

THE ABSOLUTE, PART 2

an Original Show Series, Screenplay by
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FLASHBACK - EXT. METROPOLITAN CITY ALLEY - MORNING

Text on screen: 6 Years Prior To The Life Ascension Program

Through the obstruction of heavy rain and a thick gloomy overcast, an estranged HOMELESS MAN is sat alone - visible in the distance of a disease-ridden alleyway. He painfully hunches forward on his knees to hack blood through his mangy beard and into his soiled hands. He looks up exhaustedly from his painfully clutched fingers and into a set of high beam headlights.

A single black SUV rolls slowly through the narrow alley pathway in his direction, with an abundance of wintry-air condensation trailing from the exhaust tail-pipes.

-Illuminated by the vehicle's brake light, a man exits the rear door in the anonymity of the red omni-glow. His long draped wool coat is kept perfectly dry from the umbrella propped up above his head - held in place by another well-dressed man standing at the open passenger side door in front of him.

The two men approach the Homeless Man, basking in the warmth of the vehicle's headlights, and stop abruptly at the edge of a tattered scrap of carpet beneath his bended knees. The man under the umbrella removes his wool coat and lays it gently over the Homeless Man's shoulders. After meticulously distributing the jacket's coverage, he helps guide the hand holding the umbrella above him - toward the direction of the grounded indigent man.

The Homeless Man looks up to make eye contact with the two men, now standing in the downpour above him. He wipes the water from his eyes to reveal DR. ROGERS and JOE in his gaze.

Dr. Rogers removes his hand from the gifted coat and slowly backs away, as Joe continues to uncomfortably hold the umbrella over the destitute transient.

Dr. Rogers speaks loudly over the rainfall.

DR. ROGERS

We can continue to help you. You're obviously a very sick man. All you would have to do is ask. Right here. Right now.

-MAYA watches tensley from the driver's seat of the vehicle's interior.

Dr. Rogers extends his gloved hand outwards. The Homeless Man labors to extend his arm to a handshake and manages to weakly squeeze only a few fingers of Dr. Rogers's grip.

Dr. Rogers nods to a straight faced Joe, who adjusts a small camera awkwardly secured under his open jacket. He covertly points it in the direction of the Homeless Man.

The red brake-lights release and the vehicle drives away into the distant alleyway. All that remains is an empty soaked piece of carpet with a somewhat clean outlined patch of fabric where the Homeless Man was previously seated.

-Text on black screen: The Absonite, PART TWO: The Program

CUT TO:

INT. SPRINTER VAN - MORNING

A beam of morning light is filtered through a small opening between the solid barrier separating the driver's cab from the darkened cargo area of the vehicle - where Tren and Pep are seated. The sliver of light slowly moves across Tren's face and over his closed eye-lid. His eye flutters to a slow open.

Tren awakens to hear an unusual audible mixture of whispers and moving vehicle ambiance around him. He slowly turns toward PEP, who is seated a body length away at his side.

The WHISPERS abruptly subside.

Pep, skittishly looks towards Tren, out of the corner of his blood shot eyes, and then quickly back down to his extended frail arm.

PEP

How is that possible? That you slept... through the entire night.

Tren looks down at Pep's arms. Pep is busied, frantically filling in open skin areas with a ballpoint pen. His arms are nearly fully covered from top to bottom with fresh ink scribbles.

TREN

Looks like you found what you were looking for.

Pep's pen movement stops. He subtly lifts his pen from the surface of his skin to examine it briefly.

PEP

Yah. I... do this. Ever since I can remember I've had to.

Pep regains his obsessive focus and continues to draw.

TREN

It's a pretty cool nervous tic if you ask me.

PEP

There's nothing cool about this. If I can't physically find somewhere to bury my head and hide, this is the next best thing, so...

Pep unexpectedly chuckles and turns to Tren to gauge his reaction in a brief moment of vulnerability. Tren grins back.

TREN

Every artist has their own creative process, I get it. Trust me, I know all too well.

PEP

I'm not an artist. Not like you. I know who you are. I do this so I don't have to make eye contact or think... or show how nauseous I feel or how awkward I am.

Pep quickly shifts to a serious expression.

PEP (CONT'D)

I shouldn't even be here. I didn't even pass the test. I... died.

Tren looks to Pep with a puzzled expression.

TREN

Oh, in the VR sim? That was just some buggy psych eval test. You know they put more data points into how you react over your performance anyway. So, I wouldn't worry about it.

Tren softens his demeanor and leans closer to Pep.

TREN (CONT'D)

You technically got farther than I did. I was pulled out mid-run after the protestor crash, so...

Pep cracks a brief smile before forfeiting to his anxiety.

PEP

We both failed. But here we are. That's what freaks me out... with all this. You know, I don't even...

(MORE)

PEP (CONT'D)
(interrupted)

-There are a series of fisted pounds on the metal barrier shielding the driver's cab from Tren and Pep.

The van SQUEALS to a dead stop.

PEP (CONT'D)
Oh shit, oh shit. I think they know
we're not supposed to be here.

Tren unfastens his seat belt to sit up with a heightened alertness.

PEP (CONT'D)
Tren, what are you doing?

Muffled vocals approach on the exterior of the vehicle. The door CLICK unlocks from the outside.

PEP (CONT'D)
Tren?

Tren quickly CLICKS Pep's seatbelt-release at his hip.

-An audible sliding door is heard while WHITE fills the frame.

CUT TO:

EXT. FACILITY - DAY

Fade in from White: Tren and Pep stand disoriented on a small stretch of road overexposed by an overpowering sunlight. They are positioned between the exterior of the open van door and a long circular tunnel within a few strides.

A formation of uniformed guards seal the remaining openings at the sides with their upright bodies. An authoritative male guard, Security Personnel 5, steps forward and gestures with a nod toward the interior of the tunneled hallway.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 5
Just follow it to the end. Don't
ask any questions.

Security Personnel 5, looks concernedly to Pep, who is staring motionlessly down the barrel of the pavement beneath him.

TREN
Pep? Hey.

Tren struggles to see through his glaring squint.

PEP
I want to go back. Tren, I need to go.

The guards synchronously creep one step closer - inward. Tren takes notice and approaches Pep. Tren looks to the washed out figures surrounding them and lunges carelessly into Pep.

TREN
We're here, Pep. There's an entrance in. Just look. Right at the end of that tunnel. It's right there.

Tren puts his hand on Pep's shoulder and helps encourage a momentum in their pace toward the entrance.

Tren speaks softly to Pep.

TREN (CONT'D)
Don't forget we signed up for this.
We qualified, didn't we? They don't know any different.

Security Personnel 5 raises his hand to the interior of the tunnel.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 5
All the way to the end. There's a door. They know you've arrived.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL HALLWAY

Eerie score music.

Tren and Pep cautiously walk deeper into the long circular tunnel; lit scarcely by the diminishing daylight at the perimeter entrance behind them - where the handful of guards remain at post.

Pep continues to watch his foot steps, while skittishly peeking up with his widened eyes to affirm the close proximity between himself and Tren.

Pep stops abruptly in his awkward shuffle.

PEP
Tren stop. I can't. I can't physically move my legs. This is more than just a mental thing, ok?

Pep's frustration turns to a saddened surrender.

PEP (CONT'D)
 I appreciate what you're trying to
 do, but... I'm another kind of weird.

Pep hunches over to take a long deep breath.

TREN
 (speaking Japanese)
 Hitotsu.
 (translated: One)

Tren stands straight faced across from Pep. Pep rises up slightly to discover a new seriousness on Tren's face.

PEP
 What?

TREN
 Breathe again. As deep as you can
 this time.

Pep falls back into his hunched over posture and controls his rapid breathing long enough to inhale heavy.

TREN (CONT'D)
 Futatsu... two. It's Japanese. My
 mother.... would count with me; each
 painful breath to ten after a
 nightmare.

Pep tilts his head up slightly to double take at Tren.

TREN (CONT'D)
 I still do this everyday of my life.
 I understand more about what you're
 experiencing than you think, Pep.

Pep stands upright, looks to Tren dumbfounded, and steps forward. Tren matches his step motion moving backwards - keeping his gaze locked deeply into Pep's glassy eyes.

TREN (CONT'D)
 Breathe. Mittsu. Three.

Pep moves forward, lost in the hypnotic trance of Tren's stare down. His slow inhale and exhale ECHOS through the tunnel, overwhelming the frenzied ambiance around him.

TREN (CONT'D)
 Yottsu.
 (translated: Four)

Pep's stride lengthens as he continues to confidently traverse down the length of the dark tunnel.

TREN (CONT'D)
Kokonotsu. Nine.

Pep breaks his gaze.

PEP
Nine?

Tren notices a newfound disbelief in Pep's stare, targeted behind him. Tren stops and slowly turns around to discover the closed metallic door within arms reach.

-An electronic BUZZ alerts and triggers an unlock mechanism in the door's lockset. The door hinges slightly open.

INT. SCREENING ROOM

Tren cautiously pushes the door ajar from the exterior and studies the landscape of the unusually vast room. An expanse of towering concrete panels, constructed to frame a barren-like chamber on all but one side, of which looms in the foreground as Tren and Pep edge closer. The entire surface area of that approaching wall is covered in a single seamless mirrored glass; that appears to display the room's infinite backdrop of encompassing desolation around their minuscule reflections.

A deep Instructional Vocal cadence reverberates around them.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)
Please step forward to the designated area.

Pep's eyes widen with restlessness until he meets Tren's calm gesture, signaling with his eyes to an area on the concrete floor's proceeding steps ahead. Both Tren and Pep stop on a long strip of white tape below their final step and stare forward at the reflection of themselves in the mirrored glass.

A finger presses into a console-button on the opposing side of the two-way surfaced barrier. A low 40hz frequency TONE is added to the ambiance of Pep's hard breathing.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (CONT'D)
Please state your full name; beginning with your middle initial, first then last designation.

Pep nervously opens his mouth to motion a dialect and fails. He clears his throat to uncomfortably project a vocal response, but Tren interrupts.

TREN

We're willing to comply with the requests because we've obviously chosen to be here.

Tren tries to peer through the reflective glass.

TREN (CONT'D)

However, the nature of this interrogation or whatever this is... is a bit intrusive for my friend...

Pep interrupts with a clear projected vocal.

PEP

Josh... Pepinski. No middle name.

Pep looks to Tren with an unusual sullen gratitude.

The Console Operator's mouth presses tightly against a minimalistic microphone protruding from a digital control board below.

-The Console Operator's vocal does not have the deep reverberated effect on his side of the glass.

CONSOLE OPERATOR

Sir, please state your name.

A lineup of lab coat technicians stand in single-file row behind the Console Operator. Amongst them is MAYA, watching Tren and Pep attentively.

-Tren's slightly truncated vocal feed is patched in through the speakers in the room.

TREN

Middle initial A. Tren Kasai.

LAB COAT TECHNICIAN 1, a stern middle aged woman, looks perplexed at the display on her digital device; held extended in front of her reach.

LAB COAT TECHNICIAN 1

We have a confirmed DNA record's match and signed Life Ascension contract on file for both. However, their testing results are showing up now as inconclusive.

The lab coat technicians turn toward Maya. She breaks her concentration to uncomfortably pontificate.

MAYA

What? That can't be accurate. Why are they here?

CONSOLE OPERATOR

We should continue to administer the dread test. They'll have to pass it regardless.

Maya begins to bite at her index finger.

CONSOLE OPERATOR (CONT'D)

They signed the contract. There's consent.

Maya watches both Tren and Pep nervously through the glass.

MAYA

You know it's more complicated than that. Damnit. Why were they brought all the way here without a cleared evaluation?

(hard pause)

Just do it.

The Console Operator carefully drags his index finger across the console. Tren looks looks to the walls at each side to notice a set of sliding vent panel thatches - quickly shift open.

From the operator's side of the glass, a billow of smoke expands from the vent openings and blankets the two boys. The thick vapor clouds appear to pronounce thousands of particles, hovering around both Tren and Pep, as if there were molecular fragments visibly emanating from their bodies.

Tren looks suspiciously around the room, however there are no signs of vapor or any noticeable visual changes. A deep Instructional Vocal reverberates around them.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)

Mr. Pepinski, are you aware that the intention of this program is to condition your mind to process knowing when the final day of your life will transpire?

Pep stares straight ahead, blankly into his own reflection. He reaches blindly to his side and down into his pant pocket to grip the top of his pen.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (CONT'D)

And obtaining conscious knowledge of this time code, can and has resulted
(MORE)

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (CONT'D)
in unstudied cognitive and behavioral
defects.

The ballpoint tip presses violently into Pep's shaking clutched hand.

On the Console Operator's side of the glass, Pep's particle clusters begin to pulsate chaotically around his body. The Console Operator closely observes the abnormalities through the glass and looks back peculiarly at Maya.

CONSOLE OPERATOR
I didn't even press him, yet. His atomic emissions are... intense.

Tren notices Pep stiffen and cheats closer. A deep Instructional Vocal cadence reverberates around them.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)
Mr. Pepinski, we are noticing high levels of epinephrine. The invasive procedure you'll have to undergo could potentially result in...

The Console Operator looks warily into the glass.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Fatality, if there is a consistent neural chemical response of this magnitude.

The white color properties of the molecular particles begin to shade shift into gradually darkening tones.

CONSOLE OPERATOR
His fear response is completely altering his electromagnetic energy projections...

MAYA
Stop. Stop the test, now!

Maya backs away from the lineup of technicians.

The Console Operator slides his index finger back across the board. The vents close shut and the volume of the 40hz frequency TONE increases.

TREN
Pep? Let us out of here. What is this?

Pep begins to fight against quick bursts of unconsciousness and stumbles to restabilize.

His POV becomes blurred as he lowers to the ground. He looks up desperately to the ceiling to gasp for air; however, his vision is obstructed by Maya's indiscernible silhouette - filling the frame above him. The moment dramatically slows as she embraces his fall and coddles him securely in her arms.

Mayas muffled vocal is indiscernible. Pep's eyes close to a black frame.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. HOLDING ROOM

Pep regains consciousness. His head is laid flattened and motionless - while his eyes dart from side to side to survey the area around him. His chaotic scan stops sharp, precision targeted off-frame to his side.

MAYA

Hello, Mr. Pepinski.

Maya's hand is extended outward, holding Pep's pen, at the side of a bottom bunk mattress. Pep cautiously removes the pen from Maya's soft grip.

Pep bashfully responds.

PEP

Thank you.

MAYA

I'm Maya, Life Ascension's program director and... mother, as I'm told by the other members here. Which is why I'm so very sorry our introduction had to be under these circumstances.

Pep shamefully looks away.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Please don't be frightened, Pep. Understand that you are a guest here at the facility by choice. There's a clause in the contract that states that you can terminate and leave at any anytime, with respect to the confidentiality agreement. We currently have you in a temporary holding room, only for the night, with Tren...

Pep lifts his head to scout the quaint minimalistic concrete room and is elated to discover Tren standing at the rear with a familiar grin.

MAYA (CONT'D)

...And first thing tomorrow morning,
we can reassess. Let's thoroughly
brief before we integrate you both
into the program community here, ok?
If that's still something you're
interested in.

Maya turns back and softly nods to Tren, who is standing next to the room's single door; open to a darkened concrete hallway.

An attractive twenty-something woman, BELLA - dressed in a form-fitted grey jumpsuit, walks by the door and playfully enters. She is cradling a stack of similarly colored - folded clothing items.

BELLA

Hello, Maya.

Bella carefully acknowledges the presence of Tren and Pep.

BELLA (CONT'D)

If it means anything, just know all
of us members sympathize. The night
after the dread test is not an easy
sleep.

Maya quickly stands from Pep's bedside and walks toward Bella. Maya's demeanor becomes a bit more reserved as she quickly interjects.

MAYA

Another unnecessary precaution. You
already know how I feel about all
this.

Maya relays the folded clothing articles from Bella and hurriedly accompanies her to the exit.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Thank you, Bella. I'll catch up
honey, ok?

Bella glances back to catch Tren watching Maya with an unusual curiosity - as she ponders momentarily with an open disdain.

Maya, oddly distracted, displays the clothing meticulously inside of a minimal cubbyhole enclosure. She presses the material creases obsessively with her hand before shooting into a quick gear shift.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Our amenities I'm confident will impress and more than make up for our inability to create the right impression for the work we're doing here. There are certain...

Tren interrupts.

TREN

So we'll be cut off from the outside world... completely? In here. All communication. Everything? That's what all this is for, isn't it?

