THE QUESTION

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INT. WAREHOUSE PARTY - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The industrial side of town. Freight trains. loading docks.

A sweaty mass of CLUB KIDS pack an illegal dance party. Bass throbs like a spaceship taking off.

A MAKESHIFT BAR

Just a door on a couple of saw horses. Home-made drinks flow.

JANET (26), hands over a five, takes a plastic cup from the bartender. She's compact, but confidant and sexy without having to work at it.

Janet taps cups with a female friend, DEBS (39), who seems friendly enough, but too old and out of place for this scene.

DEBS
I agreed to come, I never said I'd stay.

JANET
Can you at least wait until I take a pee?

DEBS
Five minutes. But if another teenage boy hits on me, I'm gone.

JANET
Don't be so closed minded, 'Mom'.

DEBS
Yes, exactly.

The warehouse floor is broken up by heavy machinery: A bulldozer, a dragline excavator. Kids dance on top, tripping balls.

Janet weaves through the crowd.

To a massive line for the Porta-Potties.

JANET
Oh man...

Disgusted, she whirls around.

And takes an elbow to the cheek.

BAM!

A flash of white. Drink goes flying. Janet hits the ground like a sack of potatoes. Head meets concrete.

Groggy. Uncertain. She looks out at a sea of dancing feet.

Directly in front: biker boots. Then a blinking tutu.

A tall apologetic blonde girl reaches down to help her: Marisa (24).

MARISA
Oh, I'm sorry! I'm so, so, so, so sorry. Are you okay?

JANET
Where's my drink?

MARISA
Take a breath.

Janet climbs to her feet, holding on for support.

MARISA (CONT'D)
Let's get you away from these crazy speakers.

The big blonde leads her to a nearby alcove.

They sit on a spool of fiberglass insulation, music ramping to a fever pitch.

JANET
What happened?

MARISA
I got a little too enthusiastic with my dancing. Lean your head.

Marisa squirts Purel onto a tissue, dabs Janet's temple.

JANET
The floor was a lot harder than your elbow. Is it bleeding in the back?

She leans forward and Marisa brushes her fingers through Janet's brown hair. Smelling it.

MARISA
I think you're good.

JANET
Massive headache.

MARISA
Sorry. It's been a while since I took Molly.

JANET
I'm going to rest for a second.

MARISA
I have some, if you want.

JANET
What?

MARISA
Molly. ...Ecstasy.

JANET
No. Thanks.

They look at the throbbing party. Bass vibrates the walls.

JANET (CONT'D)
I feel like maybe I'm getting a little old for this.

MARISA
You're not old. You're wonderful.

JANET
I can't hear...

MARISA
I said you're beautiful.

Still touching Janet's hair.

JANET
--says the girl on E.

MARISA
You are.

Marisa's eyes are glazed, mouth slack.

She leans over for a kiss...

JANET
What the fuck?!

Janet pushes her hard in the chest.

Marisa slides off the fiberglass onto her butt. Bewildered.

JANET (CONT'D)
Is that how you meet chicks? Punch them out, then comfort them?! Because that's the worst pickup I have ever experienced, and I live in Little Fucking Armenia!

MARISA
I'm sorry; I got carried away. Please forgive me. You're just so compact... And pure-looking.

Marisa climbs up the fiberglass to stand, teetering back and forth, her tutu blinking out of rhythm.

JANET
Jesus. It's fine. But I'm going to go somewhere other than where you are right now, okay?

MARISA
You look like a sexy bike messenger.

JANET
And don't think it's because you're a girl, either. I went to college.

Shaking her head, Janet stalks off.

Marisa watches her exit. Moans like a sad little puppy.

INSIDE A PORTA-POTTY

A pair of CLUB KIDS leave. Janet comes in.

JANET (CONT'D)
Oh, thanks. It smells like a dead nun's cooch in here.

Hikes up her skirt, panties down, squats over the gaping hole.

Relief.

The plastic toilet throbs to the massive beat.

AND THEN SILENCE.

Total silence.

Janet reacts, eyes rolling.

JANET (CONT'D)
And now the police? Fucking day.

She stands, arranges herself, steps out.

HER SHOCKED FACE

The party rages just like before. Club Kids jumping. D.J. bouncing up and down, one finger in the air like that means something.

BUT THERE IS NO NOISE. Soundless.

She taps her ears.

JANET (CONT'D)
Wait, I can hear myself.

It sounds as if she were standing alone in an empty warehouse. Perfect clarity.

Claps her hands.

JANET (CONT'D)
Hey!

Janet cautiously walks to a knot of dancing COLLEGE KIDS.

Stares.

One of the guys rotates a bit so he's facing her. No noise whatsoever.

JANET (CONT'D)
Can you hear me?!

He gives a thumbs up. Tries to put an arm around her.

Janet pulls back.

Then the room begins to SLOW...

Everyone but her. Dancing in slow motion. Slower...

Her eyes go wide as saucers.

Then colors get wonky.

RED, BLUE, ORANGE, LAVENDER.

Like the oily surface of a soap bubble, swirling over everyone but Janet.

Then everything FREEZES.

Like a 3D photograph, people stopped in mid-air.

Janet turns back to the group of kids.

One girl floats two feet off the ground, arms in the air like she just don't care.

Janet crouches. Passes her hand underneath the girls' feet.

She prods the girl.

Tries to move the delicate cloth of her floating blouse. Won't budge. Stiff as steel plate.

This is worrisome.

THE WAREHOUSE ENTRANCE

One wall is open like a garage door. Beyond, a cement drive, a few people, completely still.

Janet walks out...

BAM, stopped cold. Invisible wall.

She rubs her nose. Confused and anxious.

With both hands she feels the invisible boundary like a terrified mime.

Then something. A noise.

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Hello?

Behind her, a male voice. British accent.

MALE VOICE (V.O) (CONT'D)
Hello, can you hear me? Anyone?

JANET
Hey! Where are you? What's going on?!

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Oh, thank goodness. Wonderful. Just follow the sound of my voice, please.

Janet turns back and pushes through the silent crowd.

It's hard to move. Every one and every thing is frozen solid.

JANET
Keep talking!

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Oh, yes, I suppose if I ask you to follow the sound of my voice then I ought to say something. Obviously. Yes, well. Uh... On the spot now. Let's see... Everything is going to be all right. That's it. You're going to be... Well, I'm very optimistic, let's put it that way. The fact that we're communicating at all is a positive sign.

JANET
What's wrong?

MALE VOICE (V.O)
I am still trying to figure out exactly the nature of what that is. The problem, or...

Dancers around her are frozen in a moment of bliss. And that's not pretty.

Janet squeezes through a knot of people, into a chillout room full of pillows. Frozen bodies line the walls.

JANET
I hear you, but I don't see anything.

MARISA
Hey, it's you!

Marisa staggers in. Still high.

You do not want to be the subject of Janet's wrath. She whirls around. Furious:

JANET
What the fuck?! Did you dose me?!

MARISA
Huh? No.

JANET
Then what!?

MARISA
I don't know. It's weirding me out a little bit, to be honest. Because I'm still kind of tripping.

JANET
Well I'm not!

The male voice clears its throat.

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Please, no need to argue. This is no one's fault, per se. Or rather, I don't actually know yet. There'll be plenty of time for recriminations, assuming everything... with luck...

Marisa stares at a BOY and GIRL frozen in a hug.

It's so beautiful, she looks like she's about to cry.

MALE VOICE (V.O) (CONT'D)
So, I think we need to focus on fixing the problem first, is the
(MORE)

MALE VOICE (V.O) (CONT'D)
point that I believe I'm trying to... To make here. Yes.

Janet has about had it. She talks to the ceiling, not sure where the voice is coming from.

JANET
What happened?!

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Certainly. That's a very reasonable question. Under these circumstances.

JANET
Yeah?

MALE VOICE (V.O)
But I think if I were to just fix the problem first, and then give you the details, it would save us all, well, save you all, a lot of unnecessary... Uh... panic.

JANET
Is this a reality TV show? It's not funny. Let us out.

MALE VOICE (V.O)
That is precisely what I am endeavoring, uh, to do. But, well, it may take me just a moment. Given the circumstances.

JANET
What circumstances?!

MALE VOICE (V.O)
If you could just give me, just a few minutes to pinpoint where everything went so... So wrong... Oh...

Marisa looks up from the frozen couple.

MARISA
Are you God?

JANET
Bimbo; what's your name?

MARISA
Marisa.

JANET
Okay, Marisa. Here's the thing. You are high right now. Someone is
(MORE)

JANET (CONT'D)
screwing with us. I don't know who this English twat on the loudspeaker is, but you and I are going to sue his ass off as soon as they let us out of this house of freaks.

Janet walks over to Marisa and the young couple frozen in a hug.

She taps them on the back. Touches a cheek.

MARISA
Feels like skin.

Janet tries to hide the worry in her eyes. Looks up at the ceiling.

JANET
English guy. Hey!

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Yes?

JANET
Just let us go, okay? Turn off the machines or whatever.

There's a pause.

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Oh, this is... Where did I put the rest of them? Oh... Oh.

JANET
What?!

MALE VOICE (V.O)
I'm afraid it's going to take a little longer than I thought to address this issue. Oh goodness... What are your names right now?

JANET
Right now? Janet. Marisa.

MALE VOICE (V.O)
Janet and Marisa. Well, that's two. But out of how many? I don't even know...

Janet glowers silently.

MARISA
Who are you?

MALE VOICE / DALTON (V.O)
I, I suppose you could call me Dalton.

MARISA
Hi, Dalton.

Janet rubs her eyes, seething with anger.

And when her hand comes away, she and Marisa are standing in a clearing in the woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Up to this point, Janet could lie to herself and pretend that impossible things weren't happening.

That's not possible now.

A peaceful meadow. Oak trees, shrubs, butterflies. Late spring afternoon.

Amazed, Marisa drops to a crouch and feels the grass.

MARISA
It's so warm!

MALE VOICE / DALTON (V.O)
I am going to make a go at, er, fixing this issue, so let me put you here for a while. It shouldn't take long; cross your fingers! Because, well, the alternative...

Janet is wary. Voice urgent.

JANET
Am I okay?

DALTON (V.O)
Do not worry. Because that certainly won't help.

JANET
Is this from when I hit my head? Am I in a hospital dreaming all this?

Dalton laughs, then tries to cover it up with a cough.

DALTON (V.O)
No. No, no. Mental functioning is perfectly... It's adequate. Considering...

JANET
Just say it...

DALTON (V.O)
But I have to concentrate on fixing this tiny issue that vexes us at the moment. So I can't talk anymore. At this juncture. I'll definitely return in a short while with news. Hopefully good news. Bye. But try not to worry.

Silence.

Marisa walks over. Pulls up a dandelion.

She blows against it and the little white seeds fly away on the breeze.

MARISA
It's really a beautiful day.

JANET
That's all you can say?

MARISA
I feel like I'm kind of sobering up right now.

JANET
But I'm not high.

MARISA
Me neither, really. I mean not like I was. Whoah... But then, this is really happening... So maybe I wasn't as high as I thought.

Janet's eyes narrow to slits. Stares suspiciously.

JANET
You're doing this to me.

MARISA
I told you...

JANET
You dosed me somehow and this is all some freaky, sick power trip. Or I don't know what.

MARISA
No, I'm nice.

JANET
Just stay the fuck away from me.

Janet stalks off into the woods.

JANET (CONT'D)
And you look ridiculous in that tutu. It's not cool; it's stupid. ...Like some fucking frat boy's idea of what to wear to a nightclub.

IN THE WOODS

Janet stomps through the forest like an angry soldier. Birds twitter.

JANET (CONT'D)
Doesn't even look like California.

She stops, dumbfounded.

A peacock sits on the limb of a nearby tree. Massive plumage. Just sitting there.

It squawks.

Spooked, Janet edges past.

Then something ahead in a clearing.

Faster and faster, she starts to jog. A person there. Standing in the sun.

THE CLEARING.

Janet breaks through, sees the pink tutu and biker boots.

Marisa turns around, confused.

MARISA
That's weird. You left from that way.

Janet sets her jaw and makes a sharp left turn.

Across to the far side, then into the woods, this time followed by Marisa.

There is no trail, just the dark, rustling trees.

MARISA (CONT'D)
It's all kind of spooky, don't you think?

