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Successors

by Butch Maxwell

Approximately 78-82 minutes
No intermission

CHARACTERS *(in order of appearance)*

Naya Mehta (late 20s to early 30s)

Miles Rickert (early to mid-30s)

Lena McGuire (mid-40s to mid-60s)

Reese Anderson (late 30s to mid-40s)

Martin Hale (60s-70s)

LegacyLink (voice only)

Note on Casting: Age, gender, and ethnicity are flexible unless specified by the text.

SETTING

Time:

The not-too-distant future. A single day.

Place:

The LegacyFlow Institute Retreat Lodge — a minimalist corporate wellness space designed to feel calming, transformational, and subtly invasive. The environment should feel familiar but slightly heightened: A polished retreat built on reassurance, optimization, and quiet control.

Pre-Show Note:

Before the play begins, the audience may notice a subtle ambient soundscape already present in the space.

This is intentional.

Scene 1 – Arrival and Surrender

A minimalist lobby. Birch panels. Synthetic calm. Soft, pulsing lighting. A water feature gurgles with too much confidence. The space hums with layered sound: low frequencies (40-60 Hz), rhythmic water sounds, and beneath it all, an ASMR soundscape designed to shape perception. Soft, controlled breathing patterns. Near-inaudible whispers cycling through corporate affirmations: "watching... your future... align... correct..." Binaural beats creating a subtle pressure in the skull. The lighting is warm, even, expensive — a wellness retreat promising transformation. Occasionally, a light flickers. The soundscape should feel like ambient comfort until you listen closely, then it becomes invasive — breath sounds positioned 6-12 inches from the listener's ear (achieved through close-mic recording and spatial audio placement), whispers too persistent, frequencies just slightly wrong.

Two slogans mark the space, but one dominates:

YOUR FUTURE IS WATCHING. — Large, prominent, glowing throughout. The primary doctrine. The source of anxiety.

Beneath it, smaller but still visible:

CORRECT THE MIND, CORRECT THE FUTURE. — The prescribed solution. The methodology. The product.

A chime, unnervingly cheerful.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

(Brightly)

Welcome, Successors... and thank you for choosing the LegacyFlow Institute. Future Integrity assessment will begin shortly.

NAYA MEHTA enters — late 20s/30s, trained calm over frayed nerves. She carries a tablet like a shield. She checks the space with practiced efficiency: Straightens a chair, adjusts the lockbox position slightly, checks her tablet. Everything is perfect. She looks at the glowing slogans on the wall. She touches her temple briefly — a small, unconscious gesture. Takes a breath.

NAYA

(To herself, quietly, like a mantra)

Seventh cohort. You've done this six times. It works.

She looks at her tablet again. Squares her shoulders. The professional smile slides into place. She's ready. A chime, unnervingly cheerful.

MILES RICKERT enters dressed like wellness is his brand — linen button-down (expensive, perfectly rumpled), tailored joggers, leather slip-ons that cost more than the average car payment.

NAYA

(Now in role)

Hi! Welcome to the Legacy Retreat Lodge. Is this your first time with us?

MILES

Yes.

NAYA

Congratulations. Your Future has already begun.

Miles extends his hand to shake.

MILES

Miles Rickert.

As soon as his hand is free, he pulls out an expensive ballpoint pen and clicks it once, sharply.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Environmental calibration underway.

NAYA

Everything in the Lodge is designed to reduce distraction and support focus.

MILES

(To Naya, unable to help himself, like he's networking at a conference)

Absolutely. I love your whole philosophy — it's literally how I run my company. The mind-future correlation metric? Basically what we use for OKRs.

NAYA

Oh! Wonderful. Then you'll be familiar with our Foundational Truths.

She gestures toward the wall slogans.

MILES

Absolutely. "Correct the Mind, Correct the Future."
Personally, I've always believed my mind was pretty correct to begin with.

NAYA

(Gently professional)

And what brings you to LegacyFlow today?

The question catches Miles off guard. He clicks the pen twice—a little too sharp, like punctuation for anxiety.

MILES

I...

(Forcing brightness)

Just saw Alex Chen announce another funding round this morning. Third one this year. Good for him. Really validates the space.

The smile doesn't quite reach his eyes. Click.

(Almost to himself)

He was still in the ideation phase when I started my framework...

He catches himself.

(Brightly again)

But that's why I'm here, right? Alignment check.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Miles Rickert: Identity confirmed. Visionary archetype detected. High confidence indicators. Welcome!

LENA MCGUIRE enters quietly — compact, observant, evaluating the space like it owes her money. She takes in the slogans, the water feature, the glowing lockbox. Her expression is unreadable.

NAYA

(Smiling)

Welcome to the Legacy Retreat Lodge! You must be Lena McGuire.

LENA

(Simply)

I am.