Tren looks around the room. Maya turns back to the interior of the room and lingers gently in the doorframe.

MAYA

What we're doing here is...

(long pause)

It requires an extensive initiative to create safeguards for everyone involved...

Tren interrupts.

TREN

So, that's a yes? Good. That's good.

Tren lightly taps the soft side of his balled-up fist against the hard concrete wall at his side. He contentedly reexamines the interior perimeter of the room and stops to find a preoccupied Pep. Staring oddly at his motionless pen, held suspended above his open forearm with a newfound sense of asylum in his calmed eyes.

Maya attempts to articulate a response, but is strangely perplexed by the shift in Tren and Pep's shared demeanor.

She admires them fondly in this moment of realization and discreetly closes the door behind herself. She stands contemplatively on the exterior of the room, pressed up against the backside of the door with a hopeful expression.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL WAREHOUSE

A transparent tube continues to fog up and quickly release, en route to a clouded oxygen mask covering a heavily bearded face. The pumping sounds of an oxygen machine are diluted by the high-heels heard walking closer, over the concrete surface, from afar.

The footsteps suddenly stop and a hand reaches into frame - to gently lower the man's mask below his mouth.

Maya, dressed in a yellow protective coverall - insulated suit, looks down at the semi-coherent Homeless Man with an unusual compassion.

MAYA

You're awake. Can you tell me how you're feeling today? Or nod as usual.

The Homeless Man smiles and nods.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I assume that you're aware... that you are indeed a very sick man, Isaac.

Maya looks down at a digital chart, accompanied with the identification profile of ISACC BENSON.

MAYA (CONT'D)

There were no other forms of contact information, outside of your old address, in your possessions. Do you have family sir? That we can contact for you?

Isaac, painfully moves his head from side to side. Maya softly smiles to comfort Isaac.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Isaac. I'm very sorry to have to inform you. But your condition is quite severe, in the context of... expectancy.

Isaac slowly moves his hand over his chest to signal a painful squint with his eyes. Maya sadly nods.

She lowers her voice to a more intimate vocal cadence.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, Isaac. We only have about a week before the equipment that you're body is relying on... well. It will no longer be able to service you in the same way. Maybe even sooner...

Maya looks down at her digital clipboard. She swipes over a transcoded date readout to reveal an active digital countdown time-code.

MAYA (CONT'D)
...4 hours, 26 minutes and...

She looks back up at Isaac, as his eyes struggle to remain open. Maya's eyes begin to glaze over. With an apparent sadness in her expression, she approaches Isaac and pulls his oxygen mask back up to cover his face.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Sleep well, Isaac.

Maya looks out, through her tears, into the distance of the vast warehouse behind her. There are hundreds of sick patients displayed in rows of stretcher-like beds, with portable life-support machines and erroneous medical equipment stacked on top of old wooden crates beside them.

A symphony of machine beeps ECHO disjointedly throughout the drab and windowless warehouse.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING ROOM

An omni blue light, previously a bright white, now traces the perimeter of the room's obscure atmosphere. Metal scratching sounds disrupt the muted ambiance of the top bunk, where Tren is lain fast asleep.

A pen tip continues to carve deep into the painted framework of the bed. Pep, with one hand extended above him, uninterruptedly wipes the paint shavings from his face with the opposing hand. Pep proudly admires the Sistine chapel equivalent of abstract sketches that are freshly etched into the bed's support beams above him.

Pep passionately pushes his pen deeper into the paint to discover the likes of an unusual set of preexisting grooves. He determinately chips away to reveal a series of handwritten letter divots, concealed beneath a thick layer of filler.

His efforts to discern the mysterious markings, will come to reveal the three words engraved in the metal frame: FOLLOW THE VENT

Pep glares upward, with his face nearly covered in paint shavings, and slowly mouths the three words to himself.

Pep is startled by a CLICK aloud, accompanied by a swift switch in the room lighting - from the blue omni glow to the white ceiling perimeter backlights. Pep quickly turns to dump the piles of paint trimmings, coating his face and body, onto the floor and under the bunk.

A KNOCK on the door forces Pep to resume the likes of an exaggerated sleeping position.

An authoritative figure, SECURITY PERSONNEL 6, pushes the door open from the hallway and stands in the doorframe.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 6

Good morning gentlemen. Maya has requested to see you both, so as soon as you change out I'll escort you to...

(interrupted)

Give me a moment.

A vocal signal breaches the radio on the Security Personnel's shoulder mount. His attention diverts to the seriousness of the OPERATOR DISPATCH instructions.

OPERATOR DISPATCH

One - Adam - Twelve Dispatch. West wing emergency code 419. I repeat code 419 for security personnel on the west wing. Please respond.

Security Personnel 6 backs away from the door opening and provides fleeting instructions while in motion.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 6

Just work your way to the atrium in this direction. Double time. Just beyond the room blocks you'll find the labs. Find Maya.

Pep's wide eyes linger toward the empty open doorway and into the hallway. Tren lunges over the side of the top bunk and hangs suspended - facing Pep nearly upside-down.

TREN

You're gonna need a new pen, huh?

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - HALLWAY

Tren and Pep walk attentively down a long stretch of darkened hallway - obscured by the muted concrete walls and weak glow emanating from the light panels strewn above.

Pep paces forward, staring holes in the floor, until he's distracted by a ventilation plate. He is soon to discover that it's connected to a large cylindrical pipe shaft above.

Pep begins to prowl quick glances upward to follow it's trail, concealing his actions from Tren, at his side.

TREN

I can bare the fact that we've been lost in this hallway for a minute, but fabric that doesn't conform to the body well is just too much, Pep.

Tren uncomfortably plucks at the clothing material at the mid-section of his grey jumpsuit uniform.

PEP

What do you mean we're lost? He said this was the direction.

Tren stops to peer back down the hallway behind them.

TREN

Here look. There are security cameras every meter or so. They all monitor the hallway. Except this one, oddly.

Pep notices that the position of the camera is pointed directly across the hall.

TREN (CONT'D)

I noticed when we passed it the first time. It's the only one that's angled inward toward...

He follows the line of the lens to a closing door that jolt startles Pep. A figure stands in the immediate hallway - directly beside them.

The figure walks forward into the overhead light to showcase a set of gentle eyes. THE COUNSELOR is revealed, a tall middle-aged; clean cut Indian man - dressed in a minimalist multi-layered asymmetrical grey tunic. A modernized hybrid attire between a science professional and clergyman.

Pep is surprisingly calm in the radiance of The Counselor's presence.

PEP

I think we're... lost.

THE COUNSELOR

(Indian Accent)

And look what you have found. It is an ironic habit of human beings to run faster when we have lost our way.

The Counselor looks to Tren with a convicted compassion.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

But it is our nature to be lost you
see? It is when we are no longer
searching, that we can be can
discovered.

The Counselor cue's his last line to end on an inquisitive
glance at Pep.

PEP

Discover... me? Oh, I'm Josh. I go
by Pep though. My last name is
Pepinski. It's the first part of
that... name. The last name. Just
Pep.

Pep bashfully rescinds his overcompensation. The Counselor
smiles and extends his open hand to a soft handshake.

THE COUNSELOR

That is a perfect name, Pep. There
is a nickname they use for me as
well, ya know? They call me the
Counselor. Isn't that a fun name?
I enjoy it very much.

Tren observes The Counselor with a peculiar expression.

The Counselor looks over to lock eyes with Tren and slowly
approaches him without a single blink or hesitance. He stands
before Tren, engaged in a deep stare, locked behind Tren's
eyes for an unusual period of time.

TREN

It's Tren.

The Counselor continues his uninterrupted stare.

TREN (CONT'D)

What are you...? What happened to
your "searching leads to dead ends"
mantra?

Tren breaks his stare and nervously shifts his eyes to shy
away from his projected confidence. The Counselor hesitates
to respond and then bursts into an unexpected laughter.

THE COUNSELOR

Yes. Tren. I'm sorry... this is a
great joke you have said. Both wise
and fun.

The Counselor extends his hand outward to Tren. Tren slowly
reaches to a handshake.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Thank you for making me laugh.

The Counselor looks to Tren with a serendipitous compassion.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Such a pleasure to have you join us.

The Counselor leads the way with his extended hand.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Perhaps a shortcut through the maze?
Shall we?

The Counselor joyously walks ahead laughing to himself.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
That was a good laugh. My mantra,
yes.

Tren and Pep trail behind with an awkward skepticism.

-The Counselor, Tren and Pep are shown from a topical perspective of the facility as they progress deep within the maze-like intricacies of a near infinite span of concrete corridors and tributary passageways.

The concrete hallway begins to swell as they approach an oversized opaque glass sliding door; glorious in it's vertical height and glowing from the backlit interior.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
For me... if there was a life blood
at the heart of these cold walls...

The Counselor slides the door open.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - ECO GARDEN

The Counselor, Tren and Pep stare up into the surrounding abyss of colossal LED simulated sunlight panels. There are hundreds of them seamlessly interconnected across the circumference of a domed green house infrastructure, overrun by veins of vine-like vegetation.

As they continue to walk into the first tier of the immense horizontal multi-tiered floor-plan, the Counselor is greeted by the friendly eyes and warm smiles of admiring program members. Each tending to their casual horticulture routines. The members are uniformly dressed in identical grey jumpsuits, with the only visual discrepancy being that of variously colored arm bands - wrapped at the sleeve. Pep reaffirms this revelation by checking his band-less sleeve.

Both Tren and Pep continue to trail behind The Counselor in bewilderment. They are unwillingly drawn to the contagious energy of the inquisitive onlookers and reciprocate a polite smile of acknowledgment.

TREN

What is all this? Is this... all part of the experiment? Some kind of sustainable community?

The Counselor resumes his gleeful laugh.

THE COUNSELOR

Every member here is an integral and interconnected part of something, yes. But, there is a means to an end. Please excuse the pun.

The Counselor suddenly stops in a region where there are large populations of self-sustaining plant and tree cultures, unconventionally paired with various high-tech hardwares. He bends to a squat to tenderly uproot a small plant species from the soil below.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

However, it was also important to create another kind of relationship here. Between us and them.

He fatherly cradles the small plant in his arms and speaks into its leaved appendages.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

We must come to rediscover something sacred that has been forgotten over time. Isn't that right my dear friend?

The Counselor slowly rises and looks to his new possession like a proud parent.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

This little one has been here since the beginning of creation, you know? It is the beginning.

The Counselor holds the plant outward from his hip and toward Pep. Pep looks up tentatively and slides his fingers through the plant's delicate foliage.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Tell me what it is that you feel?
What do you hear?

Pep retracts his hand and confusingly contemplates.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
To fulfill the purposes within the
Life Ascension program, we must
listen... closer.

The Counselor confidently reads Tren's blank stare.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
To know the end, you must understand
the beginning, Tren. This is the
answer to your question, but I know
you will require more.

The Counselor holds the plant up to his grin.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
We will show you if you want.

The Counselor, Tren and Pep resume their route through a star-field of suspended atmospheric pressure sensors, hanging from the domed peak above.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
There are other curious bees too,
you know.

The Counselor stops to a button-push on a glass display console, protruding from the back end of a fully-covered floor of topsoil. There is a group of ten people (Group-seven) at the center, seated together in the organic sediment.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
One of my favorite groups in the
program has also been seeking, the
same as you, for those very answers.

-A digital timer, displayed on the console glass, begins to count down from 3:00 minutes.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
What a treat for me, isn't it?

Group Seven is tightly nestled - uniformly seated on their backsides, facing towards an open area toward the front. The Counselor approaches, looking back over his shoulder at Tren and Pep - of whom have both cautiously lingered behind at the outer perimeter of the group.

Pep profiles the gathering, a peer group within reasonably the same age, and immediately lowers his head.

PEP
I'm not good in groups, Tren. Please,
let me know when this high-school
orientation thing is over.

The Counselor sits at the head of the land plot and pushes his exposed toes and fingers into the soil around him, falling deep into a unfamiliar trance.

Tren witnesses the abnormal behavior with a heightened concern.

TREN

I don't think this is going in that direction, Pep.

A member at the front of the seated formation, LACEY, an attractive twenty-something blonde with unusually sensitive eyes, notices Tren and Pep standing awkwardly un-introduced.

Lacey turns back toward The Counselor.

LACEY

Counselor? Are those... new members?

The Counselor is unresponsive. Lacey signals with a raised arm and innocent grin to gain the attention of both Tren and Pep.

She looks back, surprisingly, to discover The Counselor now revived and cheerful.

THE COUNSELOR

Oh, yes. Thank you, Lacey. Look at who I had the opportunity of being lost with today. Group Seven, meet our newest members, Tren and Pep.

The group members flash unevenly timed nods and grins, as Tren and Pep lower to the cleared area alongside Lacey.

Pep busies himself with heavy pen strokes down the side of his exposed forearm.

LACEY

Hi. Sorry about that. That's unlike him. I'm Lacey. I gather this is a Counselor detour?

Tren, seated directly beside Lacey, shrugs playfully.

TREN

We'd still be lost in the halls I think.

LACEY

There's typically a few more steps for joining members. You were supposed to...

TREN

Yah, meet with Maya? At the labs
somewhere at the center of the maze.
That didn't go so well.

Lacey laughs.

LACEY

So from your perspective, your first
impression of the program is sitting
in the dirt? Nice.

Tren wiggles on his backside to position deeper into the soil and shoots off a cool smirk. Lacey is put at ease by the gesture.

THE COUNSELOR

Oh, and another new member. I almost forgot.

The Counselor holds up his newly uprooted plant, over an open hole in the soil, between his extended legs. He is quick to reseal his eyes and tilt his head back.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

I wish for you to simply observe.
What it is that emits from the source
of life that I hold in my hands.

CARTER, a slender twenty-something male - with bleach blonde hair and fully covered arm tattoos under his pulled up sleeves, hurriedly breaks the gap of silence with a punchy response.

CARTER

It's a plant, right? Easy enough.

A SNICKER is heard in the ambiance of the group. Carter reasserts himself confidently, but with an expression that reaffirms a slight uncertainty about his overly obvious answer.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Hold on, let me elaborate. A plant;
with a... long stems and green leave?

Carter looks, with seriousness amongst the group, for sets of eyes to validate his verbal contribution.

Bella looks at Carter to unnerve his unease with a frisky eye roll.

THE COUNSELOR

I meant you must observe without
classifications.

The Counselor opens his eyes to peek a look at Carter in a joking manner.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
However, yes, thank you Carter.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
To label it, will only force you to build a mental image for you to analyze. But, as you think of these concepts, you are subjected only to your mind.

The Counselor inhales deeply.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
To truly observe, you must come to experience it... go beyond "the plant with long stems and green leaves."

The Counselor peaks out from his squinted eyes into the group's curious stares.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Let me show you. Close your eyes with me. Go ahead.

The group members begin to close their eyes. Carter looks around to make sure the consensus is participating before he finally gives in to the request.

Tren looks to Pep, who is wide-eye busied with his artistry, and then to Lacey. He is caught in her eye's gaze, as she willfully closes her eyes with a graceful surrender. Tren is lured in to follow suit and submit to the demonstration.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Now, we must first... listen. Do not try to identify what it is you hear. Just listen.

The console timer alert SIGNALS an audible tone in the distant background.

-The digital console shows a blinking time code: - 0:00

A slight water mist releases from the spray valves of the osmosis hydration system above. The group lets out a collective exhalation as the light precipitation falls through the open air and onto their skin.

A symphony of mystical sounds are created by the dispersion of water droplets.

A macro perspective of water beads fall dramatically through the air and onto the plant's flexible leaves.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Your sense perception will begin to sharpen. Allow these heightened sensitivities to begin to slowly merge with the plant's. Becoming one with it.

The micro sound frequency of these events become audibly discernible to the group.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

You will no longer be an isolated and separated fragment, drifting alone... searching for a way to define this moment. You are this very moment.

The water condensation on the plant is absorbed into the leave's open pores. The sounds are strangely similar to a human swallowing.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

You will begin to feel the connectedness to something that is beyond you. Beyond form.

-A rhythmic swelling is shown on the body of the plant. It sounds of slow breathing - similar to a respiratory response.

-A tear gently falls from the corner of Lacey's closed eye.

-Bella, seated beside Carter, reaches slowly across the soil to place her hand lightly over his.

-Carter scrunches his eyes and digs his hands and bare feet deeper into the loose soil.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

And as the plant absorbs this nourishment, we also will breathe this same abundance of life into our own cellular bodies. Restoring. Healing.

