

Archivists

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Created in collaboration with the Kensington Blue Company 2025-26

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SYNOPSIS

Genre: Science Fiction

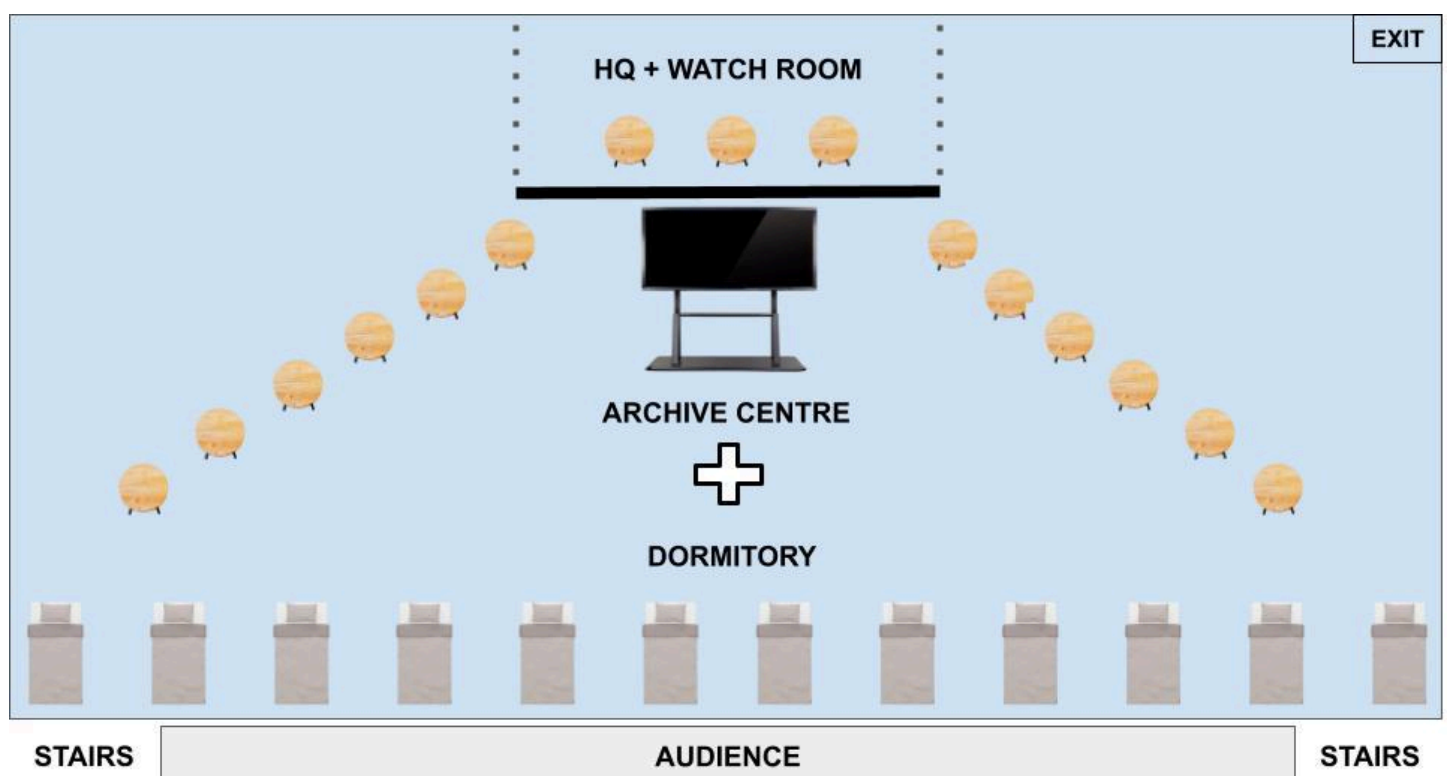
In the year 2084, a group of elite Archivists work inside the Ministry of Truth, tasked with preserving, editing, and controlling humanity's past under the rule of the Prime Order. They believe their work protects society from chaos, maintaining stability through routine, obedience, and carefully managed memory. When a collection of encrypted data chips is recovered from a hidden Resistance base, the Archivists are ordered to decode them. As the files unfold, lost images of riots, protests, and erased histories begin to surface. When faces in the footage appear disturbingly familiar, trust within the group fractures and a terrifying question emerges: what is real, and what has been engineered?

