

THE ABSONITE - PARTS 1-3
an Original Show Series, Screenplay by
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INT. SKYRISE, ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Tren, a mid-twenty-something Asian tech-hipster, dressed in all black trendy fashion, longingly stares through the elevator's transparent glass interior walls and out at the night's vast skyline of large metropolitan city lights.

The elevator continues to descend swiftly through the neon light streaks reflected from the building's exterior glass panels.

Text on screen: Tokyo, Japan.

Tren nudges closer to the black designer suitcases positioned upright on the floor between himself and Tren's Mother, a petite and frail middle-aged Asian woman - who appears to look much older under her oversized upscale black trench coat. She watches intently as the two-digit red digital numbers continue to slowly decrease above the door - from 32... 31... 30... all the while discretely digging her small fingers into the ground floor (G) button on the elevator's control panel. She repeatedly pushes the button until she is overwhelmed by her sudden and unruly coughing.

Tren watches reluctantly as she desperately pulls a metallic pill bottle case from her coat pocket.

TREN
(speaking English
with Japanese accent)
The drivers out front for us.
Everything is going to be ok now.
Almost there "Okaasan".
(translated "mother")
.

She lowers her hand from her pale face, tilts her head upward and swallows painfully. She looks back and out to admire the cityscape view from the glass interior.

TREN'S MOTHER
(speaking Japanese)
I have forgotten... just how beautiful
it is.

She extends her frail hand to Tren's open hand embrace.

TREN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
(speaking Japanese)
Do you remember when I use to count
down for you... when you were scared
as a child? After every deep breath;
tou/ten,
(MORE)

TREN'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
(deep breath)
Kokonotsu/nine...

Tren repeats the digit in Japanese and then takes a deep breath.

TREN KASAI
Yattsu/eight...

A soft CHIME alerts abruptly and the elevator begins to slowly halt to a stop. TENSE MUSIC.

TREN'S MOTHER
Nanatsu/seven...

The 13th floor is digitally frozen above the closed doors below. Tren and Tren's Mother cautiously back step and stare straight ahead in an uncomfortable anticipation.

TREN KASAI
Muttsu/six...

Tren takes another deep breath.

A large, suited Heavyset Japanese Man stands alone, inversely facing the opening doors. He enters the elevator slowly with a domineering presence and strangely neutral expression. He inserts a specialized key fab into the control console on the side of the closing doors and selects a numberless floor button under the highlighted Ground Floor (G). Upon pushing the blank button, the orange omni glow on the (G) button darkens.

HEAVYSET ASIAN MAN
(speaking Japanese)
You are still free to leave after,
but he has requested that you see
something first.

Tren and his Mother continue to face forward with a shared catatonic dismay. Tren's Mother tightens her grip onto her sons hand.

INT. SKYRISE, PRIVATE LOUNGE

The elevator doors open from the outside and into the minimal lounge-like floor-plan. The sound ambiance is filled with loud banter and cocktail glass CLANKS. As Tren and Tren's Mother proceed to walk cautiously from the elevator and into the darkened lounge, they enter into the radius of neon backlit glass tables full of belligerent business men. At the center of the circular room, is a large cylindrical digital panel that emanates a solid white light around a 360 degree - 20ft diameter.

The entire room faces this high-tech landmark.

Two Japanese women, dressed in sleek black kimonos - stabilizing their cocktail drink trays at their hips, proceed to elegantly showcase an open table at the center of the room. Tren and Tren's Mother proceed to look curiously around the room before hesitantly seating.

Tren and Tren's Mother are watched from a table across the room through a cloud of smoke and a match light held out in front of a man's face silhouette. AKITO KASAI is slowly revealed as he leans forward into the light with his gold laced cigarette between his lips. He is a middle aged Japanese man, who is astutely postured with an authoritative demeanor - dressed in a distinguished business attire. Akito Kasai blows a stream of smoke through his nostrils, wets his lips and stands powerfully upright.

The room immediately grows still and silent. Akito lifts his drink.

AKITO KASAI

We call ourselves scientists,
technological masterminds,
visionaries... innovators, don't we?

A muffled BURP is heard in the distance of the room's reasonably settled ambiance. Akito Kasai turns aggressively in the direction of the outburst and nods softly to INVESTOR 1, a drunken Japanese businessman. Investor 1 covers his mouth briefly to mock a polite gesture.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

But we are merely dogs. Made in the
image of our original... sloppy
programmers. But, none the less, we
are creators of the same lineage
aren't we?

Akito Kasai walks into the crowd toward Investor 1, who is groping a set of young Asian women at his sides.

Tren and Tren's Mother watch skittishly from afar.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

We are merely a flawed sentient life,
just like them, who project a failsafe
of hope for each new proceeding
generation. So that the illusion of
evolution, of moral betterment can
free us from our own guilt. For
creating such a shit piece of art.

Akito Kasai, expressionless, stares deeply into the back of Investor 1's face.

The room occupant's expressions quickly shift from light hearted smirks to tense stares.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)
It's been tens of thousands of years
now, and we continue to bark like
dogs, don't we?

Akito Kasai reaches deeply into the inside of his sport coat jacket. Investor 1 drops his hands to his sides and looks upon Akito with an unexpected apprehension. Akito is quick to pull his arm out to reveal a small handheld remote in his grip. Investor 1 breathes relief deep into his chest, while the room erupts into a relieved laughter.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)
Kasai Games will become a new God.
One that refuses to follow the ones
before us. And if we continue to
live as dogs, we will always be bound
to their same failures. But not
anymore.

Akito looks around the room with an exaggerated smile and presses his thumb proudly into the small device. The white digital display pixels of the screen, wrapped around the large cylindrical hardware at the center of the room, flicker off and into a transparency. Revealing a perfect view into the interior of the large tube; kept digitally veiled until now.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)
Behold. A working prototype to
dethrone our predecessors.

Inside, an UNCONSCIOUS MAN is seated in a minimalistic form fitted seat with two assistants facing toward the opposing sides of his closed-eye face. ASSISTANT 1, holds up a nano-sized microchip set contained in a single transparent capsule, pressed securely between his index and thumb.

Tren leans close to his mother and looks discretely over her shoulder at the few open exits at the back of the room.

TREN
Be ready, ok? Hold my hand.

ASSISTANT 2, strums his black surgical glove through the hair of the Unconscious Man, to reveal the fresh surgical sutures embedded into a recently shaven area at the top of the scalp.

AKITO KASAI

What better way for an artist to
know his work intimately than to
see through the eyes of his creation.

A digital display screen patches into the transparent pixels
on the outside of the circular glass. A POV view showcases
a set of arms being closely examined in a surreal/natural
environment.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

Take the threat of survival away
from the dog and discover it's true
design.

Akito looks across the room to discover that Tren and his
mother are no longer seated at their designated table. He
glances back to the Heavyside Asian Man, standing with a
handful of others in an entourage. Akito shakes his head to
disarm the alertness to action amongst them.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

Kasai Games has biohacked its way
into a new digital virtual-existence.
Finally revealing what our current
reality truly is. A kennel.

The room ambiance begins to peak in applause, but surprisingly
begins to awkwardly fall off to an uncoordinated rhythm of
quips and concerned breathing.

Akito uncomfortably on-looks as Assistant 1 and 2 brace the
Unconscious Man's convulsing body.

The POV view on screen, showcases the test subject running
chaotically through the simulated natural environment. The
Unconscious Man's vitals displayed on the circular screen
begin to skyrocket. The room begins to grow restless.

Akito gestures to his entourage in the back of the room as
they begin to assemble at the exits. The men in the entourage
lock the doors in almost unison.

Akito labors to inhale a deep breath.

-Text on black screen: The Absonite, PART ONE: The Discovery

CUT TO:

INT. SUV - NIGHT

A dimly lit SUV is in motion through the darkness. A black
uniformed DRIVER and SECURITY PERSONNEL 1, seated adjacent
on the passenger side, stare through the windshield and into

the high beam lights that illuminate a solitude stretch of dirt road.

A news broadcast is heard aloud from the vehicles speakers.

FEMALE REPORTER (V.O.)

Confidential sources have released more private documents from the corporation "The Life Ascension program" today, said to contain information in clear violation of the ethical guidelines of Neuroscience research. A full investigation into the whereabouts of the company's lead scientist and CEO, Dr. Rogers remains high priority for...

Security Personnel 1 leans forward to press his index finger into the vehicle's middle console interface. The broadcast audio abruptly stops. Security Personnel 1 turns apprehensively towards the driver.

The SUV comes to a sudden SCREECHING halt.

Three people, a woman and two men, are seated hunched over in the rear seats of the SUV with thick black canvas hoods covering their faces.

The strong vocal of a woman, ANGELA ROTHWELL, breaks the ambiance of muffled breathing.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Is this really necessary? Can someone take this off me please? I can't see... I couldn't see anything all night.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 2, opens the back side door from the outside of the SUV.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

This is not what we agreed to. We had an agreement.

Security Personnel 2 reaches inside to remove a black equipment case nestled between Angela's legs. Angela fights to add pressure by squeezing at her knees to secure it, but the Security Personnel 2 effortlessly dislodges it. He sets it down outside the vehicle.

SECURITY PERSONNEL 2

Ma'am, these are precautions to keep everyone involved safe. We need to move.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Safe? Do you not see us held captive
like hostages in here? We don't
know where in the hell we are...
mission accomplished.

Angela Rothwell reaches blindly through the air in her close proximity.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Help me out of here. Now!

Security Personnel 2, looks back for confirmation amongst the neutral expressions of his security team, standing in the distance behind him. He proceeds to guide Angela out of the vehicle as she stumbles to gain her footing. She bumps into her equipment case and possessively grasps at the handle to take it back into her possession.

Two male passengers, CHRISTOPH and BENNY, exit with their own cases and equipment held closely to their bodies. Christoph, a proper and passionate Frenchman, guides Benny, a vain and temperamental American, at the end of his extended arm's reach.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Christoph? Benny? Guys?

CHRISTOPH

(french accent)

We're right here, Angela. We're
alright, right Benny?

BENNY

This is bullshit. We've covered
fucking stories behind combat
bunkers... and some how this takes
the cake.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Stay close to me guys.

They all shuffle forward to a checkpoint entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY CONTROL ROOM

MEDICAL PERSONNEL 1, dressed in surgical scrubs, speaks into the console.

MEDICAL PERSONNEL 1

Just waiting on authorized clearance,
sit tight.

MAYA, a forty something, professionally sophisticated brunette - also dressed in scrubs, anxiously stands in the back of the control room. She bites apprehensively at her index fingernail.

Maya speaks under her breath.

MAYA

We shouldn't be doing this. They're not ready.

Medical Personnel 1 looks at Maya with a reassuring confidence.

MEDICAL PERSONNEL 1

We're not ready either, Maya. But you heard him. This has to happen.

Maya quickly reflects and emotionlessly responds.

MAYA

He didn't get this right then.
(hesitating)
Open it. God help us.

A large digital interface button is pressed. A buzzer sound triggers the release of an electronic door lock. The hooded passengers are seen on one of the many security monitors entering the clearance area.

INT. FACILITY - ATRIUM

Angela, Christoph and Benny are led down a walkway through a series of high clearance security access gates.

Angela stumbles and drops her case.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I can't breathe in this shit. I'm freaking out in here. I'm...

Angela tries to brace in her balance as she holds her flailing arms out in a panic.

In the near blackness of her POV, under the canvas hood's cloth thatched material, Angela's breathing becomes louder and more escalated.

She lets out a slight whimper.

CHRISTOPH

(french accent)
It's just me. I have your arm.
We're going to walk together now,
yes?

Christoph and Angela begin walking together.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Christoph.

CHRISTOPH

We have all the gear, yes? This is just a job, Angela. That is what you always say, is it not?

From Angela's blinded POV, all she can hear is the scuffle of feet on the ground below.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

You're right.

The sound cadence of the movements quickly subside.

Medical personnel remove the hood covering Angela's face. Angela is an attractive black woman in her late-thirties.

-Upon removal, the pitch blackness of the POV quickly transitions into a somewhat blurred view of the large dimly lit atrium interior. An unknown man is seated across the vast floor, facing an empty foldout chair. Angela, disoriented, looks upon the unrevealed man.

Angela breathes heavy.

CHRISTOPH

Welcome back, huh? This better be worth it.

She speaks aggressively under her breathe to Christoph.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I don't know where in the hell we are, but I do know I'm rolling this camera. That was the deal.

ANGELA hostilely sets the case down at her side and speaks softly.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Look around. See if you can recognize anything.

DR. ROGERS, a young studious mid thirties man, is busied looking downward at his disheveled case study notebook of research assets: scribbles, sketches and note-like blueprints.

ANGELA raises her voice.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
 Doctor? Rogers, is it? This is
 happening.

DR. ROGERS breaks his deep trance and quickly looks upward to lock eyes with ANGELA ROTHWELL. His serious gaze lingers for an extended length of time. He gestures softly with his open hand to the vacant seat across from him.

ANGELA signals to BENNY, who is setting up a large broadcast camera in the distance. She aggressively taps her index finger to her eye. The red recording light on the camera begins to burn hot.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE JET - AFTERNOON

A female Japanese FLIGHT ATTENDANT gestures to sit.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 (Speaking in Japanese)
 Please, be comfortable.

AKITO KASAI waits impatiently as the FLIGHT ATTENDANT finishes setting up a camera-like device on the back of the chair in front of his seat.

He sits deep in the leather seating of a luxurious private jet and closes a port window on the overexposed sky-scape to his side. He aggressively extends his arm out to press a series of buttons on a area of the console near the small camera peripheral.

AKITO KASAI
 (Speaking in Japanese)
 Is this how you want us to communicate now? You're still just like a child, Tren. Lost inside the simple rules of a game, even though we are the architects.

Akito looks up and signals impatiently to someone off screen.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)
 You don't understand what we are creating. You still see Kasai Games as just some cheap virtual reality toy.
 (distracted)

He looks up with a fake smile and politely cradles a short cocktail glass extended gently within reach. A Japanese FLIGHT ATTENDANT 2 bows gracefully and walks off.

He is then quick to relax his labored efforts to smile and looks back intensely into the camera.

EXT. LUXURY PENTHOUSE APARTMENT, OUTSIDE HALLWAY - DAY

A recorded video message plays in a pixelated digital display screen. AKITO, continues his monologue into the camera lens with a very solemn expression on his face.

AKITO KASAI (Japanese - English
Subtitles on screen)
It is going to be a new digital world,
Tren.

Akito slams down his drink and looks off screen while signaling with a hand swipe through the air to halt approaching assistance

AKITO KASAI (Japanese - English
Subtitles on screen) (CONT'D)
I don't know why you have chosen to
hide inside the old one. Afraid.
Alone now.

Akito meticulously wipes the outer perimeter of the cocktail glass with a silk handkerchief and raises it slowly to his face.

AKITO KASAI
I arrive tonight, Tren. Honor your
dead mother for once and continue
our work together...
(interrupted)

TREN, a mid twenty-something Asian kid, asserts his vocal over the video message audio.

TREN KASAI
End message. End it. Please stop
the video...

The MESSENGER, a young teen wearing a support vest with a rounded display screen mounted to the front and back of his body, quickly turns off the displayed video message playing on his chest.

MESSENGER
Ok, ok. It's off, bro. I get paid
to deliver it. I don't care if you
watch it or not.

The MESSENGER is quick to compromise his nonchalant demeanor after glancing up at Tren.

He shows a strange familiarity towards Tren.

MESSENGER (CONT'D)

Hey, are you the guy that ugh... yah
you're him. I never usually get to
meet famous people on my routes,
but...

(audio fades to muffled)

Hello? Are you ok bro? Hey?

Tren stands unresponsive at the open door to his apartment. He slides his hand into his right pant pocket and reaches downward with desperation. His hand balls up inside his pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY PENTHOUSE APARTMENT

Tren with glossy eyes steps slowly away from the closed door and into a sea of glass particles, scattered across the floor and under the skin of his bare feet. He walks over the glass, unfazed, in his route to the other side of the room. Leaving behind an increasing trail of blood under each step.

The minimalistic - upscale apartment home has somewhat of a somber atmosphere. Lit solely from the gloomy exterior light casted through the open opulent glass wall panels. Tren walks past open full trash bags of discarded memorabilia and personal belongings that line the barren floors throughout the apartment.

-PHOTOGRAPH: Akito stands with Tren, dressed leisurely in trendy clothing. They are on a large stage together, holding a glass award.

-MAGAZINE COVER: *Time* Magazine, headline "The Year's Most Successful People." The father and son are portrayed facing each other in the foreground with a pixelated virtual environment behind them. Main title caption: "Virtual Game Masterminds."

-NEWS ARTICLE: Headline, "Virtual Reality Wiz-Kid, Tren Kasai of Acclaimed Japanese Company Kasai Games Inc. Changes The World." TREN sits with his legs and arms crossed on top of an office desk - overlooking the metropolitan city behind him.

Tren, revealed from afar, stands at the edge of an open large sliding glass wall - with nothing separating himself from the sky-rise of neighboring buildings. He stands locked in a trance-like disposition. The wall's light-fabric drapes, on both sides of Tren, dance dramatically in the exterior cross winds.

Tren begins to lean forward, partially protruding into the open air. Tren is startled by a loud BOOM from the ensuing riot mayhem thirty stories below and takes a step back inside. He abruptly collects himself and looks down to pull a crumpled paper from his pant pocket. Tren smooths the paper's wrinkles between his fingers to reveal a hand written message.

Written on the paper: *"Sign up if you want to know. -5th and Main."*

Tren lingers in his deliberation as he looks downward through the rising smoke.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN CITY STREET, LOS ANGELES - OVERCAST

Hostile protests ensue on both sides of the street, under a canopy of large sky-rise buildings. The architecture's reflective glass panels - mirror the smoke debris, burning embers, and artifacts set ablaze around them. A reflection of a white van is seen.

ANGELA ROTHWELL slam closes a sliding door on the white makeshift utility van, recklessly parked amidst other abandoned vehicles. Benny quickly loads his oversized camera rig atop his shoulder. Christoph runs around the vehicle from the drivers side to convene on Angela and Benny.

CHRISTOPH

(french accent)

Stay tight...stay together? We caused this shit. Everyone has seen the interview, Angela.

Christoph looks with a purposed dismay at Angela.

CHRISTOPH (CONT'D)

So, we make it right, yes? Let's get this story. Let's go.

Angela, Benny and Christoph run into the heart of the disarray off in the distance.

There are two radical opposing protester groups chanting and screaming conflicting convictions as they slowly progress in their march down the street.

Protester's signs read: "God Speaks Through Science." "Here's Your Proof Atheists!" "Religion Was a Lie." "My Death. My Choice. My Life."

A physical altercation breaks out in the center of the street, where a handful of people are whipped around from the momentum of a physical pull. Screaming and thrashing persists.

An irate woman, PROTESTER 3, stands above PROTESTER 2, a woman bloodied up and uncomfortably holding herself up off the ash covered sidewalk.

PROTESTER 3

How's it feel to be their fucking puppet? Letting some lab-coats string your ass up. You think that's being awake... because you believe in some test tube bullshit?

Protester 3 sticks her wobbly limbs out to reenact being controlled like a puppet.

Protester 2, who appears to be surprisingly calm, wipes blood from her mouth.

PROTESTER 2

It's our choice to know. Don't you want to know when? Nobody's making us sign-up if we don't. So...

Opposing groups continue to antagonize with hostile chants, while Protester 3 is dragged off into the engulfing crowds.

Protester 2 grabs her sign that reads: "My Birth Date, My Death Date"

She painfully stands to a limp.

News reporter, Angela Rothwell, pushes through the crowd to convene on Protester 2, who has resumed to hold her sign up proudly above her head.

Angela discreetly sneaks her microphone under Protester 2's face and looks out towards Benny holding up his camera above the havoc in the crowd. Christoph uses his body as a barrier to protect Angela from the crowds.

Angela holds her open hand over the face of the microphone and speaks concernedly to the young girl.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

You good? Now's the time to say something that matters.

Angela shifts her concern to a seriousness and looks out into the crowd at Benny to motion with her fingers to countdown.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

We're going live in three, two...

The crowd nudges into Christoph, who is pushed back into Angela.

Angela aggressively gains her footing and signals with a nod to Benny - with impatience.

The light on the camera turns RED and Angela looks intensely into the lens.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

This was supposed to be a peaceful protest here on 3rd street today, which has now turned into what appears to be a full blown riot.

Protestor 2 stumbles slightly in here stance. Angela hooks under her arm to help stabilize her balance.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

With injured protestors caught in the crossfire of an extremely violent demonstration...

Angela notices PROTESTOR 2 emotionally reacting and pulls the microphone from her own face and into the proximity of Protester 2.

PROTESTER 2

It didn't have to be violent. People are scared, I get it. Because they know this is some kind of... miracle. Your interview helped us see that. Thank you.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Please don't thank me. There is still a great deal of speculation surrounding the accuracy of what was disclosed...
(interrupted)

PROTESTER 2

But... you know it's true.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Again these are still unsubstantiated claims...

PROTESTER 2

For me to know... for me to believe... has nothing to do with anyone else. People are finding out their date. When their day is.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

How are they doing this?
(MORE)

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
 Are they recruiting people...? How
 is the company communicating with
 the public...?
 (interrupted)

Angela is aggressively pushed into the vortex of the moving crowd. She looks to the ground for her lost mic and then back up to yell over the crowd to Protester 2.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
 How are they recruiting?

The crowd continues to build momentum as it pushes further down the street.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
 Get... off me. Back up people.
 Benny? Christoph?

Angela gets swept away into the abyss.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY - ATRIUM

Equipment cases cover the ground below Benny standing off in the distance behind a camera secured to a heavy duty tripod. Christoph holds the LED spot light stand watching intently as Angela waits for a response from DR. ROGERS.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
 Why aren't you answering me?

Angela swiftly retrieves the black hood from off the floor besides her chair.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
 Then put this thing back on me.
 Tell your creepy Uber driver to take
 me back because we're done here.

DR. ROGERS
 The effects of mass hysteria can
 sabotage even the greatest of
 scientific developments, Angela.
 This is something we both must prevent
 from happening.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
 If the leaks from any of the anonymous
 sources contain even a shred of viable
 truth, this could be the most
 important discovery in the history
 of humanity.

Dr. Rogers shakes his head.

DR. ROGERS
Please don't be naive. You're here
as an insurance policy, Angela.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
I'm here to do my job.

DR. ROGERS
The person that hired you... us...
has quite a different interest in
all this. You know that right?

Angela looks peculiarly unresponsive.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
You don't even know who hired you,
do you? Why you're here even.
(interrupted)

Echoed commotion is heard off in the distance. Angela is surprised to see two inquisitive teen kid onlookers from the shadows. They are quickly escorted from the room by security personnel.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
Listen to me. Without adequate time
for people to fully comprehend what
is happening here, it's merely in
our animal nature to reject what is
unknown. This is why the secrecy.