-Other members slowly relax their bodies and lessen muscle control. Heads tilt back free of constraint and the group's breathing appears to be more blissful.

Lacey unexpectedly breaks free from the surreal moment with an unusual concern in her slowly opening eyes.

LACEY
Counselor? Counselor, are you ok?

The Counselor slowly opens his eyes to look across at Lacey's perturbed expression. She lowers her eyes for him to follow.

LACEY (CONT'D)
You're... bleeding. A lot. Are you hurt? It looks really bad.

The Counselor casually comes to notice the bright colored liquid covering the thorned vascular roots in his palmed hands. He lifts his arm upward to study the blood with a bizarre astonishment. His unorthodox expression appears to be that of one similar to experiencing something for the first time.

Lacey comically asserts herself to dismiss the oddity of the Counselor's unusual fixation.

LACEY (CONT'D)
How are you not feeling that? Are there some kind of psychedelic properties on that thing, or...?

The collective concern of the group is quickly shifted into an open laugh. Lacey relaxes her forced smile and turns around to a gentle tap summons from behind. Lacey is met with the conservative unease of ASAMI - a proper and petite Japanese twenty-something girl.

ASAMI
I think we should inform medical.
I'm going to the labs next anyway,
I'll go.

Lacey nods. Asami abruptly stands.

LACEY
Asami, tell Maya that Tren and Pep are with us, ok? I'll get them started.

Asami nods and lightly runs through the soil into the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - ATRIUM

Lacey, Tren and Pep walk into the vastness of the Atrium, the concrete equivalent of a heavily populated mall courtyard.

Lacey gracefully spins around to a slow backwards walk, facing both Tren and Pep.

Of whom are intimidated by the complexity of the facility's city-like subculture.

LACEY

As unconventional as his methods are, The Counselor is everything to Life Ascension. Next to these.

Lacey hands both Tren and Pep a circular glass tablet-device from her shoulder bag.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Here. This makes it official. You were supposed to get these earlier, prior to being weirded out back there, I'm sure. However, this is now your life source into the program.

Lacey winks and holds up her device, mocking the likeness of an exaggerated tour-guide.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Well, it pretty much is your "life" in the program. It monitors and records all the neural data from its paired user; being you of course. So as you progress through, how you respond cognitively and cooperatively to the curriculum, shows them when - ya know? When... you're ready to get the time-code.

PEP

Why cooperatively, again?

Lacey laughs.

LACEY

You'll be surprised at how easy that becomes when you're in here. Things get close, fast. The program is almost designed to ensure it.

Lacey quickly pulls her eyes from Tren and resumes her high spirited choreographed exhibition.

LACEY (CONT'D)

With the only real communication restriction being with that of the outside.

PEP

Yah, I like that part.

TREN

So, nobody here knows where they're at?

LACEY

Nope, not even me. Surprisingly. I've been here the longest. Out of all the other purples.

Lacey proudly plucks the purple arm band on her sleeve.

LACEY (CONT'D)

We are the mentor - phase 4's. Oh, before I forget. We have a saying. When it doubt, look to the tower.

Lacey swings her open arm behind her.

Tren and Pep look out amongst the multitudes of colorful arm bands to locate the 30 foot high, purple coated, cylinder beacon at the center of the member community. The tower is surrounded on all sides by members equipped with the same shade of matching purple arm bands.

LACEY (CONT'D)

So it's pretty obvious the member phases are colored-coded. Another critical program hallmark. You'll learn all about that soon enough.

-The purple mentor group-members are seen assisting lower level members, proudly utilizing their circular tablet as they field inquiries from diversely colored arm banded members.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Alpha Phase 1's are the new sign-ups. The whites. You'll be getting yours later by the way, yay.

Bella, sneaks up from behind, unbeknownst to Lacey. She silently gestures to Tren and Pep, with an index finger pressed to the front of her lips.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Discovery phase 2's are blue, and revelation phase 3's are yellow. Yellow is when you've been cleared to get the procedure. So that's a big deal.

Bella surprise-shocks Lacey, startling her with a friendly squeeze at the waist.

BELLA

That's for not telling them how important Phase 2's are.

LACEY

I was getting to that, Bella bear.

BELLA

So, "blues" get the privilege of working closest with new sign-ups. Since it hasn't been as long for us, being recently whites. It's easier for us to remember how crazy this all was at the beginning.

Bella looks playfully to Tren and Pep.

BELLA (CONT'D)

See, I'll test it out. Ready? So, Tren right? And then Pip?

Pep deflects the attention by looking down.

PEP

Yah, close enough.

BELLA

So when Carter and I came in together, you met him earlier by the way... bleached hair and tats; the first thing we wanted to know...

(dramatic pause)

...Why are there no exits.

Lacey begins to show a slight discomfort as she watches Tren and Pep survey the room's doorless perimeter, clusters of security personnel and unreservedly dispersed surveillance hardware.

BELLA (CONT'D)

See? I told you. I know what you're thinking. Blue's baby!

LACEY

Ok, don't scare off my newbies, please.

Lacey kiddishly bumps into Bella, regaining her walking pace backwards. She lightly glances to Tren and Pep to normalize the mood, but is soon interrupted.

TREN

I understand why.

(MORE)

TREN (CONT'D)

I also understand why there would be security provisions on the outside. But why on the inside?

BELLA

Oh, it's on now.

LACEY

See what you started, Bella?

LACEY (CONT'D)

I think it's pretty obvious there's a clear separation between the program member population and the scientists, right? There are aspects, that even you Bella, will come to learn of... that are actually very deserving of the efforts they've put forth to obscure. For us of course.

They pass by a series of digital holographic sign post directories that lead down color-coded segregated hallways.

BELLA

Fine, I get it. You're brainwashed. But, just know I'm stealing you away from Tren and Pep now. Come on.

Bella pulls at Lacey's waist in the direction of the blue room-blocks. Lacey fights against her force and forfeits to a shared laughter between them.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Bye guys.

LACEY

Ok, wait. So these are the room blocks, by the way. Wait, Bella.

Lacey stops and smiles.

LACEY (CONT'D)

You know how the color system works now, right?

Tren confidently rests his hand on Pep's shoulder.

PEP

The freaked out people have the white arm bands.

Tren peers beyond the crowds to find the WHITE labeled room block hallways. He gestures with an air traffic control hand signal in that direction.

TREN

I think it's safe to assess that we must be in the white block area?

Lacey gestures with a cute grin and thumbs up as Bella resumes to pull on her, by the shoulders, in the opposite direction.

Bella yells out from afar.

BELLA

Unfortunately, you guys aren't at a clearance level to hang yet, but we'll see you at dinner tonight.

LACEY

At the Tree, guys. It's called the Tree on the directory. Don't get lost again.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - ATRIUM, ROOM BLOCK DIRECTORY

Tren approaches a backlit directory listing at the entrance of the colored coded hallways. He moves his finger across the display to locate the digital listing that reads: Kassai, B-107.

Pep looks baffled at the room charts.

TREN

I don't think we're even in the same room. They split us up for some reason. That can't be right.

Tren then pans across the screen to find a listing that reads: Pepinski, W-111.

TREN (CONT'D)

Here is "Pepinski" right here. We can get this changed. I'll just...

Pep interrupts.

PEP

It's ok.

(contemplative pause)

Thank you, Tren.

Tren turns to look at Pep, surprised to notice his extended hand, held frailly out in front of his torso.

TREN

For what?

Tren shakes Pep's hand with an unusual sincerity.

PEP
Underneath the wreckage...

Pep signals with both index fingers to his temples.

PEP (CONT'D)
... Under this. There's just enough operating to know what a good person is. So that's why, thank you.

Tren, off guard, processes Pep's sentiment and smiles with a new degree of genuineness.

PEP (CONT'D)
But, I got this. Remember what you said? We signed up for this. We're in now. Nobody knows any different, right?

Tren nods proudly.

PEP (CONT'D)
See you at the Tree?

Tren and Pep share a bonded laughter.

TREN
Nobody knows what that is.

PEP
Exactly. Something tells me there's a lot more of that coming. Shit.

Pep mockingly flashes a nervous expression. Tren pulls his arm up and begins drawing friskily over his arm with his index finger.

Both Tren and Pep walk off into opposite directions, with a tranquility in their eyes, amidst the chaos of the highly trafficked room block hallway entrances.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREN'S ROOM BLOCK - HALLWAY

Various members walk through the long hallway, lit from the glow of the white backlit hallway floor below their strides.

Tren is revealed, behind the fleeting crowd, standing out in front of room 107. He looks around cluelessly with his hand pushing on the locked door in front of him.

Tren turns awkwardly to summon a pre-cautious passerby, but then is quick to notice a red pulse alert on his glass tablet - followed by a simultaneous remote triggered unlock at the door.

He nonchalantly looks away from the passing member to shield his naivety and pushes into the open door.

INT. TREN'S ROOM

Tren slowly closes the door behind him and walks into the glumness of the room. Carter's voice projects from behind the closed bathroom door on the opposing side.

CARTER (O.S.)

Who's there?

TREN

Yah, I was... assigned to this room.
I'm Tren.

CARTER (O.S.)

I kind of figured. The other guy
wouldn't of even answered.

Tren walks to the only made bed out of the two. He discovers a stack of white arm bands, a folded supply of jumpsuits and a guide book - neatly displayed on top of the comforter.

CARTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I've always had this place to myself;
this isn't ideal for me.

Tren picks up the book to carefully strum his fingers over the book's logo emblem. Where the colors of the different phases are built into a protruding ring shape, with a tree of life symbol at the inside of it's circumference.

Under the logo, it reads: The Life Ascension Program,
Ascension Career - Guide Book.

CARTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They don't usually pair roommates
who are at different phases of the
program like this.

Tren walks around and surveys the high tech, minimalist room layout. There are backlit panels at the top and side walls. A vertical display monitor is mounted at the front-center wall of the room, with a digital menu on it's interface.

Tren observes the screen. There are short blue staggered progress meters next to Carter's name and a blank profile under Tren's name.

CARTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Did they tell you there's kind of a
seniority thing with the color
hierarchy deal?

Tren continues to inspect the room. There are disheveled piles of clothing and wrinkled blue arm bands on the floor at Tren's feet. Tren notices a peculiar metallic object protruding from under the clothing. He bends down to inspect it and discovers a used needle syringe.

-The bathroom door's spring-latch CLICKS to an open.

Tren hurriedly kicks the clothing over the object and stands to face in the direction of the opening door.

Carter exits with a labored stride and looks at Tren's bed.

CARTER (CONT'D)
You see the care package they left
you? I'm Carter by the way.

Tren remains cautiously silent.

Carter walks by Tren, refraining to make eye contact, and falls ineptly through the air onto his bed.

CARTER (CONT'D)
I need to crash, pretty bad. If
you're around. Wake me up before
you hit up the tree later.

Carter, peculiarly weakened, tugs at the blanket on the bed to cover his fully dressed body.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Or not. I'm good. I just need to...
rest real fast.

Carter struggles to hold his eyes open. Tren watches through his lowered brows.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDUSTRIAL CITY - FOG

A vast encompassing of abandoned industrial factories are glimpsed by the illuminated glow of a vehicle's headlamps, peering out through the open pockets in the thick fog.

A white makeshift utility van creeps slowly through the myst.

INT. UTILITY VAN

Inside the driver's cab, a continuation of low engine idle is paired with the bad reception of a classical french jazz quartet.

Angela Rothwell aggressively releases her finger from the radio's dash console On/Off button, and then slams her back deep into the contours of the driver's seat.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Can we turn this shit off please. I
need to focus.

Angela throws the gear knob into Park and sits with unease in the single frequency of the low rumble, staring through the fog on the outside of the vehicle.

Christoph, sat in the passenger seat, turns with an unsettled look towards Benny in the back.

CHRISTOPH

(french accent)

Why does she do this, huh?

Christoph reaches back to the dash radio controls and is blocked by Angela's hand covering the console.

CHRISTOPH (CONT'D)

It relaxes me. What do you know of
this?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Do you see em? I can't see a damn
thing out there. This is where they
said to meet.

Benny anxiously shoots forward in his seat, fumbling through various video equipment cases, to fill the gap between the two front captain chairs.

BENNY

Turn the headlights off. Hurry.

Angela Rothwell flails into the steering column levers; a sudden SWOOSHING of wiper blades begin to dash across the windshield. In a final attempt, after repeated frantic fails to switch them off, she turns the key on the ignition.

The three of them sit in absolute silence. Angela calms her anxious breathing.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I know I messed up, ok?

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
I know you guys shouldn't be here.
I know that I've always dragged you
into my sociopathic rationalizations.

CHRISTOPH
We know why you did it, Angela.

Angela shamefully covers her mouth.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
In the interview, the Doctor knew
who hired us. We weren't there for
the story. Our footage was an
insurance policy. He even knew that.

BENNY
And now the whole world knows what
we were hired to keep secret? Is
that about right?

CHRISTOPH
They were on the inside already?
They'll kill us, Angela.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
Their too clean for that. They
wouldn't do it in the middle of the
day. Not with witnesses.

Angela is distracted by a second set of headlamps, now facing
directly towards the van, buried deeply in the distant fog.

CHRISTOPH
What is this? What do you mean
witnesses?

Angela filters the blinding lights from her eyes with her
arm and turns the van's high beams on with her opposing hand.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
I'm going alone. You two are the
witnesses now.

CHRISTOPH
How dare you. All apart of your
plan, huh?

ANGELA ROTHWELL
No. But, I can fix this. Give me
the footage, Benny.

Benny grabs a set of memory cards from a case beside him and
skittishly hands them off. He then reaches to eject an
additional card from his camera, but tentatively refrains.

Angela quickly exits the vehicle and walks out in front of the van, splitting the headlamp beams.

Both Christoph and Benny watch nervously from behind the fogged windshield.

BENNY

We're stuck in this salvage operation, Christoph. She's still trying to get our old lives back.

CHRISTOPH

I don't care about vindication anymore.

Angela stops where the two vehicle's lights converge. Two large figures in black, shrouded in the anonymity of the distant fog, approach her.

BENNY

I don't trust anything about this. Turn on the ignition. Do it, Christoph.

Christoph lunges below the dash to jingle the ignition until the van rumbles. He peaks up to discover the two figures slowly fading away into the grey and Angela walking hastily back towards the van.

Angela opens the door and quickly closes it behind her, to sit in a speechless discomfort.

CHRISTOPH

So? Angela speak. What did they say?

Angela exhales deeply and locks her door. She bends low over her arm rest, between Christoph and Benny, and looks to them with an unusually conflicted conviction.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

You have to trust me. Like before. As you always have. I have forty-eight hours to make this right.

CHRISTOPH

Forty-eight hours until what?

Angela reflects a somber vulnerability.

BENNY

Until they kill you? What the fuck, Angela.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
I need you guys. I can make this
right. Everything..

The three startle to a sudden fleet of ambulance sirens, traveling at unusually high speeds - on the quaint industrial road behind the van. Angela pops up to watch through her side mirror. In the reflection, her soft demeanor shifts to a squinted-eyed calculated expression.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN CITY APARTMENT

Red and white strobe lights paint over a roomful of silhouetted uniformed figures. A set of cold, motionless and non-flinching eyes mirror the busied room.

-The chaotic sound ambiance of the scene is muted as a loud zipper is pulled over a woman's suspended frozen facial expression.

A black body bag dramatically hovers across the floor below, vignetting a room full of customary crime scene routines; en route to the overexposed light at the front door.

-The chaotic sound ambiance is restored when the stretcher is pushed through the doorframe and into the street, where there is a hostile competition between media and medical crews.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CITY STREET - FOG

En route to the open doors of a parked ambulance, two EMT technicians recklessly trample a stationary female field journalist - BETHANY TOWNSEND, toppling her in their aggressive attempt to fold the legs of the stretcher into the undercarriage of the transported cargo.

Bethany Townsend rakes over the blacktop, with her nearly perfect manicured nails, to collect her station branded microphone (Wilshire News).

A high frequency EAR RECEIVER COORDINATOR vocal is heard faintly in the background.

EAR RECEIVER - COORDINATOR
Look sharp Bethany. Standby for
anchor relay. In 3, 2...

Bethany stands to straighten her cosmopolitan-esque wardrobe ensemble in the projected light, casted from three shoulder-mounted broadcast cameras.

EAR RECEIVER - NEWSCASTER
...Additional developments in the story. Wilshire News is on location at the scene with Bethany Townsend.

Bethany Townsend listens intently, with a broken-nailed finger pushed against her discreet ear receiver.