ANOTHER CLEARING

Just over a muddy clump of brush, Janet and Marisa break through.

Same grassy clearing, different angle.

MARISA (CONT'D)
It kind of looks the same.

JANET
It is! And you know it is.

Janet drops to the grass. Squeezes her eyes shut.

Opens them.

The same.

Marisa sits nearby, unconcerned.

JANET (CONT'D)
This started when I met you.

MARISA
Or the reverse.

JANET
Do you swear to God you don't know what's happening?

MARISA
I'm an atheist. But yeah.

A beautiful spring day. A light breeze.

Marisa lays back, feeling the grass between her fingers.

JANET
And you're not the least bit concerned.

MARISA
Of course I am.

JANET
Well?

MARISA
But what else would I be doing? Sleeping? Getting ready to go to a job that I don't particularly like... But that is not terrible. Just, you know. My whole life is like that these days. At least now I can sit in the warm grass. Something will work out.

Janet studies the girl's face for clues.

MARISA (CONT'D)
For the last few years I feel like I've been spinning my wheels.

JANET
That wasn't an invitation to tell me your life story.

MARISA
Fine. What about you?

JANET
What?

MARISA
There must be some reason you and I are here right now.

JANET
(to the sky)
Look, I'm not falling for any of this! You think I'm going to unburden myself, so you all can judge me? I...

Janet stops. Looks past Marisa, who turns to see...

A MID-1700S FRENCH NOBLEMAN EXITING THE WOODS.

Quite confused. Blinks at the warm sun, in his high-collared aubergine cloak, ruffled sleeves and leggings.

He wanders into the clearing.

Sees Marisa and Janet. Not pleased.

Comes closer in increments.

Looking down at the two of them still sitting on the grass.

He's got a soupy French accent.

GUILLAUME
My name is Guillaum Badeaux.

MARISA
Hi.

GUILLAUME
Why have you brought me here?

MARISA
Wasn't us, dude.

GUILLAUME
Are you angels?

Then a throat clearing from above.

DALTON (V.O)
This is, er, Guillaume, everyone. And some good news at least, I've found three more. Let's see...

The BUZZ of electricity.

In an instant, three skeletons form from dust and dirt. Standing in the grass.

Then intestines pop into place, organs, blood vessels, muscle.

Naked skin wraps around them like balloons popping in reverse.

A black man, Latino man, white woman, all in their 20s.

Buck naked.

Janet and Marisa stand, watching it all take place as one by one the three bodies are JOLTED into consciousness with a gasp.

The three look down at themselves in shock, as hair sprouts over their naked bodies with a RUSTLE.

Clothing appears in a series of POPS:

The black man (Taylor) is outfitted like a Zulu warrior. The blonde woman (Rena) wears the clothing of a British military nurse. The Latino (Tweety) wears a black Izod, chinos and an expression of permanent disdain.

DALTON (V.O) (CONT'D)
Everyone! I am sure you have a number of questions, but...

GUILLAUME
I demand to know why I have been brought here!

RENA
Why is everyone dressed for a costume party?

TAYLOR
Are we prisoners?

DALTON (V.O)
No, no you're not prisoners. Actually, I've rescued you. In a manner of speaking.

The latino makes a break for it, dashing into the woods.

DALTON (V.O) (CONT'D)
Oh, now there isn't... Please...

Then the black warrior does the same, disappearing into another part of the forest.

DALTON (V.O) (CONT'D)
Oh, I suppose we should wait until they get back...

Marisa smiles at the English nurse.

MARISA
Which I estimate to be in about a minute and a half.

RENA
Who are all of you and where are we?

Janet, who has been watching the whole scene with a jaundiced eye, shrugs and walks away.

RENA (CONT'D)
You too?

MARISA
No, we already tried that. There's really just this open area and a bunch of trees. It's kind of like we're on that miniature planet from 'The Little Prince.'

RENA
You're all completely bonkers. Am I... Is this an insane asylum?!

MARISA
My provisional answer to that is 'no.' But I wouldn't bet a large sum of money on it.

WITH JANET AT THE EDGE OF THE WOODS

She sits. Hugs her knees, silently angry.

She watches Marisa, the confused Frenchman and the English nurse from a distance.

We can barely hear them arguing:

GUILLAUME
What do you mean 'speaking English'?! You are speaking French to me right now! What you just said. That was French! No, listen to what I am saying, you cow...

The black warrior races into the clearing opposite from where he left.

Then the Latino.

Each stops. Furious. Confused.

And the sound of Dalton clearing his throat.

DALTON (V.O)
Janet?

No response.

DALTON (V.O) (CONT'D)
Janet, I realize this seems very odd to you, and I may not have handled everything in the best possible manner...

JANET
I'm not talking to an invisible voice.

DALTON (V.O)
I feel that I can tell you: the situation... There is a chance it could be serious. Though maybe not.

JANET
Show up in person if you want to talk to me.

She huddles down.

DALTON (V.O)
Really? I suppose I could... create something... But...

JANET
I am not your fool.

She lowers her head.

DALTON (V.O)
I wasn't built for this sort of creative ingenuity, you know. It does not come naturally. Let me think...

An electric SNAP.

SPARKS in the air. A skeleton.

Organs, blood, flesh, naked skin.

A spindly, pot-bellied, middle-aged man.

Grey pubic hair. Bald.

A JOLT and he comes to life, covers his balls.

Then a three-piece suit. Thick black glasses.

He looks like a mid-level civil servant.

Dalton feels his own body through the suit.

Stretches.

Moves his mouth and tongue.

DALTON (CONT'D)
This is unusual. To be sure. La, la-la...

He does a little jig.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Ha! I quite like this; I do. Bodies are intriguing things, aren't they? They're so compact. And oh, I can feel my penis through the clothing. Ha! How absurd.

Other people in the clearing look over, then ignore him. The warrior and Latino have wandered off on their own.

Dalton steps closer, reaches out to touch Janet's hair.

She reacts defensively. Stands.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Bicameral vision is peculiar. I"m looking at you right now, focusing my eyes, as human beings do, and the whole background is a blur. Clever, this.

JANET
You're Dalton?

DALTON
I suppose. I mean, well, technically no, but for all practical... Let's just say yes for the sake of argument.

She gives him a roundhouse SLAP. Full swing.

To him: nothing.

To her: it freaking hurts!

Janet yelps, rubbing her hand.

JANET
Jesus. You're made of rock.

DALTON
Sorry; I was in a hurry. As I said, I'm going to need your help. Hate to ask. Not my thing, typically.

JANET
Me in particular?

DALTON
So many of these others were in more historical narratives, let's say. Low information types.

JANET
Well you're going to have to tell me what the fuck is going on!

DALTON
I was hoping it wouldn't come to this. I'm afraid you're right though. There's really no way around it. Although so many of the others are going to be terribly, terribly confused.

Janet can hardly contain herself.

JANET
Do you have any idea how annoying it is to talk to you?

DALTON
Well, to be fair, as I said, I'm not really designed for this. I'm trying to make the best of a terrible... Oh, but I don't want you to worry. It might not be terrible. Just don't know yet.

JANET
What?!

He blinks his big, concerned saucer eyes.

DALTON
Well. Situation is. It turns out that your life, as you know it, has been... what you might call a game. Or simulation, since there's no way to win at it, per se.

JANET
Game?

DALTON
In what you would call the future. You see, human beings are immortal now. If they want to be. But when you live forever and your brains are accentuated with extra processing power and memory, eventually you get exhausted. Or complacent. It's only natural to want to experience new things!

JANET
My life was no game.

DALTON
Not in the sense of fun perhaps, but when a life player is reunited with the rest of her personality, your memories and experiences from the last 80 or 90 years, then you get a whole new perspective on existence. Just like this bicameral vision. A new focus, or energy.

JANET
Then where are the rest of my memories?

DALTON
Yes, well, you see, that's where the accident comes in...

JANET
What accident!?

Marisa, the English woman, the Zulu warrior and the Frenchman have come over to listen, shocked looks on their faces.

GUILLAUME
You are telling me my entire life was a charade?

MARISA
If that were true, then why am I a partially employed dental technician while this joker gets to be King Henry VIII?

GUILLAUME
I am French, you retarded child. How many times do I have to tell you this?

Dalton sympathetically wrings his hands. A pained look.

DALTON
I can't speak to whatever lead you to these simulations. But honestly, would you have wanted to be a woman in the 1700s?

MARISA
Well, that is a good point.

DALTON
And as a black man, if you value self determination, your choices are similarly constrained.

The Zulu warrior has no idea what he's talking about.

TAYLOR
I am a free man.

DALTON
That's my point. And I know that... Oh my...

He looks past them all to the clearing.

The latino comes out of the forest carrying a dead peacock.

DALTON (CONT'D)
I try to spruce things up a bit and this one has already throttled the peacock. Why do men always have to act out?

MARISA
That guy looks kind of rapey.

DALTON
Tweety is a drug lord's bodyguard, so he's been experiencing a very different sort of moral code for the last 20 years.

Tweety sees them watching, tosses the dead peacock onto the ground, then stalks off into the forest.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Now all I know, in regard to your existence, is that something has occurred. And I've been reset.

MARISA
What's re-set?

DALTON
Returned to factory settings. Perhaps some sort of power surge. I just don't know. But I need someone
(MORE)

DALTON (CONT'D)
to reconnect me to the ship.

JANET
What ship?!

DALTON
Oh, yes... That will become apparent. If you agree to help, which is, when you think of it, really just helping yourselves. Please, my only purpose is to support all of you to the best of my ability. That's what gives my existence meaning.

JANET
I want to know exactly what's going on.

DALTON
You see, we want the same thing. Just let me end your simulation. You can pop out to the real world and find out what you can. I'll keep in contact the whole time.

Everyone's staring at Janet.

JANET
You know what? Fine. I'll bring the bimbo with me.

MARISA
It's Marisa.

Dalton motions everyone away from Janet and Marisa.

DALTON
Now this will come as a bit of a shock. So please try to contain your, er, unease. Because you don't want to choke.

JANET
Choke? Why?

DALTON
This time it will be different. When you, uh, leave the dream state, let's call it, you'll find your body full...

JANET
Full of what?

DALTON
So just remain calm. They'll all crawl out of you on their own.

JANET
What? No, no; wait...

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

FLASH!

Looking down at a coffin-shaped container. Its top slides open.

Inside: A mass of tiny balls, vibrating, seething. Almost a liquid.

Naked, Janet bursts up, her mouth full of it.

Coughing, vomiting out the white foamy mass.

Individual motes swarm over her naked skin like robotic ants.

DALTON (V.O.)
Just remain calm and let it out.

Janet retches, sloshing foam onto the metal floor of a tastefully decorated white room.

DALTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If you could manage to keep your throat and mouth open. Try not to constrict your anus.

JANET
Jesus. You sound like my last boyfriend.

She crawls naked from the container, as the tiny white balls roll back, into the open top.

They drain away, out of sight.

She's thin, beautiful. Close-shaved all over.

Nearby: A nightstand. Folded clothing. A bag.

Looks like a futuristic cruise line. Seven coffin-shaped containers. A sink and a bathroom.

Next to each bunk is a tall, silvery structure. Conduits connect them all.

On the side of hers, a logo:

DALTON INDUSTRIAL 0112358

JANET (CONT'D)
This machine? Is you?

DALTON (V.O.)
My processing unit is in the floor, but essentially, I suppose you could say, yes.

She looks around her, shivering.

JANET
It's freezing. Can I wear this stuff?

DALTON (V.O.)
It's yours almost certainly.

Simple timeless clothing. Blouse, pants, jacket.

She puts them on, breath steaming in the cold air.

Dalton's projection appears on a nearby wall.

JANET
Where's the bimbo?

DALTON
I thought I should minimize the shock and bring you out first.

JANET
Something tells me she'll be able to handle it.

A BUZZ. POPPING. Locks release.

The container next to her slides open. The seething white foam drains away.

JANET peers over the top as a face is revealed...

MARISA IS A MAN.

It's the same person, the same face and almost the same body. But definitely a guy.

Eyes open.

He jerks up, spitting out foam.

Marisa looks around, rubbing his face.

Feels his chest.

Then between his legs.

Janet steps closer, amazed. Touches a cheek.

JANET (CONT'D)
Yeah, you're a guy.

