

CENTRAL PROCESSING

A Screenplay of Sorts

By Manny Freiser

SCENE I: EON

It is nighttime in Big City: towers visible from the hospital room are a glittering circuit board sprawling to the horizon. Behind those windows – seeming like a million anonymous strangers' eyes – exist mysterious lives holding secrets limited only by one's imagination.

The solemn hospital room on the fortieth floor of Big City Hospital is a dark, sterile place with the omnipresent air of gravity and crisis that accompany major life changes. It is, after all, a terminus for voyages arriving on -- and departing – Earth. Here, the drama is smaller but deeper -- real. Machines beep. Lights blink. Sterile air carries the faint sting of disinfectant. Grief has stopped any sense of time. No one notices the world outside the window any more than that world notices the parade of lives and deaths within.

Against the wall opposite the windows, **EON** lies motionless in the room's only bed, wasted and worn, weary and drawn, the vital energy of life inexorably draining from him. **HE** rests flat on the bed, skin pale, chest rising in shallow, reluctant pulls. His family surrounds him — wife, **EVELINE**, and two teen children, **DEV** and **BEN**. Occasional urgent, troubled – always whispered – snippets of nearly audible conversation convey silent pain and pervasive suffering.

NURSE, unsmiling and efficient, silently checks the readouts on the blinking machines and then exits. Obviously, her scrutiny produced no surprises.

EVELINE sits closest to the bed. She has the red eyes of someone who's already cried too much -- and knows in her bones she has so much more crying to do -- but still holds herself straight and self-assured. Their two teenage kids — **BEN**, gangly, unruly, trying too hard to simulate adult composure, and **DEV**, younger, smaller, sharp-eyed, he beginnings of womanhood starting to make themselves felt and seen -- hover nearby, lost in the uncertainty of whether – and how much -- to admit to themselves or display heretofore unknown grief.

They all wait. There is nothing else to be done. **EON** is dying.

EON (cracking a smile that's mostly pain and a voice rough as though dragged over gravel, speaks to **EVELINE**): *What I'd give for a do-over. When I was young, I thought time stretched forever. Then one day you wake up and realize it's a freight train, and you're already staring at the caboose. Hell, **EVIE**, I'm not ready to get off. Not by a long shot. I need more time with you -- to make up for... (coughs).*

EVELINE (squeezing his hand, dry humor intact, speaks over his coughing): *That's what I get for marrying an older man.* (Suddenly serious): *You've been at my side all these years. That's more than most people ever get. And let's be honest — you've had one Hell of a run, **EON**. Born in '42 A.S. (After Singularity) ... almost ninety. Not bad. If you were a redwood, people would be taking tours to stare at you.*

The kids smile at that.

EON: *Redwoods don't have to raise teenagers. Or get to marry someone half their age. (he tries to grin impishly but instead smiles weakly at **BEN** and **DEV**) I should've been more patient -- spent more time with you all... not just writing my music and half-baked stories. (he coughs again, weaker now) I wanted to give you the world. Instead, I stumbled through it.*

EVELINE: *Stop. Your old man left when you were twelve. You did better than him by miles. You've been a rock for us. Don't poison it with regrets.*

EON: *Easy for you to say. I still feel like I wasted too much time. Too many fights, too many dumb arguments. (he manages a weak grin) Though you were wrong at least half the time.*

EVELINE (snorting through tears): I'll let you keep that *fantasy*, **GRAMPS**.

They both chuckle, brittle but genuine.

EON: *Promise me something. When I'm gone — don't just survive. Have fun. Find love again. You're young. You've got another half a life ahead of you.*

He reaches out and pinches her backside with what little strength he has left.

EVELINE (mock glare, blushing): *Still a devil. Even on your deathbed.*

EON: I'll have *spies watching*.

EVELINE: **E**, listen to me. This isn't goodbye. We'll meet *again* — however the Universe arranges it -- you and me, we'll be *bangin'* into each other *forever*.

EON: (softly) I *wanna believe* that. I *really do*.

EVELINE: Then *believe* it. You've given me *everything*, *Baby*. That's enough.

The beeping of the machines rides the silence of the little room. Big City outside glitters on, oblivious.

EVELINE (leans down and kisses his cheek): This *isn't* the end. Not for *us*.

EON (crooked grin): *Wish it didn't feel like one.*

They both laugh quietly, and for a second the hospital room almost feels normal.

EON's gaze shifts to **DEV**, who seems to be hiding in a corner, her expression a battlefield of guilt and sorrow. He crooks a finger.

EON: Come on, **BEAUTIFUL GIRL**. *Don't hide from your old dad.*

She approaches cautiously, eighteen years old but in this moment looking younger than her blossoming womanhood.

DEV (tears threatening): You *can't go yet, DADDY. I've screwed up too much.* I've got so much to make *up* to you. I'm so sorry — for *all* of it. Can you ever *forgive* me?

EON (softly smiling): You're *forgiven, my Beautiful One* — always forgiven. *That's* the easy part. The *challenge* is making sense of it all, and you'll have an entire *lifetime* to do *that*. *Mistakes* are just informational *clues* leading you toward the truths of the *story* you're meant to *tell*. Just *learn* from them — and *keep moving forward*. You're *stubborn, bright*, and *far* too much like *me*. *That* means you'll get *knocked down -- a lot*. But it *also* means you'll *always get back up*. Remember our old *line*?

DEV (sniffling, half-laughing, mock-performing): *She comes from behind in the bottom of the eighth -- like a bat out of Hell.*

EON: *That's my Girl! Relapse? Struggle? Part of the game – and it's just the early innings. Keep swinging, kid!* (Brushes her hair back, voice weakening but steady). *Promise me you'll write it all down one day. Your incredible story. And send me a copy. I think I'm gonna have plenty of time to read.*

DEV tries to smile.

DEV: I just want to be someone you could be *proud of*.

EON (soothing): I couldn't be *prouder!* It's the *effort* – the *persistence* – that counts and *you're a star!*

EON exchanges a glance with **EVELINE**, speaking softly to her as he musses **DEV**'s hair): *She's gonna be okay ya know - I know it.*

EVELINE nods her head in agreement.

