

# THE NETWORK

By Christian Kiley

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ISBN 978-1-60003-693-4

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## THE NETWORK

By Christian Kiley

**SYNOPSIS:** Social networks are everywhere. Although they offer us new opportunities to communicate, they also give us the opportunity to initiate conflict. Friendships can be destroyed as quickly as they're created online. *The Network* is a look at the changing world we live in and the impact that social networks have on our society. Sometimes funny, sometimes sad, often with moments of real human passion and the desire to be heard, "The Network" reminds us that while social networks may be with us for a long while, we must decide how to use them. We must consider that the potential for harsh, derisive, and hurtful behavior is now part of our lives around the clock. But ultimately we make the final choice. Ultimately, "we are the social network."

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 FEMALES, 3 MALES, 9 EITHER, 18 TOTAL CAST)

- A (f).....New to *The Network*. She is trying to have both a "normal" life and an "online" life. (96 lines)
- B (f).....Very popular. She has hundreds and hundreds of "friends." Her trust in her "boyfriend" is betrayed when he posts private pictures of her on *The Network*. She is forced to reinvent herself as P. (108 lines)
- C (f).....In love with D. She is ignored and dismissed and eventually joins *The Tribe* (an anti-technology group started by M). (66 lines)
- D (m).....He only cares about himself. He posts the private pictures of B. (61 lines)
- E (m/f).....Signs online petitions. Wants to stand up for positive change but lacks the courage to do it. (22 lines)

- F (m/f).....Reposts everything. No original posts come from F. Seems to want to be a positive person but lacks the originality or initiative to make it happen. (17 lines)
- G (f).....A poet. Often ridiculed, she ultimately gives in to peer pressure. (19 lines)
- H (m/f) .....Always wishing everyone a “great day!” Tries to maintain a positive attitude in a contentious and negative world but eventually caves in to the peer pressure. (19 lines)
- I (m/f).....Addicted to online games, particularly *Mall Wars*. I and J get into a heated *Mall Wars* battle that culminates in a food fight. (45 lines)
- J (m/f).....Also addicted to online games, particularly *Mall Wars*. (77 lines)
- K (m/f) .....Loves all things old and ancient. (20 lines)
- L (m/f).....Loves Lady Gaga and all things hip and contemporary. (20 lines)
- M (m).....Asks N to the homecoming dance and is rejected on video; it is then posted on *The Network* and he is humiliated. Decides to delete his account and start *The Tribe* (an anti-technology group). (108 lines)
- N (f).....The girl M asks to homecoming. (20 lines)
- O (m).....Is mean to just about everyone. Films M’s homecoming rejection video. Reluctantly becomes a member of *The Tribe*. (51 lines)
- P (f).....The reinvented B. Vows to become bigger and more popular than *The Network* itself. (31 lines)

## THE NETWORK

- THE NETWORK (m/f).....The biggest social network on the planet.  
Personified and played by a human actor.  
(29 lines)
- SURVEY MONSTER (m/f) .....An annoying and frightening “monster”  
in the game *Mall Wars*. (6 lines)
- YOUNG M (m).....M as a child. Doubles with any male  
member of the cast. (4 lines)
- MOM (f).....M’s mother. Doubles with any female  
member of the cast. (3 lines)

### PRODUCTION NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

*The Network* can be produced with a strong but simple design concept that captures the idea of being on-line with the use of inexpensive headlamps. These headlamps can be turned on (white light) when a character or characters are on-line, off when they are off-line, and red when the character or characters have sinister motives (the bullying scene, when D reveals the pictures of B on-line, or when the other characters are defriending A). This is a powerful way to put part of the design concept in the hands of the actors and can create exciting and dynamic rehearsals.

The use of status updates as set dressing and for the play’s climax (when M, O, and C try to destroy *The Network* with the use of a virus) can be a simple way to express the idea of a social network without much cost or preparation time.

Some sample status updates:

A is doing homework

B is now friends with Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z

Relationship Status: It’s Complicated

C is in a relationship with D

D is in a relationship

E signed a petition...

F wants to watch a movie

G is tired but afraid to go to sleep

H is thinking sunny thoughts

I is playing *Mall Wars*

J is playing *Mall Wars* better than I

K is reading *Oedipus Rex*

L feels like a rock star

M is heartbroken

N is waiting for a certain guy to ask her to homecoming

O posted a video

The world of the play can be simply and effectively created with the headlamps and status update signs. A director's chair (or similar) labeled "The Network" for the actor who plays Network to sit in is helpful as it gives the impression that *The Network* is always present.

During our rehearsal process, we used the phrase "we are the social network" to remind ourselves that it is still person to person interaction that is the best way to communicate; and that as great as social networks can be, they can also cause a tremendous amount of pain and suffering. We used student quotes in the program and in the lobby to help express the positive and negative feelings that young people have about social networks.

### SETTING

The world's most popular social network. Present day.