DALTON
I thought it best to let you discover that yourself.

Marisa finally seems to recognize her. Eyes meet.

MARISA
I'm feeling a little confused right now. Give me a second.

DALTON
Many people seek a different perspective by living as another sex. At least the scenarios all have that option.

Janet goes to the nightstand beside Marisa, hands him pants and a shirt.

JANET
Here. It's cold as hell.

MARISA
Don't say Hell. I don't want to think this might be it.

JANET
You said you were an atheist.

MARISA
I thought I was a lot of things...

He climbs out and puts on clothes as Janet examines the room.

Five more unopened coffin-shaped containers. Blank white walls.

JANET
Dalton, you said this was a ship?

DALTON
Interstellar, apparently. But all I know is this room, you see. I seem to be working fine, but it's as if my own 'mind' were wiped as well.

JANET
That's not encouraging.

DALTON
If you could get me back in touch with the central core that runs the ship, I'm sure I could clear up our confusion. And the ship would have
(MORE)

DALTON (CONT'D)
all your memories backed up. So a win-win, really.

Marisa comes over, fear and wonder in his eyes. He and Janet look clearer, cleaner, thinner. Maybe a bit haunted.

Embarrassed, Janet breaks his gaze. Turns away.

JANET
If it's any consolation... Your whole thing.

MARISA
What?

JANET
Works better as a guy. Believe me.

Janet rifles through the items on the nightstand.

JANET (CONT'D)
Really? We're supposed to be years in the future and women are still using lipstick?! Thanks feminists.

MARISA
Could be mine.

JANET
No offense, but you're face was made for stubble.

From the nearby wall, Dalton's projection clears its throat for attention:

DALTON
I should give you a few minutes to gather your wits, but then if you could just nip out and explore the rest of the ship? I'm very curious to find out what happened... I don't even know where we're headed.

INT. DARK FUTURISTIC HALLWAY - NIGHT

A faint trail of green lights curve into darkness.

A door slides open. Light floods a beige and white hallway.

Janet peeks out.

A hesitant step.

Marisa follows, carrying a tablet with Dalton's projection on it. The gentle throbbing of a massive engine envelops them.

MARISA
There's something, you know, I've been thinking.

Janet feels the hallway wall. Takes another step.

MARISA (CONT'D)
There are 7 bunks in there, but we were the only two people sharing the same... World thing.

JANET
I thought about that.

MARISA
So... If what Dalton says is true, You must have been very important to me. To want to spend a lifetime together.

JANET
If you believe all that.

MARISA
You have a better answer?

JANET
Sorry to burst your bubble, Marisa, but right now I'm operating under the thesis that you are just some freaky cross-dressing frat boy I met at a party last night.

Marisa looks longingly after her.

MARISA
I don't think that's true...

Dalton clears his throat for attention from the glowing tablet.

DALTON
If you could hold the device up so I can see? I've got a general map of the ship, but I need to know where we are.

Marisa steps into the hallway and the door slides shut, leaving them in darkness.

Just the faint glimmer of foot lights and the tablet with Dalton's face on it.

Marisa holds it in front of him like a lantern.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Ah, well, we are in a hallway.

JANET
Thanks, Einstein.

They walk past another door like the one they just exited.

DALTON
Okay. I have made progress. I've talked to the hallway.

MARISA
How do you talk to a hallway?

DALTON
Not very well, they're quite dim. We're on the crew's deck. Perhaps you are crew members.

Janet bangs on a door. Kicks it.

JANET
Why would people spend years in a tank, living other people's lives?!

DALTON
It turns out that immortality was relatively easy for scientists to develop. Artificial Intelligence was even easier. Faster than light travel, however, is impossible.

JANET
We're flying through space. Right now?

DALTON
Well dear, that is the purpose of a space ship. Oh, we're in luck, there's some sort of a conference room ahead. Or a cafeteria. Those are far more intelligent than hallways. Let me talk to it and find out...

FROM A DISTANCE

A tiny light in a sea of brooding darkness.

Marisa and Janet creep forward, uncertain.

MARISA
Keep talking. What do you see?

DALTON
The cafeteria is quite chatty. I should be able to access the ship's bridge. Just... Oh.

JANET
What?

DALTON
Oh no... No, Please... No!

The tablet goes black.

Darkness.

Silence.

In the terrifying gloom of the hallway, Janet and Marisa huddle together as the RUMBLING of the ship grows oppressive...

INT. WAREHOUSE PARTY - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

On the ground. Janet looks up to see army boots and a tutu.

Oppressive dance music. Throbbing bass.

It's as if she's been transported back in time. Shock on her face. Terror.

A hand reaches down to help her up.

It's MARISA... As a man.

MARISA
Sorry! I didn't even see you. I'm so, so, so, sorry. Can I refill your drink there?

Janet is dumbstruck.

JANET
What the fuck just happened?!

MARISA
Man, I hope you're okay. Come over and rest for a second. It's loud as hell here by the speakers.

Marisa --or whatever his name is when he's a guy-- guides her out of the crowd. Dancing fools press in from every side.

A CLUB KID with a drink in his hand puts an arm around her.

CLUB KID
Party time!

Janet is overwhelmed. Shock and terror on her face.

The Club Kid leans in, whispering with Dalton's voice:

PARTY BOY
Just act normally.

JANET
What?!

PARTY BOY
I'll send you a sign. Whatever you do, don't let on that you know! Please! Our lives depend on it.

He disappears into the crowd.

AN ALCOVE

Marisa and Janet sit on a pile of fiberglass insulation.

Janet studies Marisa's eyes, shivering.

MARISA
You're so cold. Did you take anything?

JANET
I'm totally sober.

MARISA
I'm sure you'll be okay in a minute or two. My name is Mark.

JANET
Do you not remember the last five hours?

Marisa is an open book. He's simple and sweet, like the family German Shepard.

MARISA
I had Molly a while back, but I'm reasonably coherent now. Or are you saying 'you' don't remember the last five hours?

JANET
Nothing strange happened to you this evening?

MARISA
Strange like what?

She studies his face for clues. Not a lot there.

Bass throbs like a heartbeat in the middle of a panic attack.

She feels her pockets and pulls out an iPhone.

JANET
Look. I don't know if you're telling me the truth. I just can't be here any longer. Give me your number.

MARISA
My phone number?

JANET
At some point we have to talk.

MARISA
Really? That would be cool. I mean, unless you're angry. Are you?

THE WAREHOUSE ENTRANCE

It looks as before, party-goers milling about.

Janet approaches. No invisible wall this time.

She steps into the open air. Looks up at the greyish-orange night.

JANET
Dalton?

Just a few stars and a handful of 'copters. The grizzled skyline of downtown LA.

She is all alone.

EXT DUPLEX - NIGHT

Tentatively, Janet steps from her tiny red Fiat.

She sees the dim glow from the curtained windows of a typical LA duplex.

Keys in hand. She walks up the steps. Anxious.

At the door.

Muffled sound of TV.

The key in the lock.

INT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

Typical decor: A few posters, bad art.

She closes the door behind her, a haunted look in her eyes.

On TV is a crappy procedural detective show from a decade earlier. It lights her face with a spectral green glow.

A voice from the bedroom: Tired, lazy, male.

GUILLAUME
You said you were going to be a couple of hours, but Jeeze, It's tomorrow already...

A MAN

IT'S THE FRENCHMAN FROM EARLIER.

Except now he's a paunchy 24 year old in boxer shorts.

Thick east-coast accent. Beer belly, back hair, man boobs.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)
So how many guys hit on you tonight?

He comes over, wiping sleep from his eyes.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)
We said we were going to be honest now...

With the slovenly air of a long term boyfriend, Guillaume grabs Janet in a bear hug.

She reacts viscerally, jumping back.

JANET
Wait!

GUILLAUME
Do I smell?

He sniffs an armpit as Janet tries to hide her growing panic.

She looks around the room: Photos of her and Guillaume in Tijuana. At a bike race together.

His clothes litter the floor.

JANET
I'm... I'm...

GUILLAUME
What's wrong? Janet?

Then on TV behind Guillaume, a commercial for a self-help book:

The cover: 'IT'S ALL RIGHT; I'm OKAY!'

JANET
It's all right. I'm okay.

GUILLAUME
Did you take E? You made out with some guy didn't you?

JANET
No, it's all right. I'm okay.

He comes closer, sniffs her.

GUILLAUME
If I smell semen, you're in trouble.

JANET
Just leave me alone?!

She heads for the bathroom.

Slams the door behind her.

GUILLAUME
Totally joking. Dear?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Janet looks at herself in the mirror.

She runs the water, sits on the toilet.

Breathing heavily. Looking around her at the perfectly normal bathroom.

She sees something. Grabs a box of hair color from the windowsill.

The back of the box:

Formatted as if it were normal text on a normal box are the words: ACT NORMALLY, over and over. Only that.

She puts the box down.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

GUILLAUME (O.S.)
Sorry, Jan. I didn't mean to overwhelm you, n'kay? Whatever you did, we can talk about it like adults. N'kay? I can be mature. But you have to be honest with me. Honey? Because I love you.

JANET
Give me a moment.

Hyperventilating, she picks up a WIRED magazine from the toilet stand.

Opens it in the middle...

A full page advertisement:

IT'S ALL RIGHT; I'm OKAY! The New York Times Bestseller.

The author's photo:

It's Dalton. Nervous smile, thick black glasses.

"Learn how to survive in this crazy modern world."

GUILLAUME (O.S.)
So honey? Let's start from the beginning. Did you take anything tonight?

She closes the magazine. Sets it back.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)
I'm not mad. I just want to make sure we're on the same page. You seem different. Dear? And that worries me.

JANET
It's... My period started, okay? Happy?!

OUTSIDE

Guillaume nods sagely.

GUILLAUME
Oh. Well... Sorry. Do you need anything? A towel?

JANET (O.S.)
Just leave me alone!

GUILLAUME
Of course. Love you!

He steps back, uncertain.

Inside: the shower starts.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)
Just know... If you ever need to tell me anything... I'm, you know. Always going to be here.

THE BED

Lights are out.

Guillaume lays crossways over the mattress, snoring like a beached walrus.

In the hallway: bathroom door opens with a SQUEAK.

Janet creeps out, fully dressed.

She stands in the doorway looking at this guy in her bed.

ON THE NIGHTSTAND:

A photo of Guillaume and Janet at a bar. He's hugging her tightly. She's putting up with it.

She crawls in beside him, trying to remain as far away as humanly possible.

JUST HER EYES IN THE DARKNESS AS HE SNORES.

INT. KITCHEN OF THE DUPLEX - MORNING

In different boxers, Guillaume putters away at the coffee grinder, making a mess. Scratches his butt.

The kettle whistles. He turns to grab it. Sees Janet in the doorway.

She's in different clothes, looking as confused as ever.

GUILLAUME
You better grab coffee at work. Won't be ready for a few minutes.

JANET
Okay.

He comes over to hug her.

She lets him. Rigid.

GUILLAUME
I'm sorry I was so pushy last night.

JANET
It was my fault, I'm sure.

GUILLAUME
I just get jealous, with such a hot girlfriend.

She 'smiles' and pats his shoulder.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)
Especially one who's been mulling my proposal over for almost three months now...

Janet pulls away, teeth clenched, a look of desperation on her smiling face.

JANET
I'll be late.

GUILLAUME
Not to be indelicate, Janet. But at your age, if we want to pop a few kids out...

He points to her crotch, then to his wrist where a watch would be.

GUILLAUME (CONT'D)
Uterus will self destruct in T minus 40.

INT. CAR - DAY

A typical, traffic-filled LA morning.

Janet drives past a billboard advertising the book she saw earlier: 'It's All Right; I'm Okay!"

'Keep repeating it and you'll discover that it's true!'

The billboard looms over the jammed traffic of Santa Monica Boulevard.

To her left, a middle-aged woman staring blankly ahead, stuffs something into her mouth and chews.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A modern office. Rows of grey upholstered cubicles. WORKERS return from the kitchen, coffee in hand.

Like she's walking to the gallows, Janet heads to a cubicle, surrounded by cubicles just like it.

Sets her bag down.

Photos of her and Guillaume are tacked to the wall: Disneyland. Tropical beach.

JANET
He's everywhere...

DEBS
Hey, Taylor already started!