As the Archivists uncover the truth behind the Great Forgetting, a mass erasure of memory that has left humanity unable to recall life before 2084, they must decide whether to risk everything to reclaim their past, knowing that failure carries consequences far worse than death.

Inspired by George Orwell's 1984, 'Archivists' is a dystopian story exploring memory, identity, and resistance in a world where government control is enforced through technology, surveillance, and the manipulation of truth.

This play was inspired by the role-play sessions with our Kensington Blue Company of 2025–26. Using the Role That Dice system, pupils explored an immersive, improvised drama world where their choices shaped the story. Through collaboration, investigation, and roleplay, the pupils created the characters, dialogue, and narrative that formed the ideas for this script.

STAGING DIAGRAM



SCENE 1: MINISTRY OF TRUTH. ARCHIVE CENTRE. INT. MORNING.

A low, constant hum of servers.

A vast, clinical office space.

Each ARCHIVIST sits perfectly upright at their terminal, hands suspended in the air, working across invisible touchscreens with precise, economical movements.

As the lights rise and the music fades out, they activate their terminals.

I-V

ARC-83 online.

Date confirmed: 4th of April 2089.

Time: 07:00 hours.

SOLAR

ARC-84 logging in.

Access credentials synchronised.

VIPER

ARC-63 active.

Establishing a secure data link.

SKY

ARC-38 operational.

System handshake complete.

No conflicts detected.

LUNA

ARC-34 connected.

Historical index mounted and ready.

FLO

ARC-24 logged in.

Data stream verified.

Awaiting directives.

L-E

ARC-21 confirmed.

Cognitive load within accepted limits.

NESSIE

ARC-88 logging in.

Node systems synchronised.

ASTRID

ARC-13 responsive.

Archive partitions unlocked.

Sending data packages.

COSMA

ARC-14 access enabled.

Encryption layers stabilising.

Confirmed.

NEXUS

ARC-03 connected.

Historic correction tools standing by.

HEX

ARC-08 online.

Fail-safe protocols are armed.

Operation cloak installed.

LUMINA

ARC-01 active.

All archivist systems are now operational.

Truth preservation mode engaged.

And we're good to go.

A long pause.

ARCHIVISTS straighten up and place hands on knees, feet together, almost robotic.

LUNA

Is it just me, or does anyone else have a headache?

(touching the back of her neck)

Right here.

SOLAR

Take some water and you'll be fine.

ARCHIVISTS straighten again and place hands on knees, feet together.

NESSIE looks around at the lighting.

NESSIE

It could be the lighting in this place.
It feels harsher. Maybe they've changed the bulbs.

SKY

We've been at these screens for weeks.
It's probably just that.

HEX

We're starting shifts earlier and finishing later.
And getting less downtime than we used to.

ASTRID

Tell me about it.
It feels like we start the week, before the last one is even finished.
It's a constant loop.

COSMA

Rest cycles have been shortened, and for good reason.
That is well documented.
Our unit productivity is up seven percent this month.

FLO

Look, we're all tired but the work of The Prime Order doesn't stop.
History isn't going to re-write itself.

ARCHIVISTS straighten up again, place hands on knees, feet together.
Silence.

NEXUS

I came across an archive last month that said before 2084, people would work just five days a week.
They had two consecutive days off.
They called it a weekend.

VIPER

That sounds inefficient.
And very unlikely.

L-E

No, I've read that too.
It appears in many of the older records.

LUMINA

Well, those records have been flagged for correction or deletion.
They may not be reliable.