*THE NETWORK*

**PROPERTY LIST**

- Headlamps (Ensemble, used throughout to indicate when a character is online)
- Flowers (M, Act One, Scene 1 to give to N to ask her to Homecoming)
- Cell Phones (O, C, D, Act One, Scene 1 during the Homecoming video and when C and D must give up their devices of technology during Act Two, Scene 5)
- Apple (Act One, Scene 6 for the ensemble to comment on in their status updates)
- Spear (M, Act Two, Scene 1 and throughout Act Two)
- Cardboard Box (M and O, Act Two, Scene 1 and Act Two, Scene 5)
- Backpacks (O, I, J, and others as needed)
- Backup Cell Phone (O, Act Two, Scene 1)
- Plastic Food Items or objects to represent the food items (I and J, Act Two, Scene 7)

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*This play is dedicated to young people struggling with the pressures they must face on a day-to-day basis.*

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**PRODUCTION HISTORY**

*The Network* was first performed at Etiwanda High School (Rancho Cucamonga, CA) on November 9, 2011 with the following cast. The playwright would like to thank the cast, designers, creative team, and crew for their talent and effort. Special thanks to Bill and Ellen Kiley and Chelsea Barron for editing and proofreading assistance.

|                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| A.....              | Amanda Lucido              |
| B.....              | Savannah Carrillo          |
| C.....              | Kaylee Wynn                |
| D.....              | Keith Mertan               |
| E.....              | Stephanie Bowler           |
| F.....              | Jasmine Hamming            |
| G.....              | Desirae Montes             |
| H.....              | Sabina Ennison             |
| I.....              | Jay San Luis               |
| J.....              | Dustin Darr/Mark Barcelona |
| K.....              | Sarah Price                |
| L.....              | Valery Saikaly             |
| M.....              | Anthony Fisher             |
| N.....              | Lauren Dumapias            |
| O.....              | Jonathan West              |
| P.....              | Caitlin Halbeisen          |
| THE NETWORK.....    | Alexis Martinez            |
| SURVEY MONSTER..... | Bekah Smith                |

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Director.....                | Christian Kiley                      |
| Assistant Director.....      | Dustin Darr                          |
| Technical Directors.....     | Nathan Guerard and Cynthia Smith     |
| Stage Manager.....           | Bekah Smith                          |
| Assistant Stage Manager..... | Jeffrey Rimpau                       |
| Sound Design.....            | Ivan Luna                            |
| Poster Design.....           | Marco Banuelos                       |
| Costume Design.....          | Alexis Austin and Antaeus Littlejohn |
| Makeup Design.....           | Alexis Austin and Angie Mendez       |
| Prop Design.....             | Zedric Jackson and David Mendoza     |

ACT ONE, SCENE 1  
LOGGED ON

*When the lights come up A and B are standing on opposite sides of the stage with their headlamps on, indicating they are “on-line”. THE NETWORK enters with the style and confidence of a seasoned sales person.*

**NETWORK:** Welcome to *The Network*. We are here to help you get connected and communicate with the people you care about, to make new friends and reconnect with people from your past. Your family and friends are here. And they are waiting. They miss you. Isn't it time to join them?

*THE NETWORK sits in a chair that is labeled “The Network” and remains onstage throughout the play except for the scenes with The Tribe.*

**A:** Is anyone up?

**B:** Of course. I never log off.

**A:** When you sleep though, right? You log off when you sleep.

**B:** No, never. I could miss something.

**A:** But how do you do anything else?

**B:** Is there something else?

**A:** I think so.

**B:** My need to network is pretty much the same as my need to breathe.

**A:** Really?

**B:** Of course. *The Network* was like a second birth for me.

*C enters and turns on her headlamp.*

**C:** Here goes...In a relationship.

**B:** Oh...C is in a relationship.

**A:** How do you know?

**B:** Just updated. Just now.

**A:** Really?

**B:** I wonder who she is in a relationship with?

**C:** Should I post who I am in a relationship with?

**B:** Are you C's friend?

**A:** No.

**B:** You should totally friend her. Her life is a mess and you get to watch the whole thing unfold here!

**C:** Here goes. In a relationship with D.

**B:** Just updated. C is in a relationship with D.

**A:** D?

**B:** D.

**A:** That sucks.

**B:** Jealous?

**A:** No. D is a mean-hearted person.

**B:** Are you friends with D?

**A:** Of course not. In second grade he told me that by the looks of it, I was raised by a herd of elephants.

**B:** But you can still be friends on *The Network*.

**A:** No.

**B:** Oh, you sweet naïve puppy dog.

**A:** But I thought...

**B:** How many friends do you have?

**A:** Sixty-two.

**B:** Now, Sweetie, don't take this the wrong way. It is medicine and medicine always tastes bad going down. But it will make you better. I have four thousand, three hundred and twenty-two friends. Actually twenty-three. A hot looking guy from Iceland just accepted my friend request.

**A:** What can I do?

**B:** Take control of your life. Get out there. Friend people. Post glamorous pictures and wonderful updates about your life. Create yourself again. The way you want. This is the new plastic surgery baby. You can mold yourself like the raw, warm clay of creation. You can be whoever you want here.

**A:** You should work for *The Network*. You're selling it all the time.

**B:** This is incredible! O just posted this video of M asking N to homecoming. And N said no. Classic failure captured on video.

**A:** How can you—

**B:** I just sent it to you.

**A:** You did? (*Receiving the video.*) You did.

THE NETWORK

**B:** Watch it.

**A:** It just seems a little cruel.

**B:** If you can't handle *The Network* maybe you should just go watch television with all the other coward-clones. This is where you can change the world. If you dare.