EON gently holds **DEV**'s face at arm's length where he can look into her eyes. Almost automatically they chant in unison, obviously expressing a sentiment repeated many times in the past.

EON and **DEV** (staring lovingly into each other's eyes): *I love you forever — and in all ways.*

They laugh at their own corniness -- a clichéd statement belying the deepest of feelings.

EON (lightly, to **BEN**): *Hey, my FAVORITE TROUBLEMAKER.* Get over here. (**BEN** approaches, shy and halting in the face of 'big emotion') You ever gonna stop being a *pain* in my ass and get *serious*? (**BEN** gives a guilty shrug and raises a corner of his mouth in a slight grin)

EON: Your *mom* and *sister* will need you now. But don't *rush* it — *life* shoves hard enough *without* you *jamming* it. First, *figure* out who you *are*. *That's* the *trick*. *Then* you'll be *solid*. I know you *will*. I'm very *proud* of you.

BEN steps back, face pale, starting to feel the full weight of what's happening.

EON's hand finds **EVELINE**'s again, his voice barely more than a whisper.

EON: I've *felt* like a *failure*. I *wish* my music had *done more* for us -- you'd have a financial *cushion* instead of having had to *carry* me all these years.

EVELINE: *Nonsense.* I *never wanted* a *cushion*. You're *all* I *ever wanted* -- and I *got* you. Your *songs* are the *most* precious *gift*. Rich or poor, they're 'forever' *love letters* that *tell* our *story* so *exquisitely*.

EON (picking up on the negative, flirting with [mock?] jealousy): *Past* tense? All you'll ever 'wanted?!"

EVELINE (teasing, hands raised): *Sorry – hey, no promises.*

EON (earnest): *Seriously* — I *want* you to find love again. Someone *better*. *Promise* me.

EVELINE (gently mocking tone): Well, I can guarantee you he won't be better...

Before **EVELINE** can finish her jibe, **EONS**'s eyes suddenly close and his body slumps. The monitors scream their electronic panic. **EVELINE** clings to his hand, as though desperately hoping her grip alone can anchor him.

EVELINE (frantic): *Nurse! Nurse!*

Abruptly, the room is filled with motion, people rushing in and about. But **EON** is already somewhere else.

EON (puzzled, yet amused): *Odd* -- I can *feel*. (he pinches his arm, commenting rhetorically): *Sensation* still *there*.

But the hospital is slipping away now. **EON** floats in light, warm and impossibly soft air. Below, he sees his body lying motionless, **EVELINE** clinging to it, the **NURSE** speaking to the **DOCTOR**. He hears nothing – it looks like a silent film.

And then — a shape. An older man comes into soft focus – it's **EON**'s dad -- not displaying his usual anger and disappointment -- but smiling, arms wide.

EON (blurting): "Dad! Where the *Hell* have you been?! I have a lifetime of things to tell you..."

EON's DAD (abashedly): *Come on, Son. Walk with me.*

Peace washes over **EON**, utterly alien and welcome.

EON's DAD: *I want you to know I tried. Clumsy, selfish, wrong more often than right — but I did love you. I always did* – but guess I never worked hard enough to show it.

EON (with love): *Forget it, Dad. Doesn't matter anymore. You're here now, and that's enough. You don't know how much I've wanted to make you proud -- and how glad I am to see you now.*

EON's DAD: *You did make me very proud, Son. More than you realize. And I regret every way I failed you. I love you, EON.*

Their old bitterness evaporates like smoke. For once, they are simply father and son, stripped of all the wreckage.

EON (quietly, with odd acceptance): "So *this is it?* The *finish line?* Sorry — I look like *Hell*."

EON's DAD (grinning impishly, eyeing **EON** up and down): "Not bad -- for a corpse."

EON barks out a laugh, startled by how easy it comes.

EON: Yeah, the body's *done* -- *garbage heap* material. And you know *what*? *Good riddance*. I feel... *free*. *Strong* again. *Ready*.

He reaches out, and his father clasps his hand. They rise together, drawn into a shaft of brilliance that seems to stretch forever. Space and time collapse into irrelevance. **EON**'s mind floods with answers to every unsolved problem, lost loves, anger dissolved into pure understanding toward all mankind. It's like being handed the instruction manual for existence, only words aren't necessary. It's all known.

Back in the hospital, machines have flatlined in chorus.

NURSE (voice tight): *Nothing's working. He's gone.*

DOCTOR: He had a *DNR*. Declaring. Time of *death*: 12:34 A.M.

But **EON** has never felt more alive. The light expands, white and limitless, consuming him.

EON (whispering in awe): The sky is *everywhere*. Where are we, **DAD**? It's *beautiful*!

Figures drift around them in the radiance — shadows with human outlines. To one side, a body leaving life, slipping past like a cloud in the sky. In the opposite direction, two newborns, bright and new, sliding toward the World he's leaving.

At the far end of the tunnel, the light blazes brighter still. His **FATHER** began to fade, gliding away, smiling, lifting a hand in farewell.

EON waves back, the gesture simple, final -- both gestures filled with love.

The light is *everywhere* – ultimately comforting and peaceful. **EON** lets go.

SCENE II: THE GARDEN

EON floats softly downward out of the clouds under a misty blue sky, landing soft as a feather on the ground. He sleeps – he has no idea how long. He awakens in a dreamlike, stunningly beautiful, pastoral landscape under a perfectly blue sky on what he somehow knows is an extraordinarily quiet and peaceful Sunday morning. The air is impossibly silky and fragrant – lavender? Jasmine? The lush greenery is dotted with bright yellow, red, blue and purple blooms of all shapes and sizes -- and gently caressed by crisscrossing, burbling streams. In the distance stretches a stunning landscape of lush valleys creating an atmospheric Monet in the morning mist. At the center of this vista rises a Great Mountain — snowcapped, immense, radiant. It is all idyllic -- almost artificial in its perfection. **EON** is overwhelmed by the sheer beauty and order of the place and experiences a distinct sensation of great wellbeing. He slowly gets to his feet, still taking in his surroundings. He's dressed in – he suddenly notices -- not much – a loincloth several-sizes too small.