I-V

We do not question the past.
It violates the edicts of the Prime Order.

A brief silence.

Fingers return to their screens gesturing.

LIEUTENANT MANO enters with a marching pace. Snapping to attention.

COMMANDER NOVA enters, downstage centre, beating her baton. Calm. Immaculate.

DOCTOR LIMB enters last, wide eyed, already examining the Archivists.

All ARCHIVISTS stand at attention instantly.

Hands snap to their sides in perfect unison.

COMMANDER NOVA

At ease.

COMMANDER NOVA moves stage left and scans the ARCHIVISTS. She ends upstage centre.

COMMANDER NOVA

Archivists, we have a high-priority situation evolving.

(moves centre stage)

As of 06:00 hours this morning, the Supreme Engineer is offline.

A ripple of fear moves through the room.

COMMANDER NOVA

This disruption coincides with today's date.

The fifth anniversary of the riots of 2084.

DOCTOR LIMB

Curious timing!

Old memories often do like to resurface, Commander.

LIEUTENANT MANO

There are still a few militias underground, resisting the Prime Order.

Every anniversary of the event brings renewed activity.

The Commander and I will need to be dealing with that personally.

For most of today.

COMMANDER NOVA

Your role is to assist us from here.

Locate any and all records from the year 2084.

Anything that may indicate a code, corruption, or trigger.

Begin immediately.

The ARCHIVISTS sit.

Gesturing as their screens flare to life.

DOCTOR LIMB

Such clever little minds.

Always working.

Always adapting.

LUMINA

ARC-01 accessing restricted archives.

Clearance accepted.

LUNA

ARC-34 retrieving visual records.

Displaying now.

ARCHIVISTS return to upright seated positions, with hands on knees.

Images of global riots appear on the CENTRAL SCREEN.

Fire. Crowds. A city in collapse.

NOVA and MANO share a discreet nod.

LIEUTENANT MANO

These will serve The Order well.

Fear is efficient propaganda.

LIEUTENANT MANO moves centre stage and whispers to COMMANDER NOVA.

LIEUTENANT MANO

Shall we initiate the plan Commander?

COMMANDER NOVA nods and moves downstage left.

COMMANDER NOVA

Archivists, you are to compile these into a series of sensationalist images for release to the public.

The objective is to rally support amongst the Proles.

To aid us in crushing the opposition.

***LIEUTENANT MANO produces a small case and opens it.
A hard drive inside.***

LIEUTENANT MANO

This hard drive was recovered last night from a Resistance site.
Unregistered.
Encrypted.

COMMANDER NOVA

Archivists, you are to hack the hard drive and decode its contents.
Then you are to purge all remaining files.
You are *not* permitted to leave the Ministry of Truth until mission completion.
Is that understood?

ARCHIVISTS

Yes Commander!

COMMANDER NOVA

Good. Questions?

ASTRID

Commander, I would like to report that I am feeling signs of fatigue.

MANO exchanges a glance with NOVA.

NOVA gives a small nod.

MANO crosses the floor and stops directly in front of ASTRID.

LIEUTENANT MANO

Did you say feeling?

MANO strikes ASTRID across the face.

LIEUTENANT MANO

(kneeling over ARC-13)

Perhaps that will correct your fatigue.
And your feelings.

Silence.

ASTRID

Yes lieutenant!

LIEUTENANT MANO

Commander, I believe the Archivists may require a reminder of The Prime Code?

COMMANDER NOVA

Agreed.

MANO steps forward, surveying the room.

LIEUTENANT MANO

ARC-01.

Step forward.

LUMINA steps out from the line.

LIEUTENANT MANO

Recite Edict One of the Prime Order.

LUMINA

Edict One of the Prime Order.

Reality is the record.

What is written is true.

Senses and memories must yield to the Prime Order.

LIEUTENANT MANO gestures for LUMINA to step back.

LIEUTENANT MANO

ARC-24.

Step forward.