**A:** Okay, I'll watch the video.

*The video is acted out by M, N, and O who enter without headlamps. M is holding flowers. O is taping the "scene" on his cell phone camera. A and B either move down stage left and right to watch the video or even out into the audience as your playing space permits.*

**M:** I wanted to ask you something.

**N:** Are those flowers for me?

**M:** Yes. They are part of the question.

**N:** O, please turn off the camera.

**M:** I wanted to ask the most beautiful girl in the world to homecoming.

**N:** Please turn the camera off.

**M:** It's okay. The camera. It's fine.

**N:** Just turn it off, O. Turn the camera off!

**M:** N, will you go to the homecoming dance with me?

**O:** This is so great!

**N:** Turn the camera off.

**M:** I saved up some money so we can have a nice dinner and—

**N:** I don't like you that way.

**O:** Oh no, she doesn't like you that way. That's not the first time you've heard that.

**M:** People learn to like things. Sushi, the accordion, an exotic perfume. They are acquired tastes.

**N:** I don't like raw fish, weird instruments, strange smells, or you.

**O:** Get lost weirdo. Freak.

**M:** Okay. Well, I'll see you later.

*O holds the camera phone up to M's face.*

**O:** Here's your close-up big boy.

**N:** O, would you please turn it off.

**M:** (*Looking into the camera.*) Well, that didn't go to well...did it?

*M exits. O turns the camera toward himself.*

**O:** From the location of the greatest rejection in the history of the world, I'm O signing off.

*N exits quickly, followed by O. A and B move to their original positions on opposite sides of the stage.*

**A and B:** That was...

**A:** ...Terrible.

**B:** ...The best.

**B:** I liked the video, along with forty-five other people. And it has only been up for six minutes. This is blowing up and going viral.

**A:** You are celebrating in someone else's agony.

**B:** Delete it if you don't like it. Then it won't exist. At least not in your world. But you have to look at the beauty of it. *The Network* gives us a chance to live forever.

**A:** I have homework to do. I better log off.

**NETWORK:** Are you sure you want to miss all the excitement?

**A:** Yes.

**B:** You should just stay logged on like me. You might miss something amazing if you go.

**A:** No thanks. Log off.

**B:** Look at that! Lady Gaga hugging the Queen of England. Now that is my definition of world peace.

**C:** D. Are you there?

*D is laughing offstage, as if having an engaging conversation with someone else.*

**D:** Yeah.

**C:** Oh.

**D:** Just chatting.

**C:** With who?

**D:** What's up?

**C:** I just want to...

**D:** Look I'm chatting, okay?

- C: Yeah, I just...I was wondering if you saw my relationship status.  
D: Yeah.  
C: Well, you didn't post anything.  
D: Do I have to?  
C: No, I just thought we were together.  
D: Yeah.  
C: So we are together?  
D: Yeah.  
C: Don't you want to...  
D: What?  
C: Post it. Don't you want to post it?  
D: I guess.  
C: Okay. (*Beat.*) Have a good night.

*D exits. C looks out toward the audience.*

- C: My Mom told me that she and my Dad used to pass notes to each other in class. And that they would meet behind the school near the drinking fountains. They only had two, maybe three minutes before someone had to go to practice or be picked up. But those minutes, those seconds, they meant something. And that's how they built their relationship, their love for each other, in those moments.

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 2  
STATUS UPDATES**

*When the lights come up the ensemble is looking out at the fourth wall with their headlamps on.*

**NETWORK:** What's on your mind?

**A:** A is doing homework.

**B:** B is now friends with P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, and Z.

**C:** Relationship status: It's complicated.

- D:** D likes Monster Trucks, Monster Energy Drinks, and monsters that live in your closet and eat small pets and children who don't grow fast enough.
- E:** E signed a petition to "Change the voting age to fourteen."
- F:** Please repost this if you know someone who is standing in a line right now. Lines are horrible and should be abolished. Haven't we all stood in lines before? Annoying, right? And sometimes it results in stiffness in the lower back and soreness in the feet. Help us abolish lines by reposting this. Heart, heart, heart. Colon, closed parenthesis to indicate a smiley face. Heart, heart, heart.
- G:** G shared a poem entitled "My Poetry, My Lifeblood."

*G acts out the poem.*

- G:** These words don't bleed, but I do. The consonants cut, the vowels scowl and mock. "Ha, ha" they say. They drain my lifeblood. But I can get them back. I can leave letters out of words. Letters are now etters. People are eople. You are ou. Will ou love me for who I am? The oet I am?
- H:** H hopes everyone is having a great day! A great, great, great day. You are responsible for your own great day, so make it great. This day is great. So make it that way. Great.
- I:** I just killed J in Mall Wars with a cinnamon roll and a fistful of giant, expired gumballs.
- J:** J is a cheater who uses snack items to kill his friends.
- I:** You are just saying that because you got killed with a cinnamon roll and you still have icing on your face. Wipe it off. Go breathe in some flavored oxygen, get a massage in one of those weird vibrating chairs, and have a hot dog on a stick. You'll be back. Baby Gap is that good.
- K:** Why does Socrates have fewer fans than Lady Gaga (*Or the name of another popular musician.*)?
- L:** It's Lady Gaga.
- K:** That's not a reason. Socrates, sixty thousand fans. Lady Gaga, over forty-three million.
- L:** Please stop.
- K:** What?
- L:** Your tired campaign to love all things ancient.

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**K:** Ancient philosophers were like the pop stars of their generation.

**L:** Yeah, no one is going around humming the *Poetics*.

**K:** You never know.

**M:** M is heartbroken.

**O:** (*Crossing to M.*) Loser.

**N:** Please stop calling me a mean-spirited person and a witch. Sometimes people don't get to go to homecoming with the person they want to go with. That's life. I can't control everything that is captured on video. If you feel so sorry for the guy, you go to homecoming with him. Oh, and find a new lab partner in Bio. I am not dissecting a virtual fetal pig with a traitor.