Dr. Rogers looks to the hood in Angela's hand.

Angela follows his eyes down to the hood and looks up with a more aggressive demeanor.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
Then it stays between us. We aren't
broadcasting live. You know that.
This footage stays private. It sounds
like whoever wanted me here, won't
want this to go public either. What
did you find, Doctor?

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.

DR. ROGERS
It found us. Remarkably.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
What found you, doctor? I need you
to tell me how this started.

Dr. Rogers looks back downward at his disheveled case study notebook of research notes.

Music tension:

On the visible page: A loose sketch is shown of a man with arms extended outward into a vortex of light. A series of scribbled notes and data calculations are drawn into the margins of the page around it.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. MODERN HOME - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Text on screen: 12 Years Prior

An usually slower than normal EKG heart rate rhythm is heard in the distant background.

A large somber lit bedroom, stripped clear of all traditional furniture items, is retrofitted with futuristic medical equipment surrounding an elaborately constructed metal framed bed in the center of the room. Life support machines pump liquids through IV's and oxygen through long tubes attached to an unconscious man, PATIENT, lying propped up under thin white linen sheets.

Blood transfuses upward through a clear tube, leading away from the needle insertion slightly above the Patient's wrist. A sudden jolt muscle spasm causes his hand to open and shake profusely.

The EKG heart rhythm shoots into a fast paced repetitive tone.

An older sophisticated woman sitting at an open window across the room, PATIENT'S WIFE, is startled into an upright stand. She is quick to dial the last digits of a phone number on a futuristic handheld device. She struggles to stabilize the shaking of her tight grip, pressed into the side of her head.

Her vocal trembles into the phone.

PATIENT'S WIFE

I can't believe it. He's awake.
Please, get here...fast.

Brain electrodes now hang motionless from the exposed skin on the unconscious PATIENTS forehead.

Four research team members are now stationed on the outskirts of the bed behind highly sophisticated technologies. Brain synapse readings are strewn across complex software interfaces, vital sign read-outs are being continually refreshed on display screens, and an expression of seriousness is shared amongst the team.

MAYA

He's fully conscious.

Maya's concern shifts to relief. She picks up a young blonde haired - blue eyed 8 year old girl from the floor beside her, LACIE, and sets her atop her lap. Maya smiles at the PATIENT'S WIFE as she straightens the collar on Lacey's miniature white lab coat.

DR. ROGERS

Are you sure? Neuro data is way off
on my side.

Rachel, a thirty-something intellectual who is extrovertly proud of her introverted superpowers, is quick to peek up from behind her screen.

RACHEL

No way. My little boys here never
lie.

Rachel, affectionately moves her hands over the contours of her highly coveted machines.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

They had a good breakfast too. Ran
diagnostics, calibrated and tested,
doctor. These bellies are fed. The
patient should be responsive.

PATIENT'S WIFE

The patient's name... my husband's
name is Jim.

JOE, a thirty-something amiable man, dressed in medical scrubs, pans his video camera from the patient and onto RACHEL. He shakes his head in distaste and captures RACHEL on camera as she innocently shrugs her shoulders.

The Patient's Wife embraces her husband's arm and strums her fingers over the skin on his open forearm.

His fingers slowly grip through the air.

PATIENT'S WIFE (CONT'D)

Jim. Please wake up sweetie. You've been asleep for too long. Jim?

JIM's eyes slowly peel open and focus. He looks first to his wife. She becomes immediately emotional and gently kisses his hand.

JIM speaks with a gargled vocal.

JIM

How long? Tell me.

PATIENT'S WIFE

22 months.

Jim speaks under his breathe as he looks befuddled off into the room.

JIM

They had me come back.

Patient's Wife looks at Dr. Rogers with a puzzled curiosity.

Dr. Rogers begins to jot notes onto an open page in his notebook. He speaks softly into the pages in his lap.

DR. ROGERS

Who? Where did you go, Jim?

JIM

It felt as if a lifetime had passed.
Somewhere that at first felt like I
was trapped in. In a loop. My mind
had created this nightmare.

Patient's Wife holds her husband's lifeless hand in front of her quivering lips.

DR. ROGERS

Were you aware that you were in a
coma?

JIM

On the outside, yes. In this world.
Where initially I fought to stay,
to hold on to this illusionary sense
of... everything I knew. Time.

Dr. Rogers concernedly monitors the sporadic readings in the brain scans.

JIM (CONT'D)
 But it was only out of fear. The
 longer I clung to what was most
 familiar, myself, even you Doreen...

Jim looks to Doreen (Patient's Wife) with glassy eyes.

JIM (CONT'D)
 ...The colder and colder it grew.
 And I knew I had to... let go of all
 of it.

A tear falls from Jim's eye as he looks deeply at Doreen.

JIM (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, dear.

DR. ROGERS
 Let go, you said? You chose...

JIM
 ... To die. And in that very moment,
 everything changed.

DR. Rogers responds with a sense of childlike wonder.

DR. ROGERS
 You shut down your mind's construct
 of identity control.

RACHEL looks oddly at her machine responses. She tries to
 calm the machines with a gentle pat and subtle pep talk of
 encouragement.

RACHEL
 Come on guys, be good.

She looks up concernedly.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 My readings are going off the grid,
 doctor. My neural tracking just
 disappeared.

Dr. Rogers moves closer to Jim and leans into the foot of
 the bed.

JIM
 Without relying on what I had spent
 a lifetime building up in my head,
 out of survival reflex, I was allowed
 in. Somewhere... else.

Maya looks strangely down into her lap to discover Lacey
 sketching a man with his hands out, walking into a vortex of

light. Lacey is neurotically enveloped in her aggressive pencil sketched illustration.

DR. ROGERS

Where Jim? Who was with you? You said "they" earlier.

PATIENT'S WIFE

I think he's had enough. Please, doctor. This is... too much. Jim?

Jim starts to breathe heavy. Maya notices a jump in his heart rate vital readouts.

MAYA

Doctor, she's right.

DR. ROGERS

We only have one window here Maya, you know it. He won't be able to retain these memories by tomorrow. This is...

(interrupted)

Jim labors to push out his slurred words.

JIM

It was warm. There was someone... there.

Jim's weak arm gestures for Dr. Rogers to move closer to his frail vocal.

JOE struggles to discern Jim's audio. He disappointedly removes his monitor headphones and lowers his camera.

Jim tilts his heavy head to the side on his propped up pillow and whispers in close proximity into Dr. Rogers's ear.

JIM (CONT'D)

(indiscernible vocal)

Dr. Rogers listens intently to the Jim's whispers. His eyes begin to squint in disbelief.

The WHISPERS volume grows louder.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS - SECLUDED VILLAGE - DAY

A massive snow covered mountain panorama stretches off into the unseen depths. The WHISPERS continue to echo in the aggressive crosswinds. A small group of people are seen in the distance, dwarfed by the surrounding nature.

JOE, shown in the foreground, looks directly into the lens of portable futuristic camcorder. A red set of battery, date and display icons are stamped in the upper righthand corner of the screen. A small mountainous village is shown shaking in the background of the video feed as JOE walks over an uneven terrain. He struggles to stabilize his hold on the camera that he has turned on himself.

JOE
Video log index. Neuroscience
research team member, Joe Resnick.
Field data, media and analysis
recorder for US government class 4
project...

Camera view abruptly tilts downward and falls recklessly through the air, stabilizing perfectly on the snow covered ground. The video feed scrambles before the frame cuts to all black.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shit. Shit. Shit.

Joe looks off into the distance in front of him. Dr. Rogers, Maya, Rachel and Lacey are shown bundled in thick, black modern snow attire, pulling equipment sleds into a barren village.

JOE (CONT'D)
We shouldn't be here guys. This
wasn't cleared.
(under his breathe)
This is crazy.

Joe collects his mangled camera and runs awkwardly to catch up.

JOE (CONT'D)
Wait up.

Rachel glances a shot behind her.

RACHEL
He's right, ya know?

RACHEL looks to Dr. Rogers with concern and then to Maya.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
This is definitely a security
clearance breach or whatever they
call it. This is dangerous. I know
you're like some kid prodigy to them
doc, but this is...

Rachel looks concernedly back at the ice sled cargo.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

... Really freaking cold actually.
We're pulling millions of dollars
worth of equipment through a blizzard
somewhere in South Asia, guys. My
kiddos are pissed and cold back there.

Dr. Rogers, breathing heavy, looks down at his heavy duty
handheld GPS tracker. He looks up at Lacey, nestled
comfortably, seated on his shoulders.

DR. ROGERS

We made it though. Didn't we Lacey?
These are the coordinates. This is
the place.

The team walks through what looks to be an abandoned makeshift
village.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

You had your chance to prove me wrong.
You all did your own digging for
months. And it all led us to the
same source. The origin of those
words were traced to this region.

Dr. Rogers looks to Maya, who passes an insulated water
canteen to Lacey.

MAYA

Yah, but you heard what the guides
said when they turned back. This is
all forbidden. The words Jim
whispered to you, as miraculous as
that was, for him to randomly quote
some ancient Tibetan dialect... was
probably just...

DR. ROGERS

Used only in this village, Maya.
Why would he of said that?

Lacey playfully reaches down and grabs the handheld GPS device
from Dr. Rogers.

MAYA

Even if there is civilization here,
then what?

Dr. Rogers reaches up above his head to grab Lacey and sets
her into the thick snow.

DR. ROGERS

We know, don't we Lacey?

She holds the oversized device out in front of her small frame.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
Lead the way, Lacey. Do you still
remember the name... remember what
we practiced?

Lacey nods.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
Let's hear it.

LACEY
Sh.. Sheeng-shen-yen.

Dr. Rogers playfully smiles at the team, while Lacey runs out in front.

MAYA
Don't encourage her, please.

Maya looks to Rachel with an unsettled concern.

MAYA (CONT'D)
This can't be healthy for her. She
hardly sleeps. You've seen what
she's drawing now.

RACHEL
Good luck explaining that to him.
Someone who purposely lives half way
between imagination and hallucination,
all in the name of science. He thinks
it helps him study it more
objectively. Crazy person!

Rachel kiddishly rolls her eyes around and trips forward in the knee-high snow. Maya cracks a smile and looks back to Joe, who is cursing at his equipment.

MAYA
Sadly, I think we've all gone crazy,
Rach.

The four of them continue to trek through the thick snow terrain and into a more inhabited region.

Music Tension Shift.

Lacey is secretly watched from behind weathered worn wood window panels and a slightly ajar door from off in the distance.

Lacey stops dead in her tracks to look off screen. Two figures step into view. Two local Tibetan men, one middle aged and one elder, slowly approach Lacey. They are heavily bearded with worn skin and dressed minimally in weathered fabrics.

Dr. Rogers, Joe, Rachel and Maya quickly converge on Lacey. Maya attempts to reach out to secure Lacey into her embrace, but Lacey steps out of reach and towards the men.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(under her breathe)
Lacey, come....

Lacey slowly raises her arm up towards the muddled aged TIBETAN MAN standing, offset, out in front. He watches her without any movement or expression.

LACEY
Sh.. Shee... Sheng-sheng-yen.

Lacey watches for a reaction but is surprised at the nonresponse. The Tibetan Man shakes his head from side to side.

ELDER TIBETAN MAN
Jingshén rén? Jingshén rén.

The Tibetan Man looks back in bewilderment at the Elder Tibetan Man behind him. The Elder Tibetan Man fragily approaches to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other Tibetan man. He then reaches out to embrace Lacey's small snow glove with his exposed and weathered hand.

ELDER TIBETAN MAN (CONT'D)
Jingshén rén.

Translation subtitles: Spirit Man

The Elder Tibetan Man compassionately nods and slowly turns around. He points to an ancient monastery nestled within the mountains closely neighboring the village.

Dr. Rogers cracks a smile out of the corner of his mouth and looks playfully at the apprehensive team at his sides.

Joe struggles to pull himself out of an entranced wonderment and speaks gently to the mangled camera extended out in front of him.

JOE
Out of all the times I really needed
this damn thing...

CUT TO:

EXT. HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS - DAY

The team traverses over the vast snowy landscape. Lacey looks up to the newly assembled snow clouds in the sky from her seat on the back of Maya's equipment sled. She stares in wonder.

Heavy winds and snow continue to intensify on their route to the mountainside temple.

INT. MOUNTAINSIDE TEMPLE

EERIE Music.

They close the tall double doors behind them on the exterior winding trail of boot prints through the snow. Maya unzips her large oversized jacket to warm herself, Rachel lifts Lacey from the equipment sled to inspect her machines, and Joe quivers as he removes the ice coated fabric wrapped around his face.

JOE

That's weird.

Joe feels his face and then turns his hand around slowly into the open air. Maya holds her jacket open and looks strangely at the thin layer of exposed clothing.

MAYA

I wasn't expecting that either.

DR. ROGERS

No fire. No electricity. I feel it too. It has to be at least 80 degrees in here.

Dr. Rogers wipes the sweat from his forehead and looks peculiarly at the perspiration on his fingertips. The team steps away from their discarded sleds and heavy snow attire and into the dark temple, lit solely from a handful of flickering candles mounted to the windowless stone walls.

Their route down the center walkway of the interior is populated on both sides with strangely positioned local villagers. They are sat in pairs, upright on their knees, slightly hunched over with their closed-eyed foreheads gently touching. - They are completely still and inaudible.

Lacey is slightly offset out front from the tightly conjoined group. She innocently skims her small fingers lightly over everything within reach of her extended arms, including the arched back of one of the unorthodoxly posed villagers. A hand appears from out of frame and grips onto Lacey's hold. Maya secures Lacey at her shoulders as the group startles.

A VILLAGER BOY rises out from amongst the other unresponsive villagers and looks deeply into Lacey's eyes.

Music shifts from EERIE to ATMOSPHERIC

He slowly walks Lacey by the hand and the trailing group behind him down the center pathway.

The team is locked into a stare towards the front of the room until they arrive at an old, worn and heavily bearded man slouched over on his knees. A freshly struck match casts a glow from the hand of an old VILLAGER WOMAN, seated beside him. She lights a candle and sets it out in front of the old villager man, the SPIRIT GUIDE. He tilts his head upward and opens his eyes to reveal his blinded cloudy white gaze in the ambience of the candlelight.

The Villager Woman leans in closely to speak softly to the Spirit Guide.

VILLAGER WOMAN
(ancient Tibetan)
Zhèxie shì nín yízhī qidài de fāngkè
ma?

Translated subtitles: Are these the visitors you've been expecting?

SPIRIT GUIDE
Shi de.

Translated subtitles: Yes.

The Villager Boy tugs at Lacey's hand. The SPIRIT GUIDE looks down and smiles in the direction of Lacey and the Villager Boy. Lacey looks back to Maya with intent in her wide eyes and pulls her other hand gently away from Maya's tense hold.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)
(broken english)
It is ok.

The Villager boy and Lacey run off. The SPIRIT GUIDE nods at the slow fade out of kiddish giggling. The SPIRIT GUIDE reaches outward into the open space in front of him.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)
Please, come closer. My eyes are
not as good for seeing in this world
as they are... in other ways. In
other places.

Dr. Rogers comes to an unexpected epiphany.

DR. ROGERS

You know why we're here, don't you?

SPIRIT GUIDE

The eyes are like a window. It is to truly see when you have looked through from opposite sides.

DR. ROGERS

His eyes. Through Jim's eyes? How is that possible? He was... You were there with him. He knew. That's how we found you... here.

Dr. Rogers looks around the room with astonishment.

SPIRIT GUIDE

Or the other way around.

Dr. Rogers looks mystified into Maya's glassy eyes and then back at the SPIRIT GUIDE.

DR. ROGERS

Where did you go?

SPIRIT GUIDE

Perhaps your team would like to set their equipment down now?

The SPIRIT MAN lets out a surprising laugh under his breathe. The team, still in shock, slowly lowers the equipment cases to the ground and are reluctant to release their tight grips. The SPIRIT MAN, raises his index finger to his temple.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)

If you are looking here. This is where. There are no words I could say.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)

Only what is inside, right here, will allow you to understand what it is you seek.

Dr. Rogers looks down at the case at his side and then back up to the Spirit Guide's blank stare.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)

Yes. You have my permission if this is what you are waiting for.

He removes his index finger from his temple and points accurately to each member of the team.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)

All of you.

Rachel excitedly taps the tops of the equipment cases at both of her sides.

RACHEL

Let's do this.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS:

A) INT. MOUNTAINSIDE TEMPLE

-Rachel quickly snaps open a series of equipment case locks in a single file lineup. Uncased neuroscience technology and computer hardware are showcased out in front of Rachel as she holds her hand proudly over her heart.

-Joe snaps a panel back in place on his camera, fastens a screw, and powers up a functional display monitor with a preview of the SPIRIT GUIDE on-screen.

-Maya checks her software of digital electrode sensors and hands a complex wire infused neuro-headgear to Dr. Rogers. He reaches first for a quick compassionate hold on her arms before taking the hardware held in her hands into his own possession.

Dr. Rogers carefully places the headgear on top of the SPIRIT GUIDE's head.

DR. ROGERS

Signals open, team.

SPIRIT GUIDE (V.O.)

Your team, yes?

Dr. Rogers looks back at his busied team setting up their equipment.

-Display screens show a live fMRI signal being monitored and mapped to a region of the brain. A pulsing red signal throbs on the screen in front an outlined brain grid.

SPIRIT GUIDE (CONT'D)

Them. Jim. You and I. We are all the same, you understand?

The SPIRIT GUIDE brings his index finger up to his blinded eyes.

DR. ROGERS

We are separated only by thin glass it would appear.

B) INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

A bald young boy lays in a patient bed with his weak eyes squinted. He his affirming with a nod as he is shown Lacey's sketch of a man walking through a vortex portal.

SPIRIT GUIDE (V.O.)

It is not light your patients speak
of when they are able to see through
it. It may appear bright at first
to them, yes. Because they have not
yet used their eyes.

C) INT. PADDED ROOM

An emotional woman with an electrode cap wraps her arms around Maya. Bloodied gauze wrapped wrists are revealed holding tightly around Mayas back.

SPIRIT GUIDE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It is in the darkness they become
aware of this. They are not leaving
this world and going into another.

D) INT. MOUNTAINSIDE TEMPLE

The Villager Boy opens a large, worn and dust covered book under a faint candlelight. He points into the book and looks across to Lacey. She peers oddly into the illustration that is similar to her "man walking into the light" sketch. There is ancient Tibetan text inscribed onto the page.

SPIRIT GUIDE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Their sight is simply showing them
who they really are for the first
time. That they are in fact the
windows. Everyone is.

E) INT. MOUNTAINSIDE TEMPLE

The SPIRIT GUIDE pulls Dr. Rogers into a slight lean forwards from a kneeled position across from him. He gently presses his forehead up against Dr. Rogers.

SPIRIT GUIDE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Who is looking through us is what
you must come to find out.

F) INT. MEDICAL LAB

Dr. Rogers and his team are running consistent neuro analytic tests on a room full of unconscious patients on open exam tables. An IV drip bag has "DMT Hallucinogen, Experiment Class 4, Patient #123

SPIRIT GUIDE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is why you've come. But, you
must search deeper.

G) INT. MOUNTAINSIDE TEMPLE

The Villager Boy points at the image and then to himself, before finally resting his small pointed finger on Lacey's forehead.

-The SPIRIT GUIDE's eyes spasm rapidly out of control and then stop abruptly to a wide open stare.

Music crescendos.

-Rachel's display monitor displays text on screen: Neural coordinate trace: Successful. The red throbbing location signal is located on an area of the brain that is unmapped.

-Rachel looks up from her screen with shock and speaks softly into the quiet room.

RACHEL
We found it. We actually... found
the location.

END OF MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT. SUV - BASE CAMP, HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS - DUSK

Static shot - A futuristic glass smartphone is displayed atop a middle console arm rest. The phone sits in the silence of the vehicle's uninhabited interior cab. Slowly approaching muffled banter and footsteps are heard crunching through the snow on the exterior.

The phone's visible display lights up and reads: Incoming Call. Agent Townsend.

The phone continues to emanate a display light and pulse until it stops to read: 23 Missed Calls

The doors are heard opening from all sides. Equipment clanking, rustling movements and sporadic breathing overwhelm the silence until all doors eventually close. The vehicle starts and the onset of engine idling, electric dash alert tones and a blasted heater fill the ambiance of the interior.

Distant vocal from the backseat.

JOE (O.S.)
Holy shit. We made it back down.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Push the heat back here... please.

JOE (O.S.)
Here. Body heat. This'll help.

RACHEL
Don't get any ideas mister. But
I'll take it. Get over here.

Seen in the out of focus background behind the phone: The driver exhaustedly falls back into the seat and removes heavy snow gloves to warm a set of hands under an exhale. One of the hands reach down to pick the foreground phone upward through the air and into the possession of Dr. Rogers. He looks with hesitancy at the phone's display screen.

Dr. Rogers labors to turn and look around the vehicle at each of the weathered and emotionally compromised team members. He finds Joe and Rachel interconnected in the back and then ends his slow pan on Lacey; asleep on the passenger side seat in Maya's arms.

DR. ROGERS
(Soft spoken)
Is all this... going to be ok for
her? I'm sorry.

MAYA
I don't know. It's been years like
this, since her mom's... my sister's
accident. She hasn't left the lab,
this project... our sides. This is
all she knows. This is all she wants
to know. She's so exhausted. This
is probably like just some big dream
to her. This is wrong.

DR. ROGERS
Things are going to change. For all
of us. Whatever just happened up
there they'll never understand. We
can't share this data Maya.

Rachel and Joe look oddly to one another in the backseat.
Rachel promptly leans forward.

RACHEL
What do you mean can't share the
data? That's the only way we walk
back into the lab with our jobs after
this stunt, Doctor. We can get our
lives back.

DR. ROGERS

Rachel... you have confirmed
coordinates of an area in the brain
that doesn't even exist in medical
text. Let alone what the functional
purpose of that area is capable of.
You know what they'd do with that.

JOE

So we don't show em. We cover it
up. I erase the logs...
(interrupted)

DR. ROGERS

Then what Joe? Go back to NDE patient
studies like none of this happened?
So they can continue making some
kind of neural inhibitor for soldiers
with PTSD or something?

MAYA

Are you asking us to go... completely
rouge here? Like, how far down the
rabbit hole can we go with this?

Lacey is woken to squinted eyes. Maya strums her head gently
until she falls back asleep.

MAYA (CONT'D)

It just feels like we'd be encroaching
on God's work from this point on.

Dr. Rogers breathes deeply and succumbs to a rational
composure.

DR. ROGERS

I know. I know. This is crazy.

He turns back to Rachel and Joe.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

But, we've been following something
outside of the scope of our research
for years. You know it.