BETHANY TOWNSEND
That is correct. It was confirmed that the latest victim, discovered by authorities early this morning, did possess the identical scar tissue disfigurement at the back of the neck. Another circumstantial indication that the reported suicides are in some way linked to the investigations surrounding the Life Ascension experiments.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY, OPERATING ROOM - LOUNGE

A man sits below a single in-wall speaker at the top of a two-way mirrored glass room.

- A relaxing binary-toned frequency plays aloud.

A slender grey-haired fifty-something man, STEVEN BRAUNER, fidgets through the pages of an esteemed science and technology magazine. He is quick to slap the magazine atop a stack of other related publications at his side and tap his fingers anxiously over the cover.

Shown on the cover: A young Dr. Rogers is distinguishably posed alongside a headline; "Prodigy Nobel Prize Hopeful"

A gentle KNOCK is heard against the glass.

Maya cracks a mirrored door to peek into the small minimalistic waiting room lounge.

MAYA
There you are. How are you Steven?

STEVEN BRAUNER
Today's the day. Feeling the nerves a bit. A little too excited maybe.

MAYA
We'll have you in and out. Promise.

Steven lowers his head and begins to methodically organize the stack of magazines at his side.

STEVEN BRAUNER
I've always just assumed it would be
pretty ah... routine. But, um...

Maya gently interrupts.

MAYA
Everyone asks, Steven. It's ok.
And, no. You won't feel a thing.

Steven breaks his obsessive fidget and looks up with a softened demeanor.

MAYA (CONT'D)
You know all about the inhibitor cocktail. Even if there's an unconscious hesitation, once the pituitary floods with DMT, all that white noise just dissolves. Into nothing short of absolute bliss.

Steven resumes a normalcy of calm.

MAYA (CONT'D)
And paired with your program training...

Steven confidently nods.

STEVEN BRAUNER
I know. I know. I'm ready.

MAYA
Your mind is more than ready, Steven.

Maya looks down at her digital clip board.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Your neural analytics are perfect.
Your pathways are primed to open without any form of mental resistance... least of all anything physical, so... pain will not be an issue, ok?

Maya smiles with a reassurance.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Just sit tight. Dr. Rogers will be right in.

She smiles and backs away from the closing glass door.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY, OPERATING ROOM

Maya walks with urgency to the center of the room, with the two-way glass view of Steven behind her.

-A female field journalist vocal is heard in the distant ambiance of the room.

Maya enters an area solely lit to showcase a customized exam-table at the base of an elevated platform; with streamlined tech populated around its bevel. Grouped there, in front of a single glowing display monitor, are Rachel and Dr. Rogers.

MAYA

What are you doing? Where are the other technicians?

There is a delayed response.

DR. ROGERS

You're not going to believe this.

MAYA

What are you talking about? I know you two have been working on something together but I don't care. We have Mr. Brauner out there stat for coding. Why are you not....?

DR. ROGERS

Project it, Rachel.

Rachael reluctantly pushes into her keyboard. A strip of red, green and blue digital pixels line the ceiling in the distant darkness and progress downward.

RACHEL

We shouldn't be watching this. We already know what they're trying to do.

The descending pixelated lights chart the protruding outline of Bethany Townsend, slowly filling in the holographic dimensional details as she monologues into her branded microphone.

The broadcast vocal is patched in.

BETHANY TOWNSEND

Her family reported that Talia had been struggling with depression prior to her undisclosed membership into the program.

(MORE)

BETHANY TOWNSEND (CONT'D)
It wasn't until after the recent developments, leaked in the Rothwell interview, that friends began to notice her crippling paranoia.

Lacey slowly protrudes through the digital pixel display from the opposing side. She slowly turns, with her back facing the room, and tilts her head up to watch the holographic pixel broadcast rain down over her.

Maya uncomfortably watches Lacey and squeezes her eyes closed.

BETHANY TOWNSEND (CONT'D)
A progressive fear of death, Life Ascension's botched scientific claims and fraudulent accusations were said to precipitate. The 24 year old's recent tragedy has enflamed a growing worldwide outrage for the scientists responsible for the...

Maya hurriedly reaches over Dr. Rogers and into the keys at Rachel's workstation. The holographic light projection and audio abruptly cut off.

Lacey stands motionless in the darkness.

LACEY
What happened to Talia?

Lacey slowly turns to face the room with an impressionable distress.

LACEY (CONT'D)
That woman thinks that we did something to her. What did she mean?

Maya painfully absorbs Lacey's inquiry and looks to Dr. Rogers with desperation.

DR. ROGERS
Out there, this is what they all dream of, Lacey. To know what we know. But then they have to wakeup to a very different reality. One that just doesn't quite feel as real as it should.

Lacey's eyes glaze over.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
To keep people like Talia from being able to know that, they will do and
(MORE)

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
say anything. At all costs. To
create some illusion, like what you
just heard, just to keep that lie
alive. Even though innocent people...
friends even, will continue to suffer.

Lacey ponders uneasily to an epiphany.

LACEY
How ironic. We can't leave. We
can't tell the full truth about what
we're doing here. And yet we're the
lucky ones to be graced with
discernment.

Lacey turns to walk off into the distance. She angrily
projects into the open room.

LACEY (CONT'D)
I've never even slept long enough to
know the difference between a dream
and reality anyway. So that can't
apply to me.

MAYA
Lacey?

Maya lunges forward to follow after Lacey, but is quick to
notice Dr. Rogers's hand held firmly in place around her
arm.

DR. ROGERS
Wait, Maya. This is what you wanted.
For her to experience this. She's
in the room blocks with them. She's
friends with them.

MAYA
But, she's different. Ever since
she was little, we knew there was
something. Different. The Counselor
sees it too.

Rachel shuts down the glowing screen in front of her.

RACHEL
But, this is as close to a normal
life as she's gonna get for now.
The shitty parts and all.

DR. ROGERS
Maya. At least she...

Dr. Rogers looks to Rachel, with sympathetic eyes, as she strums kindheartedly over her keyboard keys.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
At least it's better than befriending
computer parts or something weird
like that, ya know?

Rachel passionately wraps her arms around the display and computer equipment at her desk.

RACHEL
What? This isn't normal?

Rachel looks up with an exaggerated kiddish smile. Maya and Dr. Rogers are thrust into an unexpected grin.

DR. ROGERS
We all wanted this for her, Maya.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - ECO GARDEN

Lacey and Bella walk swiftly over an open stretch through the soil, populated on both sides by members collecting fresh produce from the utopian-esque gardens.

BELLA
Are you ok? There is such thing as
roommate intuition, ya know? Why
are we running?

Lacey nonchalantly latches onto an idle member at her side, who is bear-hugging a wooden crate full of vegetables. With a soft shoulder repositioning, she alters their direction to a location off screen and reciprocates an intimate nod.

BELLA (CONT'D)
You're just never this ambitious
about dinner prep duties, geesh.

Lacey resumes her fast pace.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Kinda reading something here, Lacey.

Lacey dips to pull up a remaining bundle of spinach from the soil, alongside an older woman cradling an over abundance of leaved greens. She stacks the single bundle at the top of the woman's unstable pile and continues on her speedy pursuit.

BELLA (CONT'D)
I know you're not sleeping.
(MORE)

BELLA (CONT'D)
I mean you rarely do anyway, but...
hey, stop.

Bella and Lacey halt their forward progression amongst a traffic of member contributors.

BELLA (CONT'D)
You asked me to do this. Remember?
What if you have one of your...
episodes again? It's scary to see
you like that.

Bella reaches slowly behind her back.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Here. This is for you.

She whips out a deformed and dirt covered carrot at the end of her extended reach. Lacey's compromised demeanor is momentarily restored.

LACEY
A peace offering, Bella bear?

Both Bella and Lacey laugh.

LACEY (CONT'D)
You're right. Maybe I'm just in
that half asleep, half awake daze.
Sorry.

Bella looks around the room at the dizzying hustle and bustle of activity.

BELLA
You're remarkable, Lacey. How is it
that you just helped everyone that
crossed the path of your little zombie
walk?

Lacey breaks into a full on uncontrollable laughter.

BELLA (CONT'D)
Anyone else would of just pushed
those people over.

LACEY
There's been a lot on my mind, Bel.
(reflective pause)
Maybe I'm hungry. I don't know.

BELLA
I know what it is.
(MORE)

BELLA (CONT'D)
We have a few new dinner guests,
tonight. That's it, huh?

Lacey takes a bite of the mangled carrot.

LACEY
No, I'm hungry. That's it. You
better keep up... this zombie needs
to eat. Come on.

Lacey speeds off through the vast surroundings. Bella runs
after her into the distance to catch up.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM BLOCK HALLWAY

Various group members walk down a heavily trafficked room
block hallway, traveling in the same direction.

Within the ambiance of indiscernible banter, there is a
cluster of three (group 7) members, of whom occupy a clear
dialog. BENJAMIN, a twenty-something male - an astute scholar
behind his trendy spectacles and curly locks. JESS, a sporty
urban styled twenty-something girl - confident under a
backwards ball cap and pants bunched up to the knee. And
Asami, who is walking out in front.

All three have a blue arm band and trademark circular tablets
in their possession.

Jess takes a few swift paces to tap Asami from behind.

JESS
Asami, wait up.

Asami drops back alongside Jess, and dips her head to bow
slightly.

ASAMI
You're a blue now, Jess?
Congratulations. Phase two.

Jess flexes and kisses the blue band covering her bicep.

JESS
I hit baseline finally. So did
Benjamin. He kinda showed me what's
up.

Jess nudges into Benjamin.

BENJAMIN

What? Your readings were always better than mine. It's a progress meter competition in our room, Asami.

JESS

Yah, I did kinda passed you up, huh?
I've been tracking perfect serotonin levels... until this morning,
obviously.

ASAMI

Oh yes. The Counselor was ok. When I got back he was already fascinated with something new. He's pretty great.

BENJAMIN

He's just so in tuned with like... everything. It's kind of weird.

JESS

It could of been a test or something.
Huh? Next time I'm staying dialed into my meters.

Jess lifts her tablet up to her lips and kisses the glass.

JESS (CONT'D)

Phase three. Yellow is mine, baby!

In the distant background, Tren is revealed walking alone, down the busy hallway. He oddly separates, undetected by the preoccupied crowds, and turns down a concealed side pathway.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY, ATRIUM - SECLUDED LOOKOUT

Tren enters a secluded nook that overlooks the facility atrium below. He carefully approaches the concrete overhang to sneak a peek.

Tren inconspicuously surveys the desolate atrium, populated by only a handful of security personnel at their posts. He double takes to notice Pep wandering below, taking covert glances up into the tall concrete ceiling air vents.

Security Personnel 7 utters an authoritative command aloud.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 7
Group member access is prohibited at
this time, sir. Please use the
directory at the hallway entrance.

The Security Personnel 7 points Pep towards a hallway exit.
Tren efforts to keep himself unseen, while continuing to
secretly watch Pep nervously double back.

Tren speaks under his breath.

TREN
What are you doing, Pep?

The Counselor appears suddenly from behind Tren, startling
him with his soft voice.

COUNSELOR
What is it that are observing, Tren?

Tren jolts back out of view, collects himself and then
responds with a soft vocal.

TREN
Ah, you got me good.

COUNSELOR
You have ventured away from your
peers. Why?

Tren is desperate to conjure up a response.

TREN
Oh, no they're good. This seems to
be really good what's happening here
for them. I was just...

COUNSELOR
But you are not ready to smile with
them yet?

Tren looks to The Counselor with an unusual bemuse. The
Counselor stares familiarly into his eyes.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
There are those eyes again. Too
busied... analyzing, maybe?

Tren breaks eye contact to reflect.

TREN
Maybe. I can't just jump right in
to all this yet. I've always just
felt more comfortable knowing what
the next move is.

COUNSELOR

Ah, yes. I have come to just know this game you speak of. It is very fun, isn't it? This Chess the members play.

The Counselor slowly extends his arm outward toward Tren.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

The anticipation of my next move and your reaction to my move is something that will come to happen, yes?

The Counselor turns the back of his hand over to reveal his closed grip.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

I'm sure you are measuring the probable future outcomes here. Allowing your mind to occupy itself with predictabilities and whatever else.

The Counselor slowly opens his hand to reveal an empty cupped palm.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

This is the trick your mind can play on you. That many come to believe is the only way to interact with their present reality. Always anticipating.

The Counselor shows a newfound excitement. He turns his fisted hand back over and quickly flips up a black marker between his fingers.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

When you stop playing chess, you will understand what this very moment truly requires of you.

The Counselor lifts his other arm to showcase his gauze casted injury, covered in various black marker signatures.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Please.

Tren softens his demeanor, carefully removes the marker from his hand, and pushes the tip into The Counselor's white bandages to sign his name.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

There is freedom in this, Tren?

The Counselor offers up an expression of boyish excitement.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Oh my. Tonight will be a meal to remember.

The Counselor casually walks back to the hallway.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Make sure to try everything. I love this asparagus, oh so much. In your mouth it feels like...
(reflective pause)
...Little chewy bamboo canes or something.
(laughing)

Tren appears to have a puzzled but peaceful expression on his face.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Join me, Tren. No chess. In this present moment only. Yes?

Tren looks to the Counselor with a friendly grin and walks to catch up.

INT. THE TREE - DINING HALL

The Counselor, Tren and a stream of remaining members progress toward the heart of the room. A large hall lit solely by blue fiber optic branches and leaves stretching outward from an oversized tree at the center. The base of the tree's trunk protrudes from the radial cutout hole in a large circular wooden platform; a diameter that nearly extends to half the length of the room.

The members congregate to the empty cushions atop the surface of the platform. Where they are both sat upright and stretched out on their sides, under the massive glowing foliage hanging above them. There is an abundance of minimalistic organic food plated on a slightly offset inner circular divider, separating members who are sat on both sides.

Indiscernible banter, from the gathered twenty-one groups, fills the ambiance of the room.

The Counselor walks off into the crowd, winking over his shoulder, as Tren converges on the designated area where group-seven is seated together. Lacey, who is braiding one of the leaved vines hanging down from the tree in front of her seat, gestures to Tren as he approaches.

LACEY

I saved you a spot. I thought you
might want a front row seat.

Before sitting on the vacant cushion next to Lacey, Tren
reservably surveys the group members until he discovers Pep,
smiling back at him with a mouth full of food.

Tren sits and stares up into the vastness of the luminescent
branches above him.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Welcome to our tree of life. Every
member of Life Ascension, from the
past 5 years, got a chance to build
on this... and start over.

Tren stands up to examine one of the hundreds of circular
glass ornaments hanging from the tree.

TREN

What are these? Glowing orbs.

Bella, seated on the opposite side of Tren, theatrically
glorifies a slowly raised orange at the end of her reach.

BELLA

It's the tree's fruit. They're all
the different members. Who finished
the program.

The small sphere cupped in Tren's hand projects a unique
facial hologram image from the inside. Lacey emotionally
strums her thumb across the orb entangled in her braided
vine. The face hologram is of Talia.

Carter walks up from the rear and sits beside Bella.

CARTER

If.

BELLA

Look who just woke up. What are you
rambling on about, Carter?

CARTER

If... they finish. You don't get to
hang from the tree unless you finish.
Most members don't finish... is all
I'm saying.

Jess throws a grape, through the air, in Carter's direction.

JESS

Coming from the person who's been a
Blue longer than anyone in the history
of the program.

Carter extends a fist bump across the table divider to Pep.

CARTER

Pep is probably tripping like I was
on my first day. Just trying to
help out a fellow member, shit.
Right Pep?

Pep leaves Carter hanging, shrugs and continues nervously
gorging.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Ok, I see how it is. At least you
made it past the dread test. I've
seen people who never recover from
that. So, you must be doing something
right.

Carter turns from Pep to give a thumbs up to Tren, sitting
across from him a few seats down. Carter fills his mouth
with a handful of food and speaks through his obnoxious
chewing.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Oh, thanks for waking me up by-the-
way, Tren. No roommate love huh?
I'll remember that. I'll remember.

Benjamin looks up from his glass tablet to laugh at Carter.
He turns to Asami with a certain profundity.

BENJAMIN

You know what's been hard to remember?
Strangely. The sun.

ASAMI

The eco-garden's simulated sun is
pretty close though.

BENJAMIN

The light, yes. Not the heat.
Remember that feeling?

ASAMI

It's the ocean for me. I think that's
why I love seeing so many blue arm
bands in here. If you turn your
head fast enough, it kind of feels
like you're surrounded by water.
Try it.