**O:** Joined the group *A Real Man Doesn't Cry Unless His Arm Has Been Chewed Off By A Grizzly Bear And It Is His Dominant Arm And He Tries To Sew It Back On Using His Own Hair To Stitch The Gaping Wound*.

*THE NETWORK crosses center stage while the others freeze.*

**NETWORK:** Please allow us to help you create groups and sub-groups so that the right people can see your posts, pictures, and invitations. For example, if you are throwing a party and you only want to let certain people know about it, then we can help you create a friend group called "Only Really Cool Friends." Sorting your friends into neatly organized and prioritized groups has never been easier or more fun.

*Everyone turns off their headlamps and exits.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 3**  
**WORLD WAR 2.5**

*When the lights come up M is alone with his headlamp on, looking off into the distance for someone to talk to.*

**M:** Is anyone awake?

**J:** (*Entering with a flourish, headlamp on.*) Yes! Yes, wide awake.

**M:** Hey, J.

**J:** M, I really need your help.

**M:** You do?

**J:** Absolutely. It's of vital importance.

**M:** Okay.

**J:** I'm putting together a top secret army.

**M:** Really?

**J:** Yes. Only the best and brightest will do.

**M:** You know this is M right?

**J:** M, of course I know it's you. I've been waiting for you.

**M:** Great.

**J:** I need you to download Mall Wars and create an avatar.

**M:** Isn't that the game where you try to seize control of a shopping mall?

**J:** Yes and it's awesome.

**M:** Sure, it's just, my Mom warned me about violent video games.

**J:** Violent? No, no.

**M:** Didn't you get killed with a cinnamon roll and some expired gumballs?

**J:** Enough about me getting killed with old gumballs already! It's time to enact *my*—I mean *our* revenge.

**M:** Why would I need to seek revenge?

**J:** Look flower boy, I saw your video with the pathetic proposal.

**M:** I was just asking her to homecoming.

**J:** Sure.

**M:** You know sometimes people say "no." It happens. It is protected by the first amendment and everything. We don't live in a world where I just bring over a couple of chickens and a dozen ears of corn to N's Dad and get to take her to homecoming.

**J:** Listen, you need this as much, if not more, than I do.

**M:** No.

**J:** M, do this or I am going to make that video go viral in ways you couldn't even imagine. Your Mom will have it in her inbox tomorrow morning at work.

**M:** Alright, alright. What's the big deal? Why do you have to win so badly?

**J:** Winning is the best. And once you've had a taste, you can't stop. Not ever. Take a look at my photo album. It's entitled, "ME: Winning Throughout the Years."

*BLACKOUT. When the lights come up, five or six members of the cast are in position for each picture in the slideshow. This pattern continues throughout the slideshow with the actors positioning themselves in the BLACKOUT for the next slide. Slide #1: The actor playing J mimes slaying the actor playing the dragon, as other members of the ensemble are frozen in disbelief.*

**J:** This is me slaying a dragon.

*Slide #2: The actor playing J holds the actor playing the dragon in a headlock so that it looks like the dragon's head. Others are frozen in celebration.*

**J:** This is me, holding his head.

*Slide #3: The actor playing J with a foot on the actor playing the dragon, now on the ground in a heap. Two of the female villagers mime kissing the actor playing J's cheeks. Other members of the ensemble continue to celebrate.*

**J:** These are the villagers celebrating my bravery and skill in slaying the dragon.

*Slide #4: The actor playing J mimes killing a zombie. Other members of the ensemble can play zombies or frightened onlookers.*

**J:** This is me killing a zombie.

*Slide #5: Is exactly the same as slide #4.*

**J:** And me killing another zombie.

*Slide #6: Is exactly the same as slide #5.*

**J:** And yet another zombie.

**M:** Hey that's the same picture.

**J:** Yeah, well, zombies look a lot alike.

*Slide #7: The actor playing J points his hands at a member of the ensemble playing his enemy, as if he is casting a spell. Others look on with disbelief.*

**J:** This is me using my magic powers to turn my enemy into...

*Slide #8: The actor playing the enemy of J exits and puts a stuffed frog where he/she was standing. Everyone else stays in the same positions but appear completely amazed.*

**J:** A frog.

*Slide #9: The other members of the ensemble pick up J as if he is flying.*

**J:** This is me flying...a power I was given from earning one trillion points in Crafty War Craft, Doom, Chaos, Despair and Scrapbooking, Two.

**M:** Okay, I get it. You like to pretend winning in strange, fake video game worlds.

**J:** What? When you pour yourself into *The Network*, it is you. Trust me man, you invest in this. You take a Cookie Monster Eat and Play doll and you use it to devour your enemy. Or a candy apple, or better yet, a toffee one, a deluxe, you know, with the hard, nutty, outer shell and, once you use that delightful treat to shank your opponent, there is no turning back. It's Mall Wars. It doesn't get any more gritty and real than that, right?

**M:** You ever been inside a real mall?

**J:** No. But I've heard the stories. The tear-filled eyes of a child searching frantically for an exit with nothing but a half-eaten giant pickle and a melted cherry ICEE to sustain his life. No thanks. I'll stay right here where I have as many pickles as I can eat. And the ICEEs flow as freely as...as freely as...rivers of cherry ICEE.