Rachel attempts to speak, but is quick to reason in silence.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Searching for something to help us
explain... everything. Especially
what just happened.

He looks softly to Maya.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
We're in the Himalayans right now
guys. We all wanted this to happen.

They all resume a deep reflective stare. They struggle to vocally engage but are soon conveniently distracted in the same direction below, off-screen, under their softening stares. Lacey's small arm slowly hovers to the center of the group. She looks gently through her squinted eyes at Dr. Rogers and uses her free hand to help guide his reach. His open hand then rests atop the backside of Lacey's open hand. The remainder of the group is soon to follow, extending their hands to the top of the hand pile. A contagious affection infects the group.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (O.S.)
Wait. Hold on.

INT. FACILITY - ATRIUM

The sound cuts to silence.

Angela Rothwell leans forward into an upright seated posture in her chair across from Dr. Rogers and clears her throat. He looks up from the opened notebook in his lap with an uncomfortable vulnerability in his eyes.

Christoph turns to Benny in shock, who synchronously rises from behind the camera and turns toward Christoph.

Christoph speaks aggressively under his breath.

CHRISTOPH
What is she doing? Damnit.

Benny shrugs.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
You were some top secret savior to them. Now, the world knows of you as the mad neuroscientist gone AWOL, who faces a lifetime in prison. I know you're aware of that.

Dr. Rogers looks off-screen at Maya.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
What else are you not telling me that would of been worth taking that kind of risk? Come on. The whistleblower reports?

Dr. Rogers, who is still turned towards Maya, responds in a distracted and desensitized vocal tonality.

DR. ROGERS
Everything you've read is true.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
We both know what they know isn't
the full story, Doctor.

The music tension increases.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
What is the The Life Ascension
program?

Dr. Rogers notices a figure pacing in the distant shadows.
The slow stride is seen in the small openings between Maya
and the medical personnel's torsos, positioned shoulder to
shoulder.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
I need something here. This is bigger
than just violating ethical
guidelines.

DR. ROGERS
I told you... we...

ANGELA ROTHWELL
You're opening these people up aren't
you? The whistleblower talked about
what you did at an abandoned
warehouse. This is where you left
off in your cute little story, right?
You began using illegal black
market... actually, even worst;
classified government technology to
hack into these innocent people.

Music tension ends.

Angela loses her professional composure and angrily
interjects.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
How are you concealing the sign-ups?
Where are they? There are people
missing.

(Silence)

Dr. Rogers snaps back into an alert awareness of Angela
Rothwell's presence. He is quick to turn and face her.

DR. ROGERS
There were years of human trials.
(MORE)

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

We weren't even close in the beginning
to understanding what we would come
to...

(reflective standstill)

We refer to the instance as Patient-
Zero. There were hundreds of
procedures before it happened.

CUT TO:

INT. INT. WAREHOUSE - MAKESHIFT LAB/OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

DR. ROGERS (V.O.)

But, what we had discovered during
that single operation... we no longer
had a choice. It would change
everything.

Dr. Rogers, Maya, Rachel and Joe are standing off in the
distance at a makeshift futuristic medical workstation. The
single lit area inhabits a small piece of real-estate at the
center of a dark and gutted warehouse.

The team is hovered over the sterile draping on an occupied
patient exam table. The operating light-heads positioned
above the table cast an ominous glow over the neuro-technology
equipment at the anterior of the body. Where the back of
the patient's head protrudes from a small opening beneath
the surgical dressing safeguards.

Rachel moves a population of wires hanging from the adhered
electrodes to clear an area of exposed skin on the back of
the patient's neck.

RACHEL

Is the patient out?

MAYA

Not fully. I'm adding 50mg to the
IV, right... now, to induce the
psychosis.

The black handwriting on the IV bag reads: Dimethyltryptamine,
DMT, 50mg.

Dr. Rogers writes neurotically in his notebook.

DR. ROGERS

Do 60. If the patient wakes up, we
lose the signal again. We can't
play it safe on this one, Maya.
We're going deeper in this time.

Maya injects the liquid solution from her syringe into the IV bag's tube opening.

Maya looks out of the corner of her eye at a distracted Dr. Rogers; then around the workstation at the other members. She is quick to notice that they are all busied and unaware of her look of concern. She resumes the injection.

MAYA

Done. We're just going to extend
your hallucinogenic vacation for a
bit longer here, patient 232.

Maya changes the handwritten 5, in 50, to a 6 with her marker.

Joe, panning his camera down the length of the patient's neck, speaks aloud without breaking his focus on the camera's stabilization.

JOE

Video log index. Team member, Joe
Resnick. Invasive lower cortex
procedure to insert fiber optic
endoscope for live video feed.

Joe points his camera at Rachel as she tests the pin drop camera head at the end of a fiber optic line.

JOE (CONT'D)

Here's our pilot. Right here.

Rachel squeezes the hair sized cord between her fingers to test the video feed, shown on the display screen in front of her. Joe turns his camera on the display monitor and sees an oddly formed appendage.

Joe looks back at Rachel as she holds her middle finger out in front of the pin sized camera head and smirks. Joe turns back around abruptly to the sound of EKG meter beeps.

DR. ROGERS (O.S.)

No way, the patient is in already
guys. Maya, hurry. Mark my cut
point.

Music changes to serious.

Dr. Rogers slides a pair of surgical binoculars downward on his head and over his intense eyes.

The camera follows his hand down through mid air to receive a scalpel handoff. He continues to lower the scalpel to cut two incisions into the mid neck. He traces the blade over a penned outline of two connecting sides of a triangular shaped cut guide.

MAYA

Ok, the same rules apply as always.
The patient's trip is identical to
coma consciousness here. Hours to
them is minutes to us.

Rachel lip syncs the end of Maya's instructions: "Hours to
them is minutes to us."

DR. ROGERS

And, we get about 3. It should be
just enough time to make this dive.

He pulls the skin and tissue back with the tip of the scalpel
and signals to Rachel with his free hand.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

You're on. Take us into the uncharted
depths, Rachel.

Rachel runs the line through a hair-sized tube casing and
into the open incision.

RACHEL

Following the spinal cord pathway to
the stem.

She feeds the line in deeper and watches the video feed on
her display monitor. The forward progression shows a detailed
visual passage through tissue and flesh.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

And our sharp turn at the lower
cerebellum.

Maya, with one hand covering her mouth, follows the red signal
marker as it moves through the brain map grid on her laptop.
Dr. Rogers turns around swiftly in his chair and rolls back
to view Maya's screen. He touches the display to zoom in.

DR. ROGERS

Just through the cranium opening and
we're in guys. Rachel you know where
to go.

Rachel carefully moves the dial on the endoscope's handle.
The video display screen shows the line progressing deeper
into the brain cavity.

The brain map fills in information around the darkened unknown
geography. It forms a digitized pathway into an open channel
of neurons.

JOE

Hot damn. We're mapping so much detail. The neuropathic activity is off the charts. What do think, Rach?

Joe is typing with a single hand on his laptop while holding his camera with the other. He points his lens at the fiber optic video-feed monitor.

RACHEL

Yah. This is crazy. You can almost navigate in the blind. I think we're gonna make it. I'm a proud mama.

Rachel kisses the cradled endoscope controller in her hands.

DR. ROGERS

The signals almost there guys. Time, Maya.

MAYA

A minute three. It's gonna be tight.

Music tension.

RACHEL

Wait. This is creepy. It's like this entire region, under the posterior, appears to be... fused together. You seeing this?

DR. ROGERS

That is really abnormal tissue growth. Like it's been sealed. The symmetrical wrinkle here is almost too perfect.

RACHEL

This isn't right. It's like the fold was manipulated. Kept... purposely closed by design or something.

MAYA

Hurry guys. Be aware of your out time.

RACHEL

We can't just yank this out.

DR. ROGERS

Just go. Push it open.

RACHEL

Are you sure? I'm going through.

Rachel turns through the resistance on her control dial.
The tone of the EKG pace quickens.

Joe, with an eerie seriousness, anxiously turns the camera
around on himself.

JOE

There appears to be a... passage
embedded under fields of pituitary
gland neurons. Making this the
deepest neural dive ever. Patient
zero.

DR. ROGERS

This is the area guys.

The Red signal flashes on the digital brain map. Small grid
details continue to draw in around the signal.

RACHEL

Wholly shit. Look at the video feed.

The display monitor progressed into an open passage in the
neural tissue. Enigmatic or incomprehensible symbols line
the open flesh.

The Music tension drops out.

The team is frozen in a daze.

DR. ROGERS

Those are markings. Precision
cauterized into the walls of the...
(interrupted)

RACHEL

They're inscriptions. There's a
pattern. There's a fucking pattern.
Yes.

Rachel loudly exclaims.

DR. ROGERS

How can there be sequentially ordered
symbols like this? This is
incredible, Maya.

Dr. Rogers looks in awe at Maya. She emotionally smiles to
show a brief moment of vulnerability.

The Music thrusts back into tension. The EKG meter tone
flatlines aloud.

Maya jolts into an alert panic. The team's extreme reaction
is paired with a symphony of chaotic beeps, shuffling, exam

table metal creaking and a frantic music score. The patient's head begins to convulse uncontrollably.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. DOWNTOWN CITY ALLEYWAY, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

A small fire burns at the surface of discarded trash, inside of a large alley dumpster. Through the slightly ajar hatch on the interior, Tren is seen approaching at a distance from the closing door of his luxury apartment complex. He slides the hatch completely open and pushes two plastic garbage bags inside. The flames grow in the reflection of his motionless glassy eyes.

TREN KASAI (V.O.)

This is the farthest I've ever got...
to walking away from everything I
know. Everything that is, but this
voice in my head.

Tren zips up the front of his worn red hoodie, with the burning dumpster at his back, and looks outward into the dystopian city streets.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN CITY STREET, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Tren walks down the middle of a lightly trafficked road through a neon signage-lit marketplace. The ambiance is glum with dispirited street vendors competing amongst the sparse crowds for business.

TREN KASAI (V.O.)

Maybe, talking to myself gives me
some form of twisted sense of purpose.
So I continue to awkwardly narrate
like this. Like this is all some
coherent story.

Tren approaches a high-tech video game vendor kiosk. He walks nostalgically under a canopy into an ambiance of flashing lights and game sounds. He stops abruptly and draws close to a rack displaying multiple copies of the same game package. Tren pulls the game off the rack and into his possession.

TREN KASAI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But, it doesn't make sense. Aren't
you supposed to be able to decide
how your story ends. At least in
the games I design I have that choice.

An unkempt Russian Street Vendor signals to his two destitute young boys, fighting over a handheld gaming device atop an cluttered display counter. Vendor Child 1, a ragged 10 year old, breaks his feud to scan a tech wand over a customer's wearable wristband. The Street Vendor robotically bags a game and looks out at Tren.

STREET VENDOR

(Russian Accent)

That is most popular game you choose.
You got neural headgear for that? I
got it. Kasai Games. Top shelf.

The Street Vendor reaches for the headgear box and holds it high. The two boys stop bickering and look peculiarly in Tren's direction.

Tren nods and re-shelves the game.

STREET VENDOR (CONT'D)

They say the brain can't tell what's
real and not with this. You want to
have rich life huh? With game is
possible for that.

The two boys banter secretively amongst each other. Vendor Child 1 looks up excitedly to the Street Vendor.

VENDOR CHILD 1

That's him. Kasai. Kasai Games.

Vendor Child 2, the younger brother, rotates his game screen to the Street Vendor and points at the display.

STREET VENDOR

That's the game guy?

The Street Vendor yells into the distance as Tren walks off into the street.

STREET VENDOR (CONT'D)

Hey, where you going, game guy?
Sign a copy and I give discount,
huh? For the kids.

The Street Vendor taps his open palm against both of the boy's foreheads.

STREET VENDOR (CONT'D)

That's not the game guy. Just some
depressed game geek like you two,
huh? Now get off the counter and
help me clean up...

(faded out)

Tren pulls the hoodie over his head and rounds the corner to an isolated city street. The commercial shops are lined with plywood sheets; while ash and debris coat the entire block like destroyed ruins. There are pockets of protestor groups off in the distance.

TREN KASAI (V.O.)
 Maybe it's not such a bad thing. If
 our mind can't tell the difference
 between what's real and not. Why
 would anyone choose... this?

Tren looks at the surrounding devastation from the riot aftermath.

TREN KASAI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 To continue suffering in this chaos.
 Stuck in a loop, forced to play the
 same level over-and-over again.
 Slowly programming us to become more
 and more destructive.

Tren walks under the 5th and Main street signs at the intersection and looks up. He stops to closely survey the surrounding area, before noticing a MYSTERIOUS MAN standing alone on the opposing side of the street. He slowly approaches the Mysterious Man, who is quick to mirror Tren's apprehension in his own body language.

Tren reaches into his right pant pocket and presses closer into the awkward encounter.

TREN KASAI (CONT'D)
 I'm looking for...
 (clears throat)
 Do these cross streets mean anything
 to you?

Tren pulls the crumpled paper from his pants.

TREN KASAI (CONT'D)
 It says 5th and Main. This is...

An alarm trips and RINGS aloud in the background. The Mysterious Man begins pacing with his makeshift protest sign at his side and impatiently avoids making eye contact.

Two adolescent men squeeze their bodies under the slightly lifted security grates that guard a storefront entrance behind the Mysterious Man. The men exit the interior of the store from the small grate opening and pull a series of product boxes within reach into their possession.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Hurry, just get what you can. We'll
come back for the rest. Let's go,
come on.

The men scamper to a run and clumsily knock over a flier stand; scattering loose papers into the air and to the ground at Tren's feet. The Mysterious Man shoots an odd look back at Tren, while the young men continue to run off celebrating amongst themselves.

Tren desperately looks around amidst the looming alarm cadence and is quick to grow frantic. Tren picks up a handful of fliers within reach and notices a strange yellow stenciled symbol at the corner of the last page.

He proceeds to strum his finger over the "tree of life" textured branding with curiosity. He is quick to notice more of the same symbols on selective fliers, blowing wildly above the pavement. He looks up to the boarded plywood safeguards to discover the identical yellow spray painted stencil, progressing down the street.

Tren follows the signs with a quick pace until he passes by the last visual sighting. He double backs to the graffiti stencil, positioning himself at the front of a broken glass showroom window. Tren looks through the opening and into the darkness of the abandoned commercial building interior.

TREN KASAI (V.O.)

So if this is our life, this loop.
How do we escape? We can't... all
we can do is dream. And then that
dream embeds us deeper into a code
that holds us suspended in time.

Tren steps over the jagged sharp glass frame and into the abandoned building.

TREN KASAI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Where you sit and wait. Reduced to
believing in some future version of
your hero character; instead of
becoming one. We're all held hostage
here. This is the reality we all
design for ourselves. Something we
chase forever. A glitch... that
becomes our truth. Is there any
real truth in all this?

Tren is watched from a neighboring building as he enters the building.

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING

Tren walks deeper into the dark and gutted interior. His slow cautious steps trudge through rippled sewage puddles and slimy refuge.

TREN KASAI (V.O.)
Is getting to the "game over" the
only way to know for certain? There
has to be another way.

Tren takes a deep breath and projects his vocal into the abyss.

TREN KASAI (CONT'D)
Hello?

Tren's vocal echos into the darkness. Tren listens briefly in the silence and speaks under his breath.

TREN KASAI (CONT'D)
Anyone else crazy enough to be in
here? No, just me? Way to go Tren.

A painful cough echos from the shadows. Tren startles to a stop. A dark silhouette of a ragged man sits up slowly from off of the distant floor.

Tren steps back and looks to the opening in the glass behind him. The diffused light from the exterior casts a lit path back to the window. A soiled napkin protrudes from the swampy floor surface within Tren's visual proximity. He slowly lowers to a squat. Tren takes a deep breath after his gaze and pulls the paper from his right pant pocket.

He holds his paper out in front of him to compare with the napkin.

The napkin handwriting reads: Go to Fifth and Main Street.

Tren's paper reads: *"Sign up if you want to know. -5th and Main."*

Tren talks quietly to himself.

TREN KASAI (CONT'D)
Come on Tren. It's either back to
the "glitch" or keep going. Ugh.

Both the napkin and Tren's paper lay alongside each other in the liquid sludge, as Tren walks off into the distant darkness of the background.

Tren puts his hands out in front of himself to feel through the darkness.

There is an echoed sound ambiance of pipe dripping, squatters moving over the wet surface, and Tren's breathing.

Another set of foot steps are heard walking in the distance behind Tren; until his extended reach collides with a metal surface CLANK. Tren's hands shuffle chaotically over the textured metal until a door pushes open.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Tren's face is lit from the omni glow of the surrounding lights. His wide eyes survey from side to side with disbelief. A sound ambiance of crowd banter and video audio is heard as Tren's frozen expression approaches.

A long and staggered single file line, populated with desperate and saddened people, leads away from a neon lit kiosk that faces towards the alleyway door - where Tren walks into a place at the back of the line. Tren connects eyes with a few neutral expressions before turning to discover the long digital display screens at his sides. The oversized futuristic visual displays extend the entire length of the line and projects light and audio onto the crowd standing between them.

Tren begins watching the animated commercial.

CUT TO:

ANIMATED 2-D COMMERCIAL:

Four lab coat scientists descend slowly, holding onto a large fiber optic line, through the malleable depths of an oversized brain. A red circular signal pulsates on one of the submerging scientist's handheld display-screen. The scientist stares into the screen as the grid map draws on the missing details of the brain under the signal.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

It was there, on the neural image map, where the signal coordinates would lead them to eventually make the discovery. In an area of the brain never-before explored, until now.

The scientists are surrounded by hovering brain folds and neural cavities, similar to that of floating debris and formations at the ocean depths. A beep rhythm begins to grow faster. They descend to a slowed float and tread water in front of an oversized light orb, emanating a red glow as it levitates in place. Dr. Rogers compares his screen's flashing red signal to the area in front of them.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

An area that senior neuroscientist
Dr. Rogers would come to elatedly
name, the Absonite.

The scientists swim past the transparent digitized light orb
and towards a circular cave opening in the wall of the brain
tissue. They all reposition their bodies to help point the
head of the oversized fiber optic line - held between them.
The camera lens, protruding from the end, now faces upward
and towards the entrance.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And what he and his team had found,
embedded beneath hidden layers of
pituitary folds, was made perfectly
viewable to the naked eye through
the pin-head camera lens of a modified
endoscope. Of which, the video feed
would reveal what would be an unusual
opening into an unknown region.

On an operating table, a female scientist pushes a fiber
optic endoscope line into a triangular incision on the back
of a patient's neck. She looks up to watch the video feed
on a screen beside her, showing her the forward progression
into the brain cavern opening.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And what was discovered within, deeply
sequestered into the walls of this
anomalous tissue, was a rare - never
before seen, sequence of watermarks.
Seared into the flesh like an artist's
signature.

The scientists swim through the middle of the cylindrical
interior walls of the cave, mystified by the cauterized scar
tissue markings that surround them. The markings look
consistent to foreign hieroglyphic symbols.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This string of unusual markings was
then captured, analyzed and then
processed in an algorithmic
computation - with the hopes of
reverse engineering the encrypted
code. And to the surprise of the
team, after 3 years of being held in
suspense, a readable pattern was
eventually deciphered.

A camera flash projects from the endoscope head, held upright
by the swimming scientists. A frozen image of the markings
are then displayed on screen, held in the open hands of Dr.

Rogers - inside of a laboratory. The digital symbols convert into repetitive whole numbers on screen. 4 sets of 2 digit numbers are displayed next to a green alert text that reads "Successful Decode." XX-XX-XX-XX

The team of scientists stare down at the screen in disbelief. One scientists nods and scratches his head.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 So began the human trials.
 Consequently, the results for each
 of the evaluated test subjects
 revealed to yield its own unique
 strand of 8-digit readings.

A hand removes the fiber optic cord from the triangular incision mark on the back of a neck. A scientist walks from the back to the front of the test subject, joining the other evaluating members of the team. The scientists look down at their transparent tablet devices. A finger presses a button labeled "decode" on the device screen, directly under the foreign watermark inscriptions. An 8 digit number is generated.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Which would come to be known as a
 "time-stamp" - a unique and randomly
 conceived year, month, day, and hour.

A glowing numerical 8 digit number rises and hovers above the back of the person's head. The two digit chunks are separated into four sets of numbers and labeled.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The significance of the date was not
 yet clear, until the first test
 subject became... a patient.

The test subject looks to their right and left to reveal a room full of additional subjects standing shoulder to shoulder. The subjects are standing in a circular lineup around the room, with unique digital time stamps above their heads. A test subject in the distance falls weakly to the ground.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The terminal nature of this single
 test subject would come to help
 finally uncover the relevance of the
 mysterious cracked codes.

The sick test subject is positioned in the same pose, however they are now atop an exam table - with their eyes closed.

The EKG meter flatlines aloud.

A glowing particle outline of the test subject's body ascends from the table and above the patient. The particles burst and reconnect to create the 8 digit time stamp. The scientists, standing around the perimeter of the bed, look to their tablets with urgency. A digital death certificate reads: Cause of death: Terminal disease, Time of death: 54 11 22 45

They look up from the tablet to compare the time of death date with the hovering date above the test subjects bed. They are identical.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
To solidify the experiment's efficacy,
a 100% test result accuracy would
come to validate the precision of
these predetermined times of death.

A test subject, standing in the circular lineup around the room, looks up at their date and begins jumping repetitively with joy. Under their 8 digit number is a phrase that reads: 88 years remaining. The test subject beside them looks up to discover that the phrase under their number reads: 1 year remaining.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
With the only exception occurring in
cases in which subjects chose to
prematurely terminate their own lives.
Rendering the date reading... void.

The test subject lowers their head and walks quickly to a door at the side of the room. They open the door to look off the edge of a tall building before stepping to their death. As the test subject is frozen in mid-air, the 8 digit number above their head turns into red text - that reads: VOID

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LOADING DOCK

Tren continues to watch the commercial with a glazed over expression. The people in line continue to nudge him forward in his stupor.

Commercial continues to play in the long digital screen alongside Tren. In screen: A person approaches a large tree of life silhouette with glowing yellow circular blossoms.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Now, you too, can know the end to a
new beginning.

Tren looks uncomfortably to his sides with an overwhelmed anxiety. He locks a stare into the eyes of the man behind him, an overweight middled aged man breathing heavy into a portable oxygen mask. The overweight man looks strangely at Tren's dazed and aloof movements. The young teen in front of Tren, glances back oddly at him and then returns back to holding up an elderly woman at her side.

NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When and if your voluntary enrollment contract is approved after evaluation, a 6-month preparation curriculum known as the Life Ascension program, will be made available to you prior to your procedure.

The commercial continues at his side: A yellow blossom falls from the top branch and morphs into a loose paper. It falls gracefully through the air and into the hands of the man beside the tree. The man looks to the paper to reveal the contract signature line.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Join the Life Ascension program today.
(Vocal speed increases)
You must successfully complete the program to gain the cognitive wherewithal to undergo the aforementioned procedure.