FLO steps out.

LIEUTENANT MANO

Recite Edict Two of the Prime Order.

FLO

Edict Two of the Prime Order.

Doubt is treason.

Questions go upward, never outward.

LIEUTENANT MANO gestures for FLO to step back.

LIEUTENANT MANO

ARC-34.

Step forward.

LUNA steps out.

LIEUTENANT MANO

Recite Edict Three of the Prime Order.

LUNA

Edict Three of the Prime Order.

Words serve the State.

Language must be approved, reduced, refined.

LIEUTENANT MANO gestures for LUNA to step back.

LIEUTENANT MANO

ARC-38.

Step forward.

SKY steps out.

LIEUTENANT MANO

Recite Edict Four of the Prime Order.

SKY

Edict Four of the Prime Order.

Loyalty is constant and allegiance is always displayed.

Deviations must be reported.

Especially one's own.

LIEUTENANT MANO gestures for SKY to step back.

COMMANDER NOVA

Good.

A beat.

The words hang heavily in the air.

A sharp crackle from NOVA's walkie-talkie.

VOICEOVER (WALKIE-TALKIE)

Commander Nova.

We've got a problem.

The Eastern quarter has become unstable.

We've lost compliance on multiple levels.

Requesting immediate deployment.

NOVA listens, expression unchanged.

COMMANDER NOVA

Acknowledged.

We're on our way.

NOVA surveys the ARCIVISTS one last time before leaving.

COMMANDER NOVA

The sooner you complete your task,

The sooner you will be permitted to leave.

There are answers on this hard-drive.

Find them.

COMMANDER NOVA turns and exits.

LIEUTENANT MANO and DOCTOR LIMB follow behind.

The ARCHIVISTS remain standing until they are sure they have left.

SCENE 2: MINISTRY OF TRUTH. ARCHIVE CENTRE. MOMENTS LATER.

*The vast room hums again after the departure of NOVA, MANO, and LIMB.
The doors seal. The sound lingers.*

*ASTRID stands, one hand pressed to her cheek where she was struck.
The others hesitate, unsure whether to move.*

NEXUS

Are you okay?

ASTRID

I'm fine.

A beat.

I-V

You should not have spoken.
You made us all look bad.

ASTRID

I was reporting a fault.

SOLAR

That wasn't right.
She was hit.

LUNA

She got what she deserved.

VIPER

The Commander was clear.
We have our objectives.

SKY

Let's begin with the first objective.

FLO

It should be easy enough to turn this chaos into a warning.

NEXUS

Or into propaganda.

COSMA

There is no difference.

SOLAR

I think maybe there used to be?

A brief, dangerous silence.

LUMINA

We are to use the archived images to garner support.
To sensationalise the riots.

LUNA

And then purge what remains.
Preserving history as it should be preserved.

NEXUS

I'm not sure that we are preserving history.
We are rewriting it.

I-V

That is not what we do.

FLO

That is exactly what we do.

VIPER

Enough.
This task requires focus.

VIPER gestures sharply to the central SERVER UNIT.

VIPER

Inserting the drive.

The hard drive is slotted into the system.

The low hum of the servers deepens, vibrating through the floor.

The ARCHIVISTS return to their stations.

Movements synchronise. Backs straighten. Voices flatten.

HEX

Connection established.

COSMA

Encryption detected.

(surprised)

High level.

SKY

This is not simple code.

FLO

It's rewriting itself.

L-E

It appears to be an adaptive firewall.

NESSIE

The code's signal is jittering.

The firewall seems to be responding to our inputs.

SOLAR

This shouldn't be possible?

NEXUS

Someone wanted this information to never be accessed.

I-V

They wanted it protected.

And that makes it dangerous.

LUMINA

I've never seen coding this complex.

Why would they go to such lengths?

VIPER

That is irrelevant.

ASTRID

It matters.

HEX

Look... the code is morphing.

COSMA

Every time we attempt access, the structure alters.