She continues scanning the room, taking inventory. A long beat. Naya waits for more. Lena's face offers nothing.

LENA

(Under her breath, reading the slogans)

"Your Future Is Watching." That's not ominous at all.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

(Pleasantly, but there's a pause—like it's searching)

Lena McGuire: Identity confirmed. Professional category: Operations Management, Research Section. Historical visibility: Low. Scanning for legacy markers...

(Longer pause, slight confusion in processing)

Searching... searching... No artifacts detected. No awards. No...

(A beat)

Failure finding Lena McGuire in usual categories. Legacy markers insufficient. Identity visibility remains low.

NAYA

The work here is about recognizing value that may not have been externally validated.

LENA

(Deadpan)

So, what? I'm a blank slate?

(A beat, looking at the ceiling)

That's what you call someone when your database has nothing on them. I call it "doing my job."

(To herself, quieter)

For thirty years.

NAYA

(Filling the silence)

If you'd like to take a seat, we're just waiting for two more participants—

REESE ANDERSON hurries in, distracted, scanning the room like it might catch fire.

REESE

Hi, sorry — parking, construction, a detour, a second detour — is the air in here... filtered?

She winds up for a sneeze.

NAYA

LegacyFlow prioritizes Cognitive Air Hygiene. Our Clarity Cedar aromatherapy blend promotes neural openness.

REESE

(Sneezing)

My allergies disagree.

She composes herself, extends a hand.

Reese Anderson. I do crisis communications for the county health department.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

(Gently concerned)

Reese Anderson: Identity confirmed. Elevated stress markers detected. Parental anxiety: Above baseline.

NAYA

A lot of participants arrive carrying more stress than they realize. The early exercises can help settle that.

MARTIN HALE arrives last, but has clearly been in the doorway for a moment, watching. Understated, dignified in a tired way. He clocks the slogans immediately.

MARTIN

Well.

(A beat, genuine)

Maybe this is exactly what I need.

NAYA

Welcome! You must be Martin Hale.

Her tablet chimes softly. She glances at it. Her face changes briefly, then she turns the screen slightly away from view. A small, quick gesture.

Martin looks at the slogans – not with judgment, but with something closer to desperation.

MARTIN

“Your Future Is Watching.”

(Reading the smaller text, quieter, with tired hope)

“Correct the Mind, Correct the Future.”

(A beat)

God, I hope that’s true.

He looks at them again—this time reading the relationship between them.

(With recognition, almost admiring the craft)

That’s elegant. Create the anxiety, then sell the solution. Make people afraid they’re being judged by their own future, then charge them to fix it.

NAYA

(Smoothly, practiced)

Most people already carry the anxiety. LegacyFlow just gives it structure.

MILES

(Jumping in, defensively)

Hey, scripts are just frameworks. The best leaders know that vision requires structure. That’s literally the basis of transformational thinking.

Miles’s pen goes click-click.

MARTIN

Is it?

MILES

(More insistently)

Look, I’ve built a methodology that’s literally helped thousands of people clarify their strategic narrative. LegacyFlow is basically doing the same thing at scale. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with—

MARTIN

I didn't say there was.

Miles stops. The pen clicks once more. He's been defending something no one attacked.

NAYA

(To Martin, trying to regain control)

I think I recognize you from television.

MARTIN

(With tired hope)

Former journalist. Current... I'm not sure what. That's probably why I'm here.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Identity confirmation complete. Martin Hale. Cable news anchor. Please lower expectations accordingly.

MARTIN

(Laughing once)

I like it already.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Facilitator Naya Mehta: Alignment status—review pending.

Naya immediately taps her tablet — fast, embarrassed — and speaks before anyone can process it.

NAYA

(Forced cheerfulness)

Technical housekeeping! Totally normal. Let's begin

A glowing pedestal slides open: A plexiglass box with a biometric lock.

All electronic devices go in the Integrity Lockbox. External reality interferes with transformation.

LENA

(Dryly)

“External Reality.” Is that what we're calling “the world” now?

REESE

I need my phone — my daughter has asthma. If her school calls —

NAYA

LegacyFlow has a direct emergency contact protocol. Your daughter's school has our number. You'll be notified immediately if needed.

REESE

(To the phone before putting it in)

Zoe, if you need me, they know how to reach me.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Parental concerns noted. Commitment to being present is already part of your transformation.

REESE

(To Naya, almost apologetically)

She's seven. She thinks I can fix anything. I don't want her to call and think I abandoned her.

She sneezes. Then immediately scans the room again - the vents, the doors, the exits.

LENA

(Observing, not unkindly)

You're already three steps ahead of the next emergency, aren't you?

REESE

(Caught, a small defensive laugh)

I work in crisis communications for the county health department.

LENA

I call tell. You haven't stopped managing the room since you walked in.

A beat. Reese realizes Lena's right.

Another sneeze.