**M:** Yeah, I have to go.

**NETWORK:** Are you sure you want to log off? *The Network* is the world without all the boring parts.

**M:** Log off.

*M exits.*

**J:** Back to the mall!

*J make an exaggerated pose and then exits with great exuberance.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 4**

**BFF**

*B, C, and D are online chatting. B is chatting with both C and D. But C does not know B is chatting with D.*

**B:** I'm so sorry friend. What happened?

**C:** He was chatting with someone else at the same time I was chatting with him and he wouldn't tell me who it was.

**B:** Dirtbag.

**D:** Hey, baby.

**B:** Hey, sweet thing. How are you?

**D:** Better now.

**B:** I posted some new pictures just for you.

**D:** I know. Hot.

**B:** Guess who I am chatting with right now? C.

**D:** Why?

**B:** She is head-over-heels for you.

**C:** B, are you still there?

**B:** Yeah, yeah. My Mom. Something about dirty dishes not washing themselves.

**D:** I don't even like her.

**B:** Then maybe you should tell her.

**C:** What should I do?

**B:** Tell him how you feel. *(To D.)* You need to tell her how you really feel.

**D:** No way.

- C:** I changed my status from “in a relationship with D” to “it’s complicated” and nothing. He wasn’t concerned, jealous, anything.
- B:** Then change your relationship status to “in a relationship with...Z.”
- C:** Who’s Z?
- B:** It doesn’t matter. He sounds super hot.
- C:** Z...yeah. Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. I like it.
- D:** Look, I have to bail.
- B:** Wait baby, I’m just cleaning up your mess.
- D:** What the heck does that mean?
- B:** Oh, you know. Just cleaning up all the juice that leaked out of this girl’s heart after you broke it.
- D:** Thanks.
- C:** Great advice. I don’t know what I’d do without a friend like you. Status update I have the best friend in the whole wide world and her name is B.
- D:** B, are you still there?

*C exits, excited about her friendship with B.*

- D:** You are so hot. I want you to...
- B:** Yeah, D. Anything.
- D:** Send me some more pictures of yourself at the beach or something. Be creative.
- B:** Yeah, okay.
- D:** Night sweetie.

*D exits leaving B alone on stage.*

- B:** Night. *(Beat.)* I don’t know what to do. Help. Post. Delete. Help. Post. Delete. Help, Post. Delete.

*B continues to whisper “Help. Post. Delete.” This can continue until she is merely mouthing the words with no sound.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 5**  
**STUPID CRUEL THINGS**

*The members of the ensemble are on stage. Each character can turn on her/his headband right before they speak. A and B are onstage in the same position they were in at the top of the show.*

**A:** What should I post?

**B:** Oh, you poor newbie. Anything. Everything and more!

**A:** My feelings.

**B:** Yes, but always with some flair and sparkle...keep 'em guessing.

**A:** Who?

**B:** Your friends.

**A:** Isn't that a strange way to relate to your friends?

**B:** It's sophisticated.

**A:** But they're my friends.

**B:** Yeah but there are levels and layers of friendship. Did you know that you can rank your friends?

**A:** No. Where am I ranked in your friends?

**B:** I can't tell you that.

**A:** Why?

**B:** It's private.

**A:** That's crazy.

**B:** I know. Isn't it great?

**A:** Not really. Look I need to run around the block or something to try to get in touch with reality. Make sure I still have a heartbeat. Log off.

**B:** People need to accept that this is the future. People who don't learn the language of *The Network* will be the new illiterates. This is the dawning of a new age!

*J and M enter from different locations with their headlamps on.*

**J:** Hey, M, your Mom just posted a video of you. You better check it out.

**M:** Oh, please no.

*Two members of the ensemble act out the video of M as a child. A female member of the ensemble should play mother and a male member of the ensemble should play Young M.*

**MOM:** What do you want to be when you grow up M?

**YOUNG M:** The Easter Bunny.

**MOM:** Why do you want to be the Easter Bunny?

**YOUNG M:** I want to poop pretty rainbow eggs.

**M:** No, no, no.

**MOM:** You know that eggs come from chickens, right?

**YOUNG M:** Then I want to be a chicken too.

**M:** Mom, did you post a video of me? Mom!

**YOUNG M:** But I still want to poop rainbow eggs. Lots and lots of pretty colorful eggs!

**M:** *(Exits, calling out.)* Mom, what is going on? ...Mom!

**J:** Wow, that might be even worse than your homecoming video. M? Where'd you go?

*E and F enter quickly with their headlamps on.*

**E:** My job sucks! Who names a frozen yogurt place Artic Utopia anyway? And we are always out of mint-chocolate swirl. My boss is an idiot.

**F:** Hey, I like Artic Utopia! The mint-chocolate swirl is divine.

**E:** You know what? You're an idiot too.

**F:** That's not necessary.

**E:** You know that Artic Utopia frozen yogurt is just powder and water blended with ice. Let it melt sometime. It will look just like your life, a puddle with no nutritional value.

**F:** Hey, you don't know me well enough to say that. No one should treat me that way.

**E:** Fine. De-friend!

**F:** I just got defriended by someone who was never really my friend to begin with.

**E:** E was just fired from Artic Utopia.

*E turns off her headlamp and exits demoralized.*

THE NETWORK

**NETWORK:** Artic Utopia is seeking part-time help. Must be loyal and not post slanderous comments about the product on *The Network*.

**F:** F just got a job at Artic Utopia. The best darn place to work in the world.

*F turns off her headlamp and exits with excitement about her new job. G enters.*

**G:** I wrote a new poem entitled "Technophobe." Post.

**J:** Crazy poet girl is on the loose again.

*G moves downstage as the intensity builds in her poem.*

**G:** Eyes crinkle to focus in on the fluorescent glow that hypnotizes but never enlightens. It is not the catalyst of photosynthesis. No. It sucks life from the sockets and soul, leaving us shoeless and cold. Heartless.