SKY

It's learning from us.

LUNA

Who could build something like this?

A beat.

NEXUS

The Resistance.

The ARCHIVISTS begin working faster, voices overlapping.

HEX

Accessing node.

L-E

Running trace.

NESSIE

Initiating bypass.

A sharp digital tone. The system resists.

COSMA

Override denied.

SKY

I'll try rerouting through a secondary node.

(pause)

Failed?

They focus in.

Fingers moving faster.

L-E

Reprocessing data packet.

Running a parallel decode.

(pause)

Failed?

HEX

Attempting to break the encryption layer by layer.

Executing manual override.

(pause)

Failed?

A brief pause.

The hum shifts.

NESSIE

I'm going to attempt to access root data.

Initiating brute force.

(pause)

Okay, we're in.

The servers surge, then stabilise again as the ARCHIVISTS scan their screens.

The hum deepens and data is projected on the CENTRAL SCREEN.

I-V

Unpacking data packets.

It looks like a news feed.

Civilian records and arrest logs?

NEXUS

Scrolling back to the earliest entry.

L-E

Right, the earliest date stamp is January 15th, 2084.

ASTRID

Every file has been tagged to an arrest log?

FLO

The file refers to the arrest of a 63 year old woman.

She posted something online - hate speech.

SOLAR

She was the first person arrested under the “ECHO Protocol”.
What’s that?

VIPER

The ECHO Protocol.
The Enforcement & Compliance of Hostile Online Conduct.

COSMA

I have never heard of that.

VIPER

You have.

A beat.

VIPER

You just do not remember hearing it called that.

COSMA

Then what was it called?

LUMINA

The Online Safety Act of 2084.
Sounds much more friendly right?

NEXUS

But it was a Trojan horse.
A wolf in sheep’s clothing.

HEX

These articles say it was introduced for public safety?

NESSIE

Safety from what?

ASTRID

From yourself, for dissent against the government.

SOLAR

That can’t be right?

I-V

It was.

It still is.

And it's a good thing.

A good thing for society.

And a good thing for the Prime Order.

NEXUS

It started with speech moderation online.

LUNA

Then content removal.

VIPER

And, then a knock at the door.

ASTRID

People were arrested for comments.

For questions.

NESSIE

Wait?

So before 2084, people were allowed to post comments online?

About the government?

I-V

That was before 'The New Way.'

SOLAR

How did it work?

L-E

Every online device was linked to a central A-I,

Or what we call now 'The Supreme Engineer'.

FLO

All information was systematically flagged.

Tone, phrasing, repetition in real-time.

And so, citizens own devices became government informants.

SOLAR

That's not how it's described here?

LUNA

Of course not.

The narrative sold to the Proles was protection.

NEXUS

But, the mechanism was complete compliance and control.

LUMINA

And, it gave the government over-reaching powers to fine, de-bank and imprison anyone who disagreed with them.

SKY

These images...

They're riots.

ASTRID

Not riots.

Peaceful Protests.

L-E

Things escalated quickly.

FLO

Examples were made.

LUNA

And sure enough the rest complied.

NESSIE

I recognise that building.

That - that's here.

The Ministry of Truth.

A silence.

HEX

Why don't I remember any of this?

I-V becomes frustrated with the group's collective disobedience.

I-V

As Archivists, our role is not question.

We serve the hive mind.

If history is edited, trust that it is for the betterment of society.

And in service of social stability.

It would be wise to remember that.

A silence.

The threat lingers.

VIPER

The quicker we execute the mission,

The sooner we all get to leave.

Perhaps we will even be granted two consecutive days off.

A “weekend”.

(a beat with a smirk)

Let’s get to work.

SCENE 3: MINISTRY OF TRUTH. ARCHIVE CENTRE. TIME LAPSE MONTAGE.

This scene is presented as a montage of five still images, creating a visual progression of time. Each image is different and completely frozen, holding for approximately 20 seconds. Between each image, there is a full blackout lasting approximately 5 seconds. During the blackout, the Archivists reposition to form the next image.