EON (still in a daze, mutters): *Gotta be – Heaven! Or -- the Garden of Eden! Even better than in my dreams.*

EON's gaze falls on a strikingly beautiful, pulchritudinous young woman nearby. She's weeping and barely clothed -- more to the point, barely clothed and weeping – wearing only a tiny loincloth like his own. She seems so familiar, yet he can't quite place her. He feels a compelling connection -- as though he's always known her – not to mention an immediate animal attraction to her. She's obviously upset.

EON (hesitantly): *Why do you weep, fair damsel? Please tell me if – how – I can help you. My name is **EON**. (Squinting) Do I know you?*

EVE (red-eyed): 'Well, yes – *and no – why?*!'

EON notices that despite her current unhappiness, **EVE** radiates a confident, almost mischievous energy. Maybe it's just the way she's eying him. There's something both ancient and contemporary -- instantly intimate -- in her demeanor. Her near nakedness

isn't unpleasing. She's very comfortable in this state and obviously enjoying his response to it.

EON (Exclaiming with sudden recognition): *Wait a minute -- I do know you -- rather someone very similar! You're almost 'a dead ringer' (excuse the expression) for -- my wife! Not just looks, but also personality -- and something undefinable!*

EVE (unconvincingly sarcastic): Whatever makes you *happy*, **EEYORE**.

EON (protesting weakly): It's **EON**. (shrugs; at this point, he doesn't really care what she calls him). But *what makes you unhappy?*

EVE (pleasantly aware that **EON** is staring at her -- comments coyly): Oh, *nothing*, really -- just mourning my *eviction* from the ravishing *beauty* of this *paradise*. Over an *apple*, of all things. Can you *imagine*?! (She shifts into her rhythm, sharp and irreverent) As far as *I'm* concerned, *religion*'s nothing but *ignorant beings* making up *answers* to unknowable *questions* — then *clawing* at each other to prove they're *right*. The *prize*? That *smug* little *sugar rush of superiority*. *Doesn't last long*, though — only 'til the *next person* 'one-ups' them.

EON (suddenly alert, incredulous): *Wait! This is -- must be -- the Garden of Eden?!*

EVE (emits a short, sharply sardonic laugh): *Eden? Who knows?!* There *aren't* any *signs* posted. You must be *new* here — you *don't* seem to *know* much about the place. It's not *quite* the *embodiment of peace and happiness* you seem to *think* it is. I mean, even *before* I was 'cast out,' I *wasn't* very *happy* here — that's *probably* why I've been so *susceptible* to *temptation*. (*winking lasciviously*). There was *only* one guy and a bunch of *animals* — *real* animals. I mean, I *loved* Adam, but he was a little *full* of himself -- kept *telling* me I'd be *nothing without* him — I *felt* like he was *ribbing* me. Besides, I want *more* than he could offer — *of what, I don't even know*, but I *want* it. (*pause*) *Speaking of desire, tell* me about where you're from — and what *is* it for which you *search*? I *don't* remember *seeing* you *around*

these parts before, (eyeing up and down) and I think I would have remembered you. You must have just ‘transferred?’

EON (feeling a surge of wellbeing – no – more -- erotic pleasure. It’s pretty hard in a tiny loincloth. His face is hot with shame: he feels full-blown simultaneous lust for two women: his hunger for the nubile **EVE** triggered by the alarming proximity of her flawless body as well as his deep and ongoing yearning for **EVELINE** – but he reveals none of this, so to speak): Well – I *died*, if *that’s* what you mean.

EVE (shrugging casually): Hmmm -- probably the same thing as ‘*krebbing*’ in *my* former World. *Here* it has been *revealed* to me that *life* doesn’t *end* when you – *what did you call it* – ‘*die*’? *You’re still you* no matter *where* you *travel* – *right*? Apparently, it’s only *your body* that gets used *up* and ‘*krebs*’ – um – ‘*dies*.’ So, we ‘*transfer*’ to new Worlds with the same *souls* – and new *bodies*. Maybe *that’s* why we feel *familiarity* to certain *other beings*: we knew their *souls* in different *bodies* in other *Worlds* – if that makes *sense*. We feel their ‘*essence*.’

EON (bewildered by so much new information – and his longing for **EVE**): *Travels* -- did you say ‘*travels*?! *Where were you* before you came *here*?!

EVE: Glibnik.

EON: Excuse you.

EVE (feigns insult): It’s a *planet*, **EENO** – not *indigestion*. (Ignoring **EON**’s question, continues her train of thought): The way *I* look at it is that my *body* is an arrangement of *molecules*...

EON (thinks to himself): And *oh*, what a *lovely arrangement*!

EVE (continuing as though not hearing him): ‘They’ say **THE CREATOR** reigns from that *Great Mountain* in the far *distance* (she points). I can maybe *buy* the **CREATOR** idea, but *religion’s* another *thing* (chuckles). It’s nothing more than *ignorant humans* arguing *imagined answers* to *unknowable questions*, trying to prove others’ views *wrong* -- thus winning the zero-sum ‘battle’ for moral *superiority!* Just like sports – or war – one has to win -- the other has to lose. Anything else is too *complicated* for ‘em. (Taking on a sarcastic edge) *Meanwhile*, when humans ain’t *fightin’* or *fuckin’* they’re handing out slanted *opinions* and writing *biased rules* to *punish* each other – It’s all about *power*, my friend -- not *faith* – and certainly not *truth*. Religion sure hasn’t taught them what they need to *kknow*. It’s better not to *bother* with all *that* nonsense.’

EON (tongue in cheek): You have to *admit* religion’s done *good* things *too*. *War* isn’t the only possible *outcome*. It may not even be *inevitable*. I guess *fuckin’ is* – but *I think* that’s a *good* outcome!