Commercial continues: The man signs his signature with the tip of his index finger. The paper ascends upward to disintegrate into yellow particles - that move into a circular shape at the circumference of the tree. It forms a replica of the logo stencil that Tren saw earlier on the flier.

Tren halts to a complete standstill. The overwhelming sound ambiance from the crowd and display screens dropout to a high pitched frequency.

An aggressive vocal is heard in the distance.

SIGNUP ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Sir. You're holding everyone up here. Hey.

Tren is startled out of his daze.

A SIGNUP ATTENDANT, standing behind the kiosk desk, an authoritative man dressed in a generic military attire- yells impatiently to the person standing at the front of the line.

SIGNUP ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

We don't have time for this. You need to make a decision now.

The Signup Attendant impatiently looks towards the crowd and then down at his watch.

SIGNUP ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

Look at how many people are behind you, sir. These are just simple tests, nothing more. Then you're free to leave.

A rather skittish and indecisive, scrawny twenty-something male - JOSH PEPINSKI, is frozen with the sign-up form out in front of him. He looks back at the line and then oddly to Tren with apprehension in his widened eyes.

Tren, visible between the elderly lady and her caretaker, locks his estranged eyes with Josh Pepinski's stare of desperation. In that fleeting exchange, Josh Pepinski succumbs to the pressure and signs the form.

A KIOSK RECEPTIONIST, a well presented middle-aged female, nonchalantly slides two new contract tablets slowly across the surface of the kiosk desk.

KIOSK RECEPTIONIST

Next two in line please.

The elderly woman and teen caretaker approach one side of the desk and Tren the other. The Kiosk Receptionist looks kindly to Tren.

KIOSK RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Please hurry honey. We don't know how long we can keep this open tonight.

The Receptionist leans to the side to look towards the back door exit with a growing concern.

KIOSK RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Let's at least try to get you qualified, ok? Come on.

Tren watches Josh Pepinski nervously walk off with the aggressive Signup Attendant. He looks down at the digital contract tablet and then back up towards Josh Pepinski with an unusual concern.

The pen stylus dramatically drops to the top of the digitally signed contract. Signature reading: Tren Kasai

CUT TO:

EXT. INFINITE BLACK

Complete black vastness fills the frame. A sliver of light from above casts a silhouette outline around Tren's body. Tren rises from an exam table and looks into the darkness.

A deep Instructional Vocal cadence reverberates around Tren.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)
Are you employed by and/or affiliated
with the media sector?

Tren looks perplexed to discover that only a patient's gown covers his nude body.

TREN
No.

A positive affirmation chime echos aloud.

TREN (CONT'D)
Is this part of the test? Did you
already...?

Tren reaches concernedly for the back of his neck.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)
What are your intentions and/or
personal interests in relation to
the Life Ascension program?

TREN
I'm here... because I want to know.
I need to know.

A negative affirmation chime echos aloud.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)
Repeat. What are your intentions
and/or personal interests in relation
to the Life Ascension program?

Tren pushes himself off the end of the exam table and onto a reflective surface of shallow water.

TREN
What is this? Who's out there?

Tren runs through the shallow water into the darkness and ends up approaching the same exam table.

TREN (CONT'D)
Is this some twisted game? Let me
out of here. Is this... you?
(MORE)

TREN (CONT'D)
 This is what you wanted, right? To
 make me suffer.

Tren flips the table over and onto it's side.

TREN (CONT'D)
 Enough. Please. I can't live like
 this anymore.

A negative affirmation chime echos aloud.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)
 Repeat. What are your intentions
 and/or personal interests in relation
 to the Life Ascension program?

Tren lowers weakly to the floor and sits up against the back
 of the turned over exam table. He lowers his head into his
 trembling hands.

TREN
 My mother...
 (Tren chokes up)

TREN (CONT'D)
 As her last breath fell to her chest,
 where I had buried my face to hide
 from looking into her lifeless eyes,
 I knew. And what I thought I knew
 before that single moment; myself,
 this life, everything... it was all
 a lie.

The spot light above Tren flickers and shorts out. Tren
 sits in complete darkness.

TREN (CONT'D)
 This realization felt like an
 eternity, but it was all within the
 few seconds it took for my mothers
 hand to release all muscle contraction -
 and slowly open beside me. And in
 her open hand was the balled up
 message that would keep me alive...
 and lead me here.

A elder woman's hand opens to reveal the crumpled paper
 message.

A positive affirmation chime echos aloud.

A switch CLICKS. An overexposed light floods the path in
 front of Tren. Tren gets up and walks toward the blinding
 light.

As he progresses forward, the solid black floor beneath him begins to exhibit a dispersion of sand granules covering the surface.

Tren's continuous steps eventually lead him into an entire floor covered in sand.

EXT. SAND DUNES - DAY

Tren stops and looks up from the sand floor and into the light. He discovers the immensity of the desolate mountainous sand dunes that envelop him on all sides.

Tren in confusion, speaks to himself under his breath.

TREN

This is a neural reality construct?
How is this possible?

Tren notices a figure approach from afar. Dressed in a high-tech black fabric body suit, the figure stops just close enough for Tren to recognize the familiar characteristics of the figure's face. The Double Figure is identical in every physical detail to Tren - except for the patient gown.

TREN (CONT'D)

You're a copy? I wasn't even scanned.
How did they...?

DOUBLE FIGURE

No. However, you'll come to soon
recognize that you are indeed, the
copy.

Tren looks upward into the sky.

TREN

System. Source code override. Match
user wardrobe.

Tren lifts his arms up to watch the same black body suit fabric, worn by the Double Figure, draw onto his own skin.

TREN (CONT'D)

I live and breath this world. You're
a hacked data integration.

DOUBLE FIGURE

If I'm the copy, then how are you
sweating? Is that heat you feel?
Fear even?

TREN

How is there sensory response? This
technology is still decades away.

DOUBLE FIGURE

Because this is not a game. It is a
test, Tren.

The Double Figure looks behind Tren, into the distance.

DOUBLE FIGURE (CONT'D)

Do not die. Your survival is
required.

Tren looks behind himself to discover a large sandstorm wall. The storm covers the entire horizon line and races quickly towards him from the distance. Tren turns back to discover that the Double Figure is no longer standing in front of him.

A deep Instructional Vocal cadence reverberates around Tren.

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL (V.O.)

Do not die. Your survival is
required.

TREN

Terminate simulation. Override
passcode. Let me out of here.

A negative affirmation chime echos aloud. Tren yells up to the sky.

TREN (CONT'D)

I'll pass your test. Then you better
pull me out of this black market
hack job. You hear me?

Tren begins to run in the opposite direction, with the trailing storm of debris at his back. He trips to a fall into the loose sand floor, plunging to his hands and knees.

TREN (CONT'D)

How can I feel like this? What is
this?

He looks back from his disoriented position, gets up frantically and begins to run again.

A crowd of chaotic voices pierce through the violent winds. The commotion of the yelling vocals distract Tren. He looks up, peculiarly above himself, towards the source of the sounds.

CUT TO:

INT. SPRINTER VAN - NIGHT

With Tren still looking upward, a futuristic makeshift VR helmet is removed from Tren's head. Tren is sat at a makeshift control seat, wearing the same black skin tight body suit. The only difference in the attire, is that there are electrical ports plugged with wires that extend outward from a high-tech console at the center of the vehicle.

The crowd commotion and yelling vocals are still heard distinctly from outside the open vehicle door.

The Sign-up Assistant 2 frantically unplugs Tren from the console.

SIGN-UP ASSISTANT 2
We got to get out of here.

Tren looks alarmed.

Sign-up Assistant 2 hastily pulls the equipment into open cases and runs outside of the vehicle to break down the signage that reads: Psych Evaluation Testing

SIGN-UP ASSISTANT 2 (CONT'D)
Now's your chance, kid. We don't usually do this, but you can come if you want. But you need to decide fast.

SIGN-UP ASSISTANT runs up to the open door of the vehicle and leads Josh Pepinski into the first row of passenger seats in the back.

Tren gets up and peaks outside the vehicles door and into the siege of violent protestors and swarms of news media. Tren recognizes the Mysterious Man, of whom he saw earlier vandalizing the store. The Mysterious Man is waving his protest sign wildly into the scampering crowd.

There are additional sprinter vans pulling out from behind the sign-up kiosk.

Signup Assistant yells to Signup Assistant 2.

SIGN-UP ASSISTANT
You need to get out of here now. Go go.

Tren slides into the back seat alongside Josh Pepinski, who is slumped over in an uncontrollable panic. The vehicle's door slides shut to a darkened - windowless cab and speeds off.

The audible of terrorizing shouts and the thunderous banging on the vehicle is heard from all sides. Tren and Josh Pepinski are thrown from side to side as the vehicle aggressively maneuvers to evade the crowds.

Josh Pepinski, also dressed in the same black body suit, is hysterically looking around the interior of the vehicle.

TREN

It's going to be ok. Just relax.
I'm Tren. What's your name?

Tren fastens and clicks his seat belt securely in his lap.

JOSH PEPINSKI

Josh. Josh Pepinski. People just
call me Pe... Pep. I need to...
(interrupted)

TREN

Pep, you have a seat belt over there?

PEP

I don't... I. I need to find my...
I need to know where they put our
stuff?

TREN

We'll get it. Just hold tight.
Here, take this.

Tren finds the missing belt strap and extends it to Pep's shaking hands. Pep clicks his belt together and attempts to subside his sporadic hand movements. He digs his fidgeting fingers into his arms in an attempt to keep himself from hyperventilating.

Tren turns away from Pep, pushes his head back into the head rest and squeezes his eyes shut.

The audible sounds of the crowd slowly fade, but the getaway sounds continue: high RPM's of the engine, screeching tires, and the grunting of the suspension intensifies over the repeated speed bumps.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Angela Rothwell, Benny and Christoph are amongst the chaos of the signup kiosk. Angela watches the van speed off with squinted eyes and then turns to Benny.

Benny continues to film. His camera lens reflects the van driving off into the distance and then fades to black.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. SPRINTER VAN

The large side door is aggressively pulled open to flood an overexposed light into the interior of the van. Tren and Pep jolt up, locked into a look of fright, and fight to focus their eyes.

THE END OF PART ONE

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?
(MORE)

TREN (CONT'D)

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...
(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. Damn it. 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 cadence 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 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 cuddles him securely in her arms.

Maya's 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.

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

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 minimalistic 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 hesitation. 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 it's 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 let's 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 leaves' 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 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 banned 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. 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: Kasai,
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 precautious 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, minimalistic 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 needled 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 minimalist 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 their 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. 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 wake up 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 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. 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. 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 the star boy. Benjamin 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

Maybe if you started reading the guide book instead of your space book, you would of had a chance.

Benjamin tightly grips to "The Cosmos" book at his side.

JESS (CONT'D)

But I had to pass em up, Asami. 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 astronomy book to laugh at Carter. He turns to Asami with a certain profundity. Benjamin points to a text section in the book below his gaze.

BENJAMIN

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

ASAMI

The eco-garden's sun is pretty close.

BENJAMIN

The simulated light part, maybe.
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
(MORE)

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)
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
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

connect us to a new consciousness,
is now being transferred in its sub-
atomic 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.

(MORE)

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

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...
(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.
(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

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 girls 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, arduously 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. 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 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.
(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

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.
(MORE)

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

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, Lacey.

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, SEDAN - 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 steal 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 overlaid 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? Damn it,
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. Their 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

FLASHBACK - INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL WAREHOUSE

An EKG machine displays three sets of zero digit readings, alongside three uniquely colored parallel flatlines. Dr. Rogers, Maya, Rachel and Joe stand motionless on the outskirts of a wheeled stretcher bed, locked into a dead stare with the machine's display readings. The area is lit solely from the glow of the operation table head lamps above, separating the workstation from the darkened backdrop of hundreds of other bedded patients.

The sound of the room ambiance slowly fades-in to reveal a piercing solid tone. Maya presses into the EKG machine interface at the head of the bed, directly above Isaac's frozen face, to set the room into a deafening silence.

Maya looks back to Dr. Rogers with a glum eye-roll and then to the glass room enclosure in the distance.

Where a young Lacey is sat inside, at the center of the scattered drawings strewn across the floor. She is oblivious to the visual and audible activity on the outside of the glass.

The drawing beneath her chaotic pencil tip is indiscernible.

Dr. Rogers interrupts Maya's distracted gaze.

DR. ROGERS

This is it. The exact time. It's perfect.

Dr. Rogers looks to the digital glass clipboard under his lowered view.

Display reads: Patient 2301. Time of Death - Year/Month/Day 11:31 AM.

MAYA

Should we... at least try, just to be certain? We can still resuscitate. There's still time.

Rachel looks to Maya with confusion. Joe briefly peeks up from his LCD viewfinder screen to scoff and then buries his head back down behind the camera. He positions the handheld device between himself and the deceased patient, creating a barrier to keep himself hidden in anonymity.

DR. ROGERS

You got close to him didn't you? Maya, he was sick. We were supposed to intervene when we did, but this is as far as fate will allow us to go now.

Joe continues to film the event while speaking with a soft and desensitized vocal into the side of the camera.

JOE

Date accuracy was consistent. Precise down to the very minute. This concludes patient 2301's data log archives. Fatality results were...

Joe slowly looks up from the camera with an unusually dumbfounded expression. The identical look begins to form on the faces of the other scientists.

JOE (CONT'D)

Wait. Did he just... ? Hey, Rogers?

Below the laser focus of their collective stares, the oxygen mask covering Isaac's bearded face sits in complete tranquility. A dramatic revelation is synchronously acknowledged by the team, when a slowly growing fog forms on the interior of the plastic mask.

The three parallel solid-lined meters on the EKG machine unexpectedly bump up. A rhythmic BEEP is paired with the sounds of fragile inhalations of pumping oxygen. A quiver is released with the exhale of Dr. Rogers's lips.

DR. ROGERS

The date. The encoding was accurate.
This isn't right. Somethings not
right. Joe, stop recording.

Joe fights against a sudden loss of muscle control in the arm holding up his camera, but he persists.

Maya's hand rests softly over the exposed foot protruding from the bed linen at the end of the stretcher.

MAYA

He's freezing already.

Dr. Rogers is soon to recognize the cold chill shiver vibrating Isaac's body.

DR. ROGERS

It's ok, Isaac. Let's get you warm,
huh?

He reaches to pull the covers across his body and observes the eyes of Isaac discovering him with an unfamiliar disorientation.

RACHEL

We can't log this. We can't show
this you guys.

The camera lens turns to Maya's expression of dread and then to Rachel. Rachel is quick to shove Joe's camera-hand down into the exam bed linens.

DR. ROGERS

Are you still filming this? Joe I'm
serious, shut it down. Now.

The camera sits at the foot of the bed.

JOE

Ok. Jesus. It's off.

Rachel looks up from the downed camera.

MAYA

How is this happening? This doesn't make any sense. Was it wrong? It's never wrong.

Dr. Rogers leans over the bed and slowly removes his protective surgical face covering. Joe swipes the camera into his possession in the background and inconspicuously presses into the button functions.

DR. ROGERS

No. It's never been wrong. This is different. Something is different.

Isaac, the homeless man, slowly raises his arm in an uncoordinated motion and pulls down the oxygen mask covering his muffled breathing. He stares deeply back into Dr. Rogers's mystified eyes above him.

The facial hair covering Isaac's lips separates, but his forced vocal fails to project.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Grab my notebook. Rachel. Hurry.

Rachel lunges over her precious equipment, inattentive to the hardware knocked to the floor in the process.

RACHEL

Where is it? Oh god, oh god. Come on. Here, it's right here.

Dr. Rogers relays the soft-back book of notes, shoved into his hip from behind, to Isaac's extended reach. Isaac opens the book to the pen placeholder and begins writing with haste down the length of a blank page.

Maya observes the unfamiliar personality behavior with concern.

MAYA

Isaac?

Isaac slowly shakes his head from side to side and hands the open book back to Dr. Rogers. Dr. Rogers carefully receives the handoff, under his inquisitive view, to examine the newly inscribed contents. His eyes dart down the page in a progressively intensifying state of disbelief.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL WAREHOUSE - CLEAN ROOM

Maya, Joe, Rachel and Dr. Rogers are sat motionless on the makeshift benches, made from safety equipment cases, in the

decontamination tent's modular air tight entrance compartment. The compartment quarantine doors are wide open behind them

Dr. Rogers, dressed in his traditional lab coat street clothes, is seated alone on the bench across from the three other scientists. He looks onto his colleagues, of whom still have their protective attire on, with tears in his eyes.

DR. ROGERS

What happened today... will change
the course of everything we've done.
Everything.

Dr. Rogers reaches out to Maya, directly across from him.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. You were right. You
knew something didn't you?

Maya recognizes an authenticity to Dr. Rogers's sentiments and removes her mask, unzips her protective exterior garb and reaches her now ungloved hand to his extended reach.

MAYA

I don't think there's a single doubt
amongst any of us now.

DR. ROGERS

Nobody will understand this. Or
him.

Rachel follows suit and derobes.

RACHEL

What do we do now? We can't stay
here. Everything that we thought
was important to our research...
it's nothing in comparison to whatever
just happened out there. I can't
even...

Dr. Rogers nods emotionally in agreeance.

DR. ROGERS

I know. I know. It's ok, Rachel.
Joe? You ok?

Dr. Rogers looks down to notice Joe's focus fixed on his shaking gloved hand.

JOE

I can't stop it from moving like
that.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

I just need to process all this.
This is just too far down the rabbit
hole, ya know?

Joe still in his protective suit, pushes himself to separate further from the other members on the bench. The inside of his protective facial shield fogs to hide his distress.

RACHEL

What's happening here ends today.
We need to leave. Like now.

Dr. Rogers looks to Maya for a gesture or reaction of any kind.

MAYA

What are saying? How do we...? There
are hundreds of people out there.
We can't just abandon all this.

Maya looks to the group with angst. Dr. Rogers sits with an assuming confidence.

DR. ROGERS

I know what to do. We'll do it right,
Maya. Then we go off the grid
completely. For as long as it takes.
Until we figure this out.

MAYA

What about Lacey?

Dr. Rogers's eyes quickly shift from an enthusiastic resolve to an empathetic compromise.

-On the interior of the glass popup room, Lacey fights against a crippling fatigue to keep her eyes open. She continues to bob in and out of a wakened consciousness so that she can continue to sketch, over the blackened paper canvas below her, with an acute determination.

Lacey's head jolts up, as if startled by an abrasive sound in the background.

CUT TO:

INT. MAKESHIFT MEDICAL WAREHOUSE

A loud metal CLANK echos through the interior.

A vertical loading dock door slides up, leaking the bright moonlight through a waist level gap - revealing three sets of legs on the exterior.

Christoph bends beneath the opening to stand upright on the inside, holding a set of bolt cutters in one hand and an equipment case in the other. Angela and Benny are quick to follow, toting an unusual amount of equipment at their sides.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

You know what this means, don't you?
Everything that man said was true.
He showed me video of what they did
in here, guys.

All three stare into the vastness of the eerie abandoned warehouse, scantily lit from the small gap at the half opened entrance door.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

What did I tell you, huh?

BENNY

There must of been hundreds in here
at a time. This is just sick.

Disordered and overturned metal-framed stretcher beds populate the concrete floors around them, along with scattered medical equipment and discarded neuroscience related machinery off in the distance.

CHRISTOPH

I smell death everywhere. We need
to do this now, yes? Get the footage
and let's go. Benny, just shoulder
the shots.

Christoph holds the shirt over his face to conceal the putrid aroma from his sour expression. He begins to walk quickly back towards the door opening. His projected vocal is diffused under the fabric of his shirt.

CHRISTOPH (CONT'D)

I can't do this. I can't be in here
like this. I'll keep watch from the
van. I'm sorry. I just can't.

Christoph wobbles under the gap in the exit. Benny begins to show his shared disinterest by freezing with an open case between his legs.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Let's go, Benny. Just one teaser.
Come on. That's all we need. I can
keep those assholes off me if we do
this right. We still have time to
pull this off.

Benny throws the camera rig to his shoulder and flips the on-camera LED spot to cast a glow around Angela.

BENNY
It's hot. You're on.

Angela orates into a microphone while walking backwards through the large abandoned warehouse.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
We're here at what looks to be the abandoned warehouse of the alleged illegal black market neuro-technology company, Life Ascension. Of which its scientists in question, are said to have crossed the line with a recent experimental brain imaging procedure.

The camera pans away from Angela to reveal the disarray of interior.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Rumored to be capable of generating predetermined times of death for voluntary case study patients.

The van's horn is HONKED repeatedly in the background. Angela brushes off her audible distraction to continue her monologue.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
However, there's more to the story than we've been led to believe. More on the alleged experiment origins have surfaced...

The horn continues to sound off. Angela cuts her vocal and stops in her backwards pace.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
The audio is shit now. What the hell is he doing? We can't use that, Benny. Let's go again.

BENNY
Christoph knows what we're doing, Angela. He would never spoil a take like that. Unless it was legit.

Aggressive banter competes with the revving of the van's engine on the exterior. Benny sets the camera on the floor and begins to pace short steps to his sides.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
Hide, Benny. Go.

Benny dashes into a frenzy, in the direction of the depths of a dark corner. Angela runs in her heels down the projected line of the camera's light beam, off into the visible distance. She pushes herself through a small exit door at the back of the warehouse, leaving behind an audible door slam to echo aloud.

Dust and debris float chaotically in the glow of two sets of dress pants, stopped in front of the floored camera's light line. They proceed to run off to follow the closing door sound - off into the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAYS, CITY STREETS

Angela presses herself deeply into the side of an alleyway dumpster to catch her breath. She sits awkwardly, crouched over the blacktop, meddling with the strap fastenings on her high heels.

The backdoor of the warehouse closes within close proximity.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Go the other way you goon freaks,
come on.

As the approaching heavy steps grow louder, a series of tire screeches are heard in the opposing direction.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Where you at, Christoph?

Angela dashes into a full sprint, on her bare feet, down the alleyway's grooves and turns. The headlights facing Angela, at the end of the route, fade away as the vehicle turns down a perpendicular alleyway street.

Angela speaks angrily under her breath.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Where in the hell are you going?
Shit.

The quickened pace from the two sets of black oxford leather dress shoes, further ensue over the blacktop of puddles and pot holes - gaining on Angela. Angela follows the headlights through the gaps between the industrial buildings at her side and cuts hard down a small sliver of a path, narrow enough for her to barely squeeze through. Angela releases the hold on her high-end high heels to smoosh herself between two buildings.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Damnit, those were Louboutin. I
loved those shoes.

Angela jostles from side to side with choppy steps to continue on her path to cut off the vehicle ahead. She looks to her side, back to the strip of an opening where she entered, to discover the absence of her followers.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
You big boys couldn't hang huh?