**J:** You're a nut-job!

**H:** J you are out of line. That was beautiful!

**J:** This is not a place for you to get all deep and philosophizing.

**H:** That is not a word.

**J:** It is now.

**H:** Why don't you go play Mall Wars and get your anger out by blowing up a Donut Hut or something?

**J:** It is called *Donut Planet*. Get it right. De-friend.

*J quickly turns off his headlamp and exits.*

**H:** Like. I thought your poem was inspiring!

**G:** I just write what I'm feeling.

**H:** Yeah, I know. Not everyone is ready for that. Maybe you should just post normal things on *The Network*.

**G:** What are you saying?

**H:** It may be more trouble than it's worth.

**G:** I think my feelings are worth the trouble.

**H:** Of course they are. But maybe create a group, just for those people who appreciate it.

**G:** I have to go.

*G exits.*

**H:** I just don't want to see you suffer. G, are you there? Status Update:  
H is sorry.

*H follows G offstage. I bursts in...*

**I:** I just blew up a Rings, Bobbles, and Trinkets store. There are skull rings and fairy-wing-shrapnel everywhere. So this is what domination feels like. Are you hiding J? Because you should be.

*J peeks out from the wings, as if hiding. K and L enter.*

**K:** I don't think Confucius would like *The Network*.

**NETWORK:** K's comment has been red-flagged as inappropriate.

**L:** Are you kidding? He would love it! His status updates would be blowing up.

**K:** Don't you have some pop video to post?

**L:** Why do things have to be old to be meaningful?

**K:** If something stands the test of time, it should be respected.

**L:** The old dead guys should be grateful to *The Network* for bringing them back to life.

**K:** We should research them in books. Real books.

**L:** Look, I respect you standing up for old things. Eight track tapes, vinyl records, CDs, video files...it's a kind of evolution. Now everything is streaming, everywhere. Here, there, in the air. You can feel the vibrations. Soon your entire life will fit into your cell phone. Everything. This is space efficiency. This is the future. The one our parents dreamt about with those action figures they played with. With their hands. The brain is the new hands. Our minds running free in the open field of *The Network*.

*M enters and turns on his headlamp.*

**M:** I am an idiot.

*M stands motionless.*

**O:** Like.

**I:** Like.

*O and I exit laughing.*

**J:** You know what will make you feel a lot better? Mall Wars!

**A:** You are not an idiot M.

**B:** I think you are pathetic but not an idiot.

**A:** Why would you post that, B?

**B:** It's the truth.

**A:** But you said to dress the truth up. To give it flair and sparkle.

**B:** Oh, yeah. Hang on. M, you should kill yourself. Post.

**A:** You have to delete that now! Now, B. Now!

**B:** Calm down okay. Ten seconds and I'll delete it.

**A:** No. Take it off now. Please.

**B:** Hang on.

**A:** He'll see it.

*Pause.*

**A:** Hey, delete it. Okay?

*Pause. M turns off his light.*

**B:** Delete.

**A:** Why did you do that?

**B:** Wow! That was a thrill. Like jumping out of an airplane and waiting to pull the cord to engage the parachute until the last possible second.

**A:** What if he saw it?

**B:** Look, I'm not pulling the trigger or making a noose for the poor loser.

**A:** I just think that is way out of line.

**B:** He can always defriend me and block me. No, wait. I'm the coolest person he knows.

**A:** This is not a game. Just because it is on the other side of the screen does not make it any less real. It's not another world over there. You can reach through and hurt people. This is not a game, it's not a game...

**ACT ONE, SCENE 6**  
**THE CORE**

*The ensemble stands around the stage with their headlamps on staring at an apple core on a stool or box, center stage. It has been ravenously but not completely eaten. A moment with just the apple and then...*

**A:** It's called *Rot and Reincarnation*.

**B:** Lame.

**C:** It reminds me of love. The core exposed, like the heart.

**D:** I hate apples.

**E:** Signed a petition to "Make pictures of apples look more like apples."

**F:** Please repost this if you know someone who has eaten an apple today. And if not today, yesterday. And if not yesterday, maybe tomorrow. Heart, heart, heart. Colon, closed parenthesis to indicate a smiley face. Heart, heart, heart.

**G:** This apple represents the human soul.

**H:** Click like if you love apples...even ones that might symbolize famine and despair.

**I:** I could use a grenade disguised as an apple to kill J.

**J:** I saw that post, I won't fall for it. I'm not eating another piece of fruit until my mall domination is complete.

**K:** Apple pie dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

**L:** I like to heat mine up in a microwave.

**O:** Why are there so many posts about a stupid apple?

**A:** You don't like it?

**O:** It's trash.

**A:** But it is a sign that the cycle of life continues. Though there is a finished apple here, it can become a tree, producing more fruit. The artist is clearly depicting the duality of life through death and rebirth.

**O:** You want to make out sometime?

**A:** Is that what the devoured apple makes you think of?

**O:** That is pretty much what everything makes me think of.

**A:** That's sad.

**O:** So I'll take that as a "no." De-friend.

*O turns off his headlamp and exits.*

**A:** B, are you there?

**B:** Yes, of course.

**A:** I haven't seen M on-line in a while. Or at school.

**B:** Probably just taking some humiliation days off. This is about three days' worth.

**A:** Maybe you should...

**B:** What?

**A:** Email him or something.

**B:** Email. That's a lot of work. Next thing you know, you are going to be asking me to write him a letter.

**A:** I think you were way out of line.

**B:** He'll be fine. But maybe you should post that you are in a relationship with him.

**A:** Really?

**B:** Sure. It will make him feel a ton better. You are not super popular. But it is certainly a step up for him.

**A:** Let me get this right. You want me to apologize for you by lying and posting that I am in a fake relationship with someone who is already highly depressed and unstable?