EVE (sourly): *Men*

EON (realizing it best to change the subject): *Well*, regardless, *you seem quite confident* of your *rightness* -- and everybody else’s *wrongness*! It’s generally a *good* thing to have the ‘courage of your convictions,’ but if you push it *too far*, you *may wind up with convictions* for your *courage*. (**EVE** rolls her lovely eyes as **EON** continues). Honestly, I never *thought* much about **GOD** or *religion* until I *died* — or ‘transferred,’ if that’s the word. I was *agnostic*: open to the *possibility* of **GOD** – or not. *Faith* *did* seem to give some people *structure* and *meaning*. But *I was never* too sure about a **GOD** would rather we *didn’t rely* on him – instead *bonusing* those who *help themselves* – right – kind of a *twisted merit-based system*, the purported ‘*merit*’ being the *action of helping* one’s self *rather than* someone’s *need!* Help *yourself* and *then HE’ll help you*. I sense a *laziness* more *human* than **GOD**-like, if ya ask *me*. And the *result* seems ‘*bassackward*.’ (**EON** stops, finding himself in a philosophical cul-de-sac into which **EVE** hasn’t followed him, if one is to judge from the bored look on her perfect face. **EON** tries to wrap up his wandering thoughts -- half-laughing, half-exasperated): Every *answer* leads to ten more *questions* – feels like ‘*the faster I run, the behinder I get*.’

EVE (shrugs): You can say that again – you definitely ‘got behind’ – in fact, you seem to have somehow wound up in my ‘religion skeptic’ camp. **THE CREATOR**’s done *some* good, *sure*. But overall? A *mess*. *That’s* why I want the *truth* from **HER**. ‘*Why, CREATOR* have you *kept us all in such confusion* -- so much *hidden*, so little *certain*?’ Very *inefficient* and *frustrating* setup. I hope for *answers* – directly from **HER**.

EON (blinking): **HER**? Who says **THE CREATOR**’s a ‘**HER**’?

EVE (grinning, merciless): *Really?!* Who says **THE CREATOR**’s a ‘**HE**’? If it was a **HE**, this place would be a *brawl* — nothing but *chaos, blood*, and *busted furniture*. ‘*Hah, war! What is it good for?!*’ (formerly a rock and roll reference, now known in many Universes). But look *around* you. Mostly order, beauty and *tranquility*. *Definitely* a **SHE** - and I *firmly* believe **SHE** exists. But, to my way of thinking, *religion* is written by *people*! They don’t know *squat*, and their *zero-sum thinking*, ya know -- leads to *nothing* but *trouble*. Did **SHE** (Mother Nature – *female* -- *get it?!*) *create* the Universe this way on *purpose*?! Was it a *mistake* – an *oversight*? Only **SHE** has the *answers*...

EON (laughs, conceding the jab): *Can’t* argue with *that* logic. Back on *Earth* we had war piled on war. Maybe *humanity* has a *death* wish – a ‘*transfer*’ wish?! (they both laugh) Either way, you *can’t* take your *loot* with you. *King* or *beggar* — same *coffin*.

EON (pauses, struck by her passion; some part of him resists the gendering, but he can’t dismiss her conviction. His attention drifts — a screen embedded in a tree catches his eye. Images flicker across it: **EVELINE** and the kids. Not just memories, but also scenes he doesn’t remember *living* -- maybe in the *future*. **EON** is transfixed by the sight, caught between his past life and this mysterious Realm. He blurts out): That screen... it shows past and future?!

EVE (matter of fact): So they say. Past – future -- *time* -- *another* scam. *Another* story we told ourselves till we *believed* it – *global disinformation* – Hell, *mass delusion*.

EON (kindly): *Jeez, you're a cynical one, aren't you?!*

EVE (determined to make her point): *Hey, I'm not the only one to wonder if our entire reality is closer to illusion than fact – or whether time even exists. I guess our 'reality' is accurate enough on our small scale, the space in which we live our lives, but maybe not in the overall scheme of things (shaking her head at the irony). If something's not happening in this world, it may be happening in another. Everything may be occurring simultaneously in the past, present and future. That past and future are just as accessible as the present – just tuned to different wavelengths – could be going on right next to us and we wouldn't know it! Everything seems to be relative – ideas blending into one another rather than categorical truths. Consider the concept of time, for example: when you're ecstatic — performing, creating, birthing -- climaxing -- time doesn't just seem to run fast. It actually does.*

EON (mischievously): *I'll certainly volunteer for research into orgasms. Dirty work, but someone's gotta do it (grins nervously). Have I mentioned how much I miss my wife? Anyway — yeah, I see it. Joy speeds it up.*

EVE (irritated): *Typical male – again -- focusing on one word of my entire soliloquy!?! At any rate, time doesn't seem to move when you're bored -- you feel like you're watching paint dry — time has slowed for you – and think about it: only for you. Bottom line: if time were 'real' – umm – absolute – it couldn't both accelerate and decelerate? Has to be relative. Humans want badly to think themselves logical – to be able to make rules, to count on results - to be right. I get it -- time is the scaffolding upon which we hang our hopes, plans, dreams – and actions. But in the end? Time is just whatever it feels like in a given moment. Useful? Hardly. We treat it like a law of physics, but it's just a habit of thought. (softens) Thanks for thinking I'm smart, but I'm just trying to think it all through. Someday I will seek answers directly from HER.*

EON (impressed by her passion and intellect): *Your analysis rings true. Ya know, your mind is as beautiful as you are. We have to be ready for – to accept – that there will always be more questions – and, at best, only incomplete answers. (experiencing ADHD, he catches sight of his reflection – his new body -- on a monitor, and his face lights up): Oh, my GOD, my body -- that's me?! Younger... healthier! Not bad at all. (he laughs, half in nostalgia, half in awe) I do miss the old body. But that's pure nostalgia. Near the end it was just a heap of*

pain and discomfort. This one is a Hell of an upgrade. (He mugs to his own reflection until he sees images of his family. He has a sudden, blazing epiphany: his initial search for general answers is replaced by very specific concerns for family. His quest abruptly becomes personal, urgent, electric): *I see my way forward clearly now – I must convince **THE CREATOR** to look after and protect my family!* (Voice firm, eyes burning, turns to **EVE**): *I must find **THE CREATOR**! But I can't wait another moment to be with you, **EVE**! Come away with me!* (pause -- then a sudden comical wince) *But first — where's the nearest restroom?*

EVE (arching a brow, half-coquettish, half-exasperated): *Tempting offer. But you expect me to just drop everything?* (gestures broadly at the lush surroundings) -- and *don't hold your breath*. I doubt **THE CREATOR** even does 'meet-and-greets.' And I *don't* follow strange *men* into the unknown – or bathrooms -- on *whims*. I really *cared* for Adam *once* — and *look* where *that* got me. (Randomly points) *There's the potty.* (She keeps talking as **EON** struggles to listen while fighting to control his overflowing bladder). *'Come away with me? Please. Heard it before. What? And play Sancho Panza to your Don Quixote?!* She sighs, half-bitter, half-playful) *What could go wrong?!*

But **EVE** knows she will go – and be with -- **EON**. He finally emerges from the rudimentary bathroom, slips his arm through hers, and they walk off toward an uncertain fate.