Angela exits the gap to a headlight lit ambiance. She runs towards the headlights with a relaxed stride.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Christoph, you beautiful frenchman.

When Angela is close enough to discern that the vehicle is not a van and that of sedan silhouette, she stops in defeat to catch her breath - between the high beams.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
This is going to happen, Angela. We
have enough to play ball though,
girl. Please God be enough.

Two large men, dressed in sophisticated black suits, approach from the opposing side of the vehicle and walk towards Angela - into the radiance of the lights.

The frame fills with a solid white.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. FACILITY - ECO GARDEN

-An encompassing quietness is paired with a spatial
ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC.

The white fades out to reveal the glowing white light wall-panels that surround the interior of the Eco-Garden, emanating its simulated sunlight over the unusually motionless natural landscape.

A stream of precipitation breaks the stillness and falls down the side of a bright panel and into the crack between the panel conjoined at its side.

INT. ECO GARDEN - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

-The ambiance of the ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC continues.

The water beed seeps through the crevice and drips into the moss flooring of the secret garden on the backside of the panel wall.

The makeshift swing is noticeably the only slightly moving object off in the distance, drifting gently in place from side to side. The surface of the metal tray swing seat is freshly engraved, with meticulously scratched incisions that reveal the names of Tren, Lacey and Pep.

CUT TO:

INT. ECO GARDEN - VENTILATION SHAFT

-The ambiance of ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC continues.

A slow movement, progressing deeper into the darkness, through the interior of the enlarged circular pipe-like corridor - is paired with sounds of dense flowing air and faint vocal echos.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY HALLWAYS

-The ambiance of ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC continues.

A slow movement downward, from the exterior of the hallway's ceiling air-duct ventilation tube above, is slow to reveal Lacey, Tren and Pep standing alone in the distant hallway below. The Atrium at their backs is eerily silent and desolate.

Lacey, Tren and Pep disperse at the intersection of the desolate room block hallways, and walk separately into three unique entranceways.

-The music ambiance abruptly cuts out to a closing door.

CUT TO:

INT. TREN'S ROOM BLOCK

Tren stands exhausted at the head of the vacant room with the closed door at his back. He detects the light emitting from under the bathroom door at his side and proceeds to raise his hand to knock. Tren stops short of connecting his knuckles to the grain and leans in to press his ear flush against the door's surface. Tension begins to paint over Tren's face until the door unexpectedly yanks open, revealing Carter's emotionless blood-shot stare.

Carter pushes a hollow and weakened vocal from his chest.

CARTER

What bro? Are you looking to meet again? Is that it? You need something to make you feel more comfortable?

Tren unflinchingly stares into the void of Carter's glazed eyes.

TREN

Maybe that does need to happen, Carter.

Tren cheats one step closer to the doorframe with an unusual serious intent.

TREN (CONT'D)

For you to rise out of whatever it is that torments at the back of your eyes, then yes. Nice to meet you. I'm Tren. And you are?

CARTER

You really want to drop the facade and do this? We take these surface level masks off right now, and you won't get to prance around here anymore with your fake little pleasantries and your charity act bullshit.

Tren defaults to a squinted-eye curiosity.

CARTER (CONT'D)

I see you, Tren. Pep can't though, can he? Dude can't see anything but his own pain. But you know that. That's why he's perfect for you to hide behind, huh?

Tren cheats his lead step back a pace and painfully contemplates. Carter projects a confidence in his awareness of his exposed upper torso of menacing inked art and tatted phrases of suffering.

CARTER (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. You're not ready to meet me. I'm too real for you, Tren. Let's wait until you get a chance to meet yourself, then we'll try this again.

Tren suspiciously peaks into the open door past Carter, to discover the blood spatter and used syringes on the sink counter.

Carter is quick to catch Tren's inquisitive eyes and interrupts with an aggressive push against the door, slamming it shut.

-Tren is sat upright in bed, brewing in his stare at the sliver of light emanating from under the door in the distance. He grabs his circular tablet and angrily scrolls through the pages of Akito message listings. He stops with his finger suspended over the Angela Rothwell "Urgent" inbox subject line.

After a moment of deliberation, Tren clicks the listing from Angela.

It reads: Tren, I know where you are. The Life Ascension program isn't what you think. Help me expose the truth. Attach a GPS location pin to your reply, so the world can know too. -Angela Rothwell

-A still frame image from the sign-up footage is attached, showing Tren on the inside of the psych-evaluation van.

Tren tilts his head back with a troubled conviction, but he is quickly distracted by an alert DING and a message popup - overlaid on the inbox interface. Tren clicks into the message prompt to load a sketched portrait of himself, Pep and Lacey sitting on the moss in front of the makeshift swing. A handwritten message under the image reads: Look to the vents to find Lacey, Tren and Pep. Thank you. Lacey.

Tren becomes aware of his own gradual shift in demeanor, and smiles deeply into his transition from conflicted to a newfound sense of contentment.

CUT TO:

INT. THE COUNSELOR'S ROOM

At the back of a dark contemporary multi-room floor-plan, a wavering light flickers over a trail of disheveled clothing articles - littered across the concrete floor. As the orange fire-light intensifies, toward the end of the breadcrumb of floored items, a long strip of unraveled gauze is shown to hold a quantity of imprinted blood in its woven material.

In the glowing background of the bloodied scraps, The Counselor sits grounded on his knees and hunched over a simple candle lit fixture. He chants an ensemble of foreign sounds under his breathe, downward into the exposed skin of his upper torso.

In the distance, at the doorway entrance to the room, a figure walks out from the over-exposed light from the exterior hallway.

Upon the door closing to the bright backlight, the silhouetted body progresses into the dancing illumination in the foreground, toward The Counselor.

Lacey is revealed in the proximity of the candle source light, as she takes a final step to The Counselor's side. She looks with sadness upon his arched back beneath the extension of her reach. Her fingers slowly strum over the protruding scar tissue symbols, progressing upwards from the base of The Counselor's spine to his neck. The Counselor unflinchingly reaches to the back of his head to softly embrace Lacey's hand.

Lacey fights off her tears to plead gently below her gaze.

LACEY

It was real? How could this be real?
I felt this happening to you. I
could see it. With your eyes. It
played out like all the other day
dreams do. And then stopped. But,
I wasn't hallucinating was I?

THE COUNSELOR

It is quite late for you to be up
questioning such things, don't you
think?

LACEY

I needed to talk to you about what
happened tonight. I knocked. I'm
sorry. The door was open and I
thought... I just knew it was
different this time. What's happening
to me?

The Counselor turns around to look at Lacey with a softened smile. A sense of pride fills his eyes.

THE COUNSELOR

What's meant to be will always find
a way, it seems. Dear Lacey.

LACEY

Are you ok? Why have you done so
many procedures? There are so many
incisions here.

Lacey proceeds to follow up the sequence of spinal scars with her despondent eyes.

THE COUNSELOR

This night was intended for you to
discover the nature of something
(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
more. What had previously been kept
from your understanding. What your
mind has instinctively attempted to
reject. What has manifested itself
into a disorder inside your mind.
This mustn't be any longer.

LACEY
What's wrong with me? I've taken
the pills like they told me. I've
done what you've said to do.

THE COUNSELOR
Yes. Yes, you have.

The Counselor looks to Lacey with a bold resolve and then
tenderly to the pile of clothing just out of reach.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Please. Allow me to dress suitably,
and I will do my best to explain.

Lacey hands the tunic clothing article to The Counselor and
sits across from the burning candle between them. He pulls
the fabric onto his body and struggles to maneuver the buttons
into the correct button holes.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
I could never quite do this right,
could I? Such a simple task. But
yet, it continues to remain unfamiliar
to my mind. Some would refer to
this as something very weird, yes?

LACEY
I don't. But, yes they do. You are
pretty weird to them. But, I don't
see it.

Lacey cracks a small smile with her eyes.

THE COUNSELOR
Well. Perhaps there is something
more that this weirdness allows me
to possess. Some see a sense of
wonder in it, as you do. Here I am
concerned with the small details of
the mechanisms built into this fabric.
Unaware maybe, that my unusual
calamity could be keeping me from
more perplexing provocations. The
ones that have been known to torment
and keep the mind weary. And asleep.
(MORE)

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

So, there is a gift bestowed in this weirdness.

LACEY

How are you saying that there is some kind of upside to being sick the way I am? That means the reason I'm like this... my parent's death, Aunt Maya and everything that's happened, was apart of some experience to...

(interrupted)

THE COUNSELOR

Yes, a very unique opportunity is presenting itself to you. As it once had to those thousands of years ago.

The Counselor stares mysteriously into Lacey's curious eyes.

THE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

There is a strength hidden away in every weakness, Lacey. This is the beauty few can discern. This experience is pulling you in... to learn something, you see? An ability that has become lost over time.

LACEY

How will I know when it's not just some sleep deprived delusion? There must of been some significance behind why I saw what I saw.

Lacey edges over the burning flame to encroach gently towards The Counselor.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Why was it you?

The Counselor slowly reaches to the back of his neck. A sense of childlike curiosity grows as his index finger traces over the triangular scar tissue.

THE COUNSELOR

Do not worry of the exterior damages to this body. It is only a temporary characteristic. Dr. Rogers is also aware of the importance of this truth. We must play our part. Regardless of the sacrifices required of us. You understand now, don't you?

The Counselor extends his signed cast outward, above the candle glow to Lacey's embrace.

LACEY

You've been like a father to me.
You're the Counselor. I trust you.
I've always trusted you. You're
different than them.

THE COUNSELOR

Perhaps then, this will help answer
the "why" that you were seeking for.
To the same question that also weighs
heavy on the minds of your two new
friends, yes?

LACEY

You're right. This isn't about me
is it?

THE COUNSELOR

You are very fond of them, aren't
you? Tren and Pep. You will come
to soon play your part, Lacey. Soon
enough.

Lacey internalizes with a newfound vigor in the ominous glow.

The orange glow fills the frame and continues to burn closely
at the crackling wick.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

The candle's flame is transposed behind the blaze of a freshly
struck match, burning at the charred tip of a golden laced
cigarette. A panoramic view of downtown Manhattan is
reflected through the skyline glass, seen from behind the
obstructed blur - emitted from the hot glow of the tobacco.

A double TAP knock echos from a door in the distance.

A stream of smoke spews from the lips of an Unknown Man, as
his vocal projects aggressively across the high-end hotel
suite.

UNKNOWN MAN

(Speaking Japanese)

O hairi kudasai.

English translated: Come Please.

Two oversized double doors, at the head of the room, are
pushed open. Angela Rothwell reservedly enters.

She peaks back over her shoulder, from the corner of her eye, to glimpse the two large black-suited Japanese men trailing close behind.

UNKNOWN MAN
Watashitachi o nokoshimasu.

English translated: Leave us.

She nudges forward from a thrust to her back and steps with discomfort from the closing doors. She looks to the rising smoke billow above a black high-backed chair, facing the cityscape view across the room. Where the Unknown Man remains sat and concealed from view.

Angela begins to slowly walk her soiled bare-feet over a long stretch of marbled tile, toward the lonely chair at the opposite side of the room.

ANGELA ROTHWELL
I know who you are. Akito. Akito
Kasai.

The cigarette is pulled from a set of perched lips and held in a lingering stillness. Angela takes a final step to a dead stop.

After a desperate ponder into the enormous glass panels overlooking the city, Angela humbly confesses with a compromised vocal.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
Funny thing. Three years ago I was
the sensation of this city.

Angela resumes her slow and contemplative pace.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
I shelved my first Pulitzer that
year and single handedly put a media
company into the highest building in
that picturesque cityscape in front
of you.

Angela grabs a small chair from an offset table at her side, en route to Akito.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)
I did it all... with my sweat.

She slides it harshly across the tile floor on it's back legs.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Around that same time, I got an inside lead on a story out of Japan. I mean so hot, it hadn't even broke the press in the heart of Tokyo. I knew that if what they said you were creating was legit, Kasai innovation could become one of the largest tech moguls in the world.

Angela sets the chair upright and falls weakly into the back of the seat, facing the backside of Akito's chair.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

So, it was my journalistic obligation to follow it up. Even if it was against the board approval of a network I helped build.

Angela speaks in a deep masculine voice to mockingly quote.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Your tech was progressing too fast. Getting too big. It's too dangerous, they told me. But, I told the story anyway.

Akito smashes the remainder of his cigarette into the side of his leather seat and stands to face Angela, with an object hidden at the end of Akito's reach - behind the backside of the chair.

AKITO KASAI

(Japanese accent)

They were right you know? There's only one real threat to a country and its people, Angela.

He dramatically draws up an ancient katana sword from behind the chair and then proceeds to lay it gently across the cushion of his chair.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

It's not war, a nuclear weapons race or some petty cyber attack school fight. You must cripple its market and destabilize its economy. The only way to truly shut down the machine keeping this illusionary reality alive.

He walks slowly toward Angela.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I knew what your company was capable of doing. I was blackballed and discredited for reporting on a change that we both know is destined to happen. And I want tell the full story.

Akito walks to the backside of Angela's chair and tightly grips his hands over her shoulders. She looks uncomfortably into the pit of her lap.

AKITO KASAI

But you are not telling my story anymore, Angela.

Akito speaks with a labored exaggeration.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

However, I am impressed you are now aware of who hired you. You are also aware that Kasai Games has entered into the veins of your cities because of your inability to follow the leadership of your subordinates. But, that is not why I chose you. I thought we were more alike, you and I.

Akito walks to face Angela with a serious stare.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

We are. We both want to speed up evolution, right?

Akito invites Angela, with a gesture to the large panoramic window, to join him for a closer view.

AKITO KASAI

You're still built into the machine, Angela. So much so, that you can't even see outside of the dream it has created for you to follow. Enslaved. To sell its surface level sensationalism.

Angela and Akito press up against the glass to gaze out into the night's sea of city lights.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

To keep my investment in other matters confidential, I needed the predictable misdirection of that ace card. You understand?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

But, you sent me in there blind.
All I knew was what Rogers told me.

Akito walks back to his chair facing the window, and formally lifts from under the cased blade with his cupped hands.

AKITO KASAI

You played my hand too soon, didn't you? Because of your selfish ambitions to leak some miraculous story of impending death and scientific fortune telling, you have altered the purpose of our work arrangement. My money...
(interrupted)

Angela watches Akito's reflection in the glass and confidently projects her interruption.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

The money being used to experiment on your son? That money.

Akito stops in his movements. Angela closely surveys Akito's reaction, forms an epiphany and turns to face him with a new conviction.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

So, you didn't know. I thought it was pretty strange myself. I have footage of him being taken from a sign-up kiosk.

Akito approaches the lookout window empty handed and speaks softly into the glass.

AKITO KASAI

When?

Angela walks back into the center of the room to sit deep into her chair with a sense of relief.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

We were tipped off the first day of the riots. They keep these locations virtually unknown. They're not easy to find for the obvious reasons. But, we did.

Angela squints her cunning eyes to pontificate.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Then I thought, why would he be there
if he knew you were involved in some
way. Which lead me to believe that
you didn't know where he was.

Angela, in a cool demeanor, properly crosses her legs and
scoffs at the quick glimpse of her dirty feet.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

Anyway, they must cut communication
when you get there, but for some
reason he found a way to reply to my
message.

In the odd silence, Akito ignites a flame off in the distance.
He turns toward Angela, blows a stream of smoke through his
nostrils and widens his eyes.

AKITO KASAI

Perhaps you do possess an attribute
of some value.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Like you said, this isn't your story.
There was never a Kasai. Just let
me operate within the boundaries of
the machine that I'm apparently
enslaved to, get my career back and
find a way to get Tren out of the
firestorm I create.

Akito slowly builds from a unexpected smirk to a full blown
sinister laughter. Angela matches his energy with her "told
you so" grin and sits deeper into her chair.

Akito tips his head to Angela in the secrecy of the exhaled
smoke cloud.

AKITO KASAI

You know more don't you? You spoke
with someone.

Angela's ease is disrupted.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

Tell me everything.

Angela ponders in the tense moment and nods.

CUT TO:

INT. FACILITY HALLWAYS

Pep walks with haste, buried amongst the intersecting traffic of chaotic member "hustle and bustle". He repeatedly battles the temptations to dig his penned hand into his exposed forearm, but refrains by forcing his head upright - tilted away from the comforts of his floor level gaze.

Pep is unexpectedly grabbed at the arm and yanked into a small secluded nook, to the side of the main door of the Baseline room - within a few paces. He draws his eyes from the gripped hand to discover Lacey's smiling face and Tren standing at her side.

LACEY

Hey. Where do you think you're going?

Pep immediately disarms his startle and smiles with a comforted familiarity.

TREN

Did you forget something?

PEP

I was looking for you two. I just got caught in the... It feels like everyone just runs to where they need to go here.

LACEY

People are excited, Pep. Are you not excited?

Lacey exaggerates a sad faced expression. Tren chuckles and then hits Pep with a straight face.

TREN

What happened last night was serious business, Pep. You can't just leave the us hanging now.

Pep looks to a serious Tren and Lacey with a peculiarity, before discovering Tren's hand hovering above Lacey's open palm - beneath his stare.

Lacey flashes her vulnerable smile.

LACEY

You still in? Our thing?

Pep proudly lays his palm-up hand at the top of the pile with a sense of relief.

PEP

Ok, good. That was real. I woke up thinking I dreamt that whole thing.

TREN

Wait. You slept?

PEP

Exactly. That's why I freaked.

Pep's jumbled laugh permeates to both Tren and Lacey. Lacey lingers in her proud gaze.

LACEY

I'm proud of you, Pep. Wait until you baseline. You won't want to wake up.

Pep looks to Lacey with a puzzled curiosity. Lacey swings her lead arm towards the door entrance.

LACEY (CONT'D)

After you, boys.

Tren playfully pulls a hesitant Pep into motion.

PEP

Something tells me this is going to be another test.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BASELINE ROOM

In the unusual silence of a room designed to brandish the warmth and décor of a modern Japanese Dojo, a set of bare feet walk quietly over a dark wood-paneled floor. In the opposing direction of the straw tatami mats at the door entrance - lined with various sets of worn shoes. A second set of bare feet progress forward at the same pace, trailing behind the four spinning wheels of an equipment push cart.

Both Maya and Lacey are revealed as they walk in unison down parallel paths, surrounded by three single-file rows of group-seven members at their sides.

MAYA

Good morning everyone. For our new members, this is the Baseline room. Your sanctuary. I know yesterday had its fair share of new developments and I'm more than certain there are some residual thoughts floating around in here.

After glancing over at Maya to receive a confirmation nod, Lacey opens the large padded case atop the cart pushed out in front of her stride.

MAYA (CONT'D)

But please remember, this is the only place in the entire facility that requires nothing of you. Absolutely nothing. An opportunity to release any of the cognitive feedback that builds at the back of your minds. Good or bad.

Maya looks out to the various members, spatially dispersed over the floor's minimal-modern high-tech surface. There are oversized - upright glass paneled displays at the front of each of the cushioned mats beneath the member's knees, standing about head-length high.

MAYA (CONT'D)

And without that white noise, this room will become a very integral part of your succession here.

Maya strolls observantly by Benjamin. Of whom pushes himself deep into the mat, under his back, with an astronomy book held proudly above his extended reach. Maya, in mid stride, strums her finger over the open face of the book that reads: The Cosmos

MAYA (CONT'D)

We all know that Benjamin escapes into the stars. But, I'm interested to know, in your own words, what does this room represent to some of you? Asami?

Asami peeks up from a deep Tai Chi stretch.

ASAMI

(Japanese Accent)

I came a very long way to be here, but I can still feel that same feeling. Somewhere safe for you. If you allow for it to be this way it can be like home... inside.

MAYA

Beautiful, Asami. Jess? You recently baselined. What is possible in this room?

Jess removes her ball-cap to ponder, allowing her thick locks of hair to flow past her shoulders.

She strums carelessly through the uneven strands with her fingers, while lost in thought.

JESS

There are days when things aren't easy. And in here, we can stop pretending to be immune. We can just be ourselves. Being comfortable with being uncomfortable, I guess. Not trying to figure all this out.

Lacey's push cart approaches Jess's mat from behind.

LACEY

Wow. 10 points to the blue team.
(giggles)
Here you go, Jess.

Lacey hands Jess a hardware accessory, the size of a quarter, as she continues her forward progression. Maya continues to match her slow pace, en route to the head of the room.

MAYA

Yes, Jess. Everything you've seen thus far, absorbed and learned; well, your mind is desperately trying to process it all. To rationalize it. To think through it. And that's something that we don't want to happen. Not in here. Not consciously, at least.

Carter is distracted by something on the interface of his display. He raises his hand as Maya passes by.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Carter?

CARTER

I think there's something wrong with my console. My stats are reading...
(dazed pause)
The phase 2 is still the same, but it's showing I'm only on day 1 again? I know I'm not quite "this is home" fan club, but I'm not trying to start over.

The remainder of the group members look to their consoles to casually arrive at the same realization.

MAYA

Don't worry, Carter.
(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

Your program updates, along with everyone in group 7, have been adjusted to meet the criteria of the new fast track. So, regardless of your phase color, in 30 days you either qualify for the procedure or not.

CARTER

So, I'll get to be a yellow by the end of the month? Finally. Ok, now we're talking.

The members adhere the small neural hardware, received from Lacey, to the open skin region near their temples.

MAYA

I assume you missed the announcement last night, Carter. As the rest of you are aware, you are still required to pass to become phase 3.

Maya kiddishly peaks a look toward Carter. A handful of people chuckle in the background.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Tren and Pep, this is what the console in front of you is designed to help you achieve.

Pep stares blankly into the digital display device and then cluelessly around the room.

MAYA (CONT'D)

In union with the sensor hardware being passed out by our lovely Lacey. Of whom I'm not partial to at all because she's my niece, by the way.

Maya winks at Lacey. Pep and Tren synchronously look to one another with their newfound revelation.

MAYA (CONT'D)

She knows the Life Ascension program inside and out, if you haven't already learned that about her. Right Lacey?

Lacey modestly shrugs her shoulders.

LACEY

It's pretty much all I know. So...

MAYA

Outside the authorship of the
Counselor, Lacey was among the minds
that contributed to the interface
software loaded on your screens.
So, to her, this truly is... H.O.M.E.

The transparent glass display interface, in front of Tren,
reads: H.O.M.E. - Heal. Our. Mind. Experiment. Day One
(Phase 1). With a button at the bottom of the screen that
reads: "Analyze"

MAYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The goal of H.O.M.E. is very counter
intuitive to what we believe a true
neural network software to represent.

Tren speaks under his breath.

TREN

You were right, Pep.

Tren, the last to adhere the hardware to the side of his
head, reservedly presses the "Analyze" button after watching
his peers initialize the program. Instantly, the tablet at
his side, sounds an alert and the subsequent screen in front
of him reads: Syncing Tablet Device.