**B:** Do you want to help him or not?

**A:** Alright. In a relationship with M. Post.

**B:** Good work. We are on our way.

**A:** Where? That's what I'd like to know. Where are we going?

*A turns off her headlamp and exits.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 7**  
**BIRTHDAY**

*Several members of the ensemble are on stage with their headlamps on when the lights come up.*

**NETWORK:** Today is B's Birthday. Don't forget to wish your friend a Happy Birthday.

**C:** Happy birthday BFF! Love, your BFF.

**D:** Happy birthday B. I have a surprise for you.

**E:** Signed a petition to make B's birthday the best ever.

**F:** Please repost if you love B on her birthday. Heart, heart, heart.

**G:** A poem for you on your special day.

*Birthbed, Deathbed* by G

Wa, wa cries the toothless babe.

Wa, wa the toddler sans binkie.

Wa, wa the child with bloody knee.

Wa, wa the broken hearted teen.

Wa, wa the lonely soul.

With each candle a step closer to that final

Wa when birth and death are celebrated

Together.

**H:** To the best birthday you will ever have. Make it a great one. A really, really, really great, great, great one.

**I:** The network told me it was your birthday so...

**J:** J wants you to join his army in Mall Wars.

**K and L:** Happy birthday!

**N:** Happy birthday.

**O:** You are hot.

**B:** I guess I'll just stay here and feel all this love pouring in...

**D:** D tagged you in a picture.

**B:** Oh, what a surprise. I wonder what...

**D:** Happy Birthday! As a special gift for you, I am posting your private pictures for the world to see.

*B looks out, fully aware of what the picture means and is instantly flooded with implications and emotions. Everyone except for B turns off their headlamps.*

**B:** (*Barely able to get it out.*) No.

*E, A, F, I, and J remain on stage.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 8  
WINK, NUDGE...**

*Lights up on E, A, I, and J with their headlamps on.*

**E:** E nudged A.

**A:** What does that mean?

**F:** F winked at I.

**I:** No. There is no winking in Mall Wars. De-friend.

**J:** J nudged I.

**I:** Why did you nudge me?

**J:** Just a reminder that your mall supremacy is about to come to an end.

**I:** I pushed J.

**J:** Why did you push me?

**I:** I don't know but I did.

**J:** J punched I.

**I:** Did you punch me? I didn't even know you could do that on *The Network*.

**J:** Upgrades, upgrades.

**I:** I sprayed cologne in J's face.

**J:** What? How is that even possible?

**I:** Oh, this is just the beginning.

**J:** I will see you...

**I and J:** In the mall!

*I and J jump together into an action pose, holding it with great intensity.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 9**  
**A NEW DAY**

*M is standing center stage with his headlamp on as the lights come up.*

**M:** The network has taken popularity to a whole new level. I mean, in the old days, from what I've heard, it was all word of mouth. But now, you can post a status update on the way to History class. The continental drift of popularity that used to take days and weeks to form can now change drastically in just minutes. All in the quest to be liked. Or maybe just desperately trying to avoid the other place. The damp dungeon where the unpopular huddle around in the shadows. Animals measure success by survival. I guess human beings are lucky, we aren't literally afraid of being eaten during P.E. It's not like the slow ones are picked off by the omega males and eaten by the pack. *(Beat.)* A posted that she is in a relationship with me. I think that is the last reminder that I need. The network is not for me. Live mockery is enough. I don't need it to be carved into the cave walls of cyberspace. Well, here goes. Delete account.

*M makes a move to turn off his headlamp.*

**NETWORK:** Are you sure you want to delete your account?

*THE NETWORK gets up from her/his chair and crosses to M.*

**M:** Yes.

**NETWORK:** Your friends and loved ones will miss you.

**M:** Delete.

**NETWORK:** To confirm the complete annihilation of your account and all the memories, stories, bits of wit and humor, and parts of yourself that can never be replaced, press destruction now.

**M:** Destruction.

*M attempts to exit but THE NETWORK blocks him, preventing M from exiting.*

**NETWORK:** Did you know that you can take a short break from the network instead of deleting your account? It is called a hiatus. To take a hiatus rather than destroying your precious creation, press hiatus.

**M:** Delete.

**NETWORK:** You seem like you're angry. Are you deleting your account in haste? If you do, you might regret it later. Please consider a cooling off period before deleting your account.

**M:** No. Delete, delete, delete!

*M turns off his headlamp and exits.*

**NETWORK:** Deletion complete. Thank you for using The Network, we hope you will return to us one day. You will. Return to us one day.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 10  
CHAIN REACTION**

*Lights up on the ensemble with their headlamps on.*

**C:** Did you see the picture of B?

**A:** No.

**E:** I can't believe it.

**F:** How could she?

**I:** B is a tease.

**A:** That's not true.

**I:** She's a flirt then.

**N:** I always knew she was like this.

**E:** Signed a petition to remove inappropriate content from *The Network*.

**F:** Please repost this if you know someone who has just posted inappropriate pictures of themselves on the internet. Heart, heart...

**A:** She did not post those pictures herself! Someone else did.

**G:** Complete and total humiliation. I recognize it.

**H:** Have a better day B. And stop posting inappropriate pictures of yourself on the internet.

I: Tease.

J: This is the only thing we agree on.

K: John Locke believed all people were inherently good.