Benjamin whips his head across his shoulders. The slowed motion blur of his POV melds the blue shades together like water colors. The majestic painting fades and refocuses with Dr. Rogers, Maya, Rachel and The Counselor conversing together.

Dr. Rogers catches a glimpse of Tren, out of the corner of his eye. He stares curiously for a tick.

DR. ROGERS

Do we have new memberships? I didn't see anything admitted earlier.

Maya peels off mid conversation with Rachel to respond with a slight angst.

MAYA

Ah, yes. I believe Lacey updated the network this morning. There were two who qualified before the kiosk incident.

Dr. Rogers looks strangely into the crowd.

DR. ROGERS

He looks familiar. What are the names?

Maya scrolls with a flip down the surface of her circular tablet.

MAYA

Let's see. Josh Pepinski and Tren Kasai.

Dr. Rogers's is lost in an unsettled stare at Tren. Maya's vocal fades into a muffle as she continues to respond.

MAYA (CONT'D)

There was a slight mix up this morning for registration into the program...

Dr. Rogers utters under his breath.

DR. ROGERS

Kasai?

In the midst of a diverted ponder, a Lab Technician approaches the table, unnoticed by Dr. Rogers. However, he is quick to pull himself back into full cognizance to catch the Lab Technician in mid sentence.

LAB TECHNICIAN

... She's almost unresponsive and
the time stamp is about to expire.
Do you want us to proceed or...?

DR. ROGERS

No. We'll conduct it. With a member
only clinical observation.

RACHEL

Wait, what? We've never done that.
Is that even legal?

DR. ROGERS

I think this would be perfect for
one of the groups to witness.

Rachel looks to The Counselor with a raised concern, but he passively smiles and concedes to the moment. Dr. Rogers quickly grabs his glass and taps his utensil into the side until the room settles to a stillness.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

For new members... I'm Doctor Rogers.
You've already been acquainted with
the Counselor, the heart behind Life
Ascension. And the team responsible
for the Absonite discovery.

The team of scientists uncomfortably stand, offset to the side of the main tree-of-life platform, and crack unprepared smirks.

The roomful of members openly applaud. Dr. Rogers looks back to the impatience growing on the faces of the science team.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Most of you are still unaware of how
science and something so much greater
than science can be infused here.
And how it will come to soon change
your lives, forever.

The population of members begin to show their excitement with growing smiles, applause and chanting.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

We have very restricted time to make
this decision, but we're going to do
something tonight that's yet to be
offered up for any member in the
past.

Lacey looks upon Dr. Rogers with a puzzled concern.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
But regretfully, we can only select
a single group to join us tonight.

Dr. Rogers looks off into the near mystified expressions in the crowd of members.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
Since we have two new memberships
with us today...

Dr. Rogers signals to the members surrounding Tren and Pep to stand. The entire group seven, all 10 members, stand nearly uniformly; with the exception of Carter slowly rising with extended arms.

CARTER
What? Group Seven, yah!!

Carter cuts a quick look to Tren and pep to softly praise them with conceit.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Way to go newbies, represent.

-The remaining unselected members sound off their soft "awes and ewws" into the room's ambiance.

Dr. Rogers and his team of scientists walk swiftly to the exit, while the members of group seven follow with haste; looking to one another with both excitement and confusion.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION SUITE

A woman's chest slowly rises and falls, laid beneath the veil of thin medical grade bed-linens. The room ambiance is filled with arduous inhalations and wheezing exhales.

The members are seen being led to lineup around a darkened circular room, from the opposing side of a domed glass encasing; encompassing a nearly lifeless patient. The ghostly pale, elderly aged woman - MARY LOU, labors to keep an open sliver in her weak eye lids. Just enough for her to observe the handful of members, staring with their openmouthed expressions through the thick glass.

Mary Lou raises her arm up slightly to a quiver, above the exam table under her body, as she attempts to reach towards the movements of the members reflected through the glass in the distance.

Her dried lips pull apart from the skin adhered between them and she attempts to push an indiscernible whisper through her lungs.

MARY LOU

I have survived the trials of life
in this withered body. With this
tired mind. I was human.

The members of group-seven are pressed tightly up against the glass, laboring to discern the silent words from her moving lips.

Dr. Rogers, Maya and Rachel enter the interior of the entombed patient area, with their mobile neuro-technology workstations wheeled behind their matching green surgical scrubs.

There are two unique video feeds displayed on two monitors, mounted on the outside of the observation glass. The members continue to toggle back and forth between the screens and the realtime operation room activity.

-One monitor shows the neural brain map imagery, from Rachel's custom developed brain scan endoscope.

-Another monitor is an almost surveillance feed on the inside of the glass, controlled by a technician on the outside.

Maya adjusts the pin-thin mic extended from her ear to her mouth and projects her voice softly aloud. The audio feed is patched through the speakers on the outside of the glass.

MAYA

Members, if you look at monitor-two...

The interior surveillance camera's focus ring rotates to zoom in on the video footage, shown on the open laptop screen in front of Dr. Rogers.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You'll see the fiberoptic endoscope video footage here, captured at the time of this member's initial procedure. A little over two years ago. Mary Lou was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer at the age of 79 and has been in our care since the beginning of her enrollment.

The pin-head camera footage shows the entrance into an abstract brain fold region.

The members scrunch their faces in disbelief.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You'll see here, when we approached
the area of the pituitary gland known
as the...?

Maya looks back through the glass to find Benjamin's lips
mouthing "Absonite".

MAYA (CONT'D)

That's right Benjamin, this is
indeed... the Absonite. Here you'll
see the encrypted markings you've
come to recently learn of. And yes,
they were as foreign to us then as
they are now. But interestingly
enough, all that separates an unknown
symbol from the complexity of a
systematic language... is pattern.
And if there just so happened to be
one... well, thank god there are
linguistic algorithms that can just
about decode anything these days.

The interior surveillance camera moves to the display screen
with the linguistics algorithm software interface. The
unusual markings are read across the screen, while a generator
calculates the deduction pattern in each of the handful of
characters.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Notice the decryption process on the
screen.

Pep looks astounded at the monitor.

PEP

It's real. I can't believe it's
real.

TREN

Where you hoping it wasn't?

PEP

Yes. I mean, not this real.

The symbols quickly convert into numerical digits.

MAYA

Oh how I wish it worked as fast then
as it does now.

Rachel and Maya share a moment of optimistic hindsight.

MAYA (CONT'D)

This is actually a simulation of a translation process that took years for us to finally decode. But...
(interrupted)

Dr. Rogers gently touches Maya's arm. The team looks at the digital clock on-screen.

DR. ROGERS

Time synchronized everyone? We're only seconds away from the decoded time stamp. You ready Rachel?

Time stamp on screen reads (exact): Year/month/day/hour/second

The camera ring rotates to display a closeup of Mary Lou from the shoulders up. She struggles to inhale her last breaths with an unusual grin.

Maya grabs on to Mary Lou's hand.

MAYA

We brought you in here today, well aware that Mary Lou's ascension career would begin in only moments. Please don't be frightened. This is, and should be, the most beautiful and celebrated event in our human lives.

The members look amongst each other with widened eyes. Carter, out of character, interlocks his fingers with Bella's. Pep's pen is suspended above his arm, as he stands motionless, consumed with disbelief. Lacey looks to notice Tren overcome with a relative grief.

The clock continues to countdown its final seconds.

MAYA (CONT'D)

On monitor one, is a live feed of Mary Lou's Absonite region. And beyond the unusual signature markings, you'll see the likes of highly condensed memory and personality data clusters.

There are fields of nano-sized synapse fragmentations.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Right... here. Very similar to memory encoded at various places in the brain's cortex. However, these are very - very unique.

From a touch panel at her side, Maya lowers the intensity of the overhead lights above the patient and at the outer perimeter behind the members.

-The time countdown clock reaches 0 on the display monitor. The heart rate EKG meter flatlines.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Our beloved Mary Lou did give us her consent to show her scans prior-to and after her death.

Maya's vocal tonality is slightly melancholy.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Because she was confident that the comparison would indeed be quite different. And they most certainly are.

Lacey, with tears in her eyes, looks again to discover Tren's now softened gaze.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Monitor-one is the feed prior to Mary Lou's death. Monitor-two is live footage imaging at this very moment.

The memory and personality data clusters, from the Absonite region of the brain, are shown dispersing and gradually rising from the tissue. The (before-death view) shows the clusters still in tact.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Mary Lou's memory and personality data fused to the Absonite, stored using the Absonite's potential to connect us to a new consciousness, is now being transferred in its subatomic particle form - upward and away from the gravitational pull of our bodies. Into what we refer to as an ascension channel.

Multiple sheets of blue laser light luminescence, scan the area above and below Mary Lou's head - to the top of the room's ceiling.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You're seeing a wave of electrons projected here that can magnify particles by 500,000 times their original size.

A collection of particles slowly rise from her head and hover upward, twinkling in the projected digital light beam fields.

This transmission electron microscope acts as an equivalent to that of a black light. But using quantum physics so that we can view with our naked eyes, the behaviors of Mary Lou's atomic emissions. We're all just made up of dust.

The particles continue to float upward and through the ceiling of the room.

MAYA

Knowing the date was only the beginning. This is the continuation of life as we know it. The Ascension.

Lacey turns around with a lowered head and slowly extends her arms outward. The entire group-seven, excluding Tren, huddles together in a mass embrace. Freely expressing an intensified joy and sorrow; simultaneously.

Tren catches the warmth of Lacey's eyes, as she peers out to him from the nucleus of the group. He forfeits his reservation after catching a glance into her eyes. He surrenders forward to wrap his arms around the perimeter of the group.

The Counselor is revealed in the distant shadows of the room, watching with a deeply celebrated satisfaction.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY HALLWAYS

Blue backlights line the concrete ceiling perimeter of the desolate hallways; creating long stretches of glowing runways into the maze-like facility. There is an eery stillness behind the multitudes of closed room-block doors.

Tren's voice over is soft and compromised.

TREN (V.O.)

Tren? There you are. Almost feels weird to hear it back. I've never gone this long before.

SNIVELING is heard in the distant background, disrupting the perfect silence that permeates the cold bones of the facility.

TREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This voice; these talks, was all I
had to keep from going crazy. Trying
to make sense of all this.

Through the open doors of the observation suite, Tren is revealed standing alone. He delicately whimpers with his extended arms pressed against the outside glass of the domed operation room interior.

TREN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm starting to think that maybe it
was some desperate way to distract
myself. So I wouldn't have to face
this. But, maybe it's time I did,
huh? For us, Okaasan.

CUT TO:

INT. TREN'S ROOM BLOCK

Tren reaches to touch a digital light switch console next to his bed but hesitates. His gaze is drawn across the room, where Carter is slept sprawled out across his bed. Tren follows Carter's exposed arm, strewn off the side of the bed, to discover a set of distinct puncture abrasions.

The room lights cut to darkness. A small blue glow appears from under the canopy of sheets casted over Tren's silhouette.

Tren robotically touches the display of the circular glass tablet to initialize a subset of coding language prompts. His first few attempts yield the same RED "access denied" popup. However, he is quick to scramble the firewall of digital interface queries to unlock a new set of restricted functionalities.

Tren allows his face to fall into an unguarded scorn, under the electronic light. Where the tablet display screen showcases a web obituary, with text details and an image of Tren's Mother.

Tren types in another jailbreak interface string of codes to pull up a listing of inbox messages. The entire visible page is filled with "urgent" subject lines from Akito Kasia. Tren holds his finger above one of the messages to open, but refrains.

-The glowing light from under the sheets disappears into the darkness of the room.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL WAREHOUSE - CLEAN ROOM

Maya disrobes her top layer of safety contamination clothing, inside of a portable soft-walled tent clean room. An airtight modular unit, offset at the side of the patient quarantine floor.

There is a thin transparent plastic curtain separating the room at the center, of which Dr. Rogers is clearly visible to Maya on the other side. He is dressed in normal attire, sitting next to a push-button control panel, dangling by a single cord above him. He looks up from his notebook.

DR. ROGERS

You ready?

Maya signals with a thumbs up, as she strips off her final article of rubber outer-wear. Dr. Rogers presses the button, releasing an atomized fog of disinfectant solution from the spray ports at the top of the tent's steel pole framework.

Maya zips up the barrier wall curtain behind her and sits under the flickering LED light panel above, across from Dr. Rogers.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

We're going be able to prove it again.
Patient 2301. He only has a few
days right?

Dr. Rogers logs an entry into his notes.

MAYA

Yes, 2301. Isaac.

Dr. Rogers looks back up at Maya's apparent distress.

DR. ROGERS

Maya. I know your look. There's an entire warehouse full of people here. And you know each and every one of these case studies means everything to me.

MAYA

That's why the look. They're more than just test subjects. These are lives. Working with death like this, I think we're losing sight of that. Does this effect you at all? Because I'm not feeling that from you anymore.

Maya looks with disbelief to the precautionary measures of the tent and out through a small transparent plastic bay window into the vast patient floor.

DR. ROGERS

Is that all you can see... is just that? This goes even further than the inevitability of death now. We've proved it. That there's something even more significant, Maya. These people aren't just dying in vain in here.

MAYA

I'm not just some naive research scientist anymore. Yes, it is an absolute marvel what we've been able to do in the name of science, but how much deeper into the darkness do you need to go?

DR. ROGERS

All the way. There's a source Maya. And we're at the door. You're telling me that you aren't in the least interested in knowing what's on the other side?

MAYA

I don't need to walk through like you do... to know what's there. Our research did that. Did you forget everything that you filled into that diary of yours? All those testimonies. Those people knew too.

DR. ROGERS

But, they only saw the gateway. At the time of death, some channel is opening, physically. This transference of energy can't just go one way.

MAYA

I can't believe you're even suggesting...
(interrupted)

DR. ROGERS

Perhaps we're not the only ones trying to make a connection here, Maya.

Maya drops her glass digital clipboard. It shatters dramatically on the floor beneath her, as she hovers over it in shock. She is quick to jolt up and unzip the middle plastic barrier.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Maya, what are you...
(MORE)

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
(interrupted)

Dr. Rogers hastily grabs the dangling push-button control panel above him.

MAYA

I don't care. These are human beings.
You would see the absolute ethical
insanity here if you became one again.

Maya forcefully walks through and unzips the outer wall barrier. A small air quality proximity ALERT triggers aloud. She looks back with disdain and then walks out into the warehouse, leaving both protective walls wide-open behind her.

Dr. Rogers stares into the opening to the outside and removes his finger from the decontamination push button release. He slowly lowers his arm and wipes the fogging plastic bay window at his side.

Dr. Rogers tentatively looks out into the vast warehouse - packed with hundreds of bedridden patients.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND DUNES - DAY

Tren stands alone in the open desert dunes. He appears to look lost in thought but quickly snaps into an unexpected alertness.

TREN
Ok, lets do this.

Tren looks down at his body, again clothed in the high-tech black fabric body suit, and proceeds forward through the sand with a newfound confidence.

A deep Instructional Vocal cadence reverberates around Tren and reiterates the test instructions:

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL
Survival is required. Do not die.

Tren repeats the ending instruction simultaneously.

TREN
Do not die. Good morning to you
too.

The 100-foot sandstorm wall again races towards Tren from the distant horizon. Tren runs at full sprint with a look of reinvigorated determination.

He builds up a perfect stride at full speed.

TREN (CONT'D)
Come on. Come on.

Tren looks ahead to notice an oasis of trees, off in the distance of the desolate desert, in front of him.

TREN (CONT'D)
No fear, player one. Just trust in the moment. I'm right here.

He races towards the oasis with haste and briefly looks back over his shoulder. Tren is surprised to feel the grip of the storm begin to pull him backwards, swallowing him up in it's vortex of debris.

Tren is violently stretched and torn apart to his imminent death.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH EVALUATION TERMINAL

Tren frantically removes the VR headgear from his head and gasps for air. He looks around the high-tech, acoustic sound-proofed - minimalistic room, and into a single spotlight casted down from above. The light traces the contours of the high-tech chair beneath him, shown to integrate a series of cords that connect to the plug ports in Tren's motion suit.

Tren sits up from the reclined seat and looks up at a TECH ADVISOR and a SENIOR PROGRAMMER - both forty-something Japanese men, both standing beside the chair on a lifted circular platform.

TREN
I died. But the sensory feedback is...

Tren looks to the men beside him with an awe struck contemplation.

TREN (CONT'D)
Who wrote the haptics for this?
This is decades away still.