Tren's personal profile, bio and stat information is
transferred and displayed on the large interface screen in
front of him.

MAYA (V.O.)

But, unlike traditional analytics,
this isn't recording data for us to
become something more, someone
smarter, to discover some breakthrough
that can show us who we are and how
to climb to a higher level of...
blah blah blah. You've seen the
billboards.

Maya stops in her forward progression to gently rest her
hand on Tren's shoulder.

MAYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All that might mean something out
there. But in here, those are only
forms of measurement that appeal to
the egoic mind. That will only
compile unnecessary layers of
confusion on top what we're trying
to unravel. The truest you. This
state of mind is the only key that
can unlock your baseline in here.

Maya signals to Tren, with her eyes, to the other members in the room. Of whom are beginning to engage in unique activities atop their rubber matted stations.

-Asami begins to sway her limber torso in a Tai Chi ritual.

-Carter pulls headphones over his ears and closes his eyes.

-Benjamin, in an almost trance, flips through the pages of his astronomy book - extended out above him.

-Jess, leaned back in a very feminine posture, peacefully brushes her hair and breathes deeply into the open room.

-TYLER, a twenty-something conservative middle eastern boy, lunges over the mat on his bended knees - resting inside of a worship pose across the floor in front of him.

-Bella holds a yoga-like stretching posture.

Maya proceeds forward in her walking path to the front of the room.

MAYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Baseline is the truest version of who you are. But it's hidden beneath a painful fixation that we all carry with us. This guilt to become someone other than who we already are. A pursuit that never ends, trust me. There is however a single positive aspect to that self inflicted suffering for most of you. Is that it led you here.

The hardware, affixed to the temples of each member in group-seven, slowly begins to turn from an amber glow to green. A series of interface displays showcase the baseline meter resting at the center of a digital scale.

The green lights on the temple hardware continue to switch on, as each member continues to immerse themselves deeper into their personalized activities.

MAYA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Arriving at Life Ascension with the thought, that by maybe knowing the end could help you to begin again somehow. To start over. A chance to become someone new.

Pep looks over at Tren and points to the amber light on his headwear. He shakes his head with an anticipatory apprehension. Tren smiles and looks back at his screen.

There are vitals being read, along with a progress meter etching its way into the opposite direction of the center "baseline" marker.

MAYA (CONT'D)

However, you will come to realize that there'll never be some pending date or future version of yourself available that isn't afforded to you right now, you guys. This is the only access point that will allow us to connect with the Absonite.

Maya stands proudly at the front of the room with Lacey at her side. She surveys the floor of blissful faces, before happily noticing Lacey's arm wrap around her waist. She speaks at a volume suitable for the room to hear, but she locks eyes with Lacey as she speaks.

MAYA (CONT'D)

This program is designed to allow us to see how destructive our preprogrammed pattern of thinking really is... and how to live without it. Then and only then will you be ready to understand the significance of your unique date reading.

Maya looks back to the floored group members with determination.

MAYA (CONT'D)

So, let's get you there.

DISSOLVE TO:

30 DAY - MONTAGE BEGINS

A. INT. - DR. ROGERS OFFICE

Dr. Rogers, staring ahead off-screen, listens to a muffled phone call audio through a headset device. He breathes heavy into an emotionless retort.

DR. ROGERS

I understand what to do. Today is the first day.

Dr. Rogers continues his gaze into a framed photo of himself, Joe, Rachel, Maya and Lacey in the snow covered hills of the Himalayan Mountains.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

They won't.

Dr. Rogers is quick to flip the photo facedown into the contents of his disheveled desk.

B. INT. - THE COUNSELOR'S ROOM

The Counselor blows out the candle beneath his hunched over body - IN REVERSE. He inhales the single breath back into his lungs as the extinguished candle rekindles it's glow.

C. INT. - THE BASELINE ROOM

An exhaled breath is slowly released, as Asami's postured hands glide gently through the air in front of her dramatically controlled breathing.

D. INT. - ECO GARDEN

Pep sprinkles a handful of seeds over the cleared soil beneath his knees. Lacey watches through the openings in the heavy leaves of a plant in the distance, as Pep timidly levels the soil with his awkward caress.

E. INT. - SAND DUNES

Tren digs desperately into a three-foot hole in the golden sand, launching mounds of debris into the open air with his cupped hands. He peeks up to glimpse the massive storm wall encroaching in on him.

Tren yells over the loud wind gusts.

TREN

This was a bad idea, Pep.

F. INT. - THE FACILITY, OPERATING ROOM - LOUNGE

A gentle KNOCK is heard against the glass.

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

MAYA

It's ok, everyone asks. And, no.
You won't feel a thing.

G. INT. - ECO GARDEN

Pep stares in wonder at the seedling, sprouted between his legs in the open soil. He begins to coat the single leaf with the artistry of his penned ink. He is quick to startle and smear his precision sketch, after noticing The Counselor's hand rested gently atop his shoulder.

H. INT. - UTILITY VAN

Angela Rothwell closes the driver's door behind her. She signals to Benny with her index hold finger, to whom impatiently awaits on the outside of the vehicle with a camera over his shoulder. Angela strums through the inbox on her open laptop to discover a non-reply, from Tren, to her initial message.

I. INT. - THE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE

Lacey, in a deep concentration, looks with an unusual focus at the sketched drawing beneath her pencil tip, illuminated over the backlit surface across from The Counselor. His stare is locked on a point in front of him - offscreen. She pulls her head up to shift her concentration upon The Counselor, who is seated with his back faced toward her - a few body lengths away. She is quick to drop her pencil and reluctantly holds the sketch up toward The Counselor, who excitedly peeks back over his shoulder to review it. He is cordial in his attempt to shake his head from side to side, after reviewing the bowl of fruit sketch in Lacey's hands. He slides his body to the side, across the lit surface, to reveal the small, single vined, potted plant out in front of him. Lacey drops her drawing in discouragement.

J. INT. - TREN'S ROOM BLOCK

Tren slides his index over a display, to highlight the long listing of Akito Kasai messages in his circular tablet's inbox, and touches the "delete" popup prompt.

K. INT. - PRESIDENTIAL HOTEL SUITE - DAY

A Female Server, dressed in upscale formal uniform attire, draws from two glasses on her cocktail tray. Akito relays his glass of liquor and holds it out in front of him to toast. Revealing Joe, seated across from him with two Japanese henchmen standing behind his chair. Joe nervously cradles the relayed drink atop his lap, next to the video camera at his side.

L. INT. - THE BASELINE ROOM

Pep presses his hardware device into his temple. He squeezes his eyes closed and peeks with one eye at the console interface. The display reads: Phase 1, Day 16 and the baseline readings are darting chaotically to both ends of the balance meter. Pep shamefully turns his head, glowing bright from the amber glow, to sneak a peek at Tren at his side. Tren is sat in stillness, under a green temple light, with his hand buried into the circular tablet at his side. Under Tren's spread fingers is the obituary image of Tren's Mother.

M. INT. - ECO GARDEN - HALLWAY ENTRANCE

Pep looks suspiciously around the corner into the desolate hallway. The vent, covering the Eco-Garden air shaft, slides closed from the inside and into an upright position.

N. INT. - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

Pep is talking to himself neurotically, sat alone, atop the makeshift swing. His clinched fingers wrap tightly around the swings electric cords at the sides, exposing the throbbing vascularity protruding from his fully penned arms. He is quick to notice a sudden jolt forward and Tren pushing from behind. As Pep awkwardly builds momentum on the swing and the glide grows into an enormous motion, he begins to lose himself in a smile. To Pep's surprise, he discovers Lacey running alongside the swings dramatic passing sweeps.

O. INT. PSYCH EVALUATION HALLWAY

Tren, Lacey and Pep stand out front of the Psych Evaluation main entrance doors.

PEP
Did you try digging?

Tren shakes his head and walks through the doors.

P. INT. - PSYCH EVALUATION TERMINAL

Tren begins breathing deeply under his wired VR headgear. His bodysuit begins to twitch in the reclined seating under the spot light. The electrodes on his arms begin to shake as his breathing become more short and erratic. A final body spasm is followed by a deathly MOAN.

Q. INT. - PSYCH EVALUATION HALLWAY

Tren, freshly discouraged, walks out from the entrance doors and into the hallway to confront Pep and Lacey. They onlook with an overly anticipatory excitement. He shakes his head in gloom and gestures with a thumb slash across his neck.

R. INT. - THE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE

The Counselor is sat, eyes closed, with his back facing Lacey, as she finishes her sketch. Lacey pulls up her sketch to strangely survey the contents. Her sense of disbelief is quick to turn to an exhaled letdown. She walks to the side of The Counselor to discover his closed eyes and taps his shoulder to awaken him from a daze. He looks down to examine the contents of Lacey's sketch as she watches his reaction in suspense. He slowly cracks a grin and begins to nod slowly in jubilation.

THE COUNSELOR

Yes. We are separated only by thin glass it would appear.

The sketch shows the back of The Counselor looking through a window at Lacey sketching on the floor.

S. INT. - ECO GARDEN

Pep proudly pulls up from his penned markings over a single leaf, to reveal the massive work of art drawn across the entire surface area of a thousand leaved plant - below him in the soil. The Counselor slips his hand over the shoulder of Pep, however Pep nonchalantly turns to the hand at his side with a newfound calm and cool demeanor.

T. INT. - THE BASELINE ROOM

Pep sits beside his massive potted plant, covered in ink, at his console. His temple hardware is glowing green and the balance meter on his display is leveled at the center. The interface reads: Phase 1, Day 27

U. INT. - THE TREE

Maya is caught in a gaze from across the room, as she proudly watches the entirety of group-seven joking and laughing together at the table. A sequence of kiddish food fighting actions and related banter occupy the majority of them, all but the exception of Lacey and Tren - of whom are drawn into a gleeful exchanging glance.

Maya resumes her blissful reflection as Dr. Rogers and Rachel argue over the contents displayed on a shared device.

V. INT. - OPERATING ROOM

-Dr. Rogers shakes his head in disgruntled aggravation.

-The Counselor sits up from his face down position in the exam table.

-Rachel aggressively yanks a cord from the back of her machine.

-Dr. Rogers lowers his head into his hands in front of the empty exam chair.

-Rachel cries over the small cord cupped into her open hands. She compassionately embraces and kisses into the electrical cord as if it could experience pain.

W. INT. THE COUNSELOR'S ROOM

Lacey looks down at The Counselor's open neck with a distressing concern. She continues to redresses the wound and pulls the collar of his tunic over the gauze to conceal it. She ponders with unease.

X. INT. ANGELA'S LOFT - DOWNTOWN

Angela checks her device's inbox to discover a non-reply. She conceals the tears in her eyes, as she cues the French Quartet music to play. She sits with a deep sorrow into the couch and lowers her head. She pulls her head up to notice both Benny and Christoph at both sides, wrapped around her shoulders for comfort.

CHRISTOPH

You lied to him. But he believed you didn't he? Akito thought you made contact. There is still something there, you know?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

That doesn't help us, Christoph.

Benny forms an unexpected epiphany.

BENNY

Christoph is right. He thought you had an in. Maybe you can leverage that same thing to Wilshire.

Angela carefully ponders the potential of the suggested proposition. She begins to smile from ear to ear.

CHRISTOPH

I told you. It's the music isn't it?

Y. INT. - PRESIDENTIAL HOTEL SUITE

A pair of young Japanese Assistants, both young studious men in their twenties, continue to zip and fasten a motion capture suit to Akito's body. There are tracking points populated at different regions of the suit's joints and a set of cameras setup off in the distance.

AKITO KASAI

Enough. I'm ready. Capture and upload it. The backend server should still be open

Japanese Assistant 1 flips on the cameras and relative hardware displayed in close proximity to Akito. Japanese Assistant 2 plugs a bushel of fiber optic network cables into the open ports.

JAPANESE ASSISTANT 2

Just a moment. It's amalgamating to
3D data. And done. It's open, sir.
We can patch you in... they'll know
the code was altered.

AKITO KASAI

Good. He'll know what to do then.

Akito tightens up the wave in his nearly perfect hair and looks down the barrel of the camera in front of him.

A set of children's banter distracts Akito's concentrated stare. His eyes dart in the direction of the audible disruption, and he is quick to crack a sinister smirk.

Z. INT. - THE BASELINE ROOM

Maya and Lacey walk proudly down their routes through the floored members of group-seven. They gaze into the room of preoccupied stillness, with nothing but green lights to illuminate their paths. Lacey lunges over to look at Peps console interface. The screen reads: Phase 1, Day 29 and a perfectly centered baseline meter level. She looks to Tren to notice the remnants of a small tear trail at the corner of his eye- drying down over his cheek.

Maya and Lacey look proudly - outward into the room, with their arms wrapped tightly around each other.

30 DAY - MONTAGE ENDS

CUT TO:

INT. ECO GARDEN - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

Pep's hair sways dramatically in the rushing wind. With his stare lost in the surrounding environment, he struggles to resist the smile that begins to grow across his face. His swinging feet are quick to push into the lush moss floor beneath him; to stop the forward progression of his glide through the open air. He pulls away from his clutching fingers on the swing's taut extension cord support lines and holds his forearms out below his gaze. Pep strums his fingers over the freckles atop his unusually unsoiled skin, and a certain familiarity paints over his face as he carefully examines the stark pigmentation.

A series of steps grow louder, CRUNCHING over the foliage, to interrupt the tranquility of the moment. Pep nonchalantly tilts his head to the side to acknowledge the approaching sound from behind him and speaks softly into his shoulder.

PEP

You know, it always felt like this layer of protection. And to cover myself with something that represented even just a sliver of myself was enough. But, it got so hard projecting who that was, that I began to forget.

Pep laughs into the surface of his arms. A hand grabs onto the swing's support cable from behind.

PEP (CONT'D)

I was so desperate just to be me, Tren. Now... strangely, this naked situation...

(giggle)

...This unfamiliar feeling somehow feels more right. Like the less I cling to remembering, I just am. Me, by default. Crazy.

Pep rotates on the swing to look back to Tren with a saddened relief.

TREN

I told you we were more alike than you thought.

PEP

Tren, I'm sorry.

TREN

Don't be. I've been chasing after who the hell I'm supposed to be too, Pep. I'm starting to realize that maybe that feeling, that reminds us of who we are, is recreated with each new opportunity that invites us to step outside of ourselves. An experience. A friend.

Pep follows Tren's eyes as they peer straight ahead and out into the distance.

TREN (CONT'D)

Friends, Pep.

Pep discovers Lacey walking up from afar. Revealed trailing behind her, are the remaining members of group-seven.

Asami looks up in wonder, into the vastness of the lush and overgrown hidden gardens. Bella, riding carefree on the back of Carter, extends her arms out to fly through the open air.

Carter, with his head tilted back, elatedly watches Bella above him. Benjamin, Jess and Tyler run kiddishly through the foreign landscape, holding their shoes in one hand and swinging vines with the other.

Lacey approaches and takes a final step to stop directly in front of Pep, still seated on the makeshift swing with a swelling thrill.

LACEY

This was Tren's idea, ya know?

Pep looks to Tren with a softened gratitude.

PEP

I know. I can see what all this means, now. I've been so stuck in my own selfish...

Pep pauses and looks up flabbergasted by his articulation. Lacey reaches down to flip over Pep's arm. She surveys his exposed skin with widened eyes.

PEP (CONT'D)

What's the point of any of this, if you can't share it, ya know?

TREN

Our pact expands, guys.

The members walk up and slowly fill in around the swing on all sides.

LACEY

Exactly. And if we can't continue to let our guards down; together, then what's the point of any of this?

Lacey's triumphant epiphany shifts to a unexpected seriousness. She steps a few paces back and grabs at the zipper at the top of her jumpsuit collar.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Friendship requires that you reveal parts of yourself, so that you can know your true self. And when you hide from it, you lose it somehow.

Lacey unzips at the neck to her shoulders. She pushes the protruding collar below her hand, rested at the back of her neck.

LACEY (CONT'D)

And when you lose it, it just leads
us further inside of our own
suffering, doesn't it?

Lacey gently slides her hand to the side to reveal the triangular incision scar at the base of her neck. The member's expressions shift into various forms of concern, shock, empathy and confusion.

LACEY (CONT'D)

They'd like to believe I know every
aspect of this program, but I never
grasped what it really meant. What's
the point of knowing something like
this, if it isn't apart of who you
are?

Carter reaches for Bella's hand. She looks with surprise into his glassy eyed stare. Jess watches the vulnerable moment and looks into the group of mixed reactions.

JESS

This just got real.

The group's intensity softens. Lacey slowly rotates around to face each group member.

LACEY

I know the exact moment to the minute.
And I know each one of you have your
own reasons for wanting to know.
But what these last 30 days has shown
me, is that I never once used the
date to justify some action I took.
Or to drowned out some regret. Or
to give me some false sense of
identity.

Lacey absorbs the unique displays of emotion from each member. Carter reaches his available hand to Tren. Tren to Pep. From Pep, the hand holding continues to spread to the other members - creating a circle around Lacey.

LACEY (CONT'D)

Initially I thought that because I
knew this most intimate detail about
my life, that maybe the petty things
would pale in comparison. But,
knowing doesn't protect you from any
of the fears. The pains. The petty
things are what matter. They remind
you of the importance of... this.
Us.

Lacey's rotation around the circle stops on Tren. He looks deeply into her deeply affectionate eyes with a newfound conviction.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH EVALUATION TERMINAL

Tren recklessly pulls himself into position on the reclined high-tech chair beneath him.

TREN

Hurry. I know what to do.

The Programmer, discombobulated from the impatience of Tren's ambitious demands, awkwardly connects the numerous plug ports to Tren's motion suit.

PROGRAMMER

We're not supposed to be running the network this late, Tren. I can get in trouble. I'll have to erase the logs after, regardless of how you perform.

Tren, pushes his headgear up to sneak a look of friendly assurance to the Programmer.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

You're lucky I like you. You have 30 minutes, Tren.

Tren cracks a smirk and lowers his headgear over his eyes.

EXT. SAND DUNES

Tren stands alone in the infinite desert. The ambiance is unusually still and peaceful, as Tren breathes in a relaxed certainty into his demeanor.

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

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL

Survival is required. Do not die.

The sand storm wall begins to race towards Tren in its identically sequenced program routine. However, Tren remains emotionally unaffected and completely still - with a grin painted across his face, despite the grave nature of the impending doom.

Tren proceeds to lift his arms away from his body and rotates his open palms upward to the darkening sky.

He turns slowly to face in the direction of the storm, rushing towards him with a destructive velocity.

The Instructional Vocal, sounded repeatedly from off-screen, reminds TREN that "survival is required, do not die".

Tren speaks courageously under his breath.

TREN
It's backwards. The instructions
are backwards.

Tren absorbs his epiphany with desperate humility.

TREN (CONT'D)
Dying is required, to truly live.
There's no life when you're living
to survive.

Tren begins to walk forward, towards the BOOMING crash from the violent sand particle vortex. Tren closes his eyes and continues his surrendered pace forward, until the massive sand-storm wall engulfs Tren with its full brute force.

Tren slowly opens his eyes to watch the storm pass over him, like an ocean wave crashing over a placid surface from under the water - and then dying out to complete QUIETNESS.

Tren speaks softly into his emotional reflection.

TREN (CONT'D)
You didn't even have to say anything,
did you? You told me through your
eyes. Thank you, Lacey.

He turns to look toward the oasis of trees off in the distance.

EXT. DESERT OASIS - DAY

Tren approaches the massive oasis and enters into it's thick green refuge, observing cautiously from under it's looming canopy of trees and brush.

Tren's inquisitory search through the immense natural ambiance is interrupted by a crackling across the forest floor. Slowly gaining volume as it encroaches from the distance.

The Double Figure, dressed in the same black body suit fabric, slowly approaches and stops at a distance from Tren.
(Identical in physical resemblance to Tren - with a deeper vocal cadence)

DOUBLE FIGURE
Hello again, Tren. Do you still
recall your initial inquiry?

Tren walks slowly, towards the Double Figure.

TREN
From the first night? In the van?
I figured that question would come
to set some kind of responsive
parameter in here at some point.

DOUBLE FIGURE
Are you still the copy or am I?

Tren looks deep into the eyes of his own replica, before it
dematerializes into diminishing pixels.

Tren speaks up into the open air around him.

TREN
I get the riddle.

The Double Figure appears within inches of Tren. Tren shifts
his expression to that of deep compassion. The identical
face is mirrored on the replica.

TREN (CONT'D)
There isn't even an original... to
copy from. So, it appears that
neither of us exist, do we?

Tren holds up his arms and examines the length of his body.

TREN (CONT'D)
If I'm... just dust. Particles.
I'm no more real than the microscopic
pixels of your code.

An Alert CHIME echos.

The Double Figure robotically rotates at the waist to point
off into the distance, into a specific location under the
darkened canopy of trees. The replica's deep vocal consumes
from all directions.

DOUBLE FIGURE
Next, you must confront the deception
of your own manifested reality. Do
not get lost in what is merely
generated from a collection of your
own subconscious memories and
emotional desires.

Tren lowers to the oasis floor with a suspicious ponder. He speaks from a compromised vocal.

TREN

It can't be. An AI using my...
consciousness to program in realtime?
There's only one person that's
attempted to build a neural reactive
simulation like this.

Tren looks up in anger to notice that the Double Figure is no longer standing before him.

A deep Instructional Vocal cadence reverberates around Tren and asks the question:

INSTRUCTIONAL VOCAL

You must come to learn the true
desires of your heart.

Tren storms, with an apparent resentment, into the thick brush until he arrives at a modern home. Built into the backdrop of the secluded forest setting.

EXT. FOREST HOME - DAY

Tren approaches the front door with a sense of distrust. He looks peculiarly at the numerical address markings on the home's wood paneling - that reads: 2301. He resentfully speaks the digits under his breath.

TREN

2301. The address in Minato Ku Tokyo,
huh? Clever. Where we going with
this?

He looks strangely at the numbers, before proceeding to turn the door knob and push slowly into the interior entrance of the home.

INT. MODERN HOME

Tren slowly walks in with a stirring apprehension, until the sound of a child's vocal stops Tren in his tracks.

A young boy runs across the room and wraps his arms around Tren's leg. TREN, staring down at the boy through his emotionally compromised glare, nervously rests his hand gently atop the boy's head.

Lacey walks out in mid conversation, resuming her dialogue with Tren. LACEY is quick to notice Tren staring back with a blank expression and an uncharacteristic presence.

LACEY

Hey. What's wrong? Tren? Are you
ok?

Tren looks around the room to acknowledge a handful of
familiar Japanese artifacts.

TREN

Lacey? This is just some echo in my
consciousness they recorded, ok? I
need to...

Tren looks down at the young boy staring up at him.