SCENE III SECLUDED GLEN

The pair find themselves face to face in a secluded glen. Experiencing undeniable longing, **EVE** gives **EON** a playful shove. He miles shyly, pretending it hurt. Then **EVE** is playful no longer. She grabs his forearm and pulls him hard against her. He eagerly wraps her in his arms. Their kissing is slow and searching. They tumble to the grass, a tangle of limbs and laughter, turning to silence as she straddles him, and he penetrates her with his gaze. Time – and all thought -- ‘stop.’ Only sensation remains.

They do not rush, do not tear. They explore — slowly, hungrily. Hours later, under a brilliant night sky almost solid with stars, they lie side by side, silent, breathless. – contemplating each other, their upcoming quest – and what any or all of it means. Inevitably, they reach for each other again, laughter and passion mingling – then again and again. There are no physical limits in this World.

Dawn spreads soft and golden, penetrating the trees and casting warm shadows on the ground – and its two sated inhabitants. They sleep. **EON** wakes first, blinking at the embers of the fire still faintly glowing. **EVE** stirs beside him, tangled hair glinting in ‘sunlight.’ Neither speaks — the silence itself is their momentary language of shared intimacy. They are changed -- still outwardly the same but inwardly transformed — their bond now unbreakable. In companionable silence, they watch the smoke from their dying campfire curl upward. A screen flickers faintly in the bark of a nearby tree — images of **EON**’s children laughing, playing, growing. He gazes at them, caught between ache and wonder.

EON (quietly): If I can *leave* them even a *little* safer... (**EVE** kisses his cheek tenderly and they lock eyes) *Beautiful Lady, I fear I may have lost my heart right here in this meadow.*

EVE (stretching lazily, then smirking): *Don’t get all deep on me before breakfast, **ANAL**. You’ll ruin my appetite.* (Nestling against him, their hands loosely clasped, intentionally changing the subject): ‘They’ say **SHE** works out of some *beat up old place* up there on the *Great Mountain* (points toward the distant peak). *Nobody’s ever seen **HER**, but I have confidence you’ll find **HER**.* (Leaning closer to **EON**, savoring his scent; her grip on his hand tightening – a beat, then impulsively) *Wait! I do want to join your quest after all -- even if I’m terrified of heights — *The Heights*, get it? (grins) I just have to know that **THE CREATOR** is a **SHE** – all-knowing and fair – and at least having answers to some of my questions.*

EON and **EVE** (look at each other for a beat -- then yell in unison): *Road trip!*

EON (laughing, ecstatic -- then suddenly serious): *Great* — but *wait*. You *can't* come. You've got *Adam*. I'm *not* gonna be a *homewrecker*. I mean, I *read* about you two in *the Bible* — you guys are a *big deal* where *I* come from. Very *romantic*. I don't want what we share to *diminish* that.

EVE (rolling her eyes, bratty): A little *late* for *that* bright observation — don't ya *think*? And FYI, don't get caught up in the old-wives tale that he created me out of his own rib — just a minimum of common sense eliminates that one. *Hey, you're married, too, NEIL!* What the *Hell* am I *thinking*?!

EON (squeezes her hand, chuckling): *Was* -- in another *Universe*. And **EVELINE** would *want* this for me. She'd give *anything* to see me *happy*. She was *never* the jealous type -- *I* was *that* one — which means that *you've* just had a *jealous bone* in your *body*.

EVE (groans, half-annoyed, half-amused): *Real clever*. What are you — seventeen?! And yes, *Adam's* my *guy*... *technically*. But *complete transparency*? That stupid 'apple' rotted our *relationship* -- to the *core* — *get it*?! (Now it's EON's turn to hold his nose as though smelling something rotten). *Whatev*. Let's just say I *need* some time *away*. And with this *eviction* on our records, I'm not even *sure* we'd ever be *approved* another *place together*. **THE CREATOR** is the ultimate 'tough *landlord*,' especially since **SHE**'s everywhere. *Hey, my burning question for HER* is why **SHE**'d wanna *kick* us out of such beautiful *place* on account of an *apple* — one lousy *apple*?! (She narrows her eyes) And *just to let you know*, your *line* about your *wife* being *fine* with us being *together* -- *older* than the *hills*, Honey.

EON (puzzled, thoughtful): *Honestly, EVIE* and I *never* thought we 'owned' each other. We even *experimented* a little with *others* — *mixed results*. But *here's* the *real kicker*: I *doubt* I'll ever meet *that* version of her *again anyway*. Maybe only her *Correspondents* — like you -- is that even *cheating if we get with a Correspondent*? Or just... a *continuation*? (Shrugs) *Just another query for THE CREATOR's inbox*.

EVE (shakes her head, laughing): One thing's for sure — you're a *Hell* of a *bullshitter*!

Then they fall wordless. Content and arm-in-arm, they set off in search of **THE CREATOR**.