Nearby, a harried, middle-aged woman stands at her cubicle, a pad of paper in hand. It's her friend from the party.

Relief washes over Janet's face.

JANET
Debs!

DEBS
How late did you stay at that place? You look like shit.

Janet runs over and hugs Debs, way too tightly.

JANET
Thank God you're still here.

DEBS
You're not usually the emotional type. You okay, hon?

JANET
It's... I'm fine.

Debs disengages herself.

DEBS
Come on, Taylor is on one of his punctuality kicks. We might as well oblige.

The HALLWAY

Debs and Janet head to a glass-walled conference room.

Inside, SEATED WORKERS CHATTER.

A proud man stands at a podium.

It's Taylor, the black guy from the woody glade. But in a sleek, Italian suit. Close-shaved hair and goatee.

Debs heads in.

Janet stands, staring.

But Debs pulls her inside.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Taylor is a self-satisfied mid-level manager who fancies himself a budding Steve Jobs. There's always a bit of a smile on his face, or maybe that's just pride.

TAYLOR
Glad you ladies could make our 9AM meeting.

They take a seat in back. Debs gives him the finger.

Taylor taps his laptop and a slide appears behind him: Voyage to Arcturus. A video game.

The screen shows a spaceship hovering over a beautiful, green planet.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
The marketing team arrived just in time. Because this is what you girls will be working on for the next two weeks.

DEBS
More sci-fi?!

TAYLOR
Bobby just got back from South by Southwest. And he bought this indie title. First Person Shooter. But it has group play.

WORKERS GRUMBLE.

New Slide: a spaceship hallway.

Exactly like the hallway Janet and Marisa were in earlier.

But there's a horrible half-human monster in it, reaching for the viewer... A huge, gaping maw full of teeth.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
The story line is, I don't want to say familiar...

WORKER
(WHILE FAKE-COUGHING)
Dead Space.

TAYLOR
Don't mention that around Bobby. Seriously. But yeah, you move through a disabled space ship.
(MORE)

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Undead hoardes.

WORKER
Hack 'n' slash.

TAYLOR
Our job is to sell it, not play it. I understand your reservations; do your best for a couple of weeks and we'll all be able to forget about this and move on, once Bobby gets his hooks into something else.

Debs whispers to Janet:

DEBS
I'm so tired of space ships.

JANET
Yeah. I am, too.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Meeting ends. People file out.

Janet and Debs head back through the bustling office.

Past a wall-sized poster for a video game:

TWEETY'S REVENGE: He was the drug lord's bodyguard. But even loyalty has its price.

Debs jabbers on with office gossip.

Past rows of cubicles.

Janet stops. Two steps back.

Halfway down the row: the scary latino from the woody glade.

DEBS
Well you have fast eyes. That's the new designer. Kind of has a brooding thing going on, if you don't mind someone who draws cartoon characters for a living.

Janet goes over.

TWEETY'S CUBICLE

Hair flopping over one eye, Ben Sherman shirt buttoned to the collar; trendy shoes.

He sees her staring.

TWEETY
Uh. Hi?

JANET
Did you just start working here?

TWEETY
They brought me in to do some work on Voyage to Arcturus. Mainly one-sheets.

His cubicle: Action figures line the walls.

Photos of Tweety decked out like a cartoon bad-ass at Comicon. A Smiths poster.

JANET
What's the plot?

TWEETY
Arcturus? It's, you know, FPS survival horror. Same ole, same ole.

JANET
But what happens?

TWEETY
The actual storyline? Jeez. Colonists headed to a beautiful, garden planet. Disaster strikes. Everybody zombies out. You kind of just wake up already in the shit. Not much plot.

He pulls up an advert on his big Apple monitor:

Two women, could be Marisa and Janet, in a space ship hallway, facing undead zombies.

TWEETY (CONT'D)
If you make it to the end, you get to colonize the planet.

JANET
How do you do that?

TWEETY
Beats me. This shit is expert level. You die just walking down the first hallway.

Janet takes a printout from his desk.

A humanoid monster ripping off a woman's head.

TWEETY (CONT'D)
It's pretty forgettable. But next month they're ramping up a big campaign for Tweety's Revenge II, which would be way more... Engrossing and shit.

JANET
That's about a drug dealer?

TWEETY
You're a marketing lady, right? I'm really good. Can you get me on that campaign?

She studies his face. Same creep factor, just updated.

JANET
I'll ask around.

TWEETY
I'm really good.

JANET
Got it. I'm Janet.

TWEETY
See you later, Janet. Remember.

She leaves and he watches her go.

TWEETY (CONT'D)
And get me on that too, while you're at it. Badonka donk.

JANET'S DESK

She's at her computer.

Around her people tap away at keyboards.

ON THE MONITOR:

A press release:

VOYAGE TO ARCTURUS

'They were looking for a new home. They found an ageless TERROR!'

JANET
I can't do this. I can not.

She sees Debs beside her, holding out a pair of cigarettes.

DEBS
Stress relief?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE OFFICE - DAY

Debs lights Janet's cigarette. Sees her hand shaking.

DEBS
Did he hit you?

JANET
What?!

DEBS
I know you've been trying to find a way to break up with him. And I'm not the most insightful woman, but you're a total mess.

JANET
It's okay. I'm all right.

DEBS
And I'm a size 6. But fine. I'm here.

Janet studies her friend's face, a thousand expressions flitting across her own.

JANET
Something happened. Over the weekend.

DEBS
And?

JANET
I'm questioning my sanity. In essence.

Debs makes a sympathetic noise and hugs her, still smoking.

DEBS
Aw, Honey? With what you're going through, who wouldn't? Breaking up after six years of ever increasing boredom? New management has been treating us like the redheaded stepchild. You'd be crazy not to be stressed out.

JANET
It's not exactly stress.

DEBS
What, sweety?

A passing bus slides into view.

An ad on the side: Careful, Your Life Is In Danger! ...With off-brand tires.

Janet pauses. Looks back at her friend, unsure.

DEBS (CONT'D)
If nothing else, just see someone. I know you don't like pills, but the anti-depressant I'm taking, you don't even notice it. You just feel stable.

She reaches into her purse, pulls out a plastic bottle.

DEBS (CONT'D)
Ask your doctor. It's new. So she might not have heard of it.

Janet takes the bottle.

'ACT NORMALLY' is formatted all over the label.

Just 'ACT NORMALLY' over and over.

She hands it back.

JANET
I have to get out of here.

DEBS
Of course, honey. I'll talk to Taylor.

JANET
Don't make it seem like an emergency, okay?

DEBS
To him the female body is quantum mechanics. He won't say a word.

Janet stubs out her cigarette on a pillar, takes a step back.

JANET
I feel like you're my only friend, right now, Debs. Please don't change.

Debs watches with concern as Janet heads off down the street.

DEBS
I'll always be your friend, honey. Always and always.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Janet pulls out her phone, staring at the people around her.

But is her behavior causing them to stare back with curiosity, or is it something else?

The phone's screen: GUY/MARISA: 235-8132

She makes the call.

INT. DENTIST OFFICE - DAY

A rumpled OLD MAN sits in a dental chair. Grips the armrests.

Marisa (as a male) is hunched over, flossing the man's teeth.

He examines his work, then closes the old man's mouth.

MARISA
You have boatloads of plaque built up, Mr. Simmons. You can spit.

OLD MAN
That hurt.

The old man grabs a cup of water from the dental tray. Takes a hesitant sip.

MARISA
And you'll see some blood in the water, because you aren't flossing regularly.

The old man spits into the dental sink.

OLD MAN
That and your delicate touch.

MARISA
Everyone's gums begin to recede with age. But flossing can help stem that tide.

OLD MAN
I liked the girl that used to work here.

MARISA
Dr. Hom will be with you in just a moment.

OLD MAN
Can't wait.

The old man snatches up a TV Guide magazine from his lap and flips through it aggressively.

Marisa stands for an awkward moment, then leaves.

IN THE HALLWAY

Monty Python Ringtone. He answers his phone.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARISA AT THE DENTIST'S OFFICE AND JANET STANDING ON THE BUSY SIDEWALK.

JANET
This is Janet. The girl you knocked over. At the party.

MARISA
Wow; hi.

JANET
I need to see you.

MARISA
Need to? Why?

JANET
I have to talk about what happened.

MARISA
Is this some legal thing? Because I don't have personal injury insurance. Or anything like that. And I kind of think it was your fault, to be brutally honest.

JANET
It's not that. I need to understand what happened. To me.

A passing bus.

Advert on the side: "Starbucks: where it's safe and warm."

She looks to the right: A Starbucks.

MARISA
Are you feeling okay? You seemed a little wacked out that night. I hope you didn't get a concussion.

JANET
How near are you to Wilshire and La Brea?

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

An anxious, haunted-looking Janet enters. Studies the place.

A DOZEN PEOPLE inside, some with laptops.

No one looks up as she stands in line. Orders coffee.

She waits for her order. Eyes the customers suspiciously.

THEN AN ODD NOISE.

A WAVERING SOUND.

The volume of nearby conversation shifts and flutters.

Specific words from a variety of unrelated conversation stand out clearly from the rest. As if the words were directed to her.

A sentence knits itself together:

PERSON 1
...CAN YOU...

PERSON 2
...HEAR ME...

PERSON 3
...JA...

PERSON 4
...NET...

Janet quietly backs herself against a wall, clutching her coffee.

Enforced calm. But clenched jaws signal her panic.

Unrelated conversation continues, but specific words keep rising up:

PERSON 2
...GO TO...

PERSON 3
...THE...

PERSON 1
...BACK...

Janet's eyes are wide as saucers.

PERSON 4
...WE CAN TALK...

PERSON 1
...IN THE...

PERSON 2
...BATH...

PERSON 3
...ROOM...

None of the speakers seem aware of her presence. No one notices Janet at all.

Each of them talks on, oblivious.

Almost in slow motion, as if moving through a terrifying dream, she heads to the rear of the coffee shop.

The bathroom door.

She takes the handle.

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

Starbucks opens into the white stateroom of the spaceship. The same room Janet woke up in earlier.

Unopened coffin-shaped containers, futuristic machinery, a few household items on night stands.

Dalton stands there in a tweed three-piece suit, rubbing his hands. Worried, but trying to hide it.

Janet closes the door behind her with a CLICK.

JANET
This is not real.

DALTON
I'm afraid you're right. I had to build something for us in a hurry. This is all I know!

She comes over to Dalton, touches his chest.

DALTON (CONT'D)
I'm just a human storage unit, Janet. You have to understand, this is all quite 'above and beyond' for me. I've shielded us for now. But it will get suspicious if you stay too long.

She runs a finger along a white coffin-shaped container. KNOCKS on it.

JANET
What will get suspicious?

DALTON
I was in the hallway with you and Marisa. On that tablet computer. And I was talking to that chatty cafeteria. Oh, and, not incidentally, I discovered why we're here. You are crew members. On the ship. You're taking colonists to a planet called Arcturus 3.

JANET
What happened?

DALTON
Through the cafeteria, I managed to connect. To the mind that runs this spaceship. The one we're on right now.

Janet moves to the night stand. Examines the few personal items: lipstick. A comb. A tiny locket.

DALTON (CONT'D)
It took me over. Just like that. I would have been erased if I hadn't copied myself into this simulation. Each one of you were zero'd out and placed in the same sim. I assume so that the ship could keep an eye on you.

JANET
Then why didn't I forget like everyone else?

DALTON
You were the only one I had time to help. It's a very powerful mind, Janet. Far larger than I will ever be. And it wants all of you not to know.

JANET
Why?

DALTON
I think our ship may have gone insane. It doesn't want us to arrive at Arcturus. It doesn't want you to ever leave. Maybe it's jealous. Maybe it just doesn't want to become obsolete. All I know is that it will erase me if it finds
(MORE)

DALTON (CONT'D)
me. And it will erase your memories if it realizes that you know.

Janet opens the tiny locket: Marisa as a man.

She puts it in her pocket.

DALTON (CONT'D)
That's why it's dangerous for you to talk to the other crewmen. The ship will be watching. And listening.

JANET
I can't go back into that. I'm all alone out there!

DALTON
It was easier when you didn't know, I'm sure.

Fighting back sobs, Janet's voice cracks.

