

THE ABSONITE - PART ONE
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 cigarette 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. 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 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 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, sweetie.

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 fangkè
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
it.

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?
They found the initial 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. That's
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