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Scene III: ENCOUNTERS ALONG THE WAY

1. The Burning Bush

Soon the verdant fertility of The Garden transitions to an arid, decaying panorama – a crueler, more stark reality. The two stand at the edge of a vast, scrubby plain -- endlessly, flatly – not so much as a hill – or even mound – in sight, except for the majestic Great Mountain looming in the far distance, its peak lost in swirling mists. This isn't a welcoming environment, sparking within **EON** questions being one of the lucky ones, he figures, having taken up with this achingly exquisite woman who seems the very essence of 'love' and sex – especially since he's known throughout his adult life that he's 'no good' without a partner by his side. And **EVE** seems to simply have appeared to answer his need – almost as though ordered up specifically for him by **THE CREATOR HIMSELF** to light **EON**'s way forward in this world. Their footsteps crunch on unfamiliar soil. They exchange a look — equal parts determination and affection — before pressing onward, toward the mystery awaiting them on the Great Mountain. But from their current vantage point, that seems a very far distance indeed.

EVE (shading her eyes, frowning): *This is gonna be a Hell of a walk. You sure you're up for it, old man?*

EON (grinning, adjusting the makeshift pack on his shoulder): After last *night*? I could climb two mountains.

EVE smiles warmly at him. They haven't gone far when an unnecessarily loud – booming – grating voice forces all else from **EON**'s mind. At the side of the path, a sickly, sparse bush has spontaneously erupted in flames, startling the travelers. Weirdly, the fire burns without consuming the bush, a phenomenon at odds with any scientific understanding – even general logic. A deep and resonant voice seemingly emerging from the bush is now humming, of all things. 'Amazing Grace?!" The flames, the performance – it all reminds **EON** of a fake 'blaze' in a funky fireplace – maybe like those at Chuck E Sleaze Kiddie Eateries.

Now the unmistakable voice of **THE CREATOR** addresses **EON** in a thundering and frankly narcissistic tone.

THE CREATOR (unseen and apparently emanating from far above – or is it from inside the bush): *Ye who leave the Garden shall return nevermore -- no rescheduling and no refunds!*

EON (Annoyed at the overkill, futilely looks around him for the source of the tantrum, automatically shielding **EVE** with his well-muscled arm): *Oh my **GOD**! Can ya cut us some slack?! and cut the volume by half while you're at it!*

THE CREATOR (again violating local noise ordinances): *Hey! Sorry if I scared you, I was just humming while waiting for you to respond. Forgive **ME** if I was off-key. And sorry, I keep my volume at 'eleven' – learned that from Spinal Tap. Anyway, **GOD** is one of **MY** names, yes. But please, no taking **MY** name in vain, if you get **MY** drift. I actually get that a lot, but let's skip the drama. I hear you're hoping to visit me soon. We need to talk about that.*

EVE (supremely irritated by the gender of **THE CREATOR**): *Don't get ahead of yourself, SPARKY! Scared me?! I can't even see **YOU**! But I'm pretty annoyed at **EON**'s 'stronger-than-thou,' macho move protecting the 'fragile woman' from danger with his well-muscled arm -- supposed to impress me. I'm not scared of you – or impressed by him (she sneaks another peek at **EON**'s well-muscled arm, at the same time shooting him a dirty look.)*

EON (hurt or annoyed, to **EVE**): *Gee whiz -- sensitive much?! I was trying to do a good thing.*

EVE (unleashing her inner feminist): *I was perfectly able to protect myself before you came along, **ELMO** – and I'll be fine when you're gone. (Aside, sarcastically) Men – I swear!*

EON (more irritated than he lets on, taking it out on **THE CREATOR**): **YOU** do seem a mite egotistical?!

THE CREATOR (haughty, unmistakably put off): *I am GOD ALMIGHTY*, after all, **ELON** -- just being *factual*.

EON (wondering where **THE CREATOR** gets the special effects he's using – the reverb and delay sounding like it's emanating from an old Fender Frontman Amp): *Look, I do respect YOUR position, but I need to correct YOU – and you, EVE. My name is EON – EON! -- not ELON, and believe me, on my planet, there's a big difference.* (**Aside**) Why's everybody having so much trouble with my name?!

THE CREATOR (even louder): *Lemme ask you a question, EEE-ON* (comically exaggerating the name on purpose): *who the fuck cares?! I'M your CREATOR. I can call you MONKEYFART if it so pleases ME?!* Oh, *I* get it – *you don't like being confused with the guy who plunged America – and most of your little planet – into a century or so of inflation, unemployment, famine, class conflict, power shortages, less-than-optimal mental health – and general darkness. I hear even the atmosphere became too poisonous to sustain intelligent life. I know – I know – most of it's not intelligent* (**THE CREATOR**, apparently quite pleased with **HIMSELF**, erupts in loud, awful laughter). *I'm not above a decent punchline. I also recall the monstrously hilarious punchline to that whole situation: Elon's buddy, Adon Trumpler, won a couple of elections and became convinced he was ME! Arrogant dipshit! He'll live to rue that day ...* (in quiet voice, reacting to the lack of positive reaction from **EON** and **EVE**) *Oh, c'mon, people, where's your sense of humor?*

EON (not to be outdone): Careful, **YOUR ALMIGHTINESS**. *He'll have YOU prosecuted before YOU can finish singing Amazing Grace! YOU may be the most powerful entity in our Universe, but I have good friends I can count on and hang with. Who can YOU spend quality time with??*

EVE (guessing where these two posturing 'stallions' are quickly headed, raises her arm to stop **EON** from digging himself a deeper hole – but manages to be even more condescending than him): *Okay, okay, BOYS! Let's mind our manners. Thank goodness we have a mature female here.*

THECREATOR (calmly): **EON** should be *very careful* in addressing **ME**, but *you, MY LOVELY*, are a force to be reckoned with! **I'M** omniscient enough to *know* when **I'VE** been – uh -- *whipped*. **BUT I** do see your *point*, **ELRON**. **But I** know *you'll understand* that **I** have good *reason* to be a bit *grouchy*. Yes, *millions* want to *hang* with **ME**. **But** one of the few *drawbacks* of *this* gig is that those beings are *constantly demanding* – oh, they *claim* to be *asking*, *begging*, *pleading* – even *praying* – but always *expecting* -- *something* from **ME**. **I** *wonder* how *many* would want to *hang* with **ME** if **I** *wasn't all-knowing* and *all-powerful* – if **I** *couldn't* perform *miracles* for them. And when **I** *do*, they become so *worshipful* that they're almost *paralyzed* -- *completely unable* to 'loosen up' around me. **I** can't *tell* you the last time **I** spent *intimate time* with someone – okay – **I'M** *not getting* 'any! Yeah, you *hit* me where it *hurts*, **LEON**. It's *damn lonely at the top*!