The Tech Advisor stands unresponsive and extends his hands outward to Tren. Tren pushes the neuro-headgear into his possession with a murky curiosity.

The Senior Programmer looks to Tren with an elongated familiar solace. Tren is caught off guard.

TREN (CONT'D)
Do I know you?

SENIOR PROGRAMMER
No. I am simply expressing gratitude
for your appreciation of our work
here.

The Senior Programmer head gestures to the Tech Advisor.

SENIOR PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)
Reset the system for the next member.

The Tech Advisor walks off.

TREN
You're the designer?

SENIOR PROGRAMMER
I was.

The Senior Programmer looks cautiously around the room and into the operator windows above. He softens his response.

SENIOR PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)
I designed the construct AI to be subconscious responsive. So, it's the designer now. In coordination with the mind of the user of course.

The Senior Programmer disconnects the wires from Tren's suit.

TREN
People thought I was crazy for thinking that sensory cues were the reason for VR latency.

The Senior Programmer nods to confirm his shared agreeance.

TREN (CONT'D)
Touch, motion, verbal... it just takes too much time to get from your head to your body and then to a console.

Tren deploys from the chair and stands across from the Senior Programmer with a sense of comradery.

SENIOR PROGRAMMER
Very receptive of you. There's only enough time for a neural response isn't there? Right at the split moment of a synapse.

The Senior Programmer quickly swipes his snapping fingers through the air.

SENIOR PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

As soon as it fires, the system simulates a response before the body is even aware. So early at the stage of thought, your mind can't discern between the illusion it creates for itself and the world around us.

Tren looks at the Senior Programmer with a puzzled curiosity.

TREN

Who are you developing for? Who are you?

The Senior Programmer holds his readied response and relies on a more professional candor to deflect; shifting his softened voice to an assertive projection.

SENIOR PROGRAMMER

We will be unable to fraternize in this way moving forward with all respect. Please only be interested in your understanding of the objectives of our testing together.

Tren surveys the room around him and responds to the unusual request with a slight playfulness.

TREN

Ok. Well then. Now I know the cheat code. So, I accept your challenge.

Tren walks away with a new competitive zeal. The Senior Programmer slowly backs away into a preoccupied busyness.

The Senior Programmer speaks under his breathe.

SENIOR PROGRAMMER

Until our next evaluation then, Tren Kasai.

The Senior Programmer shoots back an inquisitive glance as Tren exits the room.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH EVALUATION HALLWAY

Tren walks into the hallway with the Psych-Evaluation doors at his back, where Pep is sat on the floor against an adjacent wall.

Pep greets Tren with his wide eyes, peaking over his flattened arm - laid across his scrunched knees like a drawing board.

TREN

I think I'm getting the hang of it now.

PEP

You died again, huh? I'm just gonna try burying myself in the sand next time.

Pep pockets his pen and clumsily rises to convene with Tren.

TREN

That's actually genius.

PEP

What? Not if it's another fear test it isn't.

TREN

Speaking of... how'd it go? With the Counselor.

Tren and Pep begin to progress down the populated stretch of hallway.

PEP

Well, it was the first consultation that didn't demand that I increase my meds. So, there's that.

Pep drifts into a moment of unusual contemplation.

PEP (CONT'D)

Then there's the chance that he might be as crazy as I am.

TREN

And everyone is just so gassed by this guy.

Tren looks into the exaggeratedly cheerful faces of the passerby members.

TREN (CONT'D)

He's not a scientist. He can't be one of them. What is he? What's his name even? Just the Counselor? That's weird.

PEP

You like em too, huh?

TREN

Maybe. Yah.

Tren tries to keep a straight face as he grazes a look at Pep's cracked smile at the corner of his lips.

TREN (CONT'D)

You know where we're going, right?

Pep holds his tablet out in front of his stride.

PEP

No. I mean, the guide says that all group members are required to meet at the auditorium next, but I don't know where that is.

TREN

You should.

Tren looks down at the intricate route diagram penned into Pep's skin.

TREN (CONT'D)

Isn't that a map you've been drawing on your arm?

Pep scurries to yank his sleeve down over his forearm. Tren is quick to dismiss Pep's self-consciousness to look out into the oncoming atrium ahead.

TREN (CONT'D)

All I know is... I'd rather walk around lost than hit up the purple tower for directions. Huh?

PEP

Agreed.

Tren and Pep enter the vast Atrium and get swallowed into the congestion of member traffic.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE

-The crowd ambiance falls off to a quiet room ambiance.

A female hand reaches downward, over a white backlit surface, to grab from a set of three off-white colored pill capsules. The first extraction of the three is followed by a hard swallow off-screen. The identical sequence is rush repeated until all three capsules are consumed. A tall, half filled glass of water CLANKS down against the empty glowing surface. The movement of the water is quick to subside.

Lacey's eyes are locked into a stare beneath her view. Her continued watch reveals the sudden transfiguration in her eyes, from a neutral gaze to a bizarre fret. The water in the glass begins to tremble violently under an earthquake magnitude.

Lacey turns swiftly to a hand slid gently over her shoulder and back to the perfectly still glass of water.

THE COUNSELOR (O.S.)
The hallucinations are getting worse?

Lacey, seated on the backlit surface floor, looks upward to The Counselor, standing at her side with a restored composure.

LACEY
This is still normal for me. You kind of just accept this blurred reality between dreaming and being awake.

The Counselor sits at an arms length across from Lacey on the surface of the floor. Lacey smiles at the collage of signatures wrapped around The Counselor's cast.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Nice.

The Counselor admires his injured hand.

THE COUNSELOR
Yes. I too found a way to look with a new perspective, at what some consider to be a reason for concern.

LACEY
You're an anomaly, you know that right? I've known you all these years and still look at you like all the other members do. With wonder.

The Counselor reaches to his side to collect a stack of worn papers. He holds them closely to his chest and lays one of the papers face-up on the surface between himself and Lacey.

THE COUNSELOR
Do you remember this one?

Lacey looks down and back up to The Counselor with a childish modesty.

LACEY
I remember gifting all those silly drawings to you, yes. But, not drawing them.

The torn out page below them shows a sketched silhouette of a body walking into a vortex of light.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I would wake up from those weird black outs, that I could of sworn were as real as this very moment, to discover that I was secretly some little Rembrandt.

The Counselor spreads the additional loose drawings between his fingers to fondly observe.

THE COUNSELOR

They are very good, Lacey. Very special to me.

Lacey picks up the glass of water alongside the sketch. She examines the water before giving the glass a swirl to disrupt the resting liquid.

LACEY

Well hold on to those then. They're rare. The artisan you revere no longer stops to capture every weird figure or visual that randomly appears in their twisted mind.

Lacey drinks deep from the glass.

THE COUNSELOR

Is it working for them?

LACEY

You know what works for me? Making a connection with something real. The people here are all searching for that same thing. I can see it deep in their sad eyes. And that in turn allows me to be more than just some recluse narcoleptic.

THE COUNSELOR

Oh sweet Lacey. What we're doing here makes very much sense to me too.

LACEY

It better. You're responsible for what's happening here. Rogers knows. Or used to at least. Maya loves you. Oh, please don't tell her about my... you know?

THE COUNSELOR
I'll keep a secret, only if... the artist is willing to sign these for me, of course.

Lacey laughs. The Counselor extracts his coveted collection of sketches from the reflective surface beneath them.

LACEY
I will. But, after.

Lacey looks at the tablet at her side and hurriedly rises.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Come on. You know this is one of my favorite parts of the program.

Lacey begins to groom The Counselor with a quaint familiarity. She nonchalantly pops a series of buttons open, on the front of The Counselor's tunic, to straighten the misalignment in button-to-hole ratio.

LACEY (CONT'D)
I know you don't care what you look like, but this is important, ok?

Lacey hastily pulls The Counselor off-screen.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - AUDITORIUM LECTURE HALL

Tren and Pep enter through the back-doors at the top of the auditorium. Lacey signals with an enthusiastic hand gesture to show off the two vacant chairs beside her, facing the pulpit area at the head of the room. Where The Counselor, Maya and Rachel are grouped around an actively instructional technician, who is pointing from the ground floor stage to the technology hardwares located at various levels in the room.

Tren and Pep descend the stadium style stairway, splitting the vast room full of all twenty-one group members. They walk up to an off-set of greetings from the front row of group-7 members, projected loud enough to rise slightly above the chaotic theatre-like banter.

LACEY
Hey whites. Lost again I see?

Tren head gestures to his rear.

TREN
This one's all Pep, trust me.

Pep, unaware of Tren's comment, lags from the back and catches Lacey's head shake.

PEP

What?

LACEY

Pep, that's what the directory kiosks are for.

PEP

What do you mean? Wait, what's happening here?

Pep's clueless concern is met with Tren's kiddish smile.

TREN

I told you. That or the Purple Tower next time, Pep.

Tren and Pep sit with a boyish comradery amidst The Counselor's attempt to raise his vocal over the ambiance of the room.

THE COUNSELOR

Hello, everyone.

Various shouts, "we can't hear you" are heard from the top of the stadium seating.

A technician dashes across the floor to relay a handheld mic to The Counselor. The Counselor looks oddly at the device and awkwardly taps the diaphragm. He is reluctant to raise the microphone to his mouth, but does by default.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Hello, again. This is better for you now? Good. Ok, who would like to be a volunteer for us today?

The ambiance of the room roars. The Counselor looks out into the crowd and down to Jess with a wink. Jess excitedly jumps out of her seat and darts across the front row of group-7 members. The Counselor adores her over-enthusiastic entrance and instructs her as to where to stand.

JESS

Right here? Ok, cool. Thank you, thank you!

She flips her hat backwards and looks to him with a glowing admiration. Jess is then quick to turn to the crowd to boast and speaks under her breath.

JESS (CONT'D)

Yah, baby! Blue represent!

The Counselor, unresponsive to Jess's fanfare, signals to her to shift over a smidge. He gives her the thumbs up and points to the technician at the back of the auditorium.

The lights switch off and the room is set into darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. ROGERS OFFICE

Protests and melee continue to stream on a live news broadcast, shown on mute through a digital display in Dr. Rogers's office. Dr. Rogers's attention is divided between worriedly watching and conversing over a phone call.

DR. ROGERS

(listens to call)

It's happening everywhere. This hasn't stopped since it aired.

Dr. Rogers listens with concern.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

It was your request to send her in here. And she was pretty straightforward with her malintent. But, he was there.

FLASHBACK OF ANGELA ROTHWELL INTERVIEW IN ATRIUM

Dr. Rogers looks with uncertainty back towards his scientific colleagues in the distance for confirmation. Maya and the other medical personnel share a look of concern.

A man's hand gently rests into position on Maya's shoulder from behind. She tilts her head to the side to listen to the indiscernible comments and then resumes her glance back towards Dr. Rogers. She immediately closes her eyes and opens them with a newly convicted reassurance. She nods with a trusting confirmation.

Dr. Rogers takes a deep breath and begins to answer Angela Rothwell's question.

FLASHBACK END

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

He conveyed his interest in the potential of my response. That I answer the question. So, I did.

-Audible reply is indiscernible.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
It's hard to explain, but the
research... the team, everything is
subject to his contributions at this
phase.

(listens to call)
For this to work, he is. Yes.

Dr. Rogers begins to show signs of unease. He uncomfortably re-adjusts in his office chair and begins to flip obsessively through his notebook pages.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
We can't do that. We're not ready.
(listens to call)
That would jeopardize the safety of
every one of these members. You of
all people know. The mind requires
a reconditioning first, you can't
just...

Dr. Rogers gets up and uncomfortably paces. He belligerently swipes the screen to turn off the news report.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - AUDITORIUM LECTURE HALL

The ambiance of the crowd's whispers fill the darkness of the auditorium.

Multi-colored lights beam from the hardware projectors at various levels of the room; all targeted on the middle of Jess's chest.

The laser lights create a 3D holographic projection of a 7-year old girl. Her high definition details digitally build as she walks out and in front of Jess's silhouette.

THE COUNSELOR
Why is it do you think, in the
childlikeness of our youth, that we
are more capable of accessing the
single most important area of our
brains?

The Holographic Young Girl looks back at Jess, giving her a quick glance before turning to face the audience.

HOLOGRAPHIC YOUNG GIRL
Hello everyone.

The auditorium ambiance, lit solely by the glow of the beams, is filled with a mixture of "hellos" and "ah how cute".

THE COUNSELOR
This is seven year old Jess by-the-way.

Jess reaches out towards the hologram and swipes her hand through the projected lights.

The Holographic Young Girl props her head up against her open hand and ponders upward. Where an oversized brain cerebrum appears to encase the young girl on all sides. She reaches up in wonder to touch a specific area of the brain, initializing a glow emanation around her small hand. The glowing throbs while synapse electrical currents shoot outward into various brain folds.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
The very place, locked away in young Jess's mind, that scholars, theologians and philosophers spend their entire lives trying to regain entry back into?

The Holographic Young Girl watches a frustrated holographic old man, holding an open book, pace across the stage in the foreground. While another scholarly gowned man shakes his head at an equation written on a chalkboard in the background.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
With the intentions of solving humanity's most complex problems.
Only to continue to fail. Again and again.

The man writing on the chalkboard writes a question mark next to the words: Death?, Suffering?, Purpose? And Fear?.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
And yet, during the naivety of our childhood, we were held in the protection of this cognitive superpower. Safe from the mental obstructions that spread like disease into our adulthood.

The Holographic Young Girl walks out from the brain shell hologram and lifts her hands upward to reveal a quick clothing change; into that of a superhero costume.

-The crowd ambiance erupts into cheers and celebratory applause.

The girl runs to hug a crying friend and unselfishly offers up a shared toy, while her cape flaps in the wind behind her. She skips away and jumps onto a couch to kiss her loving parents.

She playfully rolls off and onto an open sidewalk to dance in the pouring rain - next to a man hunched over, under the same storm cloud. The depressed onlooker begins to notice the girl's playfulness and looks up to the dark clouds as they dissipate, revealing a sunny weather forecast. The man stands upright and lifts his arms outward to the sky.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Allowing us to draw from a well of inherited qualities that would bring us intimately closer to the most important and perplexing mind concept that exists. Love. Obtaining it. Possessing it. Using it to conquer all with its power.

Jess, with a softened expression, covers her heart with her hands. Lacey looks around her and upward into the crowd of jovial faces.

The 3D depth of the Holographic Young Girl scales to a large 1D illustration outline, displayed on a set of oversized blueprints. There are grid lines and measurement markers surrounding the girl's holographic design schematic.

A series of light-projected scientists stand in front of the enlarged blueprint, ardently writing math equations in the margins. While a series of religious people pray to the blueprint on their knees.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Humankind has continued to search for millions of years for the source. The maker of this design. With the intent of accessing the full potentials of this little girl's coveted ability. And even though it was obvious to many of faith, it was still very much a mystery to men of science. Could belief alone ever be enough for them to answer these questions?

The Counselor turns to Maya and Rachel behind him. They both shrug their shoulders in a rehearsed fashion and walk out to stand side-by-side with The Counselor.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Well we're here today, in front of all of you, with proof... scientific evidence, that there is indeed an architect.

(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
One that has made it abundantly clear,
that there is indeed an origin to
our existence here.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. ROGERS OFFICE

Dr. Rogers continues to pace until he stops to pick up a glass tablet device. He scrolls neurotically over the display screen.

DR. ROGERS
Please, just...
(listens to call)
I know.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
But please, just allow us to get to
the next phase of the trials before
we even consider doing something
that rash.

Dr. Rogers listens intently. He expresses a discontent and stops to peer deeply into the screen below his gaze.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
This isn't just about money.
(listens to call)
It got us here, yes; but it's more
than that now. We need time. This
goes deeper than what we both thought
was happening here.

Dr. Rogers closes his eyes and locks his movements in place.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
Fine. I'll find a way. We'll have
to speed things up significantly
then. This is something he's not
going to understand.

Dr. Rogers quickly pulls the phone away from his ear. As he listens to the aggressive vocal volume, his eyes squeeze closed tighter.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
Then we have no choice... is what it
sounds like.

Dr. Rogers throws the tablet device across his desk. The cracked display screen shows the flickering digital profile of Tren Kasai.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - AUDITORIUM LECTURE HALL

The blueprint of the Holographic Young Girl is grabbed on both sides, by a set of oversized hands. The document is turned gently onto it's side and placed onto the surface of the stage. The hands continue to toil in a high-speed motion over the blueprint until they open slowly to gesture their completion. The hands reach inside to pull the girl up from within the document below, allowing her 3D self to rest comfortably in the cupped hands as they rise.