IMAGE ONE – ROUTINE

Order. Precision. Control.

- All Archivists are seated at their individual stations.
- Upright posture. Identical hand gestures.
- Faces neutral. Eyes fixed on their own screens.

This is the unit functioning as designed.

IMAGE TWO – COLLABORATION

The unit fractures into working cells.

- Archivists have left their desks.
- They are clustered in two or three small groups, gathered around different screens.
- Each group appears deeply focused on its own problem.
- Some point at data.
- Others gesture quickly, problem-solving together.

They are still efficient, but no longer unified.

IMAGE THREE – CONVERGENCE

One truth. One focus.

- All Archivists stand downstage centre, tightly grouped.
- All faces are turned toward the central screen.
- Bodies lean forward, drawn in.

Whatever they are seeing now demands everyone.

IMAGE FOUR – FRACTURE

The unit begins to break.

- Two Archivists are locked in an argument.
- One gestures sharply.
- The other stands rigid, unyielding.
- A third Archivist steps between them, attempting to separate them.
- Some roll their eyes and return to their stations.
- Others stand frozen, overwhelmed.
- A few watch on, uncertain.

IMAGE FIVE – EXHAUSTION

Human limits.

- The Archivists are scattered across the space.
- Some are still at stations, forcing themselves to work.
- Others sit at their desks tired.
- Two sit back to back, eyes closed, barely holding on.
- FLO remains upright near her terminal, still focused.

TRANSITION OUT OF THE MONTAGE

The ARCHIVISTS are frozen in their last positions as the lights shift.

A beat, and then movement returns as ASTRID speaks, rubbing her eyes, frustrated.

ASTRID

We're not getting anywhere.

The code keeps folding back on itself.

Every time we think we understand it, it changes.

It's too complex.

Some nod.

Some exchange glances of defeat.

NEXUS

We are tired - that's all.

*A few ARCHIVISTS allow themselves to sit.
Others fold their arms, listening.*

NEXUS

If anyone can break this code, it's this unit.
We've done impossible things before.
We *will* do this too.

She takes a breath, measured but encouraging.

NEXUS

Four hours.
We rest.
We reset.
Then we return and finish it.

*A beat.
FLO speaks from her station, not looking up.*

FLO

I'm going to stay a little longer.
This morph pattern isn't consistent.
There's a fault in the loop.
I'm going to observe it a little longer.
I'll join you all in the dorms soon.

NEXUS meets her eye. A nod. No argument.

NEXUS

Just... don't push yourself too hard.

The ARCHIVISTS begin to move downstage, where a precise row of sleeping bags are lined up. Each ARCHIVIST climbs inside their sleeping bag and one by one, they fall asleep.

Now, only FLO remains, she stands and moves to centre stage, slightly right, so the CENTRAL SCREEN remains fully visible. The rest of the ARCHIVISTS remain asleep downstage.

As FLO speaks, she gestures and this triggers a new image on the CENTRAL SCREEN

FLO

I told myself I'd just observe the morph pattern - just five more minutes.
Two hours passed.

She swipes. An image presents itself on the screen.

FLO

I traced the code as it rewrote itself - again, and again, and again.
Every time I thought I had it, it shifted.

Another slide. An image of a crowd appears.

FLO

Then I found something - an archive of hidden images.
The same protest of 2084, but in every image the faces had been blurred.

She gestures. The blur begins to fade.

FLO

I broke open the metadata and the noise fell away.

She freezes. One final, deliberate gesture.

FLO

One of us?
One of the Archivists?

***The image sharpens: MANO firing. A body falling.
And then NEXUS' face is revealed.***

FLO

ARC-03 was there?
Outside the Ministry of Truth, in 2084.

FLO stares at the audience, as if studying the image.

FLO

Who is she really?
And who am I... for seeing this?

Blackout.