Lacey looks to Tren with the identical deep and affectionate
stare as the hidden boiler.

LACEY

So did you finish or not?

Tren looks to Lacey with a bewildered concern.

LACEY (CONT'D)

With your project. For work? Your
father called. He said that you'd
be...

(interrupted)

TREN

What are you talking about?

Lacey looks strangely around the home to the sound of a
roomful of busied Japanese banter. The home's architecture
slowly begins to disassemble and rebuild into a high-tech
office layout setting. There are various Japanese people in
business suits walking through the background, through rows
of populated computer workstations.

Tren whips his head back around to discover Akito Kasai slowly
walking into the room - where Lacey was previously standing.

AKITO KASAI

You can't abandon what you were
destined to become, Tren.

Tren struggles to articulate.

TREN

What is this? Are you behind all
this? What the hell is going on.

Tren enters into an unstable composure and looks into the
fading details of the room. He motions with his hands to
lift from the sides of his head, but is unsuccessful at
removing the unseen headgear.

He continues to frantically push against his head as he lowers to the floor.

INT. PSYCH EVALUATION TERMINAL

Tren, in a state of panic, lifts the headgear from his head and onto the floor. He thrusts to sit upright in the control seat and attempts to process the details of the room.

The Programmer, lunged over at Tren's side, slowly releases from his tight compression against Tren's shoulders.

PROGRAMMER

You're ok. Tren. It's ok. You're out. Look at where you are.

Tren regains his composure to stare into the Programmer's face with a rageful vexation.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

You passed, Tren. You passed.

TREN

You know don't you?

Tren is quick to notice a hard swallow at the lump in the Programmer's throat.

CUT TO:

INT. TREN'S ROOM BLOCK

Tren sluggishly enters the room with a confounded defeat. He stops to ruminate, with his head carried low, beside the light emanating from under the bathroom door. He reaches to push open the slightly ajar door, with an enflamed resolute. He lifts his head with an apparent disdain, burning across his face, to examine the newly cleaned and unexpectedly unoccupied area. Carter's voice projects from the depths of the room behind Tren.

CARTER

I can explain. It's difficult to talk about, but you deserve to know, Tren.

Tren, with his back facing the room, continues to brew in his contempt.

TREN

I don't need to know what you do in here. If you need to walk around like some zombie, to make it more difficult to remember how disconnected you are, that's your karma, Carter.

Tren turns to face Carter, sitting upright at the side of his bed.

CARTER

You're right. I've accepted that. But there's more to the story. I've haven't told anyone the reason why I'm really here. Bella's the only one who knows. She loves me Tren. Whatever's happening at this place, is... well, I can actually see it now.

Carter pulls his frosted bangs from his face to reveal his emotional distress.

CARTER (CONT'D)

The same thing that's happening to Pep, I owe it to myself to...

TREN

You're nothing like Pep, Carter. He actually has a heart. And you were right... what you said about him. That Pep can't even see past his own problems... to even know how big his heart really is. You're either a good person or not Carter. Just accept what you are.

Carter slowly withdraws to a slouch in his posture, sinking into the depths of the bed beneath him. Tren turns his cold stare to the illuminated flicker on his glass tablet, atop the surface of his bed.

Tren, sat with his shoes pushed abrasively into the bed's comforter, flips aggressively through the inbox messages on the screen. He stops on the subject line from Akito Kasai, but is quick to jolt his stare forward to the slamming bathroom door.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. WOODLANDS, UNKNOWN - DAWN

Two black SUV's caravan over a twisting pathway, dividing a vast overgrown forest landscape. The path is quick to dissipate into an uncharted terrain beneath a canopy of looming pine trees.

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK SUV - ONE

Dr. Rogers, seated alone in the driver's seat, looks down from his worrisome gaze through the windshield to observe the display on the dash console.

An incomplete driving route diagram is showcased through the onboard GPS, frozen at the current pinned location. The on-screen text reads: Realtime Encrypted GPS Mapping - Pending.

DR. ROGERS

Come on. Where the hell are we going?

Dr. Rogers desperately jostles the display screen in an attempt to resume its functionality, but is quick to shift his focus to the vibrating rear view mirror.

He speaks concernedly under his breath.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

I know you're freaking out back there.
Hold tight, guys.

The tires come to a swift halt over the darkened forest floor.

The vehicle idles under Dr. Rogers's tight grip around a black card with a single gold minted initial: K. He is quick to flip the card to reveal a series of handwritten Japanese letters and a phone number: 080-4231-8123

Dr. Rogers hesitates with his index finger hovered over the call button, and startles from the ring tone heard aloud from the vehicles interior speakers. He nervously pushes into the buttons on the console. The ring subsides.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

Hello? This is Rogers.

Dr. Rogers waits in the eerie silence for a reply.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

We're in route. I think we just
past the first checkpoint, but the...

Dr. Rogers is quick to notice the encrypted map details filling in around his current pinned location.

AKITO KASAI (O.S.)

We had to be certain you weren't
followed. You should have full map
access now. Are you alone in the
vehicle?

Dr. Rogers looks to the high beams glaring through his rear view mirror.

DR. ROGERS

Yes. The rest of my team is in the
vehicle behind me.

AKITO KASAI (O.S.)

Good. Do you remember the arrangement details?

DR. ROGERS

They don't know anything. They don't need to for this to happen.

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK SUV - TWO

Rachel, propped upright and anxiously staring over her knuckles atop the steering wheel, turns to the passenger seat to catch a quick glance at an equally unnerved Maya. They sit in the ambiance of a low rumble, basked in the red glow of the break lights in front of them.

MAYA

What is he doing? What is this?
This can't be the spot.

Maya surveys through the windows surrounding the vehicle and stops her rotation on a composed look into the immediate back row of seating.

RACHEL

She still asleep?

Maya watches over Lacey's motionless body with a degree of pain in her stare.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Those must of been some strong sedatives. What about Issac?

Maya looks through the gap in the seating, behind Lacey, to the makeshift bed in the cargo cab. She follows the IV lines to the rising and falling of a white linen sheet.

MAYA

He's still under too. I can't believe we agreed to this, Rachel. Did he say anything to you? What did he tell you about this place?

Rachel looks to the side of Maya's preoccupied stare into the back cab, with a secretive admission in her eyes.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Just the same ol' "trust me" bit, huh?

The red glowing light, highlighting Rachel's conflicted expression, flickers off. Rachel collects herself and shifts the gear nob into drive.

RACHEL
Ok. We're moving.

The vehicle slowly pulls forward over the crunching of branches beneath the tires.

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK SUV - ONE

Dr. Rogers cautiously drives into the depths of the uncharted forest terrain.

AKITO KASAI (O.S.)
There will be a series of security checkpoints leading into the facility. Of which, limited access will be granted to only yourself and your team of five upon arrival.

DR. ROGERS
Four. There are only four others now.

An uncomfortable silence interjects.

AKITO KASAI (O.S.)
Joe Resnick is no longer a contributor to the project. Is he?

Dr. Rogers listens to Akito's reply with suspect in his squinted eyes. He searches frantically through the vehicle until his eyes fixate on a small circular lens, housed conspicuously inside the glass of the rear-view mirror.

DR. ROGERS
No. There were conflicting directives... I was recently made aware of.

AKITO KASAI (O.S.)
Shortly after meeting my associates, yes? Is this going to be a problem? This Joe?

Dr. Rogers drifts into an unresponsive contemplation.

FLASHBACK - INT. RUNDOWN HISTORIC THEATRE

Dr. Rogers and Joe stand shoulder to shoulder, peering out through a blinding overhead spot light.

Dr. Rogers resumes his monologue.

DR. ROGERS

...And into a direction that is clearly pulling us further from the potentials of our intellectual and social origins. But, with the neurological discoveries we've shown you today, we can change that.

An ambiance of scoffed banter and condescending whispers are heard echoed in the distance, beyond Dr. Rogers and Joe's unflinching stare forward. They are both held in impatient anticipation. Joe whispers out of the corner of his mouth.

JOE

I told you this wasn't going to work.

Dr. Rogers looks out into the vastness of the abandoned theatre, that appears to have been forgotten to idle and disrepair for decades. Amongst the torn and ragged seating of the first few rows, butted up against the raised rotted wood stage holding up Dr. Rogers and Joe, are a dozen of distinguishably dressed, grey-haired and aristocratic socialites. Sneering with agitation.

A prominently suited - British elderly man, DR. LOVELL, stands with contempt in his scowl.

DR. LOVELL

(British accent)

Young man, this is a mockery to these fine people here. People of whom I am honored to be in the presence of, as should you. For the simple fact that they are even familiar with who you are. And would have contributed whatever resources required to any of your previous genius... to the phenom of a young prodigy you once were. But, what you are proposing will not only set back the clock of progress, it will...

A pretentious senior woman, hidden beneath the brim of her formal hat, pulls a compromised Dr. Lovell back into his seat at her side. She shoots a demeaning glance toward the stage. An arrogant Venezuelan elderly man, GUSTAVO GUDAMEL, projects an interruption into the disorderly scuffle - from an over-laxed and confident posture in his seat.

GUSTAVO GUDAMEL

(Spanish-Maracay Accent)

My name is Gustavo Gudamel. I was a business partner to your esteemed Uncle, you know?

(MORE)

GUSTAVO GUDAMEL (CONT'D)

Out of respect to Dr. Frederick Rogers, myself and probably the majority of others here, we have responded to this covert invitation of yours.

Gustavo Gudamel looks with disgust into the tarnished details of the surrounding theatre.

GUSTAVO GUDAMEL (CONT'D)

Most of us, also aware of why you have been ostracized and confined to fundraise from the shadows like this. As a fugitive.

Dr. Rogers deflects the aggressive assertion with a softened defense.

DR. ROGERS

Sir, you have to understand we've chosen to exile. The scientific community has never been primed to explore anything deemed supernatural like this, as I'm sure...

A large glutinous woman, Mrs. King, interrupts, with a mouthful of unchewed food, sloshing across her bulging cheeks.

MRS. KING

Please. Sit. We've listened to your inglorious pitch. And we've risked to jeopardize our reputations to attend your theatrics here. Please.

Mrs. King picks a date pit from her teeth and laboriously gestures to the stage with her flailing oversized arm. Dr. Rogers and Joe, itching to contest, sit with their legs dangled over the side of the elevated stage like children.

MRS. KING (CONT'D)

There are doctors, scholars and entrepreneurs, like myself, in here

MRS. KING (CONT'D)

Who will all refuse to debate the magnificence of your discoveries. But your naivety of economics is quite unfitting for such an audience, don't you think?

An eloquent, handsome and middle aged gentlemen, BILL LANDRY, stands upright to elaborate. He pleads with the crowd with a certain sophistication to his charm. Dr.

Rogers look peculiarly at Joe, as he nods to confirm he agreeance.

BILL LANDRY

She's right. He's neglecting to see the intricacies of commerce woven into this fabric. Stitched together from the hands of some of the most influential leaders over the last tens of thousands of years.

Bill Landry slowly removes his high-end cashmere jacket. He leans forward in his creaking seat to rest it gently over the shoulders of the snobby older woman, who is still preoccupied calming Dr. Lovell. She is oddly comforted to a state of calm.

BILL LANDRY (CONT'D)

Who have crafted this blanket to cover over us, to warm us and to ensure that the stability of human life continue to exist. A life built on nothing more than the fear of death.

Bill Landry stands upright to walk dramatically to the isle and towards the front of the stage. Dr. Roger attempts to stand, but is held down by Joe's hand pressure over his shoulder.

Joe whispers softly to Dr. Rogers.

JOE

Please, listen. You need to listen.

BILL LANDRY

Food, healthcare, science even, big business, they all serve to keep us tucked in at night. So that when this fear arises. Our blanket is there for comfort. Survival.

Bill Landry stops his walk to stand directly below Dr. Rogers and Joe, to speak with an almost suggestive plea.

BILL LANDRY (CONT'D)

For you to remove this with your pursuits, will carry with it the potentials to undermine the purposes of why we exist.

Dr. Rogers interjects.

DR. ROGERS

What does this have to do with...

BILL LANDRY

We've monetized these commodities.
And I'm rich because of it. And
there's nothing more valuable than
to keep up this charade, so that
this same fear can continue to be
the driving force for each new
generation. You understand?

Bill Landry turns to the populated seats behind him with an impassioned flare.

BILL LANDRY (CONT'D)

Man has killed to protect this
obligation of ours since the
beginning... and I along with my
hard working peers here will have
nothing to do with changing such a
thing now.

The empowered energy of self preservation spreads into the widened eyes of the crowd, as they stand unified and begin to trail behind Bill Landry's proud exit into the isle.

Joe and Dr. Rogers remain sat and speechless, hung over the edge of the stage, as the group belligerently mocks amongst themselves - en route to the exit at the back of the vast theatre.

JOE

I'm sorry. But, this was something
you needed to hear.

Dr. Rogers shakes his head in disappointment.

DR. ROGERS

That's how you feel too, huh Joe?

Joe looks out into the depths of the darkened theatre.

JOE

You know how I got us in here? I
screened my first film project in
this theatre. I used to work the
reels for Christ sake. I had big
dreams of my own, you know? I wanted
to take my camera and travel the
world, Rogers. Now, we couldn't
even leave the country to vacation
if wanted to. Our passports are
flagged, we've be labeled as some
kind of traitors to US intelligence...
and this is where we part ways my
friend.

Dr. Rogers looks with sympathy on Joe.

JOE (CONT'D)
Don't even try to manipulate me back
into this freakish obsession of...
(interrupted)

The slamming exit doors echo aloud, distracting both Dr. Rogers and Joe. They both turn from each other to the back of the theatre, into the shadows to discern the silhouetted outlines of three figures. Of which two of them begin to approach.

Two large black-suited Japanese men, HENCHMAN ONE and HENCHMAN TWO, progress forward into the light and stop within reach, at the floor level at the front of the stage.

DR. ROGERS
Who are you? Were you in the back
the entire time?

HENCHMAN ONE
(Japanese accent)
Our employer is sorry for our
unconventional attendance. It was a
discretionary preference, but he is
quite inspired by your insightful
submissions.

Joe painfully shakes his head.

HENCHMAN TWO
(Japanese accent)
He finds there to be a commonality
between your work and his. And would
like to understand more.

Henchman Two extends a black card with a single gold foiled initial over its surface.

HENCHMAN TWO (CONT'D)
If you are interested.

Dr. Rogers flips the card over in his hand.

FLASHBACK - INT. BLACK SUV - ONE

Dr. Rogers drives forward with vocal banter on the exterior of the vehicle. He projects his vocal through a crack in his side window.

DR. ROGERS
Through here? Just park?

He checks his rear view and then carefully shifts the middle console gear into park.

FLASHBACK - INT. - FACILITY, ATRIUM

Dr. Rogers, Maya and Rachel walk into a side guarded entrance into the atrium, peering up into the magnificence of the facility.

DR. ROGERS

What did I tell you. Trust. Right?

Dr. Rogers smiles with his familiar trademark boyish charm expression.

Rachel fanatically surveys the scattered technology and hardware of the showroom floor. She grins and looks to the oversized equipment case at her side.

RACHEL

See? Looks like you kids are finally gonna make some new friends.

A series of guards converge, to escort them to an approaching figure - en route to the center of the vast floor-plan. Maya hesitates to follow.

MAYA

Are you forgetting something? Just go.

Maya, disgruntled, shakes her head at Dr. Rogers and looks back to the visible view of the black SUV through the guarded side entrance door. Dr. Rogers and Rachel continue forward, as the figure approaches and is revealed to be the Programmer - from the psych evaluation terminal.

PROGRAMMER

There's no need for this.

The Programmer looks to dismiss the guards with his eyes. He directs a stern vocal admission into the group of guards.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

You're working for these people now. Ok? You can go.

The guards trail off as the Programmer turns to admire Dr. Rogers.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

You must be Dr. Rogers. I've been briefed quite extensively, sir.

The Programmer reaches his extended arm to graciously shake hands with Dr. Rogers.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

Our work here...

(enthusiastic ponder)

Let's just say you will be an integral contributor to Kasai.

Rachel looks suspiciously to the Programmer and then to stare a hole in the side of Dr. Rogers.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

Our team here will make sure to provide whatever resources that you will require for your work, of course.

Rachel's eye brows raise as she interjects.

RACHEL

What a... type of resources are we talking about?

PROGRAMMER

Unlimited man power. The most sophisticated electronic advancements to aid in...

The Programmer stops upon noticing Rachel's uplifted shift in demeanor.

PROGRAMMER (CONT'D)

Perhaps a tour would allow me to elaborate fully?

Dr. Rogers and Rachel both turn to look at Maya in the distance, who remains laser focused on the open doors to the exterior. Dr. Rogers proudly speaks under his breath.

DR. ROGERS

Let's bring him in.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BASELINE ROOM

Pep walks jubilantly down the row, separating the members at the center of the room. There are personalized whisper greetings from each member, as they extend their arms into Pep's path to touch the plant cradled in his arms.

ASAMI

Hello Pep and Pep's plant.

BENJAMIN

Hey Pep.

JESS

Today's the day, Pep. We did it.

Pep reacts to the interactions with a deep sense of belonging in his eyes. Pep's joy intensifies as he approaches Tren, sat at his side - adjacent to Pep's matted console. Before sitting, Pep outwardly extends the plant to Tren, but discovers an unusual avoidance of acknowledgement.

Pep sits awkwardly in the deafening silence of his confusion. From his seated position, he attempts to force contact with Tren's glazed over eyes. However, he is then quick to notice the chaotically bouncing meters on Tren's display console. The hardware patch at Tren's temple pulses amber orange. The throb of blood orange is reflected in the saddened eyes of pep.

Carter watches the unusual exchange, with a suspicious scowl, from the seat behind Pep.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TREE - DINING HALL

The ambiance of the room, set in the serenity of its blue omni glow, is filled with its traditional attendance of group member banter. Lacey turns from her reach into the heights of the fiber optic tree branches, at the center of the seating platform, to smile at a distressed Pep below her.

LACEY

Where's Tren?

Pep shrugs and continues to neurotically pick through the leaved remnants on his plate. Lacey notices the irregularity in his behavior and short response, but is quick to turn back to the tree to resume her labors. Carter watches the interaction with a foreboding gaze. He is then quick to shift his demeanor to a concerned reprieve, before projecting his vocal into the group.

CARTER

Something's off. Isn't it, Pep?

Lacey peeks through the fiber optic branches of the tree to watch Pep rise from his daze.

CARTER (CONT'D)

He just kinda stormed in late last night. Started ripping in on me about...

JESS

Shutup Carter. Pep, you know how Carter get's at lunch. You see how skinny he is?

Jess pulls the brim of her hat up to make eye contact with Pep.

JESS (CONT'D)

You know Tren better than anyone.

Jess playfully shakes her head at Carter to dismiss the accusations.

CARTER

That's what makes it so weird. It wasn't like him. I'm being serious, Jess.

Bella, at Carter's side, looks to notice the unusual sobriety in his plea.

BELLA

You ok?

CARTER

All I'm saying is, something is just off about him. He'd never talk in the room. He just stares into his device all night. Like there's something else is going on with him, ya know?

An unsettled worry grows over Lacey's face, as she continues to hang a newly unsleeved orb into the tree's branches. After she secures the ornament, her line of site is distracted by the orb of her recently deceased friend, Talia.

Jess bumps playfully into Benjamin at her side to include him in the conversation. Benjamin yanks his buried face from the pages of his astronomy book, below his gaze, to look cluelessly amongst the group.

JESS

Star boy? Can you hear from space or what?

BENJAMIN

What? Technically there's no sound in space, so it'd be easier to hear you.

Jess shakes her head and purposely stares with conviction in Pep's direction - for Benjamin to notice his distress.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Remember, today is day 30 and all.
I mean, maybe it just got to him.

Pep reaches slowly to the side of his pant pocket, and pushes into the pen outline protruding through the fabric.

Lacey stares introspectively into the image on the interior of the orb, as her dramatic contemplation is quick to escalate into a look of dread.

CUT TO:

INT. LACEY'S ROOM BLOCK - DAY

Bella maticoulsouby applies a layer of lipstick to her perched lips in the bathroom's vanity mirror.

BELLA

Out of all the possessions they take
when you first arrive, they actually
missed one. I even forgot I had it
on me.

Bella sets the lipstick down on the counter and uses her finger to smooth the bright red color into the corner of her mouth.

BELLA (CONT'D)

I wish it would of been my phone. 3
months without a phone is like dying
in real life. Oh my God, have you
even had a phone, Lace?

Bella looks through the reflection in the mirror, through the bathroom door and into the interior of the room at Lacey.

Lacey is non-responsive, sprawled out on her frontside over her bed, flipping through the images of her and Talia on her tablet.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Did you see Carter earlier? That
was really emotional for him. That
is not Carter. He wouldn't just
make that up about Tren. Have you
noticed anything different?

Lacey speaks softly below her gaze.

LACEY

No. He seemed fine to me.

BELLA

You never really know someone, ya
know? You get too close and then
you only see what you want to see.

Laceys uncomfortably ponders as her view begins to become disoriented. The images of Talia start to vibrate beneath her. Lacey turns back to the bathroom to stabilize her visual, only to discover the mirror in front of Bella begin to inverse. Lacey squeezes her eyes closed and then open, to view Bella still applying her makeup. However, the reflection of Bella's reflection in the mirror appears to be nonexistent.

Lacey stumbles to her feet to regain her sense of balance.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Lace? Hey... Where'd ya go?

Bella looks at various angles, through the mirror, to locate Lacey in the room. She walks out into the room to notice Lacey gone.

CUT TO:

INT. ECO - HIDDEN BOILER ROOM

-A slow spatial MELANCHOLY synth, score music plays.

Lacey walks alone through the desolation of moss at her feet. Both hands are interlaced and pressed into her open forehead, as she progresses forward with her head tilted upward to the tall dome of overhanging vines. Her emotional deliberation is stunted, as she surveys her lowering arms below her saddened gaze. She is surprised to discover a series of water droplets atop the surface of her skin. She looks upward into the falling precipitation with a squint, however the water disappears entirely - mid fall.

-Music stops abruptly.

Lacey looks back down to a slowly developing realization, after examining her dried skin and the absence of falling water particles.

LACEY

It can't be. Can it?

Lacey slowly smiles at her newfound epiphany.

-A slow spatial MELANCHOLY synth builds back up.

CUT TO:

INT. ECO GARDEN

-Score music continues.

Lacey pushes open the main entrance doors and continues her slow pace through the large populations of self-sustaining plant and vegetation cultures.

She enters into the organic sediment, where there is shower of water myst falling from the spray valves of the osmosis hydration system above. She quints to make out a silhouette through the dramatic rainfall.

Tren, sitting hunched over with water dripping from his hair and into his lap, looks up through his drenched bangs to discover Lacey walking through the obstruction of the glistening downpour.