THE COUNSELOR

Not only is there scientific proof,
but this master craftsman has
graciously left us a trail of
breadcrumbs, that we've only recently
begun to follow back out, with a
message.

The hands slowly lower the Holographic Young Girl into a standing position on the floor, out in front of Jess. The Holographic Young Girl looks upward at the hands above her with adulation, as a glowing circular light begins to expand between the hand's touching index fingers. The glowing orb artifact is released in mid-air to float gently downward and into the Holographic Young Girl's head.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

A message that was encrypted, sealed
and recently discovered in an area
of our brain's pituitary gland, known
as the Absonite. Giving us access
to a pathway to lay before every one
of you.

A doorway is drawn from the holographic lights to separate the crowd from the overly excited 3D girl. A digital pathway begins to illuminate from the door and slowly extends into the middle of the seated members. The glowing orb in the Holographic Young Girl's head begins to pulsate, while the illuminated door opens to the room. The orb rises from her head and into a hovering star-field into the cosmos above her.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

With a certainty that this neural
roadmap is the gateway between our
mortal lives on earth and the life
that awaits us after.

The crowd erupts into a roar of applause.

The house lights of the lecture hall turn back on, to a room filled with an ambiance of lively crosstalk and the scuffle of movement; as members collectively progress toward the exit.

Jess stumbles from the stage, in an absolute wonder, to convene with group-7 in the front row. She floats across the central staircase in euphoria, oblivious to the entrance of Dr. Rogers, who crosses her path with an overly serious demeanor. He enters the ground floor stage to assemble with Maya, Rachel and The Counselor.

As the front row begins to shift toward the stairs to exit, Pep is keen to notice the unusual body language of Dr. Rogers and the quick shift on the faces of his colleagues.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY HALLWAY

The stream of wide-eyed members disperse from the swinging doors of the auditorium into the hallway. Pep is quick to shove his glass tablet into an opening in the front of his jumpsuit, unnoticed amongst the chaos of the surrounding congestion. He turns abruptly to Tren, walking alongside him in a state of contagious exhilaration.

PEP
Oh, shit. I forgot my device.

Tren collects himself from his stupor to respond.

TREN
It's all good, I'll wait.

PEP
I'll catch up. The Tree, right?
Meet you there in a bit. I'm ok.

Tren, still speechless from his euphoric disposition, just nods and drifts off into the shuffle of moving members. Pep turns against the flow of traffic, back toward the auditorium entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - AUDITORIUM LECTURE HALL

Pep inconspicuously squeezes past a handful of remaining members on their way out. He clumsily slides to his knees, behind the back of the seats at the top row, and lowers himself suspiciously to the ground. He snoops a view of Maya, Rachel, Dr.

Rogers and The Counselor below, the last to occupy the room, through the obstructed gap between two seats. Their banter quickly subsides as they turn towards the top of the room in Pep's direction.

Pep is startled by the creek from the opening doors at the top of the auditorium. He ducks his head between his legs and listens to the stride of another person entering, walking obliviously past him and down the row of stairs. Pep restores his composure and peeks back through the small sliver view to the center of the room.

Lacey apprehensively approaches the group from the stairs as they resume their banter.

MAYA

This wasn't the plan. We can't possibly ensure their safety if we do this.

Lacey steps closer to the group with a heightened concern.

LACEY

What are you talking about? Rogers, what is she talking about?

Dr. Rogers lowers his head and sits deep into a seat in the front row of the auditorium.

MAYA

I thought we specifically developed the program duration for this very reason.

Maya looks to The Counselor with a defeated plea.

MAYA (CONT'D)

From the beginning, that's all you spoke of. For this to work; to trust in you, we just had to remain patient. That the mind requires time.

Dr. Rogers softly interrupts from his slouched over position in the chair.

DR. ROGERS

Listen, Maya. We don't have that luxury anymore. I'm sorry. I'm sure the Counselor was aware that there would eventually be outside factors to contend with. Right?

Dr. Rogers looks to The Counselor and then away with an almost shame.

Lacey is startled into a glitched visual of her extended hand, held out in front of her by the Himalayan Villager boy; attempting to lead her forward.

MAYA

I won't allow you to create some assembly line with these people, where we can just...

Maya discreetly catches Lacey out of the corner of her eye. Lacey quickly yanks her hand back through the open air and double-takes to regain her sense of composure. Maya looks concernedly to Lacey's abnormal behavior, unrecognized by the others, and then desperately attempts to regain the momentum of her petition.

MAYA (CONT'D)

This is about funding, isn't it? This place? The deal that you said you made for us. Well, we don't need all this. We never did.

Dr. Rogers draws from a frustration.

DR. ROGERS

How do you think we've all been able to stay in this perfect little utopia, Maya?

Maya reaches to her side to embrace Lacey's arm.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

And, you're right. We can't just live in this bubble forever. We've seen what's was happening out there.

Lacey shakes her head in contempt.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

We have to deliver something before we don't get that chance. The death date research was only the beginning. We need to finish this.

Pep covers his heavy inhalations with his shaking hand. Rachel looks up from her tablet screen.

RACHEL

Rogers is right. We knew what the risks were coming here. For scaling like this. We had to...

Rachel looks to Dr. Rogers for confirmation to continue with her withheld revelation. He nods.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
We've been working on something else,
Maya.

Maya looks to Dr. Rogers with a newfound perplexity.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
What happened here; with him...

Rachel looks to The Counselor with reverence.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
It's more important than all of us.
Even the test subjects. We can't
let that distract us from the bigger
picture.

Lacey surveys the scientists with a scowl.

LACEY
What can be bigger than them? The
members. Us. Life Ascension. Do
you know what they're talking about?

Lacey looks befuddled at The Counselor.

LACEY (CONT'D)
Why are you not saying anything?

The scientists are quick to follow her stare towards The Counselor. The Counselor remains contentedly upright with his arms crossed comfortably in front of him; speechless.

DR. ROGERS
We've come a long way, Lace. I think
I speak for us all, when I say we
can't sacrifice everything we've
done here. We just need to do
something that can buy us a little
more time. And as much as we've
tried to isolate you from what's out
there, time is the only currency
worth anything to them.

Lacey begins to pace the floor.

LACEY
Out there? Aren't they the ones who
think we're all crazy? I heard what
they said.

Lacey approaches Dr. Rogers with an assertive whisper.

LACEY (CONT'D)

You said they'd never understand, remember? Then how can what we're doing in here be worth anything to them? Why would you sell your soul for that?

DR. ROGERS

There are things that haven't been told yet, Lace.

Dr. Rogers and Maya lock eyes.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

And I'd sell whatever soul I have left to make sure that happens.

The Counselor looks with deep sadness at Dr. Rogers and approaches him slowly.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

I have to make some changes to the program, your program, in order to do that. And I need you to understand.

Dr. Rogers looks to his team with a blind conviction.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

I need you all to understand.

Rachel nods to affirm and looks to Maya, who is too distracted biting at her index fingernail to respond. The Counselor slides his hand gently over Dr. Rogers's shoulder and leans in to speak softly.

THE COUNSELOR

I understand. But do not forget that the only true currency of value, resides solely in the quality of our consciousness, my good friend. That is not for sale. That is what your discovery is still out to prove, is it not?

Dr. Rogers nods with a degree of uncertainty. The Counselor looks deeply into his eyes and smiles boyishly with excitement.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

If there is nothing else worth gaining at the expense of your beautiful soul, then of course I will help you.

Pep backs away from his view of The Counselor's indiscernible whisper, as Lacey storms back up the stairs beside him. The top auditorium doors close loudly, as Pep rests weakly up-against the back of the seating.

Maya watches Lacey's exit with an unsettled agitation.

DR. ROGERS
I'll inform the members tonight.

Rachel scrolls over her glass tablet.

RACHEL
I'll send a mass alert through the facility, right now.

Pep scuffles to unzip the front of his jumpsuit to frantically extract the hidden, tucked away tablet.

DR. ROGERS
After the Tree. At the Atrium courtyard. I'll make the announcement. Send it.

Pep desperately bear hugs his tablet. The display screen shows an alert popup illuminate the area between his clinched arms.

-The ALERT sound is muffled enough to go undetected.

Pep quietly exhales with a deep relief.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUXURY PENTHOUSE APARTMENT, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Akito Kasai exits the back door of a luxury vehicle, held in place by AKITO'S DRIVER - a subservient mannered elderly Japanese man. Akito uncomfortably positions in his perfectly tailored black suit to look to the top of the sky-rise apartments above him; with a vexation. A wealthy middle-aged couple exits the building lobby and walks into the crossfire of pedestrians surrounding Akito's looming presence. They are drawn to cast a greeting gesture toward Akito; however, he is quick to absorb the nicety and return a cold shoulder.

INT. LUXURY PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

Akito enters the gutted apartment and throws the key fob into the sea of glass particles covering the wooden flooring. His dress shoes crunch over the glass, into the heart of the room, and then suddenly stop. Akito slowly bends to the floor, swipes his finger over the surface and then raises a blood smeared appendage to the front of his face.

Akito surveys the blood trail splatter in various locations, leading to the bedroom. He stands upright to irritably face the destination.

INT. LUXURY PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Akito stands perfectly still in the open doorframe of the empty room. He surveys the room and smells into the air with a deep inhalation.

The closet door opens from the interior. Akito's glare tilts from low to a precision stop above his leveled sight. His hand reaches over a dusty shelving surface until it rests completely still at the back. Akito draws in his reach and unhinges his tight grip to reveal Tren's Mother's metallic pill bottle case. His eyes grow with anger as he slowly pushes his nose down the side of the familiar artifact.

INT. VEHICLE - DUSK

Akito sits deeply into the black leather seating as the backdoor closes at his side. He meticulously straightens the creased fabric of his suit and settles his view into the computer display in his lap.

The vehicle accelerates into the busy city street.

Akito releases the thumb drive at the side port, next to the display screen with the Angela Rothwell and Dr. Rogers interview playing.

The audio from the interview is indiscernible. Akito turns up the volume on Dr. Rogers's response.

DR. ROGERS (O.S.)

The Spirit Guide said that we were all separated only by thin glass. Like windows. It wasn't light that our patients spoke of when they were able to see through it. He said, it would appear bright to them at first because they had never used their true eyes to see before.

Akito is quick to pause the interview, as the glass partition at the rear of the driver's cab is lowered. Akito's Driver tilts his head to the inside, towards Akito, and moves into another lane of traffic.

AKITO'S DRIVER
(speaking Japanese)
Hoteru ni modorimasu ka?

Translated: Back to the hotel?

AKITO KASAI
Keikaku no henk?.

Translated: Change of plans.

Akito resumes the interview playback. Dr. Rogers responds with a deep mysticism as Angela listens with widened eyes.

DR. ROGERS (O.S.)
It's in the darkness they become aware of this. Don't waste your time thinking that our patients were leaving this world and going into another, he said. If we are merely glass, who is looking through us is what you must come to find out.

Akito looks up to respond to the driver's inquiry. Akito's Driver looks back with a seriousness through the rear view mirror, as Akito gestates on his response.

CUT TO:

INT. ANGELA'S LOFT - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

The night fills the long windowed walls of a disheveled equipment studio, filled with remnants of apartment furniture buried beneath various cases and technologies. Sped up and reversed audio samples are heard in the distant ambiance and grow louder toward the glowing light in the corner of the room.

Angela fights to keep her eyes open in the glow of a blue light display screen; sat atop the desk responsible for holding her head slightly upright in her folded arms. Her limp hand turns at a circular knob attached to a hardware box below her. The knob's forward motion yields a set of sped up vocals and erroneous sounds. Her display screen quickly toggles through footage clips from the downtown city street riots. Shaking as it progresses in fast forward, revealing Angela running through the enveloping smoke and chaos of the crowds.

An intercom BUZZ rings out in the distance.

Angela pulls herself up in her chair with a sense of alertness and sits in the silence until the second BUZZ.

She turns on the lights around the loft to look for something hidden in the creases of an equipment covered couch.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
This wasn't the deal. I still have time left. Where the hell is this damn thing?

She approaches the button on the intercom, blinking on the wall next to the door, with her taser in hand. As she musters up the willpower to proceed with a button press, a soft KNOCK on the door echos aloud. She speaks softly under her breath.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
What's going on here?

Angela hears an indiscernible voice coming from the other side of the heavy door.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Why are you at my door? I didn't buzz you in, so that means you're not welcome here.

An indiscernible vocal continues outside the door.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
I can't hear a damn thing you're saying.

Angela listens intently for a reply in the silence.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
I still have time. Did we not agree on that? That's when we talk.

The silence persists.

Angela gently checks the safety chain on the door and cautiously unlocks the deadbolt below. She cracks the door open slowly to peek into the hallway from the small gap in the door frame. She is unable to see anything until she is startled by a soft vocal.

JOE
Wait. Please.

An older caucasian man, Joe Resnick, steps into the line of sight and strips off a few topical articles of clothing to reveal his face.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
Who the hell are you? And why are you playing incognito at my door in the middle of the night?

JOE
If they knew I was here...
(reflective pause)
Listen, I'm Joe Resnick. I saw your interview.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I don't give a damn what you saw.
Why are you at my house? I'm closing
this door right now, and you need to
leave before the cops show up.

Angela begins to push the door closed.

JOE

I worked with Dr. Rogers for 15
years. I'm the whistleblower.
Please, I can prove it.

The door hinges shut but doesn't reach the final spring latch
click to close.

JOE (CONT'D)

Here. I knew you wouldn't believe
me, so I brought this. Just watch
it, please.

Angela pushes the door open slowly to size up Joe with a
continued suspicion. Her eye is drawn down to a video camera,
held up to the crack in the door. Joe gestures to it with
his eyes and then presses into the top of the device. The
small viewscreen lights up to reveal Dr. Rogers covering up
a patient on an exam table.

All vocals are heard off-screen.

RACHEL (O.S.)

We can't log this. We can't show
this you guys.

The camera view turns to Maya's expression of dread and then
is pushed down into the muffle of the exam bed linens.

DR. ROGERS (O.S.)

Are you still filming this? Joe I'm
serious, shut it down. Now.

The audio cuts out briefly before the camera drops to the
bed. The barely visible footage is stabilized on a blurred
frame of the patient's foot, protruding from the sheets at
the end of the bed.

JOE (O.S.)

Ok. Jesus. It's off.

MAYA (O.S.)

How is this happening? This doesn't
make sense.

The foot jolts before the frame fills with static.

Angela looks up from the camera and to Joe with shock.

JOE

There's another experiment you don't know about, Angela. It's why I left. Rogers only told you what he was told to tell you.

Joe is interrupted by the door's chain lock releasing and swinging into the open crack in the door.

-Joe sits, fidgeting, facing Angela across from him on a parallel facing couch. Angela brews with curiosity while stabilizing the stem of her full glass of red wine on her lap.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Well... Let's cut right to it then, shall we? Where's the facility?

JOE

I don't know that.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

What are we doing here then, Joe?

Joe looks around the room suspiciously.

JOE

I left right before. Before the whole Life Ascension smokescreen.

He gets up to draw the blinds on the window separating their view.

JOE (CONT'D)

But I know how it happened. Why it happened. I waited years for this, Angela.

Joe pulls the closed blind back to glance out.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Are you being followed?

JOE

Let's just say, the government agency that initially funded this is a bit more invested in knowing before you.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Why me, then?

Joe sifts through the cases and loose hardware debris off in the distance.

JOE

Because after I saw your interview,
I knew they couldn't just cover it
up anymore. You're attached to some
free speech version of a narrative
they can't just shut off now.

Angela takes an aggressive swig from her wine glass. Joe finds a portable sound system under the wreckage of equipment.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

What are you doing?

JOE

Does this work? Is it loud?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

It should, why? A friend of mine
uses it to concentrate or relax...
or whatever he thinks.

JOE

You need to know the full story,
Angela. I need you to tell it.
Everything. Let's start with the
guy who got you mixed up in all this.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Wholly shit, Joe. You know who hired
me?

Joe presses play on the sound system. The room is filled with a loud classical french jazz quartet music. Joe sits beside Angela and begins speaking. His voice is indiscernible under the blaring music.

Angela adheres to his moving mouth with a rare astonishment plastered to her face.

-Angela pours the remaining splash from the wine bottle and set's it down in front of her display screen at her desk. She moves the knob forward and then backwards. The sound of the footage reveals a crowd of rioters chanting and yelling. The audible is repeated as she continues to loop the exact same moment. She tilts her head back to swallow the last gulp of wine from her glass.