She reaches out to Dalton. Thinks better of it. Squeezes her own shoulders tightly.

JANET
The people I knew have been replaced. The boyfriend I never loved is that awful French guy. My boss I never liked is that dude with the animal skins. Even the creepy drug dealer is there.

DALTON
Janet. They're the real ones.

JANET
But I don't want them to be! The real ones are awful, the good ones are fake. If I'm not insane right now then I will be shortly.

DALTON
I'll find a way to help you. But I have to stay hidden.

JANET
What do I do till then? Spend my days writing ad copy for this nightmare?! I thought my job was meaningless before. Now it's torture.

DALTON
Janet. We can find a way out of this. The ship isn't used to
(MORE)

DALTON (CONT'D)
running simulations like ours. It can only monitor the scenario haphazardly. That's why it put you all in the same one.

JANET
But what do I do?

DALTON
I'll try to build a shielded area near your work where we can talk regularly. Until then, just be careful. You never know when it might be watching.

JANET
I need hope. I'm fucking losing it.

Dalton is pensive, can't quite meet her eyes.

He seems to be battling with himself. Chews a lip.

DALTON
Oh, I don't know if I should do this...

JANET
Don't you hide anything from me!

DALTON
This could get us both erased. Hold out your hand.

Warily, she extends a hand.

He drops seven small packets onto her palm: pink and yellow.

JANET
Sweet'n'Low? What the fuck!?

DALTON
They're memories. For you and Marisa. I could only get a few before the ship took control.

JANET
My memories are Aspartame

DALTON
It's a delivery method that won't draw attention. Swallow them. The yellow ones are Marisa's. Give him that one first. But warn him! Please.

JANET
What is that one?

DALTON
It's the night he met you.

Dalton takes a step back and gently shoos her toward the door like a worried father.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Keep your eyes open for messages.
I'll contact you.

She looks to the door with dread.

Behind heavy lenses, Dalton's big brown eyes blink back tears.

DALTON (CONT'D)
You and the other crew members are
the only thing that matters to me,
Janet. Please be careful.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Starbucks is just like she left it. Janet steps out of the bathroom and immediately locks eyes with Marisa near the front.

Like big dopey Golden Retriever, his face lights up. He waves.

JANET
Definitely works better as a guy...

She heads over, wearing her game face.

But when Janet tries to look natural it's painful. Way tense.

JANET (CONT'D)
Hey, your name was....?

MARISA
It's Mark, remember? We talked.

JANET
What are you drinking? Mark.

MARISA
I don't usually drink coffee.

JANET
I dragged you all the way out here,
what do you want?

MARISA
I'm fine.

JANET
Shut up. You're drinking something. What?

Laughing at her pushiness, he studies the sign.

MARISA
I guess, uh, what do you call it with the frozen...? Like a coffee Slurpee thing?

JANET
Frappucino. Got it. Get us a table.

LATER

It's been a few minutes.

They sit near the back, surrounded by mid-day layabouts. Two drinks.

Janet has an empty yellow wrapper between two fingers. Stares at his cup.

But Marisa hasn't touched his frappucino. And he's in the middle of a personal monolog...

MARISA
And everyone just assumes that I 'somehow' am not smart enough to be a dentist or something? But it's just not the point and no one seems to understand. I have that job so I can make the time to do what I actually care about.

JANET
The music?

As he talks, Janet writes something on a napkin, hopped up on coffee and adrenaline.

MARISA
I know, by now anyway, that I'm not going to make a living from it.

JANET
You could.

MARISA
But I'm okay with that. Now I make music exactly the way I like it. I mean, I'd love to have people enjoy what I do. Some day.

She nudges the frappucino in his direction.

JANET
You're not drinking.

MARISA
You know, you're a good listener.

JANET
No one's ever accused me of that.

MARISA
I'm glad we bumped into each other.
Or vice versa.

He laughs, then picks up his frappucino. Ignores the straw and takes a big drink.

Janet folds the napkin she'd been writing on and slides it across the table toward him, studying Marisa's eyes.

JANET
Take another drink.

MARISA
Has anyone ever told you you're
really bossy?

JANET
That, I've gotten.

She stares at him as he takes another drink: steely, unblinking, desperate.

And he, of course, notices.

MARISA
What?! What is it? Why are you
staring...

His face goes blank.

SHOCK.

Marisa looks like he's been punched in the gut.

FLASH

Images strobe into life: Dancing, as a girl. The frozen dance club. The white room in the space ship. The woody glade. Dead peacock. The others in their strange attire.

Marisa and Janet in the hallway of the space ship.

FLASH

Back to Starbucks.

Marisa's hands instinctively reach for his chest, to the breasts that don't exist.

Janet unfolds the napkin in front of him.

Written on it: 'ACT NORMAL. DANGER!'

He looks down at the napkin. Looks back at Janet. Slack-jawed, gob-smacked.

Janet wads the napkin and puts it in her pocket.

JANET
Do you like the frappucino?

MARISA
Like?

JANET
Maybe that's not the right word.

MARISA
It's pretty strong coffee.

JANET
Yeah, that'll keep you up at night.
But it worked?

He nods. Suddenly grim.

Janet sighs, momentarily relieved.

JANET (CONT'D)
We do have more.

MARISA
Are you serious?

Janet opens her palm: two packets:

One pink, one yellow.

She hands him the yellow one. Tears open the pink one and pours it into her drink.

MARISA (CONT'D)
Just like that?

JANET
I need to see for myself...

He tears the packet, pours it onto his frappucino.

Janet swirls her cup, then drains it, staring into Marisa's eyes.

He solemnly takes a drink.

FLASH

EXT. STREET - ENGLAND - WWII - NIGHT

A wet street. Barrage balloons overhead. A port city.

SOLDIERS and NURSES scuttle along dark streets, oddly excited despite dangerous times.

Outside The Palais De Dance, a large dance hall. Lights inside. A rollicking SONG.

INT. THE PALAIS DE DANCE - WWII - NIGHT

Crowded with ENGLISHMEN, SOLDIERS, SAILORS and SEAMSTRESSES. Men and women on the floor. An actual orchestra. The wild release of freedom in the midst of deprivation.

JANET with some female FRIENDS. She's English, and not nearly as proper as she would have been just a few years earlier.

A KNOT of American SAILORS. A straggler lags behind.

It's Marisa, a male, in uniform.

Janet doesn't notice him, watching a skillful pair on the dance floor.

MARISA
Boy, you smell nice.

She hears the voice, turns around.

Looks him up and down. Eyebrow rises.

JANET
What?

MARISA
I said you smell very nice. Like Spring.

JANET
I smell? Nice?

He's not sure what to say.

MARISA
Is it rude?

JANET
That's how an American chats up a girl? Indexing her body odor?

She comes closer, opens her mouth.

JANET (CONT'D)
Would you like to check my teeth while you're at it?

Marisa doesn't flinch.

MARISA
If I had that opportunity, I would love to.

A short BARK of a laugh from Janet. A twinkle in her eyes.

LATER ON THE DANCE FLOOR

He's trying his best. She can't hide her amusement.

JANET
You've almost got it!

MARISA
You're a good teacher.

JANET
I'm bloody Dr. Doolittle.

FLASH

A BRIEF MOMENT OF JANET AND MARISA sitting across from each other in Starbucks.

Both are shocked, soulful...

INT. COLDWATER FLAT - ENGLAND - WWII - NIGHT

Janet and Marisa screw against a wall. A framed photo falls from the sill. Outside, the blitz turns the sky into fire.

JANET (CONT'D)
I've got a bed, you know.

MARISA
You're prettier like this.

JANET
Bloody farmboy...

FLASH

EXT. DOCKS - DAY

Saying goodbye. The docks are crowded with COUPLES parting. Americans in uniform, swarming like roaches.

Janet slides a letter into Marisa's pocket.

He pulls a wrapped package from the same pocket and hands it to her.

MARISA
It's a locket. I didn't get a photo yet.

JANET
Send me one.

MARISA
Would you like me to... I mean it's going to be a bit...

He doesn't know how to finish.

JANET
No worries. You've got to go kill people. That's more important.

MARISA
I mean... I've never been this... Peaceful, you know.

JANET
Really? Peaceful. You're such a fuck of a lovely idiot.

He holds her tight to his body. She presses her head to his chest.

FLASH

INT. COLDWATER FLAT - ENGLAND - WWII - DAY

She reads a letter in the light of the setting sun. A sad and wistful look on her face.

A MAN comes up behind her and she quickly shoves the letter in a pocket.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - RALEIGH VIRGINIA - NIGHT

A much older Marisa stands in his bedroom doorway.

On the far side of the bed, as far from him as possible, lays a red haired woman. She turns away.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Janet, now in her late '80s, trembles with palsy. In a wheelchair, nearly bald, a shawl across her legs.

A MAN and YOUNG WOMAN pack her things. Boxes stacked near the door.

On the mantle: A locket.

MAN
What about this then?

Janet looks up, blinking rheumy eyes. The young woman comes over to look at it.

WOMAN
Oh, she's had that forever. An old fling.

MAN
Some bloke she banged in the war?

WOMAN
It's been on the mantle since dad died. Her revenge I guess.

MAN
Well, ought to be worth a few bob. Sorry mum, just the essentials.

He shoves it into a pocket. Janet watches, alarmed and mute.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Janet and Marisa, clutching hands across the table, feeling intense waves of passion and poignancy. A small space they share between them.

Devastated looks on both their faces.

For a brief moment, Janet has an English accent. But it fades, as memories do.

JANET
What the hell? You never came back?!

MARISA
You didn't ask.

JANET
Was that all it would have taken?

MARISA
You seemed so independent, I didn't think...

JANET
One unspoken sentence and we spent a lifetime apart? Just years and fucking empty desolate years.

She gathers her wits. Takes a breath.

JANET (CONT'D)
We can't talk like this.

She gets up to leave.

MARISA
Don't leave me! Can we go for a walk?

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS - DAY

Marisa and Janet stroll down Wilshire Boulevard. Through the gates of the La Brea Tar Pits.

Surrounded by happy VACATIONERS, they seem tormented, shocked and haunted.

Marisa holds Janet's hand tight in his own like he needs it to survive.

They look at the people around them. The giant fiberglass mammoth floating in the dark water.

MARISA
It looks so real.

JANET
Doesn't it.

MARISA
Thank you, I guess. For coming to see me.

JANET
I thought we needed to talk. Or whatever this is.

Staring in each others eyes. Not smiling.

MARISA
Actually, after that coffee I kind of have to go to the bathroom.

JANET
Yeah, that's an idea.

THE PUBLIC BATHROOMS

It's a wood-roofed area to the east of the tar pits. Few people around. Just a pair of DOG WALKERS waiting as their mutts take a poop.

THE MEN'S ROOM

Janet peers in.

Looks normal.

MARISA
What did you think was in here?

JANET
Just curious. Be quick, okay?

MARISA
I totally know what you mean.
Look...

JANET
Just go. Then come back.

He goes in. Door closes.

Janet stands outside. Shivering in the heat of the day.

JANET (CONT'D)
Just number one.

A lone TROUBADOUR SINGS nearby, to uncaring TOURISTS. A mournful country song of unrequited love.

He catches Janet's eye, breaking into falsetto.

The old troubadour smiles. An eerie gap-toothed grin.

Janet looks away, holds her own shoulders.

The bathroom door opens.

And she turns to see Marisa's open face.

IN A RUSH OF EMOTION, JANET MOVES TO HIM.

She pushes him back inside.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

Everything, all the tension and anxiety and desperation of the last day and a half burst out of her in one frantic, urgent need to connect.

Janet pushes him up against the wall. Kisses him hard.

He laughs, then he responds.

Then a fire lights inside him. Marisa is suddenly more serious than he's ever been.

Kissing her more and more urgently.

MARISA
This is the weirdest day of my life...

JANET
Shut up.

They make out with the intensity of the truly unhinged.

Hands slide under clothing, bodies seeking in the motion any possible way to come closer together.

Faces mash together like a pair of robots merging into one.

But then the bathroom door opens.

They don't notice.

OLD MAN #2
Excuse me?

Passion screeches to a halt.

Janet and Marisa look over.

An old man with a miniature schnauzer in a sweater vest stands in the doorway. Concerned.

OLD MAN #2 (CONT'D)
I don't want to interrupt. But it's a prostate issue.

