THE OVERPOPULATION COMMITTEE

ROBINSON — head of Overpopulation Committee; all business, incapable of any emotion except for stoicism (if that even counts as an emotion)
SMITH — second member of Overpopulation Committee; an academic type, perhaps a bit too thrilled at this job opportunity
WALLACE — third member of Overpopulation Committee; how did Wallace get this job?
CAM — American citizen with a hat
LEX — American citizen without a hat

All roles are gender-neutral, but I’ve written he/him pronouns for the sake of flow. Pronouns can be adjusted. Committee members may wear matching uniforms or badges on their shirts.

The Committee is settled around the center right of the stage, each in a chair behind a table. They face stage left, as if waiting for someone to enter, and each has a clipboard and pen (or anything similar, such as computers, notebooks, etc.). There is a phone on the table, and maybe some name plates for each member. WALLACE is, perhaps, doing something ridiculous like playing with a paddle ball.

WALLACE: Excited for today?

SMITH: Yes.

ROBINSON: No. Excitement clouds logical decision-making.

SMITH: Uh—I meant yes, according to what was professionally acceptable. Which means, of course, no.

The phone on the table rings. ROBINSON picks it up.

ROBINSON: Overpopulation Committee. Yes. All right. Send them in.

ROBINSON puts the phone down.

SMITH: I hope we get some good ones today.

The first citizen, CAM, walks in stage left, stopping to stand in front of the Committee. Cam is very nervous.
WALLACE: How’s it going, mate?

CAM: Good. Very, uh, good. How are you?

WALLACE: Good, thanks.

ROBINSON: State your name, please.

CAM: Cam. Cameron Rogers.

ROBINSON: Tell us about yourself.

CAM: I’m twenty. I’m a university student, studying engineering. I’m the top of my class. My, uh, my dad was an engineer. I’m sort of following in his footsteps.

ROBINSON: Relationship status?


ROBINSON: You have twenty seconds to argue your case.

CAM: I have a future ahead of me. I am skilled both socially and intellectually. I think I can contribute to society. I am the last remaining member of my family, and I believe—

ROBINSON: Time. Thank you. You may leave.

CAM: Thank you for your consideration.

CAM exits stage left. The Committee members begin taking notes on their clipboards, except WALLACE, who isn’t very interested in writing things out.

SMITH: He was nervous. Very nervous. “Contribute to society?” A bit vague, don’t you think?

WALLACE: I liked his hat.

ROBINSON: Here comes the next one.

SMITH and ROBINSON flip to their next clipboard page. LEX walks in, much more confident than CAM was previously.

WALLACE: And how are you?

LEX: Excellent.
ROBINSON: State your name, please.

LEX: Lex Buchanan.

ROBINSON: Tell us about yourself.

LEX: I am forty-two. I have a PhD in mathematics. I have an above-average IQ. I am skilled in writing, teaching, problem-solving, and contain many leadership attributes. I have work experience in several fields and published an award-winning book about STEM education in America.

ROBINSON: Relationship status?

LEX: Divorced.

ROBINSON: You have twenty seconds to argue your case.

LEX: I have years of experience and quality education under my belt. I have helped educate thousands and plan to continue doing so, expanding the minds of generations to come in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology.

ROBINSON: Time. Thank you. You may leave.

LEX nods, then turns and exits stage left. SMITH and ROBINSON take notes.

WALLACE: What I'd like to know is the divorce story. Probably money. It's always money.

ROBINSON puts down his pen. SMITH follows suit.

ROBINSON: Thoughts?

SMITH: Lex is clearly capable. Everything coincides with his file, as well.

ROBINSON: I agree. There were no health conditions, either.

WALLACE: I liked the one with the hat.

SMITH: Did you like the one with the hat, or did you just like the hat?

WALLACE: Both.

ROBINSON: Attire is irrelevant.
WALLACE: Is it? You can tell a lot about a person from their clothes. I liked the hat, and I liked him. And I’ll tell you something else—Lex failed my test. “How are you?” “Excellent!” But what about me? Come on! These are basic social skills! Cam’s a friendly guy. Lex—now, he’s conceited.

SMITH: Conceited, or confident? They are supposed to prove their worth. Cam didn’t give us as much.

WALLACE suddenly grows very passionate about CAM’s case.

WALLACE: He was being humble. Both claim they want to improve the world. Shouldn’t we keep the one who seems more caring? More selfless?

SMITH: But Lex has proved his usefulness already. Through experience.

WALLACE: Well, sure! Because he’s older! Cam didn’t get a chance yet. What if everything Lex does from this point on isn’t as good as what he’s previously done? He could’ve already reached his peak.

ROBINSON: We can only make decisions based on present information, not on hypotheticals. Lex has more experience and contributions. We must come to a unanimous decision. Wallace?

WALLACE: Can’t we keep them both, then? Do we really need to terminate a whole fifty percent of the population? Why not a third? A fourth?

ROBINSON: A fifty percent cut is imperative to ensure ideal living conditions for the human race. This is what is best for our nation. We cannot make exceptions.

WALLACE tosses his clipboard onto the floor, frustrated.

ROBINSON: Wallace. Are we in agreement?

WALLACE: Yes.

SMITH: Or, you know, we could just wipe out everyone. Now that’s equality!

SMITH laughs, but no one else does.

SMITH: Ahem. That was, uh, that was a joke.

ROBINSON: Here they come.

CAM and LEX enter stage left, stopping side-by-side in front of the table.

ROBINSON: After brief consideration, we have come to a unanimous decision. Lex, you have been selected for Future Society.
LEX nods.

ROBINSON: Unfortunately, that means Cam will be terminated. You will be escorted to the chamber for your final meal.

CAM has attempted to hold it together, but begins to cry.

ROBINSON: You may both leave.

Both turn to exit. WALLACE gets up and walks over to CAM, who he embraces. LEX exits stage left as the two remain hugging for a moment. ROBINSON and SMITH just watch. It is silent other than CAM, who is sobbing. WALLACE lets go.

WALLACE: It’s all right. It doesn’t hurt. They’ve got good food, too.

CAM: Thank you.

WALLACE: Bye, Cam.

CAM: Bye.

CAM exits stage left. WALLACE paces for a moment.

WALLACE: I need a minute.

WALLACE exits stage left. SMITH looks at ROBINSON.

SMITH: What’s he so worked up for? He doesn’t usually care this much.

ROBINSON: Yes . . . perhaps he isn’t as emotionally controlled as we thought.

SMITH: Should we look into a replacement?

ROBINSON: It’s something to consider.

SMITH: Maybe we should give him twenty seconds, huh? Heheh. No, no, not really. Another joke. But do you ever wonder if we’ve made . . . mistakes with some of these people?

ROBINSON: That is a dangerous question, Smith. Implying a flaw in the system means reevaluating every member of the Future Society. Including ourselves.

SMITH: Oh. Oh, well, that’s not what I—
ROBINSON: But now that you mention it, that is something to consider, as well. Are we not biased toward ourselves? Hmm.

WALLACE re-enters.

SMITH: Feeling better?

WALLACE: Yes. Sorry about that.

SMITH: No worries.

WALLACE sits back down, picking up his clipboard as he does so. The phone rings. ROBINSON picks it up.

ROBINSON: Overpopulation Committee. Yes, we’re ready. Bring them in.

They turn to a new page on their clipboards.

WALLACE: Excited for today?

Blackout. End.