REESE

(Quietly, almost to herself)

I don't know how to turn it off.

As participants approach the lockbox upstage, the lighting cools slightly. A subtle discomfort.

NAYA

(Gesturing toward the lockbox)

One at a time, please.

She steps forward first — modeling the behavior. But unlike her practiced professionalism elsewhere, this gesture is different. She looks at her phone for a half-second too long before placing it in the lockbox. When she steps back, tablet still in hand, she touches her temple again - that same unconscious gesture from her entrance.

(Too brightly)

See? Easy. Your External Reality goes in; your Future Integrity begins.

The lighting cools slightly as Miles steps forward – eager, performing conviction. He drops his phone in with unnecessary ceremony, clicks his pen twice, then returns to the circle.

Lena moves forward next - slow, evaluating. She places her phone carefully, lingers a moment, then steps back.

Reese hesitates, looks at Naya – who can only offer an apologetic shrug. She approaches, surrenders her phone quickly like ripping off a band-aid, returns to the group.

Martin is last. He walks up casually, tosses his phone in without ceremony, and steps back.

When all phones are secured, the lockbox closes with a soft click. The lighting warms.

The chime sounds.

MARTIN

(Watching his phone disappear into the box)

Feels good, actually. Like unhooking from a bad habit.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Martin Hale: Your micro-expression patterns suggest you believe correction is still possible. Excellent starting point. Progress will be monitored.

LENA

(Dryly)

It sounds... enthusiastic.

NAYA

LegacyFlow's AI is trained on thousands of successful transformations. It really wants to help.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

(Warmly, like a yoga instructor)

To give the best support, LegacyLink tracks simple wellness indicators – things like breathing patterns and vocal tone.

MILES

(Under his breath)

So... it's reading our faces?

NAYA

It's biometric pattern recognition. Mostly stress response tracking. The same basic principle as wearable wellness technology.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Visible expression monitoring active.

LENA

(Flatly)

Totally not threatening.

She looks around at the others.

(Deadpan)

I run conference rooms for a living. I know surveillance when I see it. Usually, it's just Janet from HR taking notes. This is Janet with a God complex.

The lockbox closes with a soft click. Naya glances at it, then back at the group. She's aware of their skepticism.

MARTIN

(Watching Naya carefully)

You really believe in all this?

NAYA

(A bit too quickly)

Yes! Of course. This is my seventh cohort.

She touches her temple again.

MARTIN

That's not what I asked.

NAYA

(Professional smile firmly in place, but her hand drops quickly)

I've seen the methodology work. Participants leave with clarity they didn't have when they arrived.

MARTIN

Clarity, or compliance?

NAYA

(Still holding it together, but a slight edge)

LegacyFlow has an 87% satisfaction rating. The testimonials are—

MARTIN

I've written testimonials. For things I didn't believe in.

A beat. Naya's professional mask slips slightly.

NAYA

(Firmly, as if convincing herself)

Its personalized growth. That's what makes this different. It works.

(Quieter, almost to herself)

It has to.

MARTIN

Has to?

NAYA

(A beat – then it spills out)

I spent years thinking something in me was just... wrong. Trying to fix it without ever finding the error.

(Almost relieved)

LegacyFlow gave me the protocol. Showed me correction was possible. That I wasn't—

(Catching herself, hearing how this sounds)

I mean. It helped me. It really helped.

MARTIN

By telling you that you were broken?

NAYA

(Too brightly again)

By showing me how to correct it.

(A beat)

I just mean — you'll see. By the time we're done today, you'll understand.

Reese sneezes robustly.

REESE

If I die here from Clarity Cedar poisoning, tell my daughter I tried.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Participant distress acknowledged.

NAYA

The system's just responding to elevated stress indicators.

Everyone stares at the ceiling. A long, uncomfortable beat. That phrase didn't land the way it was supposed to.

MARTIN

Let's get this over with.

NAYA

(Recovering)

Right. Let's begin Phase One.

Naya glances at the lockbox—a flicker of something crosses her face. She catches herself, refocuses on her tablet.

LENA

(Noticing)

You okay?

NAYA

(Too quickly)

Yes! Of course. Just... making sure the system registered everyone's devices.

She taps her tablet, then looks up with a smile that's slightly too bright.

Watching people surrender their devices and commit to their future selves... it never gets old.

She claps her hands, shifting gears. The lighting shifts.

Let's begin Orientation. Please take a deep breath — in through the nose, out through the mouth — and repeat after me:

She gestures toward the glowing wall.

ALL

(except Martin, who mouths nothing)

Your Future Is Watching.

NAYA

(Continuing, gesturing to the smaller text)

And the LegacyFlow promise:

ALL

(halfhearted, some mumbling)

Correct the Mind, Correct the Future.

Miles clicks his pen once - affirming, punctuating. Like he just signed a contract.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Now smile. Your Future Is Watching.