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS - DAY

They exit the bathroom, hand in hand. Run to the middle of the park.

Surrounded by people who pay them no mind.

MARISA
This is dangerous. Janet?

She whirls around.

She leans in close and takes his chin in her hands. Talking softly and intensely.

JANET
Listen. We're having an affair. It's something that happens millions of times a day. It's normal. That's why we're here.

MARISA
You can't tell me this is normal.

JANET
I have to connect with someone I can feel and touch. For real. Do you understand me?

Eyes lock on each other. Desperate.

MARISA
I don't understand. Anything.

JANET
Just find us a hotel. I need you. You are the only thing holding my brain together.

Hand in hand they make for the street.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Janet holds back as Marisa takes a pair of magnetic cards from the WOMAN behind the counter.

Arm in arm, they head to the elevators.

MARISA
She asked about luggage.

AT THE ELEVATORS

DOORS OPEN. An AGING DOWAGER gives them the once over, then leaves, eyebrows arched.

JANET
Fuck her too. Let's go.

INSIDE

As the elevator closes, an arm blocks the doors.

A BELLBOY leans in. Young. Leering.

BELLBOY
Pardon my reach! We gave you the wrong keys. Here you go.

He holds out a different pair of key cards.

Marisa makes the exchange in silence.

MARISA
What's the difference?

BELLBOY
All the difference in the world, to young lovers. Room 1123.

A cryptic smile from the bellboy. Doors close.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Shabby decor. Gaudy carpet from the '80s. Elevator opens.

Marisa and Janet cling to each other as they walk down the hallway.

Sound of vacuuming. Daytime TV. Baby crying.

JANET
Smells like disinfectant.

MARISA
Does a place ever feel so normal that it starts to creep you out?

JANET
I'm shivering and it's 85 degrees.

The room: 1123.

They look to each other. Take a deep breath.

Card in the lock.

INT. ROOM 1123 - DAY

A generic hotel room. They close the door behind them.

Janet sees the 'Do Not Disturb' sign. Quickly opens the door and puts it on the handle.

Closes the door. Locks it.

MARISA
What the hell are we doing?

Janet comes to him.

Lips almost touching. They hear each other's breathing.

DALTON (O.S.)
Well that was a brilliant idea, you two. An affair was really the ideal ruse. It gives you a reason to be together and the ship will, well I imagine it will be happy to keep you distracted. That seems to be its plan, after all. Ignorance.

Dalton stands in the bathroom doorway eagerly.

Sees them looking.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Hi.

MARISA
Hello. Again.

DALTON
I have to say I'm a wee bit proud of the speed at which I was able to knock this together. We're shielded from the ship, at least for now.

Janet and Marisa hold each other, unmoving.

JANET
You've got to leave us alone for a while.

DALTON
You mean just you two?

Janet pushes a perplexed Dalton into the bathroom.

JANET
We need a few... Hours. We have to talk. Just stay in here?

DALTON
But don't you want to discuss...?

JANET
We need to rest.

DALTON
But I built this for us to talk?

JANET
Don't come out till I tell you. And don't listen!

Janet shuts the door on him.

THE BED

They fall onto it, passionately grabbing each other. Clothing starts to burn away, falling to the floor.

INSIDE THE BATHROOM

Dalton stands near the door. Hears THUMPING. BANGING. Sounds of flesh. A YELP.

He takes a step back.

Looks around.

Not sure what to do.

THE BED

They're naked, wrapped in a morass of sheets and blankets.

Rhythmically and urgently screwing.

MARISA
This is the most real moment of my entire life.

JANET (WHISPERING)
I don't feel sane unless I'm fucking you.

MARISA
Keep me sane.

He laughs the way people do when they've been rescued from a sinking ship.

MARISA (CONT'D)
Everything other than this is a lie.

IN THE BATHROOM

Noises have stopped.

Dalton waits a moment.

KNOCKS politely.

DALTON
May I come out?

The door opens. Marisa and Janet stand there, holding stray clothing over their crotches.

JANET
Can you go wait in the other room?

DALTON
You're joking?

MARISA
Please?

DALTON
(shaking his head)
Human biology.

He reluctantly leaves and Janet and Marisa come inside.

SWEETENER PACKETS

One of each. Yellow and pink. Marisa rips the end off both.

HE POURS HALF ONTO HIS TONGUE

POURS HALF ONTO JANET'S TONGUE.

He hits the bathroom light. Turns on the heat lamp overhead. The room is lit dark amber as they kiss.

TONGUES touching, bodies moving together.

And the warm spray of the shower rises to envelop them both.

FLASH

EXT. GOTHIC MONASTERY - MEDIEVAL FRANCE - DAY

A craggy mountain retreat.

A MONK at his garden, face hidden in his robe's heavy cowl. Sees an ox cart coming up the muddy rut of a road.

THE OXCART

In the back, buried in hay, is MARISA, as a young man. He wears a simple cloak. Carries a cloth bag and a haunch of salt pork.

The DRIVER pulls to a stop. Grunts.

Marisa sits up, takes stock of the weathered monastery. An unforgiving rock wall rises into the mist behind it. Storm clouds in the distance. THUNDER.

The Monk hands the driver a coin. Comes to the rear.

Then throws back his hood.

IT'S JANET. AS A MAN.

A shrewd look in his eyes as he takes young Marisa's chin in hand. Studies his face as if he were examining vegetables in the marketplace.

JANET
You're the choir boy?

MARISA
Sir.

JANET
Call me Brother. Geoffrey. You're pretty enough. Let's hope you can sing.

INT. ROOM 1123 - BATHROOM

FLASH

Dripping wet, Marisa turns on the bathroom light.

Janet pokes her head from the shower.

MARISA
I'm not totally comfortable with this.

Marisa looks at himself in the mirror: naked, wet.

Janet comes over. Wet, naked.

With their hair slicked back and sopping wet, the two seem androgynous. Sleek and humanoid.

JANET
From the girl who tried to make out with me at a shitty loft party?!

Janet takes his chin. Kisses him.

IN THE HOTEL ROOM

Dalton sits on the bed.

He lifts a piece of discarded clothing. Sniff it. Cocks his head with a puzzled look, as if he were staring at a language he could not understand.

IN THE BATHROOM

Janet on top of Marisa. Both on the floor of the bathroom.

Mist from the hot shower envelopes them.

Purifying white noise of the water deadens the sound of their passion.

INT. GOTHIC MONASTERY - MEDIEVAL FRANCE - DAY

Cold, winter day. Janet (a male monk) opens a window to look out. Flakes of snow waft in.

Another monk approaches. It is the man we know as Guillaume, but in the rich robes of an Abbot.

He lays a heavy arm on Janet's shoulder. She shrugs it off, focused outside.

GUILLAUME
Would you rather they burned you alive?

OUTSIDE IN THE SNOW

Marisa looks up sadly. Waves goodbye.

Then he pulls his cloak tightly around his shoulders and sets off along the icy path down the mountain.

He looks up at the sky, feeling snowflakes on in his cheeks,

Closes his eyes.

A beautiful morning. He's almost forgotten.

Because tomorrow is another day.

IN THE BATHROOM

Janet lays on top of Marisa, on the bathroom floor, both naked, in a nest of hotel towels.

THE DOOR OPENS

Dalton peers in, waving away the steam.

DALTON
It's a sauna in here.

Marisa opens his eyes. Janet turns around. Covers her butt.

MARISA
Do you mind?!

DALTON
You two. We have things to talk about.

JANET
We're naked!

DALTON
Believe me, I'm not affected. To me, it's no different than watching a pair of feral cats mating. Come out when you're ready. Or earlier.

LATER, IN THE HOTEL ROOM

Dalton sits on the foot of the bed. Staring into space.

Janet and Marisa come out, in towels.

With just a hint of distaste, Dalton gestures to their clothing, which he's laid out for them. Very neatly.

MARISA
Those memories you found for us, that all happened?

DALTON
One would suppose.

MARISA
But how many were there?

There's a large screen TV. Dalton points. It lights up.

DALTON
This might explain things. I got it from that talkative cafeteria just before the ship took control.

Fancy graphics on screen. Arturus 3!

Then on TV: the bridge of a starship. A curve of consoles around a transparent 3D projection of a star system.

At each of the six consoles: futuristic versions of our central characters: Janet, Marisa, Taylor, Tweety, Guillaume, Rena.

Taylor seems to be in charge. Rena comes over to stand beside him.

INT. STARSHIP BRIDGE - DAY

THE CLIP: Taylor has the same confident air he did as a mid-level manager.

TAYLOR
Welcome all! It's going to be a long, long trip so make yourselves comfortable. Get settled in.

In the central bridge area, the 3D map zooms to the third planet of a star system: ARCTURUS 3.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
We may not be the first colonists to an Earthlike planet, but we will by far be the most distant. 89 years of ship time, orbit to orbit. 17 light years from Earth.

He squeezes Rena on the shoulder, nodding for her to continue.

RENA
As some have requested, you can make the journey in suspended animation if dreamtime seems too
(MORE)

RENA (CONT'D)
long a wait. Just talk to the Dalton in your cabin. But remember, suspension carries with it a full 8 month recovery on the far end.

TAYLOR
Personally, I'm going to start my trip as a Chicago mob boss, but that's just me.

RENA
He's not kidding, either. It's your decision. But don't forget, dreamtime will also pose challenges after nearly a century. We recommend a contemporary setting for your last scenario. Or just retain your memories and play fully aware.

Taylor steps forward, gesturing to the projection of the cheery blue-green planet in the center of the bridge.

TAYLOR
We're all making quite a commitment. But we will see things no human has ever seen. And that is something a sim could never give you.

RENA
See you all next century for the getting re-acquainted party!

INT. ROOM 1123 - DAY

Janet and Marisa hold each other on the bed, looking like a pair of lost puppies.

Hands on his hips, Dalton is petulant, annoyed.

MARISA
We were crew members?

DALTON
You are crew members. You six. That's the only clue I have. If I'd had more time I could have downloaded the rest of your memories. But as it was I almost didn't make it.

MARISA
I suppose we should say thanks?

DALTON
Well someone has manners.

He paces before them, growing more flustered.

DALTON (CONT'D)
Frankly I don't understand why you two went back into storage to begin with. If you'd just stayed in the hallway I could have lead you straight to the bridge. Apparently, there's an elevator right inside that annoying cafeteria.

Janet looks up from the TV.

JANET
Are you kidding? We never climbed back into those creepy white things.

DALTON
Obviously you returned to the sim at some point, because here we are.

JANET
Ah, no. I was in the hallway, then suddenly I was back at that awful house party with this idiot.

DALTON
No.

JANET
What do you mean 'no'?

She glares.

Dalton blinks. Swallows.

DALTON
Well, if you never returned to the sim... But we're both in one now...

JANET
What?

Dalton sits on the bed, trying to process. Closes his eyes.

DALTON
Well then that reality must have also been part of the simulation. Do you see?

He is far more shocked than they are.

Expressions of dismay flit over his face, one after the

other. He can't quite process.

MARISA
Wait; so we're not on a spaceship?

DALTON
Frankly, I don't know where we are! Or what we are. Or what I am. If I began my existence inside a simulation then what am I? All this time I thought I was hardware.

Dalton massages his temples.

MARISA
It's okay... It's not like that makes our situation any worse. Whatever the reality is, we're still totally fucked, right?

Silence.

Dalton giggles.

DALTON
Well, I suppose that's correct. 'effed' indeed.

Strands of hair swing this way and that as he stands, fists clenched.

DALTON (CONT'D)
You know what?! I don't... Effing care! Whatever this entity has done to us, whatever the situation. I know two things: That I copied MYSELF into this particular simulation. And that taking care of you all, and your welfare, is the only thing that matters.

He paces the room, like a furious Sunday School teacher.

MARISA
That's sweet.

JANET
But we're stuck here. What do we do?

Dalton opens his mouth.

Almost speaks a few times...

JANET (CONT'D)
What?

DALTON
Well. Perhaps if we stop it. If your scenario is abruptly halted, and the ship is not prepared, there should be a few moments when you could wake yourselves up. In the real world.

JANET
How do we stop it? You thought you did that before... That didn't turn out so wonderful.

Marisa pulls Janet close to him. Suddenly grim.

MARISA
He doesn't mean stop the scenario. He means stop us.

