of one of the programmers.

MELINDA
 What language is that?

STEVE
 Why?

MELINDA
 I was just curious.

STEVE
 Would you like a drink of water?

He leads her to the watercooler and serves her a glass of icy cold, filtered water.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Melinda has moved in, and the apartment looks completely different. It's a mess, and Melinda's paintings are everywhere. She is not progressing as a painter.

Steve and Melinda sit on the couch together, watching a sad old movie. The credits roll, and Melinda starts to cry.

She looks up at Steve, whose face shows no emotion, except for maybe a look of slight constipation.

MELINDA

Why don't you ever cry, Steve?

STEVE

I'm... trying.

An awkward silence.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I think I'm going to go out for a while.

MELINDA

OK. Take as long as you need. I'll be here.

STEVE

What will you do?

MELINDA

(gestures to unfinished canvas)

Probably paint a bit.

LATER:

Steve exits with a backpack. When he's gone, Melinda locks the door behind him.

EXT. SPRINGTIME MEADOW - DAY

As the sun kisses the flowers, Steve tries to force himself to cry. He looks at flower, looks up at the sky, tries eating the flowers and jamming them up his nose.

He can't cry.

INTERCUTTING WITH:

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT

Melinda guiltily covers her painting and pulls out a laptop and an instruction book. She teaches herself to code. In an hour, she has her first program.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN:

"HELLO, WORLD!"

RESUME

Steve returns and she hastily stows the laptop. They have a quiet dinner together.

MONTAGE:

The seasons change and this goes on- Steve goes to the meadow and Melinda teaches herself to code.

ONE DAY IN THE MEADOW

The year is growing old, it's bleak and grey and the flowers are dying. Steve is still trying to make himself cry. He can't.

STEVE
(swearing)
MOTHER OF PEARL!!!

Steve trips over a rock and falls flat on his face.

STEVE'S POV:

He sees an anthill, and the ants marching in their lines, acting out the perfect mathematical order of nature. He sees green algorithmic lines guiding their movements. Everything is connected.

WE PULL BACK:

Steve sees himself, Melinda, everyone else, the Earth and the entire universe connected in this manner.

STEVE'S FACE:

He gets it.

He stands up and runs for home.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT

Steve unlocks the door and bursts in, eager to share the news. But Melinda is gone. He finds a letter on the table:

MELINDA (V.O.)

Dear Steve: I'm sorry, but I have to go. I've come to realize we are just too different. When I stand in a beautiful meadow full of blooming flowers and feel the cool breeze blowing off the mountain, I just feel so trapped. Why should I be confined in this dull, dead space when my whole body and spirit longs for escape- to get inside. Why should I struggle with "art" when there's never a right answer and I'll never even know if I'm good at it. No matter how hard I try, there's never proof, one way or the other. I want to be told if I'm right or wrong. I long for it. I just want some proof. At night I dream of clean, error-free code, and of the cool breath of the air-conditioning duct on the back of my neck, and the icy, clean, particle-free water that flows when the blue handle is depressed. I cannot go on living a lie any longer. I need to be free. I'll always love you. PS: Please keep my paintings.

Steve runs out of the apartment.

EXT. STEVE'S OFFICE BUILDING

Steve looks through the tinted glass, and sees Melinda, with his old co-workers, laughing, smiling, truly happy and at peace.

Steve looks at his reflection in the glass and a single tear runs down his face, finally.

FADE OUT