The display screen is paused on a piece of footage that reveals Tren Kasai looking out of a black sprinter van at the sign-up kiosk.

Angela text messages to SEAN CLEMMENS P.I. on her phone.

On screen text: I need an email for a Tren Kasai. Urgent. I'll explain later.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
You owe me. You better text me back,
Sean.

-Angela picks up her phone to her ear.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Call Christoph.

Angela impatiently waits under a faint dial tone.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Hey. You're never going to believe
what just happened. I know how to
save our asses... and get our lives
back. Fucking unbelievable. Hold
on.

Angela looks down at her phone with urgency.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Thank you, thank you Sean. Yes.

Angela picks the phone back up to her ear.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Nothing. I need you and Benny to
meet me somewhere. Bring the van.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - TREN'S ROOM BLOCK

Tren awakens in bed to Carter's aggressive stumble from the bathroom exit. Carter articulates through his slurred speech.

CARTER
Oh no. Have I been a bad influence
on you, Tren? It's not like you to
be late like this, bro.

Tren pulls himself up from his slumber.

CARTER (CONT'D)
Either that or I had you pinned wrong.
You came across like just another
sheep in the flock to me, but maybe
there's more to your mystery, huh?

Carter collects his balance and works his fingers through his unkempt bleached bangs.

TREN
What are you talking about?

CARTER

Ah, looks like I was right. A sheep.

TREN

Let me know if this is some kind of conversation, or you're just talking to talk.

CARTER

They sent out a cattle call to our tracking devices earlier, sheep. I assume you haven't checked it.

Tren slides his circular tablet across the top of the bed and into his possession. He reads briefly from the display, before swiping the meeting announcement alert message from the screen to reveal his hacked inbox. He studies the new message from Angela Rothwell with suspect, but is distracted by Carter's enthusiastic quip.

CARTER (CONT'D)

You're late, Tren. You better hurry.
Before your brain score goes down.
Run.

Tren hustles to open the room door but hesitates to close it behind him. He suspiciously peeks through to watch Carter uncomfortably sit atop his bed in a daze.

Tren attempts to rebuttal a response back into the room, but refrains himself.

Carter slurs out a vocal into his lap.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Tell God I'm running behind schedule
for this one, cool?

Carter forces a hollow laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - ATRIUM

Tren walks hurriedly into a restless crowd, jammed shoulder-to-shoulder at the center of the concrete courtyard.

Dr. Rogers's indiscernible vocal echos into the vastness of the facility. Where all group members are uniformly packed around an elevated concrete walkway. Standing on it's looming surface is Dr. Rogers, offset and out-in-front of Maya and Rachel.

Tren walks into the exterior perimeter wall of the crowd and progresses toward the center.

Dr. Rogers is heard mid-announcement.

DR. ROGERS

...And how it will come to soon change your lives, forever. However, now you'll have an opportunity to know even sooner. The new fast track version of the program, that we're initializing as of tomorrow, will allow all of you to find out what you came here to know... but, in a fraction of the time.

The crowd ambiance is cast into a celebratory chant.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

That's right thirty days. Thirty days instead of a grueling six months. And then your back to the lives that you've sacrificed so generously to be here.

Lacey, compressed into a conspicuous corner of the room, looks on with grief.

Dr. Rogers's indiscernible vocal continues to project in the background as she internalizes a conflicted emotional angst. She speaks aloud to herself.

LACEY

They aren't ready. How dare you.

Lacey turns and moves off-screen. Dr. Rogers basks in his own enthusiasm and bends down to level out with the crowd below him.

DR. ROGERS

You're all in for a promotion. So, congratulations Life Ascension.
Let's hear it.

The ambiance is triumphant, but there are mixed emotional expressions amongst the faces in the crowd.

Tren curiously surveys the polarity of reactions. He is then quick to notice Pep violently pushing his way out from the interior of the crowd, towards the Atrium exit.

Tren is secretly watched from a distant location as he slips through the crowd to follow after Pep.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - HALLWAYS

Tren is keen to notice movement out of the corner of his eye, so his pace quickens. He follows in the direction of a trailing figure, as it rounds the corner in front of him.

Tren is soft on his steps and sparingly with his vocal intensity as he calls out under his breath for Pep.

TREN

Pep, it's me. Hey. Where are you going?

Tren continues to trail through a series of maze-like hallways in his intensified pursuit into the unknown areas of the facility.

CUT TO:

INT. ECO GARDEN - HALLWAY ENTRANCE

Tren stops at the access entryway into the Eco Gardens. He inspects the absence of exit routes and proceeds cautiously into the shadows. He looks curiously at the series of oversized air ducts along the perimeter, pumping fresh oxygen from the gardens into the facility.

Tren walks slowly towards the vent cover, that looks slightly askew, to discover a small smudge of ink on its metallic surface. He is then quick to notice that the panel is unfastened and hinged to the side with the potential to slide open.

Tren speaks under his breath.

TREN

So, this is what you've been up to,
huh?

INT. FACILITY - ECO GARDEN - VENTILATION SHAFT

Tren slides the vent grate closed behind him and sits in the confined crawl space of a passageway that trails off into the vast distance ahead.

TREN

Pep? This is crazy.

Tren's vocal echos into the overwhelming airstream ambiance.

Tren ventures uncomfortably on his hands and knees through the pipe-like corridor, deeper into the narrowing and darkening path.

Tren, is quick to scrape across an area, that at first glance looks like to be a small circular opening; from the view point of his awkward position above. Tren proceeds to push the hatch inward, to view a full panoramic view of the hidden area on the backside of the light panels - surrounding the Eco Gardens.

INT. ECO GARDEN - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

As soon as Tren's feet touch down, after dropping from the tubing hatch above, he rises to look around in disbelief. There are abandoned moss covered ventilation pipes, vine entangled water filtration tanks, and overgrown foliage populations that coat every square inch of the overgrown boiler room area - hidden on the opposing side of the Eco-Garden light panels.

Tren continues his neck rotation around to scope the uncharted natural wonder of the secret garden, until he is startled by a movement behind him. Tren turns back fast to lock eyes with Pep, frozen in place, looking up with neutral wide eyes and a pen held to a fresh set of skin illustrations on his arm.

Tren softens his expression.

TREN

What is this, Pep? This is... how did you find this place?

Pep lowers his head back down to his obsessive sketching

PEP

You'll never believe me. You'll think I'm even more crazy.

Tren walks slowly over the moss covered ground. He pulls at a handful of enveloped jungle, to expose the maintenance equipment area beneath, completely consumed by the encompassing growth surrounding it on all sides.

TREN

Pep, if I'm here, doesn't that mean we're both crazy? Please, what is this place?

Tren follows the sound of water traveling through the overhead irrigation pipes, in route to the Eco Garden on the other side; creating a sound similar to that of a deep underwater ocean ambiance. His eyes leisurely follow the maze of pipes back down and startle at the sight of Lacey, staring at him from off in the distance.

LACEY
Maybe I can explain. Is that ok,
Pep?

Pep, is staggered by the response and turns around to an upright posture on his knees. He nods with an inquisitory cluelessness.

LACEY (CONT'D)
You found it didn't you? You're the only person that ever has.

Lacey walks up softly to disarm the unease of the boys.

TREN
You two knew about this?

LACEY
This was my only secret for all these years. Since the beginning. Before the members; before Life Ascension... I was here; alone. Everyone was too buried in their work to even notice when and where I would get lost in this place.

Lacey tilts her head upward and turns slowly in place. She suspends her arms outward to glide through the open air.

LACEY (CONT'D)
I can't remember what it's even like out there anymore. But this is what I imagined it to be. My paradise. The conditions back here must have been perfect for this to happen.

Lacey stops to acknowledge Pep.

LACEY (CONT'D)
When they started to first recruit, I left the only trace of a reminder to myself in that message; so I'd never forget.

Pep pulls himself out of complete wonder to speak softly under his breath.

PEP
Look to the vents.

Lacey listens to Pep speak the words and smiles, as she fondly reminisces.

LACEY

I haven't been back here since. It was painted over and repurposed for the first members the following day.

Tren looks to Lacey with an unusual curiosity.

TREN

So nobody knows about this, but you?

LACEY

Just me. I spent my childhood in here.

TREN

So if you were here before us and you didn't follow us in, why did you come back?

LACEY

Probably for the same reason as Pep.

Pep pulls up to look Tren in the eyes with a braved sincerity.

PEP

I'm scared, Tren. I mean, the question... The question we all ask our entire lives. To now know the answer to that and that it's real is... Come on. And the weirdest part is I know it's true, but my head still doesn't want to believe it.

Tren breathes deep and settles into an uncomfortable vulnerability.

TREN

I'm starting to think it goes deeper than just belief. I was pretty convinced, up until a few days ago, that my entire life was some kind of malfunctioning program loop. I had no choice but to believe in that. It's all I had.

Tren gives in to a heaviness and sits at a distance across from Pep.

TREN (CONT'D)

And then to now know that there's an entire design schematic crafted around what we are; it's kind of a strange relief to be honest.

PEP

That's exactly my point. I couldn't have been made like this, Tren.
What happened to me? Somehow I slipped through inspection or something. The "date reveal" was one thing, but this... I didn't want to know this.

LACEY

They knew this would happen. After all these years, they've never pressed like this. A Fast Track? There were protocols in place. I don't understand what's happening. You two should of never been exposed to this yet, even if you did pass the psych evaluation test.

Tren and Pep share a guilt-ridden glance, before dropping their line of sight into the thick moss floor.

Lacey sits beside Pep as he intensifies his neurotic sketching.

Lacey softly speaks into an almost whisper to Pep.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Hey. I saw you earlier. On the floor. Hiding in the back of the auditorium.

Pep's pen motion suddenly stops.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I didn't say anything, because you being there made it feel like I wasn't as alone in there. To hear what you did, I'm so sorry for that. And I'm thankful.

Pep peaks up to bask in Lacey's glassy eyed reflection. She looks up to Tren to resume her compromised emotional appeal.

LACEY (CONT'D)

And just because an inventor sets out to create something perfect, doesn't mean their imperfect prototype isn't modeled perfectly.

Tren ponders the statement with an unusual assumption.

TREN

Sounds like... the Counselor.

LACEY

It was something I needed to hear too. A long time ago. I never forgot it.

Lacey stands to an unexpected realization.

LACEY (CONT'D)

There's something in here I want to show you guys.

Lacey extends her hand to Pep, seated below her, and to Tren at her side.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Close your eyes. Come on. It'll be worth it. Trust me.

Tren and Pep close their eyes and Lacey pulls them off into the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY, OPERATING ROOM

A keyboard stroke superimposes a brain map diagram of a live fMRI signal on-screen, where a pulsing red signal throbs in front an outlined grid.

Dr. Rogers moves into position over a customized exam-table at the base of an elevated platform. Rachel peeks over her screen from the streamlined tech populated around its bevel.

RACHEL

Are we secured in here? Did you check?

DR. ROGERS

The labs closed, Rachel. The techs don't come back here this late.

RACHEL

You didn't lock us in? What about Maya?

Rachel storms from her equipment station toward the mirrored doored entrance into the lounge. An electronic door lock CLICKS into place in the background, startling Dr. Rogers as he grabs for a scalpel from a lineup of metallic tools.

DR. ROGERS

I'll make the incision for you here.

Dr. Rogers pulls the surgical cloth down from the back of a patient's neck, to reveal a multitude of triangular incisions

leading down the spinal column. The scar tissue becomes more fresh with each mark as it progresses downward.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
We're running out of surface area to cut.

Dr. Rogers looks to Rachel with an unexpected seriousness.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
We won't be able to run line to the stem soon.

RACHEL
Too far down and we lose control of the feed. We only have a few tries left.

Dr. Rogers pulls the mask on his face up to the bridge of his protective eyewear.

DR. ROGERS
Then let's make this one count.

Dr. Rogers's focus tenses up. A slow SLICE of wet flesh is heard off-screen - below his squinted eye view.

CUT TO:

ECO GARDEN - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

Lacey walks up to a sudden halt with her head tilted back and her bright eyes fixed above her sight; off-screen. Tren and Pep are revealed at her sides with their eyes closed.

LACEY
I can't believe this is still here.
Ok, open em up.

Two long and worn electric cord lines dangle alongside one another, fixed to the cement foundation beam at the top of the building; connecting a stainless steel medical tray seat below. The three onlookers in the background approach the lonesome makeshift swing, covered in vines, dripping with precipitation and hovering in place in the lush foreground.

TREN
No way. You made this? You climbed all the way up there to run those...
What are those extension cords?
What?

LACEY
Yup. I was invincible in here.

Pep secures a cord line in his grip. He gestures timidly toward the seat held in place and then to Lacey to sit. Lacey laughs and rests back into the wet seat with a familiar nostalgia.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I used to swing here for hours. I have this thing... where I rarely sleep, but for some reason the motion of just floating here...

Lacey pushes off to a slow glide.

LACEY (CONT'D)

I would wake up just hanging over the edge with my feet scraping across the moss. Without any concept of time.

PEP

Wait. That's a good thing? That's terrorizing.

Lacey plants her feet firmly in place and looks to Pep. She appears forthcoming with the emergence of an embarrassment.

LACEY

I've never told anyone about it. I'm so desensitized to what it does to me now, I'm sorry. You must think I'm...

Pep notices Lacey internalize with a slight hesitancy and absorbs her reaction with an immediate wrongdoing.

PEP

No. I'm so awkward. I didn't mean it like that, Lacey. I meant...

TREN

...That we're all crazy is what Pep is trying to say.

Tren reaches to slide his hand over Lacey's shoulder to comfort her. She immediately turns to the surprise of the familiar touch gesture. Her eyes open large to an overlayed vision of a concrete floor, out in front of her. She can hear a dialog between Rachel and Dr. Rogers over the machine BEEPS and heavy breathing into a face-opening of an exam chair.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY, OPERATING ROOM

A set of wingtip dress shoes slide beneath the view of the patient and over the concrete floor. Dr. Rogers leans over in ear shot distance to speak softly.

DR. ROGERS

If you can hear me, I'm calling in that favor. This is where I need your help. Help me by staying in as long as you can this time.

Rachel carefully moves the dial on the endoscope's handle. The video display screen shows the line progressing deeper into the brain cavity.

The pulsating tone signal accelerates.

RACHEL

Ok, we're in. Check the time.

Rachel turns through the resistance on her control dial. The tone of the EKG pace quickens.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

His heart rhythms are getting more erratic, doc. You know how this plays out, what's the move?

Dr. Rogers looks at the time clock digits as it rolls past 0:03:14.

DR. ROGERS

We're about to pass the previous dive time in 3, 2 and...

RACHEL

Maya would be pissed. We were always fully out in 3 minutes flat.

DR. ROGERS

We've been here before, Rachel. He can hold this. We use the defibrillator if he levels. Are you getting anything?

RACHEL

His heart is going into arrhythmia.

Dr. Rogers raises his voice in frustration.

DR. ROGERS

Are you getting any transmissions? There were wave readouts last time. Frequency signals. We both saw it.

RACHEL
I'm pulling out. He'll die, Rogers.

Rachel's display picks up a sound frequency channel. The continuous sound static is disrupted by an irregular high pitched SHRIEK.

Rachel's nerves shift into an intense rush.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Wait... We're picking up an open channel. This is it. Here it is again.

The EKG bottoms out to a solid BEEP.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Oh my God, he's flat. Put the paddles on him now, Rogers. Rogers? Damnit, listen to me. Shock em, now.

All sound drops out around Dr. Rogers, as he sits in absolute stillness. His eyes remain wide and locked on the body convulsing below him.

CUT TO:

ECO GARDEN - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

Lacey continues to squeeze her eyes closed tight as she listens to the flatline ringing in her head. She slowly opens them to the comfort of Tren and Pep standing beside her on the swing, oblivious to her hallucination. She takes a deep breathe and neutralizes the incident with a forced smirk.

LACEY
Crazy, together? I like that.

PEP
Me too.

Tren lowers his open hand, palm up, below both Pep and Lacey. Lacey lowers her hand, palm up, to rest atop Tren's hand. Pep follows suit. There unorthodox handshake sits below their shared laughter.

LACEY
Our pact is sealed then?

TREN
We do this together. You in, Pep?

Pep, for the first time, stretches his face muscles to express an unusually oversized grin.

PEP
Life Ascension.

The "Life Ascension" sentiment is echoed in comradery amongst the group.

THE END OF PART TWO