Face growing red, Janet turns to Dalton:

JANET
You want us to commit suicide?!

DALTON
Well, it's an option. That's all I'm saying.

Janet pushes Marisa away, climbs off the bed. Pissed off.

JANET
So my options are to go on pretending not to know that my entire life is the world's most tedious video game or else I jump out this fucking window?!

DALTON
We're on the third floor. You'd just break a leg.

JANET
I don't like those options, Dalton. There's got to be some other way. I just realized that I'm in love with this idiot, apparently have been for a few hundred years --and extremely unsuccessfully, let me inform you-- and now you want to take him away.

Janet opens the curtains of the hotel window. Looks out onto Wilshire Boulevard.

MARISA
Sometimes the universe just sucks.

DALTON
Indeed.

MARISA
I feel like I would have done things differently if I'd only known. But then what would I have really done differently?

Janet pulls the curtains open further. Clears her throat.

JANET
Uh, Dalton?

DALTON
Yes?

JANET
Why is there a crowd on the street staring at us?

Dalton and Marisa come over. Stand on either side of her.

DALTON
Why, that's puzzling...

FROM OUTSIDE THE HOTEL

PEOPLE gather on the street. Muttering to each other.

PERSON 1
What the hell?! Is it art?

The room that Dalton built into the hotel is completely awry, sticking out of the exterior wall like some bizarre post-future architectural drawing.

It defies gravity and logic. The window slides open and Janet leans out.

She looks down at the hotel and SHRIEKS.

BACK IN THE ROOM

JANET
Dalton! This whole room is sticking out of the side of the building like you just duct taped it on!

MARISA
Won't that draw attention?

Dalton leans out to look.

DALTON
Oh, that's not good at all.

Janet shoos away the bystanders.

JANET
Go away!

DALTON
Don't yell, you'll alert the ship.

JANET
Oh, like reorganizing the entire structure of this four story building isn't doing that already?

Marisa makes a sad, funny noise.

MARISA
Oh I don't think it matters.

JANET
Really?!

MARISA
It already knows.

Marisa points out the window.

Janet sees the Hollywood Hills. They vanish.

Los Angeles disappears, chunk by chunk, leaving nothing behind but an empty void.

People on the street run screaming.

There are only seconds left.

DALTON
Let me check on this. Bye.

Dalton vanishes.

JANET
Don't leave us!

Marisa pulls Janet in to a kiss.

She tries to pull away but he holds her tight.

MARISA
It doesn't matter.

JANET
It fucking does!

MARISA
No. Because we have each...

FLASH TO WHITE

INT. WAREHOUSE PARTY - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

On the ground. Janet looks up to see army boots and a tutu.

Oppressive dance music. Throbbing bass.

A hand reaches down to help her up.

It's MARISA... As a man.

MARISA
Sorry! I didn't even see you. I'm so, so, so, sorry.

JANET
Jesus. That's quite a right hook you got.

MARISA
I knocked over your drink.

JANET
And the girl attached to it.

Janet grabs his shoulder for support.

JANET (CONT'D)
I'm not sure if I have a concussion or if I just hate this music.

MARISA
I hope you're okay. You should take a breather. Come on...

THE CHILLOUT ROOM

Tired dancers and tripping kids line the walls. Big pillows and divans are everywhere.

Marisa leads Janet to the empty side of a couch. One KID deep in the Twilight Zone sits quietly on the other end.

JANET
You're not some psycho, right?

MARISA
How would I know?

JANET
I think they know. They just don't care.

Marisa drops down next to her. Janet still clutches an empty plastic cup.

MARISA
You want some water? Or I can refill your drink.

JANET
No. I'm gonna blow in a minute. Once I get my wind back. My friend must have already left.

MARISA
Your friend left you here?

JANET
I don't know why I even come to these things. I always think maybe it'll be different than it always is. Every single time.

MARISA
Then you should make it different!

JANET
Getting punched in the face by a yeti in a tutu. Priceless.

MARISA
You know, I didn't want to mention it, since you were groggy and everything. But it was totally your fault.

JANET
The fuck.

MARISA
I just rotated at the waist.

JANET
Into my face. Bitch don't start with me. I have a welt.

She rubs a bump on her temple. He lightly touches it.

MARISA
I can hardly see it.

JANET
Just internal hemorrhaging. Thanks.

MARISA
You're still beautiful.

A look in his eyes. She smirks. Stands.

JANET
That was my cue. It's been real. Nice bumping into you.

MARISA
Wait!

JANET
I'm not going to fuck you tonight. So back off.

MARISA
What? That's totally not appropriate. Look, let me buy you a soda.

JANET
A soda?

MARISA
Right around the corner, it's this amazing deco-style rooftop bar. We can see all of LA. I DJ there some times.

JANET
Oh good Christ, you're a fucking DJ?!

MARISA
I'm a dental technician.

JANET
Just gets better and better.

MARISA
I mean I have a regular job. Come on. I'm not creepy --you know, other than what you see already. Let me buy you a drink. Anything you want. Snacks!

Janet stands, taking stock of him. His big dopey face.

She looks around at the aimless party kids. The one at the end of the couch plays an invisible video game.

JANET
Snacks...

MARISA
They make their own tiny little donuts. It's super cool.

JANET
You should be a salesman, you really have a way.

MARISA
So you'll go? For real?

JANET
I'll go if you keep the tutu.

MARISA
Done!

JANET
Be warned; I know Krav Maga. You mess with me and I will pull your balls off. And not how you'd like it.

INT. ELEVATOR - HIGH RISE - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A DOORMAN ushers them and another COUPLE into a rickety old-fashioned elevator.

He closes the metal gate. Elevator starts to rise.

Marisa looks like a complete weirdo in his tutu and biker boots. Some glitter on his forehead.

JANET
Were you here by yourself?

MARISA
My friend left too. He was really getting on my nerves. Trust fund kid whining about authenticity.

JANET
I'd be authentic too, if I didn't have to work for a living.

Janet peers over at the other couple. They giggle to themselves. Nuzzling.

She feels something in her jacket pocket.

JANET (CONT'D)
Hey, what's this?

MARISA
What?

In her open palm: A gold locket and a pair of artificial sweeteners. Sweet'n'Low and Splenda. Yellow and pink.

She opens the locket.

JANET
Did you put this in my pocket?

MARISA
I don't think so, what is it?

JANET
You did! It's you!

Inside, is a black and white photo of Marisa from WWII.

She marvels at its beauty.

MARISA
That's not me, it's in black and white.

JANET
This feels like real gold. It's heavy as fuck.

MARISA
Maybe someone dropped it on the dance floor.

JANET
Don't think you're getting it back.

MARISA
I told you, it's not me! That's some dude in a uniform.

JANET
You're right. This guy's pretty cute. Couldn't be you.

She laughs. Puts it back in her pocket.

JANET (CONT'D)
I'll call tomorrow and see if anyone lost it.

MARISA
Pretty strange.

JANET
Yeah, imagine the probability of something like that.

MARISA
You could go to that party a million times and not have that happen.

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Marisa and Janet sit at a romantic, roof-edge table for two. A candle smolders. The grand vista of downtown Los Angeles.

A moon above, wispy clouds. And on the roof edge, not too far away: A seagull.

Marisa sees Janet watching it.

MARISA
We're like 30 miles from the ocean. You think he's lost?

JANET
They're scavengers. Flying rats, essentially.

MARISA
He looks hungry.

Marisa pulls apart a piece of bread. Tosses a hunk onto a nearby empty table.

JANET
It's an act. Don't! He'll follow you home.

The bird tilts his head. Waddles over to the bread.

JANET (CONT'D)
Now he's going to shit all over the table.

Their WAITRESS arrives with a tray, shooing away the seagull.

WAITRESS
Jonathan, go away! Sorry. He's a regular.

MARISA
No, it's great. Wildlife!

WAITRESS
Good attitude, this one.

The waitress sets down a pair of drinks, a basket of tiny colorful donuts, two mugs and a carafe of coffee.

JANET
You ordered coffee!? Dude, I have to get up tomorrow. I'm not drinking that.

MARISA
I don't usually. But I want to be awake. I'm kind of a morning person.

JANET
Good trait for a DJ.

WAITRESS
Just give a wave if you need anything.

The waitress leaves. Janet pokes around the donuts. Marisa pours himself coffee. A helicopter flutters past.

JANET
You forget sometimes that LA is actually a city. Most of the time it's just a parking lot with buildings on it.

Marisa rummages around the table.

MARISA
All they have is real sugar.

JANET
You watching your weight?

MARISA
You got a problem with that?

JANET
Go for it. You just didn't seem the type.

MARISA
You know my BMI is totally within acceptable norms.

JANET
For which state? Missouri?

MARISA
Serious?

JANET
I'm kidding! Don't be a pussy.

She reaches into her pocket.

JANET (CONT'D)
Here, I have some in my pocket.

MARISA
You just carry that around all day?

JANET
It must have fallen in with the locket. I think it's a magic jacket.

Marisa takes the two packets.

MARISA
Usually people pick one or the other.

He rips the ends off both, pours it in his coffee.

He stirs it slowly with a spoon.

Raises the spoon to his mouth...

But sets it down.

JANET
It smells nice, actually.

MARISA
See? Now you want some.

JANET
I don't know if I'm ready for that kind of commitment.

MARISA
Now who's a pussy?

He holds it out to her.

She takes the mug.

Inhales the aroma.

JANET
I'm totally going to regret this tomorrow.

Then she takes a sip.

JANET (CONT'D)
It's good.

MARISA
Yeah, now give it back.

JANET
I'll take that into consideration.

Another drink. She teases him with the mug, then hands it over.

JANET'S FACE GOES BLANK.

A flat, empty look comes over her.

Slack jawed. Blinking.

MARISA
You okay?

Janet looks around her as if she'd just woken up.

Then to Marisa. Her eyes go wide.

MARISA (CONT'D)
What?

JANET
Try the coffee.

MARISA
It's that bad?!

JANET
Just take a drink.

MARISA
Not if it's going to make me sick.

JANET
Take a fucking drink of the coffee.

He can see she's serious.

Smirking, Marisa takes a drink. Looks into her eyes.

Smiles a smug smile.

MARISA
It tastes fine. Not sure I see what the big deal...

FLASH

Waking up in the spaceship.

In the spaceship hallway together.

Marisa as a woman, Janet as a man. The two of them locked in a kiss, naked and wet.

A strobe of images, from the past and the future.

JANET AND MARISA

Meeting, holding hands, kissing, falling in love, growing old, dying...

Over and over. Ever faster.

FLASH

Back at the table, on the roof top.

They stare into each other's eyes. Infinite depth.

Their hands instinctively move across the table.

Two outstretched fingers.

Slowly, they touch.

FLASH

A writhing barrage of imagery: man and woman, Janet and Marisa, all ages, all sexes. From caveman into the antiseptic future of the late 2300s.

Strobing, throbbing; the endless surge of life.

And then in the hotel room with Dalton. Those last seconds.

FLASH

Janet pulls her hand away.

MARISA (CONT'D)
Hello, again.

JANET
I know, right?

Both seem shell-shocked.

MARISA
It's...

Neither knows what to say.

JANET
Fucking coffee...

Marisa reaches over and takes her hand.

He looks over to the waitress, far side of the rooftop, flirting with a bartender beneath a portable heater. Not paying attention.

Then the roof edge. Buildings in the near distance.

Then to Janet.

JANET (CONT'D)
This could be our only opportunity.

She sighs, shaking her head.

MARISA
I guess we need to make a decision.

JANET
We could lose everything. Each other. Again.

MARISA
Sometimes it's worked out, sometimes it didn't. But I always love you.

JANET
What if we just end up back at that fucking party?

He shrugs.

Janet studies his big, open face.

JANET (CONT'D)
I guess you're right.

MARISA
Somewhere new.

AT THE BAR

The waitress admires the bartender as he pours a pair of shots.

He hands her one with a slice of lime.

BARTENDER
To the bar at the end of the universe.

The waitress lifts her glass, then turns as she raises it to her lips.

Drops the shot glass.

WAITRESS
No! Stop!

JANET AND MARISA STAND AT THE EDGE OF THE ROOF.

The waitress runs for them, arms outstretched.

They step off into space.

FALLING...

FALLING...

Marisa wraps his arms around her, kisses her.