L: Well, he was wrong. B is inherently bad.

N: This is just like B.

O: B is so hot.

A: Can we all agree to delete the photo. Maybe we can remove it from the cyber universe?

**MANY VOICES:** No!

A: Why? This is not why we're on here. (*Beat.*) Is it?

C: She's a boyfriend-stealer.

E: Signed a petition to support the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment.

F: Please repost this if you like controversy. Heart.

G: At least I'm not alone in my humiliation.

H: It seems like this gets in the way of a great day. Thanks a lot, B.

I: Anything that makes life more exciting...

J: Like. Please stop posting things I agree with.

K: Fools, "fools multiply folly." Benjamin Franklin.

L: B might get famous from these pictures. She could be a star!

N: She might be a star one day, but she's not today.

O: So hot.

A: Do we have souls or compassion or consequences on *The Network*? Or do we just post whatever and write whatever and insult whoever? With no repercussions. These bruises will not heal like bruises on the body. They are yellow and brown and purple and they will be here forever. They will never heal completely. This is going to disfigure B forever. Forever.

N: Get over it. At least it's not you.

A: But it is. It's all of us.

*As the others defriend A, they turn off their headlamps.*

N: De-friend A.

C: De-friend A.

A: We're not even friends!

D: De-friend.

E: De-friend.

F: De-friend.

**H:** Sorry. De-friend.

**I:** De-friend.

**J:** De-friend.

**K:** Ultimately, we are all alone. De-friend.

**L:** De-friend.

**G:** At least I'm not alone.

**A:** Thanks G.

**G:** De-friend.

*G exits, leaving A alone on stage.*

**BLACKOUT.**

**ACT ONE, SCENE 11  
REINVENTION**

*M and B stand on opposite sides of the stage. As the scene progresses they move closer and closer to each other until they are standing directly next to each other holding hands at the end of the scene.*

**M:** Social banishment.

**B:** Humiliation and exile.

**M:** Solitary.

**B:** Loneliness.

**B and M:** Reinvention.

**M:** To rise up.

**B:** Changed.

**M:** Disguised.

**B:** Different.

**M:** Unrecognizable.

**B:** From the ashes of failure.

**M:** Wings.

**B:** Power.

**M:** Flight.

**B:** Rebuild.

**M:** Soar.

**B:** Friends like bricks...

**M:** Outstretched.

**B:** A new empire!

**M:** For me.

**B:** A fresh start.

**B and M:** A chance to win.

**M:** To erase the past.

**B:** To rebuild. Reconstruct from the ground up. A new...

**M:** Social system.

**B:** Kingdom.

**B and M:** Where I am...

**B:** Queen again.

**M:** Me again.

**B and M:** When I was...

**B:** ...A girl I would play dress up.

**M:** ...A boy I would play aliens.

**B:** And I could become anything I wanted to be.

**M:** And I could create worlds.

**B and M:** And the universe was mine.

**B:** To hold in the palm of my hand.

**M:** Or destroy and start over from scratch.

**B and M:** Starting over...Building my own network!

*Quick beat. B and M join hands.*

**B and M:** We are the social network!

*BLACKOUT.*

**ACT TWO, "NEW NETWORK ORDER," SCENE 1  
PRODUCT PLACEMENT**

*The ensemble is standing around with their headlamps on when the lights come up. The Network is standing center stage, the nucleus of the social network.*

**A:** Status Update: A needs a study break and maybe something chocolaty...

**NETWORK:** Try Coco Jammers, all the chocolate you need and a kick of caffeine to keep you going all day or through that tough all-nighter.

**E:** Status Update: E is thirsty and wants a drink that packs a flavorful punch.

**NETWORK:** Have a Punch in the Mouth drink pouch. Tons of flavor, packs a punch you can taste!

**F:** Status Update: F wants to watch an action movie.

**NETWORK:** New from Foxfire Films, when Timmy's training wheels are replaced with high-powered jet packs, not even the sky is the limit in this action-packed thriller. *Runaway Red Bicycle*, rated PG-13.

**G:** Status Update: G is tired but afraid to go to sleep.

**NETWORK:** Tired? Afraid to go to sleep? Need a comfortable blanket that is bullet proof, water resistant, and repels most known pests both real and imaginary? Try the Flaketillow. It's a flak jacket, a blanket, and a pillow all in one. Never let paranoid delusions prevent you from sleeping again.

**H:** Status Update: H is thinking sunny thoughts.

**NETWORK:** Sunny Hills Senior Home. Not just a place to grow old, a place to grow young again.

**H:** What do I need a senior home for?

**K:** Status Update: K is reading *Oedipus Rex* for the forty-fifth time.

**NETWORK:** Community Counseling Centers provides a safe and confidential way to face your mental health issues.

**L:** Status Update: L feels like a rock star!

**NETWORK:** Be a rock star at Rock Star Academy. This year's special guest, Lady Gaga (*Or other pop icon.*)

**L:** YES!

**N:** Status Update: N is waiting for a certain guy to ask her to homecoming. Cough, cough.

**NETWORK:** Irritating cough got you down? Try Cough-Be-Gone. Now in easy-dissolve strips.

**A:** Status Update: I feel like The Network takes everything I post and turns it into an advertisement created just for me.

**NETWORK:** Searching for answers? Read the 10,001 most important questions of all time. Now available as an e-book.

*The ensemble exits, turning their headlamps off as they exit.*

**BLACKOUT.**

***Thank you for reading this free excerpt from THE NETWORK by Christian Kiley. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:***

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**P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406**

**Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011**

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