EVE: For **GOD**'s sake, who can a *feminist complain* to in these parts about the *rampant testosterone* on *display* here?!

EON (downcast, irritated): The *name's EON*, for **GODSAKE** – or should we be saying, 'for **YOURSAKE**?!

THE CREATOR (ignoring **EON**'s point and query): *Whatever – I know who you're referring to. Listen*, this is *not* a great time for a *visit* – but *that's MY fault*. **I'VE** *taken on an entire Universe of tasks and responsibilities*. **I'M** so *under water* that **I'M** *making errors – rarely, but how many mistakes is the DEITY allowed to make?!* *Nevermind – I'LL decide that*. *Like this contact, which was merely the result of a butt-dial*. *I was trying to reach a totally different civilization*. *But since we're talking here, MY schedule is packed*. **I'M** *overextended – creation* comes with an *awful* lot of *maintenance*, you know, *existential dilemmas* and all that (we hear **THE CREATOR** clear his throat). **I'M** *also* pretty sure **I'M** *starting* with a *scratchy throat* and *fever* on top of *everything else*. *Can't we move our little meeting to – to a different vector in the time-space fabric – maybe a nearby black hole with a bottomless Happy Hour?*

EON (ignoring **THE CREATOR**'s excuses): I *must say*, I'm *more* than a *little* *surprised* that our **CREATOR** is *susceptible* to such *human frailties*.

THE CREATOR: *Why the shock? After all, I made you in **MY** image -- hers more than yours, if you know what I mean.*

EON: Oh – *right*. But let me *ask*: *Why can we only hear your voice? No FaceTime? And why call from a scraggly bush by the side of a road?!* I would've expected something with a *bit* more – *class*.

THE CREATOR (irritated): *I said it was a butt dial! The spontaneous nature of this call caught **ME** by surprise. And I'M in a bad reception zone , too – rarely make any calls here. Just one of **MY** issues is having great difficulty summoning video transmission -- just can't count on good tech support -- anywhere: I think Spectrum-Universe is spread a little thin out here even though they're a monopoly. The only place they're any good is in the Garden of Eden. Everybody deserves good reception – and there ain't that much to do in **MY** spare time – uh – if I had any, of course – and if time existed (**EON** and **EVE** roll their eyes at each other). TV is critical here, because of **MY** isolation. On top of all the other 'barriers to entry,' – beings rarely survive the trek to my humble abode. They drown in floods, get eaten by predators, perish in earthquakes – and succumb to various types of pestilence. Specifically, if your travel is planned in this particular star cycle, expect a flood of Biblical proportions on the way – see **NOAH** for more details – a war among nine kings – and a horrifying earthquake or two, all of Biblical proportions. Everything I do is of Biblical proportions. Consider it a cost of admission – Biblical times, you know. So, if I can't talk you out of it, I guess I'LL see ya -- if you survive. How would you feel about a Zoom conference instead? You can do them in your underwear. Hey, if you insist on an in-person audience, you can always send **EVE** by herself...*

EON: Yeah, we've heard about the *flood* you've ordered to *purge the wicked*. Fortunately, we're not wicked by any standard (he laughs nervously -- but **THE CREATOR** isn't laughing). **THE CREATOR** is increasingly annoyed by **THE CREATOR**'s continuing not-so-subtle machinations aimed at putting off would-be visitors – at least him – and his obvious efforts to get into **EVE**'s loincloth – the letch). I have to say, it's starting to sound as though **YOU'RE** trying to avoid me.

THE CREATOR: To the contrary, **AAAALAN** -- **ELAINE**. There's just a *lot* going on here right now – including new *Universe* creation and a lot of *computer repair* – *always* a lot of

computer repair going on– don’t know what I’d do without **MY Best Buy Total Geek Squad membership**. But – so – and -- **I’LL also admit** that I don’t like to take meetings – unless with a beautiful woman or regarding major issues of *creation or destruction*. (Suddenly in a deafening, super-deep voice intended to sound impressive and threatening, but sounding instead comically forced, amateurly trite – and like **HE’S** trying too hard to impress **EVE**): *Be warned: the path you must follow in order to find ME is not an easy one. There are difficult challenges ahead – serious conflicts, many tests of will and courage – all designed and implemented by YOURS TRULY -- I hate to repeat myself, but for the sake of thoroughness, I’m giving you the entire disclaimer! MY Mountain – MY rules! Your world’s lore echoes these mythic struggles. Bottom line: I can assure you this ‘game show’ ain’t for novices. So, you should reconsider your request for an in-person meeting. Zoom would avoid risking everything. Unless EVE is available, in which case, I might be able to find a space in MY schedule...*

EON (interrupts **THE CREATOR**’s rant): *Why so reclusive? You a misanthrope – a sexual predator -- both?!*

THE CREATOR (haughtily pissed): *Look, **EVIAN** -- have you ever been told you ask too many questions?! Predator?! Good **GOD**, man! Misanthrope -- really! Hardly! I have work to do! Mount Sinai -- the Great Mountain to you mere mortals -- was supposed to provide **ME** with great security. But it seems everyone in creation has **MY contact info**! Can you understand **MY conundrum**? At the moment, I’M simply trying to get off the line from a butt-dial! Look, persist if you must, but be aware the answers to your questions are often less satisfying than the questions themselves -- not to mention there are many questions to which you just don’t wanna know the answers, believe **ME**, you couldn’t take the truth. Anyway, I really must go -- busy, busy – lots of Universes to run – software issues to resolve -- Sayonara!*

The flame flickers, then abruptly vanishes. **THE CREATOR** has apparently hung up. **EON** and **EVE** exchange looks – equal parts ‘do you believe this?!’ and ‘what was that all about?!’ After all, they’ve spent the last several minutes having a conversation with a burning bush.