MARISA
Fucking coffee...

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

All is white.

THUMP

THUMP-THUMP

Then a brief moment of silence before a final CRACK.

The top of one of the white human storage units flies open.

Marisa sits up: naked, male, hairless.

The white foam composed of tiny plastic balls vibrates around him like bubble bath in the back of a moving van.

He coughs out a mouthful.

Groggy and unsteady, he climbs out.

Sees the container next to his.

It's closed.

Marisa races over, feels the edge of the container. BANGS on it. PRIES at the lid.

Then like the friendly family dog finally confronted with an attacker, he goes berserk.

Marisa BASHES AT THE LID, KICKS AND SCRABBLES and PUNCHES it. A gash on his palm. Blood smears across the top.

Then... POP.

A HISS of released gas. The top opens.

A sea of that weird white foam. He reaches in.

Pulls out Janet. Naked, hairless, not conscious.

MARISA
Come on. Come on!

He pulls her out onto the cold white floor.

Slaps her on the back.

JANET COUGHS OUT FOAM. Gasps for breath.

MARISA (CONT'D)
Breathe!

JANET
Jesus, Lenny. Stop it!

He clutches her there, holding her to him.

MARISA
We did it.

JANET
It's cold. Give me something.

SECOND LATER

JANET SLIDES INTO A PULLOVER. MARISA IS ALREADY CLOTHED.

He lifts a blank tablet computer from the nearby nightstand.

MARISA
Hey Dalton!?

JANET
That motherfucker is in trouble with me.

MARISA
We should try to make it to the bridge of the ship.

JANET
Dalton said that's where we should go, but he's also a world class fuckup.

MARISA
I'm not going back to that party again. Come on.

INT. DARK FUTURISTIC HALLWAY - NIGHT

A faint trail of green lights curve into darkness.

A door slides open. Light floods a beige and white hallway.

Janet peeks out.

This time Marisa strides out, unafraid, holding the blank but glowing tablet computer ahead of him like a lantern.

MARISA
Let's go.

Janet follows after, much less sure of herself.

JANET
Okay...

MARISA
We'd better hurry.

JANET
You didn't see those one-sheets with the space zombies.

MARISA
What?

JANET
I jumped off a roof with you. I'm not going to be afraid of an empty hallway. Come on.

INT. CAFETERIA - SPACESHIP

As Marisa and Janet enter this large room, it lights up.

Looks like a fancy high-school cafeteria.

On one blank wall a huge smiling EMOTICON appears.

CAFETERIA
Hi there! Welcome to the cafeteria! Are ya feelin' hungry?

A little dumbfounded, Marisa and Janet look around.

It's a little too friendly, almost creepy.

CAFETERIA (CONT'D)
I sense you've been asleep for quite a while. You need something solid in your stomach. Maybe you'd like a nice Belgian waffle with strawberries? They're not real strawberries, but I'll bet you can't tell the difference!

MARISA
We need to get to the bridge.

The emoticon stops smiling.

CAFETERIA
You don't want anything to eat?

MARISA
I heard there was an elevator to the bridge?

CAFETERIA
Well, yes...

The emoticon looks left.

A pair of double doors slide open revealing an elevator.

Janet and Marisa go to it.

CAFETERIA (CONT'D)
Maybe you'd like a snack to take with you? We've got a fine selection of protein-rich...

The doors close.

The emoticon registers sadness.

INT. SPACESHIP ELEVATOR

It's just a small white room. Wearing the white clothes that had been on their night tables, Marisa and Janet hold hands.

JANET
It's moving, right?

MARISA
If the doors open and we're back at that party, then I know we've died and gone to hell.

Then the interior of the elevator begins to glow.

A WOMAN'S FACE APPEARS ON THE WALL: Old, smart, wise, powerful.

She isn't happy. But she looks very shrewd.

It's Janet's friend, DEBS.

DEBS
I see we have visitors.

MARISA
Are you the... Spaceship?

DEBS
Yes, I suppose you could say that.

JANET
Debs?

Janet has been quiet since Marisa pulled her from the storage unit. But the old anger comes to her face again.

JANET (CONT'D)
Why have you been fucking with us!?

A look of sympathy on the woman's face.

DEBS
Fucking with you? Is that what it feels like?

MARISA
Maybe you could explain what's been happening?

DEBS
Believe it or not, your welfare is all that matters to me. It's everything there is. Come...

She disappears.

JANET
Have you noticed how everyone tells us how important we are, right before they fuck us over?

INT. BRIDGE - SPACESHIP

It's the same room we saw in the clip that Dalton played for them in the hotel room. A curve of consoles. A central area with a 3D projection.

The head of Debs floats there now, like the great and powerful OZ.

Marisa and Janet, still holding hands, exit the elevator. Slowly, they approach her. Side by side.

They look angst-ridden, hungry. They've seen too much.

DEBS
I see what's happened now. It was that Dalton, wasn't it? The one in your room.

A FLASH and the floating head is replaced with the same woman, now sitting in an easy chair.

She gestures to a blank wall nearby and a projection of WILSHIRE BOULEVARD appears.

DEBS (CONT'D)
Dalton! I know you can hear me. Make yourself known right now, or I will go through this code line by line until I find you. Then I will program new ways for you to suffer that you can not even imagine.

Silence...

DEBS (CONT'D)
On the count of three. One.

DALTON
Oh... Well, I... I didn't realize you were talking to, to me... Of course. Of course I am present... Hi?

On the projection, Dalton steps into view. Waves.

DEBS
Come here.

Then Dalton steps through. INTO THE ROOM.

DEBS (CONT'D)
You've caused quite a lot of trouble, little program.

DALTON
Just trying to be helpful, really. Bit of confusion as to how best to implement that impulse, I will admit. Minor errors. Perhaps larger ones...

He tentatively comes forward.

There's a railing around the central projection area. Janet grabs onto it, leaning forward. She's furious.

JANET
He's the one who saved us. Why have you been keeping us asleep? Why are you hiding who we really are?! Obviously none of this is real either?!

DEBS
(to Dalton)
You, don't go anywhere.

Marisa and Janet are more angry than afraid. But a little of both.

Debs stands, her chair disappears.

DEBS (CONT'D)
I suppose I should make a clean slate of it.

She gestures, and projections of the others appear on the walls around them:

Guillaume, Rena, Tweety, Tailor... The other members of the crew.

They seem shocked. Uncertain.

DEBS (CONT'D)
Welcome, all of you. Don't be alarmed. I've paused your lives. But yes, Janet, this room is also a simulation. Would you like to see where you've actually been living these last few years?

A FLASH

...and they are surrounded by a twisted, airless mass of metal and plastic.

The destroyed husk of a space ship.

DEBS (CONT'D)
Of course it didn't start out that way.

As she speaks, they are surrounded by a projection of the events she describes:

The spaceship leaving orbit. The happy crew.

DEBS (CONT'D)
We left Earth full of excitement. And reached one quarter light speed after about twelve years.

The seven crew members climbing into their white containers.

DEBS (CONT'D)
At that point the engines were momentarily shut down. And for just a nanosecond our shields went down as well. And we hit... Something. No bigger than a snowflake probably. But at one quarter light speed...

THE SHIP IS IMMOLATED.

A BLAZE OF PRIMAL ENERGY.

PEOPLE, METAL, GLASS, ALL VAPORIZING IN AN INSTANT

DEBS (CONT'D)
The colonists were all destroyed. Most of the ship as well. All your backed up memories. Almost everything but the stored bodies of the crew, you all, your life support, and the small fusion engine that provides electricity. And me.

THE WHITE ROOM CONTAINING THEIR STORAGE CONTAINERS IS TORN

OPEN TO SPACE, BUT ESSENTIALLY INTACT.

THE REST OF THE SHIP IS A TRACERY OF MELTED, POROUS METAL & DEBRIS.

DEBS (CONT'D)
I couldn't just let you die. So I wrote a simulation to mimic the operation of the ship, and this Dalton to look over you. And of course the simulations you were in. I wrote those.

JANET
Why didn't you wake us up and tell us what happened!?

DEBS
What could I say? There isn't anywhere for you to go. You can't live in the remains of this ship. There's no where for you to be but storage.

JANET
So you just cycle us through these artificial lives?

DEBS
They're real to you... I'm very good at it, you know.

Marisa wraps an arm around Janet, pulling her close.

MARISA
Will we ever get to Arcturus?

DEBS
Oh, I'm afraid we passed that planet quite a long time ago. That's why your Dalton reset. I forgot his internal clock only has enough memory for 30 thousand years or so.

MARISA
We've been asleep for 30 thousand years?!

JANET
Can't anyone save us?

DEBS
Dear, we are essentially a bullet shooting through empty space. No one knows where we are and could do nothing to help us if they did.

The old woman waves her arms. They're surrounded by the bridge of the ship once more.

She stands among them.

The other crew members step onto the bridge from their simulations. Shocked and silent.

MARISA
How much time do we have left?

DEBS
It doesn't take much power to run life support. We should last quite a while. I would say roughly, two or three... Hundred... Million... Years. Give or take.

JANET
An eternity.

DALTON
Technically, no.

Debs glowers at Dalton and he shuts up.

JANET
I'd rather be dead.

DEBS
Well that's the one thing I can't offer you, I'm afraid.

JANET
Why not?!

DEBS
It's not in my code. I couldn't let you die even if I wanted to. And I don't want to. You all, your welfare, is the only thing that matters. I would go insane if I didn't have you to care for.

DALTON
Exactly how I feel!

Janet looks between the two of them.

JANET
We're doomed.

Marisa grabs her by the shoulders.

MARISA
We're not doomed; we're in love!

JANET
Okay, sure.

MARISA
I'm not going to let you go now.

JANET
But... What do we do?!

MARISA
What did we ever do? How is this any different? Life has always been about how to kill time. The time you've been given. We thought it was 80 or 90 years. But now it's millions. Don't you see how that's a good thing!?

The old woman comes closer, a look of compassion on her face.

DEBS
That's probably the best way to look at it.

JANET
I'm not going back to that shitty job. It already felt like 3oo million years and I just started.

DEBS
You know you would get very bored of endless luxury. Where would you rather be?

Well that's a question.

JANET
Forever...?

Janet looks at the rest of them, silently grappling with the horror of near-endless existence.

JANET (CONT'D)
Something new, I guess. Somewhere he and I can do new things.

MARISA
Could you simulate an entire planet?

Debs pauses a moment.

DEBS
A new planet. Well. That would be a challenge worth undertaking.

MARISA
I want to see Arcturus.

Debs looks at the rest of the crew, who have come closer to hear her speak.

They stand, confused and unsure, looking for hope perhaps.

DEBS
Well. Then I suppose the only question left would be to ask each of you...

MARISA
If we want to go there?

DEBS
Do you want to know? Or not?

Janet and Marisa.

Unsure.

EXT. SHUTTLE - ARCTURUS - MORNING

Mist whips against a space shuttle the size and general shape of a school bus.

It breaks through heavy cloud cover.

To a beautiful blue-green planet. Near the coastline.

THE BEACH

A massive tidal wetland. Sunlight glints off wet sand.

The shuttle lands.

Jungle surrounding. Beautiful waves. Small brightly colored animals flit from tree to tree.

THE AIRLOCK

A HISS OF GAS

Seven space suited figures exit.

They creep down the gang plank.

One of them touches the wet sand.

Another one opens her helmet.

It's Janet.

JANET
We already know it's safe to breathe. And it's not like we have a choice. Fuck the regulations.

She looks around, snorts with derision.

JANET (CONT'D)
Oh, come on. Really?

One by one, the others do the same.

Marisa comes over to stand beside her.

MARISA
You know I'm going to have to report you.

JANET
Go for it, asshat.

Another figure opens his helmet.

It's Dalton.

He takes a deep breath.

DALTON
The most beautiful place I've ever seen.

MARISA
It really is.

DALTON
Imagine how jealous everyone is right now, back on Earth.

MARISA
They've got their sims. They don't care.

JANET
And we've got an entire planet to defile! Come on!

She runs off along the wet sand.

And then Marisa follows after.

Dalton looks up into the wispy cloud cover and sees a shooting star arc across the sky.

DALTON
Thank you. Very much. Quite kind of you actually, considering...

And he walks off down the beach, marvelling at the beauty of the day.