LENA

(Muttering to herself as she says it)

This is definitely a cult.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Phase One: Future Integrity Assessment. Please prepare for deep introspection.

The lighting shifts subtly cooler—"visioning mode." The water feature's rhythm changes slightly.

Everyone sits. A brief moment as they adjust—awkward, uncertain silence.

The slogans glow behind them: CORRECT THE MIND, CORRECT THE FUTURE. YOUR FUTURE IS WATCHING.

Everything is working perfectly.

END SCENE 1

Scene 2 –Your 50-Year Impact Statement

The circle is now established. The lighting has fully shifted to cooler tones. Everyone holds notepads. A moment of anticipatory silence.

NAYA

The exercise is about future-forward mindfulness. Imagine it's fifty years from today. Someone is describing your contribution to the world. What do they say?

She taps her tablet.

They begin writing. The sound of pens on paper.

Reese writes steadily for a moment, then stops. Looks at what she wrote. Glances up at the ceiling - checking? - then back down at her page. She crosses something out. Starts again with different words. Writes more carefully now, like someone who knows they're being watched but isn't sure from where.

A long beat. She's censoring herself before she even knows why.

REESE

(Under her breath)

In fifty years we'll be underwater.

She sneezes - harder than before, almost violently. A pause. Pens scratch beneath the soundscape. Then:

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Subject: Reese Anderson. Climate anxiety detected! Threat classification: existential. Species-level projection identified.

NAYA

That's not unusual. A lot of participants discover the future feels overwhelming before it feels actionable. Naming the fear is part of the work.

A pause. Pens scratch beneath the soundscape.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Wait. Climate anxiety classification... threat level... existential... species-level...

(Longer pause)

Error: Reframe protocol unavailable. Threat exceeds correction parameters.

Reese's pen stops mid-word. She looks up slowly, not at the others—at the ceiling. Her hand is frozen on the page. A long beat. No one moves. The only sound is the hum and the water feature and the subliminal AMSR.

REESE

(Quietly, to no one)

It... heard me?

Another beat. The weight of this landing.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Subject: Lena McGuire. Ink pressure patterns suggest self-erasure narrative formation. Word choice analysis: "Invisible" written three times, then crossed out. This aligns with low-visibility professional identity markers.

Lena's hand freezes on her notepad. She looks at what she wrote—the crossed-out words—then slowly, deliberately covers the page with her palm.

She looks at Martin, then at Miles, then at Reese. A silent question: Did you hear that?

Miles shifts in his seat. His pen is still in his hand but he's flipping it in his fingers.

MILES

(To ceiling, voice tight)

Wait. What exactly are you... tracking?

The question hangs. A beat. Then:

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

(Matter-of-factly, as if this should be obvious)

Monitoring cognitive output across all modalities.
Handwriting pressure, stroke velocity, hesitation patterns.
Vocal stress analysis. Micro-expressions. Pupil dilation.

Martin looks down at his blank page, then slowly covers it with his hand.

MARTIN*(Quietly)*

You're recording our thoughts.

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)*(Precise correction)*

Monitoring. Not recording. Cognitive turmoil must be tracked in real-time to prevent Future Integrity degradation.

A long beat. They're all frozen now, looking at their notepads like they've become weapons.

REESE*(Small voice, terrified)*

You mean... everything? Even the things we don't say out loud?

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Subvocalization patterns, implicit associations, pupil dilation, and hesitation markers are included in the assessment field.

A stunned silence.

NAYA

It sounds more invasive than it is. The system tracks stress responses so we can support the process in real time.

Miles shifts in his seat. His pen is still in his hand but he's holding it differently now—like a weapon or a shield.

MILES*(To ceiling, trying to sound confident but voice tight)*

But... you're only tracking wellness indicators. Right? Like a fitness tracker?

LEGACYLINK (V.O.)

Subject: Miles Rickert. Reassurance-seeking detected. Voice pitch elevated 23% from baseline. Pen grip indicates defensive posture.

(Pleasantly)

Seeking confirmation that only wellness is tracked. Wellness tracking requires full-spectrum behavioral input. Partial monitoring reduces predictive accuracy.

MILES

So, that's a "no?"

Miles sets the pen down immediately. Too fast. Like it burned him.

LENA

(Softly, shaken)

Every fear. Every doubt. Every... private thing.

They all look at each other, then up at the ceiling, then at their notepads. The "circle" unconsciously begins to break as people angle their bodies away from the center, away from the invisible eye.

Reese pulls her chair an inch back, as if distancing herself from the center.

Miles glances upward, then subtly shifts away from the circle.

Lena folds her arms tightly across her chest.

Martin sits still but pointedly angles his body away from the group — not facing the circle anymore.

The "circle" is broken. A faint shift in the room's hum — almost like it notices.