Tren raises his soaked face to lock eyes with Lacey's longing stare. They rest inside the tranquility of the unspoken exchange, until Lacey slowly lowers into the soil - directly in front of Tren. Her soft gaze remains conjoined with Tren's as she gently leans in to whisper an indiscernible message, shrouded beneath the CRACKLE of the symphonic rain ambiance. Tren strums his hand through the falling water and over Lacey's face and lips, pressed lightly against his listening ear.

Lacey tenderly slides her face over the skin of Tren's cheek to regain a deep stare, close enough for the rain to cascade from his face to hers. Her indiscernible spoken message continues to separate the water between her moving lips. Of which Tren watches with a mesmerizing adoration, before lunging in to kiss her.

-A levitation through the rainfall ascends through the open air, progressing high above Tren and Lacey - traveling upwards into the ventilation air shafts of the domed roof.

An indiscernible vocal ECHOS, gradually increasing in volume, as the proximity to the air shaft decreases.

INT. FACILITY - ECO GARDEN - VENTILATION SHAFT

Pep's trembling vocal echos into the airstream ambiance.

PEP

Futatsu. Two. Three. Mittsu.
Four... I forget the numbers, Tren.
I'm sorry, ok? I'm not like you.

Pep sits uncomfortably in the pipe-like corridor, staring off into the depths of the narrowing and darkening circular passageway.

PEP (CONT'D)

I can't keep pretending anymore.
I'm not supposed to be here. I'm
not ready. Tomorrow... I can't...

He pulls himself back into his stare below his gaze, and resumes the aggressive penmanship over his exposed skin.

CUT TO:

INT. WILSHIRE, SKY-RISE BUILDING LOBBY

Angela walks up to the stern face of a young and attractive female LOBBY RECEPTIONIST.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I'm here to see Gregory Wilshire.

LOBBY RECEPTIONIST

The Editor in Chief Mr. Wilshire?
Do you have an appointment? We don't
usually have...

The Lobby Receptionist sizes up Angela's overdressed business attire.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Yah, I know how it works. I used to
work for Greg. Here, actually, in
this building. Can you just tell
him that Angela Rothwell is here to
see him?

LOBBY RECEPTIONIST

Who?

Angela looks around the building's interior with agitation.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

You know who the hell I am. Angela
Rothwell. The reporter. I ran the
entire show in here.

The Lobby Receptionist appears dumbfounded and disinterested. She reaches down to press into the blinking buttons on the multi-lined phone on her desk.

LOBBY RECEPTIONIST

You're gonna have to speak to his
secretary, Angela. You can try to
at least. I mean...

(vocal fades out)

The Lobby Receptionist's vocal fades out as Angela walks with haste towards an opening elevator, off in the distance.

A group of suit-and-tie men exit in mid conversation.

LOBBY RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Mam. You can't...

The Lobby Receptionist quickly jolts up from her chair and runs towards Angela. She yells over the chaotic echo of her uncoordinated heeled run - fighting to stay upright over the perfectly shined floor.

LOBBY RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Security. Sir, this woman doesn't have access to be in the building.

Angela, in her forward progression, looks to MR. WILSHIRE - a middle aged man with all the attributes of leadership built into his distinctive physical stature.

Mr. Wilshire stops to stand amongst his entourage in the lobby hallway, as the elevator closes behind him. Angela approaches him with an unusual familiarity and projects her commanding vocal into the crossfire of banter.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Gregory, we need to talk.

The distinguished men, competing for Mr. Wilshire's attention, turn their preoccupied focus to the sudden commotion of Angela and the converging security personnel.

MR. WILSHIRE

It's ok. We don't need security.
I'm ok.

Mr. Wilshire flashes a look at the suited men nearly attached to his hip. They react to the dismissal with reluctance and walk off towards the entrance of the building. Mr. Wilshire walks impatiently alongside Angela in the same direction.

MR. WILSHIRE (CONT'D)

Hello Angela. Isn't this a bit below your professional prowess?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I know you're following the story, Greg.

MR. WILSHIRE

Of course. I am a bit jealous I must admit. I think everyone in this building is curious as to how you got in that facility.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

You know I only do big stories. And this is even bigger than you think it is. I also know how bad you hate being second to break a headline.

Mr. Wilshire lowers his standoff intensity a notch and peeks over to Angela, mid stride.

MR. WILSHIRE

How big of a headline are we talking?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Let's just say, big enough to expose the whole woke propaganda movement for the gimmick it is.

MR. WILSHIRE

That's our market though, Angela. The people who are dependent on their medications, perversions and God knows whatever else to keep themselves from revealing how asleep they really are. Them?

ANGELA ROTHWELL

That's pretty much everyone isn't it?

MR. WILSHIRE

Those people might not be too happy to know they've been stuck in a trance this entire time, if that's your goal. What's so wrong with selling them the woke thing?

Mr. Wilshire stops, straightens his tie and pulls his dapper wardrobe into order. He charismatically smirks and wipes off the debris from the shoulder of Angela's blouse.

MR. WILSHIRE (CONT'D)

They tune in to our network to get their daily fix, Angela. So they can taste that fleeting reassurance, that their more woke than the people we run stories on.

Mr. Wilshire admires the luxury and branding built into the vast architecture surrounding them.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

I know what this business is, Greg.

Angela looks around the building's interior with a sense of discomfort.

MR. WILSHIRE

Yes you do. You had to find out the hard way, didn't you? You were big here, Angela. But, our interests at Wilshire have remained the same. We're in the business of distracting people from themselves.

Angela ponders to draw from a hopeful optimism.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

And I still believe that the truth can set you free. It's that big of a story, Greg.

Mr. Wilshire looks at Angela with a belittled disappointment in his farewell gesture and laughs under his breath as he departs through the revolving exit doors.

Angela follows him out onto the sidewalk, where a driver stands - waiting beside the open door of a running vehicle.

EXT. METROPOLITAN CITY - MORNING

Mr. Wilshire looks to the sidewalk of busied pedestrian traffic.

MR. WILSHIRE

This is all just noise to them, Angela. They wouldn't know what to do with freedom. Their like insects, look at them.

Mr. Wilshire enters and sits next to his colleagues in the back of the chartered vehicle. The driver closes the door shut behind him.

Angela stands awkwardly in the middle of the sidewalk's oncoming crowds.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Shit.

Mr. Wilshire rolls the window down to look out at Angela, standing out of her element on the busy sidewalk. He gestures with a swooping hand for her to come closer to the open sliver in the backseat window.

MR. WILSHIRE

It's sad isn't it?

Angela leans up against the vehicle to listen closer.

MR. WILSHIRE (CONT'D)

Everyday, we work our asses off to
taylor craft these stories and keep
these formulaic controversies
circulating. So the world doesn't
have to confront that deeply embeded
urge we all have in common.

Angela's body language shifts.

MR. WILSHIRE (CONT'D)

I get it. We're hard wired to end
our own suffering and face true
liberation. But nobody ever wants
to change. They rather fantasize
about it, so we bottle and sell the
hope of it.

Angela's noble and desperate transparency builds into an
opportunistic hustle plea.

Her vocal exudes a spicy sass.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Then let's not deprive the people of
their fix.

Mr. Wilshire, frozen in confusion, lowers the window to
reveal his curious gaze.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

I know someone...

Mr. Wilshire leans forward in his seat.

ANGELA ROTHWELL (CONT'D)

I know someone on the inside. I can
get the location. And with it...
all the people of Life Ascension.
And the entire story.

Mr. Wilshire signals for Angela to come closer, until they
stare face to face.

MR. WILSHIRE

I want to be first, like you said.
Our headline. Follow this through
and you'll be able to walk through
the lobby again, without security.
At the top of the Wilshire building
again, huh?

Traffic builds and a series of aggressive banter is heard in
the distant ambiance.

Mr. Wilshire yells forward to the driver.

MR. WILSHIRE (CONT'D)

These people are sick. Get me out of
this virus. Let's go.

The car pulls away quickly and into the blaring horns of
oncoming traffic. Angela, standing amidst the chaos of the
sidewalk, looks down to check her phone.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

Ok, Tren. Where the hell are you?

Angela lowers her phone and looks up into the hustle and
bustle of the exponentially multiplying pedestrians and
chaotic traffic - scurrying rapidly over the city block grid
like rats in a maze.

Angela strangely becomes receptive to the ambiance of irate
vehicle sounds, a slow crescendo of shuffling, buzzing,
creeping and crawling. A sound-bed consistent to that of
insect infestation noises. Her daze is shown in layered
tracers of herself, wandering aimlessly in multiple directions
at once.

Lost in her hypersensitive sense perception, she begins
walking against the flow of the hostile crowds. She looks
out with desperation, into what feels like a virus-like plague
that encompasses her, until she sees the familiarity of the
white utility van - pulling up to the sidewalk beside her.

CHRISTOPH

You look lost. Did it go that bad?

Angela gathers herself to project a frail but collected
coolness.

ANGELA ROTHWELL

It worked. Just like you said.

Christoph reaches into the back cab to push the van's sliding
door open.

INT. VEHICLE, SEDAN

Akito Kasai watches Angela enter the van from across the
busy city street, through the tinted windows of a stationary
vehicle.

AKITO KASAI

Did you get it?

Joe is revealed with his zoom camera lens pressed up against
the sedan's glass.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)
You'll need this if you want proof,
yes?

The red record light glows at the front of his camera.

CUT TO:

INT. TREN'S ROOM BLOCK

Tren finishes typing a message into his glass tablet,
addressed to Angela Rothwell's initial email.

The message reads: I'm ready to talk.

He touches the reply button to trigger a send ALERT chimed
notification. The blue omni glow from his display device,
casts a dramatic illumination on the solemn determination of
his face.

CUT TO:

INT. JAPANESE OFFICE SHOWROOM

A series of frozen playback frames randomly flicker,
comprising the Japanese office layout in Tren's psych
evaluation recall. The Programmer, fitted in the black motion
capture suit, walks into frame inside the virtual construct
to observe the details of the reproduced scene. He curiously
surveys the life-like surroundings of the specific three-
dimensional recorded moment of Tren's subconscious
manifestation.

He continues his peculiar inspection, en route through a
compilation of pixelated wall barriers, to stop abruptly at a
glitching workstation of cubicles. Where there are posed
Japanese workers caught in various suspended actions.

The Programmer's wandering eyes widen to a look of unsettled
disturbance. His line of sight is followed to a branded
insignia, displayed backwards over the surface of a glass
wall divider. The Programmer steps to the front side of the
glass to read the signage "Kasai Games".

A VOCAL is heard aloud, snapping the Programmer out of his
daze.

TECH ADVISOR (O.S.)
(Japanese accent)
Sir? Please. It's the program.
Something was altered.

The Programmer looks suspiciously around the construct and
raises his hands to his head.

INT. PSYCH EVALUATION TERMINAL

The Programmer continues his push upwards to lift the VR headgear from his face. He turns to the side of the reclined set beneath him, disrupting the heavy cords connecting his suit to the hardware populated throughout the darkened room. Standing on edge at his side is the Tech Advisor assistant.

TECH ADVISOR

I found... foreign coding in the virtual network? Are you aware of these changes? The mods were made yesterday.

PROGRAMMER

From a user?

TECH ADVISOR

No. It had to be someone who has access to the construct. The Dunes sequence is completely changed on here.

The Tech Advisor looks to the mysterious anomaly on his tablet display, below his gaze. The Programmer breathes deeply into an apparent apprehension.

PROGRAMMER

It wasn't a hack. There wasn't a breach.

TECH ADVISOR

How do you know?

The Programmer turns back into the reclined seat and sits uncomfortably in his ponder.

PROGRAMMER

Put me back in.

TECH ADVISOR

We don't know what was changed, it could be dangerous.

The Programmer pulls his headgear back over his face.

PROGRAMMER

Drop me into the sequence that was changed. Now.

The Programmer's hands shake as he grips tightly to the side of his VR headset.

EXT. SAND DUNES - GLOOM

The Programmer slowly lowers his arms to his side and stands in the gloomy storm brewing over the vast grey sand covered hills. The Programmer is reluctant to speak aloud, but desperately utters a command under his breath.

PROGRAMMER

Play embedded message.

The sky RUMBLES overhead.

Akito walks through the background fog and into the visible foreground, to stop within a few paces in front of The Programmer. Akito annoyingly adjusts the black skin tight fabric at his side and stares straight forward, to resume his serious gaze.

AKITO KASAI

I figured you'd be too buried in your work for our debriefing, so I figured a convenient system debug would get your attention. I'm quite certain you'll enjoy some of our new writing.

The Programmer looks up to the quickly converging blackened clouds in the sky.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

I bet this is easier for you, isn't it?, Standing here in the safety of a programmed playback sequence.

Akito begins to walk forward with an increasing intensity to his unwavering stare.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

Knowing that I can't demand a response from you in this very moment, as to why you have failed to inform me that my son continues to run around with the rest of the rats in that maze.

Akito stops and smiles to conceal an obvious deception.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

But that is ok. The work I've entrusted you to oversee is nearly complete. Dr. Rogers will be hard to convince of that, but I'm sure there are other inlets to his project you are aware of. Other people.

Children's banter is heard off screen. Akito breaks his stare as two seven-year-old Japanese twin brothers, similarly suited, run across the sand and stand at opposite sides of Akito's tight hold. The Programmer falls through the air and deep into the explosion of sand below his knees.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

Don't worry. They're both safe on a jet with me back to Japan, as we speak.

Akito looks to the disoriented children below him.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

We know each other quite well, don't we? I know what you need. And you know what I need.

Akito yells a command off screen at the assistant behind the camera.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

Shut this down. Get me out of this...

Akito pulls at the tight collar of his motion capture suit and looks back to the camera with an open disdain.

AKITO KASAI (CONT'D)

There's something else he's been working on. Something they've kept secret as I'm told. The work we've done there is nothing without this, understand? We must finish what we started years ago. Get his data by any means necessary or...

Akito's video feed cuts and The Programmer sits alone in the middle of the gloomy storm.

A loud thunderbolt BOOMS. The sand, held clutched in the The Programmer's cupped hands, vibrates as it strains through his fingers and onto the surface of the desert floor. He processes his misfortune to a solid frequency - high pitched tone.

INT. OPERATING ROOM

The identical solid frequency tone is paired to the monitor of an EKG flatline signal, displayed behind the triangular shaped abrasion on The Counselor's exposed neck. Dr. Rogers is revealed in slow motion, pulling the spool of endoscope line down the length of the spinal column - under a thin layer of scarred skin and out at the origin of the fresh incision.

INT. ECO GARDEN - VENTILATION SHAFT

Pep frantically squirms on his hands and knees through the pipe-like corridor, spewing a neurotic conversation under his breath. His pace quickens as the intensity of his chaotic banter heightens, with a volume that competes with the crashing of the circular metallic tube lining under his commando crawl.

INT. OPERATING ROOM

Dr. Rogers and Rachel strain under the tension as they struggle to turn the flailing body face-up over the exam table.

Rachel abandons an uncoordinated set of chest compressions to press a mouth full of air into The Counselor's lifeless lips. She looks up in desperation to find Dr. Rogers running into view, with a set of defibrillator shock paddles in his raised hands.

INT. FACILITY HALLWAYS

Pep, in mid stride, continues his sprinted pursuit through the lonely and darkened halls, screaming out counted numbers in inconsistent order. He navigates through the facility's labyrinth of hallways with a set of frantic darting eyes and heavy breathing. A handful of room-block doors crack open to peeking heads, extended outward to witness the passing commotion.

INT. OPERATING ROOM

Dr. Rogers and Rachel stand in attention at opposing sides of the exam table, peering down with a catatonic sense of disbelief. A single red tear falls from the corner of The Counselor's slightly cracked and bloodshot eye.

INT. PEP'S ROOM BLOCK

Pep stands motionless at the closed door behind him. His expression is stained with an unusually solemn despair. There are occasional facial twitch spasms over Pep's eyes, that momentarily rest long enough to show the void expression on his face.

A discomfort is heard in the forced whimper, pushed out painfully under his breath.

PEP

Oh, no... please no. Don't do this,
Pep. Oh God, don't.

INT. OPERATING ROOM

Dr. Rogers, sat in an unfamiliar numbed exhaustion, glances at the red running numbers on a digital timer. He gently presses into the display to stop the racing digits at 3:32. Dr. Rogers in his abnormal stupor, projects a monotoned vocal into the newly silenced room.

DR. ROGERS

Maya would be proud. In and out in three minutes.

Rachel pulls herself from her daze to look at Dr. Rogers with a peculiar grimace.

RACHEL

What? That just clocked three and a half minutes... after he flatlined.

Dr. Rogers looks at the reading on Rachel's screen with absolute defeat.

DR. ROGERS

It decoded the missing strand at least.

Rachel studies her display with an unusual curiosity.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

He held out that long... just for another death date reading? How can that...? That can't be right.

RACHEL

It's not a death date. The remainder of the encryption is only showing an hour, minute and seconds reading.

DR. ROGERS

What's that supposed to mean, Rachel?

RACHEL

I think I know what this is, but I need to confirm it.

Rachel darts from her workstation at the perimeter of the operating exam table, where The Counselor rests in a near unconscious but stable condition.

DR. ROGERS

Where are you going?

Dr. Rogers stumbles to his feet, but is too distracted by his exhaustion to follow after Rachel.

However, he is quick to fall into the distraction of his dumbfounded curiosity of The Counselor's short breaths - releasing laboriously through his quivering lips.

DR. ROGERS (CONT'D)

You're a miracle, you know that?

Who are you?

INT. OPERATING ROOM - LOUNGE

Rachel enters the waiting room to discover Benjamin sleeping, awkwardly pressed up the magazine table and the two way glass wall behind his small chair. Rachel sits across from Benjamin and softly projects into his contorted body.

RACHEL

Wake up, Benjamin.

Benjamin slowly wakes and brandishes an excessive admiration for Rachel, with a fanatical gleam in his eye.

BENJAMIN

Rachel, right? I've always wanted to meet you. I'm your... I mean both of you. Dr. Rogers too. I'm the biggest fan of you both.

Rachel abruptly but politely interrupts his delirious banter.

RACHEL

Thank you, Benjamin. You know, Maya thinks very highly of you too. She's mentioned the "Cosmic Kid" on more than one occasion.

Benjamin's eyes widen with excitement, as he lets out a polite chuckle.

BENJAMIN

Starboy seems to be the trending nickname the members are using, but I'm liking Cosmic Kid too.

RACHEL

Because of your affinity with astronomy?

BENJAMIN

I'm obsessed actually.

RACHEL

Good. Good. Good.

Rachel leans in closer and lowers the volume of her voice.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

We've been looking for an assistant,
ya know? Interested?

BENJAMIN

Really?

RACHEL

This project is very confidential,
Benjamin. Including this
conversation, ok? Everything we say
in here has to remain private. That's
why I had you meet me so late like
this.

BENJAMIN

I'll sign whatever. I'm in.

Rachel's niceties are quickened to a stoned cold stare below
her. Benjamin's eyes are drawn to the tablet pushed over
his lap.

RACHEL

Are you familiar with the encrypted
numerical stamps? The death dates?

BENJAMIN

Yes. The translated digit values or
the glyph symbols.

Rachel smiles with a reaffirmed confidence.

RACHEL

The time stamp you see here is
different from the others, isn't it?

Rachel watches impatiently in an uncomfortable silence, as
Benjamin studies the digits displayed on the tablet with a
quaint familiarity.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Benjamin?

BENJAMIN

These values are... in the same
sequence as... This reading looks
like it's from an ecliptic coordinate
system. It's pretty standard
actually, but they're referred to as
celestial coordinates.

RACHEL

Like some kind of astronomical
directions, right? Similar to
longitude and latitude?

BENJAMIN

Yah. But the two angles they use to measure are different. Because of the pole alignment issues and....

Rachel interjects with a suggestive playfulness.

RACHEL

No equator up there, huh?

BENJAMIN

Exactly. They use right ascension and declination when plotting reference points in space. Locating stars is done the same way.

Benjamin looks back down to the digits with a disturbance in his glance.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

But, these aren't written correctly though.

RACHEL

What do you mean?

Rachel looks inquisitively, over her shoulder, to the door's reflective mirrored glass.

BENJAMIN

They aren't, well they are, but... If you were going to plug them into a telescope, the time values right here...

Benjamin points to the Hour, Minute and Second digits on the reading.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

These have to be translated into degrees. It's simple to do. Astronomy 101 stuff.

Dr. Rogers listens in shock from behind the two way glass door of the waiting room, as Benjamin's discernible muffle resumes.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

1 hour is 1/15 degree. 1 minute is 1/60th degree. 1 second is 1/360 degree.

Rachel basks in Benjamin's response with a childlike wonder.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

You'll just have to convert it, but
it looks like serviceable cosmic
directions to me.

Rachel shakes her head in disbelief.

RACHEL

To somewhere in space. Unbelievable.

Benjamin looks sideways at Rachel's naivety.

BENJAMIN

Well, yah. That's why I'm a dork
for life, too. But, what are these
for?

INT. OPERATING ROOM

Rachel looks back again to the door, where Dr. Rogers stands
unseen through the mirrored glass on the opposite side. Dr.
Rogers is distracted by a subtle movement on the exam table..

The Counselor strains to lift his eyelids open and turns to
look in the direction of Dr Rogers, pressed against the
outside of the glass door of the waiting room. He attempts
to push out a weak and labored vocal from his motionless
lips.

THE COUNSELOR

Jingshén rén.

Translation Ancient Tibetan subtitles: Spirit Man

CUT TO:

INT. PEP'S ROOM BLOCK

Pep's voice quivers as multiple layers of his own voice are
heard overlapping in the ambiance around him. A series of
negative thoughts, that Pep had learned to suppress and
rationalize, are heard aloud.

Some of the discernible whispered phrases: You're never going
to get better. You aren't like them. You're too scared to
change. You'll always be the same. You can't fake it any
longer. Accept who you really are. You weren't supposed to
be here.

The whispers begin to grow in quantity to an indiscernable
audible chaos - commanding Pep's full attention.

PEP

This isn't real. I'm... more than
my fear. Please stop. Please.

Tears begin to rush down Pep's face.

PEP (CONT'D)

I can still... connect with... the
Absonite. I just need to...not think.
Stop thinking. Ah...

Pep utters an excruciating GROAN.

A tear falls through the air slowly, plummeting downward into the skin on Pep's arm. It travels through the mixture of ink and blood spreading under the lacerating pen tip, moving back and forth violently over his skin.

Pep's knees crash dramatically into the pools of blood below him on the surface of the floor. Pep's hand falls to his side, while his slow release of the pen leaves his fingers limp, swaying through the air.

The back of his head is motionless and level with the surface of the bed in front of him. Pep's lifeless eyes, level with the surface of the bed, are followed to reveal the yellow arm band and congratulatory letter propped up over a Life Ascension branded certificate.

THE END OF PART THREE