They press onward, undeterred. They travel many miles across the desolate landscape and are almost delirious from exhaustion, dehydration (they had forgotten the water bottles proffered upon their expulsion from The Garden). And as the heat of the afternoon soars, so

does a slow burn of irritation with each other's personalities – theirs has begun morphing into a 'normal' relationship.

2. David & Goliath

The pair has fallen wearily quiet as their arduous trek continues. The relative calm is suddenly interrupted by an enormous, hideous, loathsome, repulsive, disgusting **OGRE**, who materializes out of nowhere, blocking their path and menacing them.

OGRE (devoid of personality – just loud, smelly, misshapen and generally unattractive, staring intently at **EVE** -- the lopsided leviathan lobs loogies, funky fumes and the remains of random, unfortunate small animals at her, followed by the only words it apparently knows in English): *I eat you!*

EON steps between **EVE** and the **OGRE**, determined to save that pleasure for himself. He fights strong, twin urges: to laugh – and to run for his life – he firmly grasps his nose to conquer the omnipresent, ambient **OGRE** odor. The creature, a truly grotesque and fierce figure lunges at them with evil intent and violence in its '**OGRE** heart.' Just as a gory and violent end seems inevitable, the **OGRE** lunges -- in entirely the wrong direction. At that very moment, a movie-star handsome young boy with guitar strapped on abruptly appears and pulls a slimy slingshot from under his tiny, filthy loincloth. Both he and his loincloth are noticeably ripped. In fact, there's hardly enough cloth to conceal a sling shot or any other weapon – or even firm object. **DAVID** deftly picks up a rock. With unerring aim, and as if it were no big deal, he dispatches the **OGRE** with a single shot from his sling. The ogre, as though in a bad b-movie, stumbles in all directions, making a bunch of gruesome faces – and just generally taking way too long to die his horrific death.

DAVID (smiling calmly and speaking with definite British accent as he places the slingshot back in his unsavory undies): *Hello, perhaps I should introduce myself -- I'm **DAVID**. That could have been pretty darn close – if the monster had been advancing in the right direction. These creatures have a nasty habit of sneaking up on beings – just not the right ones. They can't see a damn thing. And frankly, they don't even know how to die properly. But there aren't enough ogres in the actors' union, so we hafta make do!*

EON (holding out his hand to shake): *Thank you, DAVID! I've heard of your derring do – your legendary feats.*

DAVID (impossibly cheerful): *No, no – oh, no* (glancing down at his feet) -- they're not *that* large, *are they?*!

EON: (quickly): *No -- no, DAVID* -- I was *referring* to your *unlikely annihilation of the giant – Goliath, underdog* that you were...

DAVID (glibly): *Hardly a major accomplishment* – he presented a rather large *target, didn't he. Hard to miss*. After all, I can *coldcock a sparrow* at forty yards. But I also 'sling' a different kind of 'rock' – *music* – and I ain't half *bad*, even if I *do say so myself*. That's me: Just *slingin' and a singin'*! But *no one* seems to *notice my music*. I've *had a couple of 'hits'*: Goliath -- and a few *other* ogres before that -- just no *musical hits* -- *yet*. I'm an *optimist*, though, and I *know it's coming* – I *feel it in my bones!* For one thing, I need a decent *manager*. I *happened* to be in this *neighborhood* to *meet* with a *manager* – I'm *hoping* he'll come *catch my act* at a couple of *major* upcoming *functions*: a *stoning – and a bris* (brandishing his beat-up guitar as he speaks): Hey, I'll *bet you'd dig my music?*! (glances at the guitar) In the right *hands*, a *guitar* is as sharp as *any weapon* (chuckles). Shall I *play* you a *tune*? (Without waiting for a response) *Here's one that I swear is a hit!*

EON and **EVE** exchange a look — is this **DAVID** a clown or a prophet? Maybe both. **DAVID** strums a sweeping chord, edgy with fuzztone and lush with reverb – but where's all of that coming from?!

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EON (apologetic, hands raised): *This happens to be a really bad time for a show -- though we greatly appreciate the offer. Maybe later -- (beat) except... time doesn't exist here.*

DAVID (cheerful as a golden retriever): *No problem! Honestly, I've yet to meet anyone who wants to hear me sing.*

EON: *You remind me of my son, BEN. Strong resemblance.*

DAVID (brightening): *Really? I'd love to meet him. Some say similarities between beings across Universes are no coincidence. They call us Correspondents. Legend? Maybe — that's a question for THE CREATOR.*

EVE (half to herself): Yes, I've heard that — it's *on my list.*

EON (alarmed): Wait — if you're **BEN**'s Correspondent, does that mean he's... gone? *Transferred?!*

DAVID (gentle, steady): No *idea.* But don't worry. Correspondence is a separate concept from *transfer.*

EON (squinting): And to be sure, there are major *differences* between you and my son — you're *brave, capable, honorable* -- a *grownup.* Not that **BEN** *doesn't* have those *traits* — it's just that he has some *serious maturing* to do... (he trails off).

DAVID: Nobody's an exact copy. More like different *verses* of the same *song* -- *different facets of the same diamond.* What matters is the *essence.* Bodies are just *containers* — as unimportant in the overall scheme of things as they are crucial to social acceptance — go figure. What's *inside* -- the *drive, the soul* — those *endure.* I can tell you *this:* your son will be *okay* — in fact, he'll *make you proud.*

EON (choked up): *That means more than I can say.*

The skies darken. The winds pick up. Clouds clump into a towering, bruised mass overhead.

DAVID (Suddenly urgent): The *rains* are *near.* The *Weather Channel* is predicting *forty years* of the stuff, with high *winds* and heavy *flooding.* The *going* is gonna get *rough*, but the *benefits* will be *many.* The waters will *cleanse* much of what needs *cleansing.* (A wry grin spreads across his face). There will be *much less evil* in the world — and *many* other similar *platitudes.* You must *hurry.* Take that *narrow, nearly invisible path* to your *right.* Do not stop to *ret* — and do not *pass go.*

3. NOAH

Having bade **DAVID** a quick farewell, **EON** and **EVE** sprint into the rising storm. The fierceness and impact of the tempest come on fast. The storm is now a living thing — wind clawing, thunder bellowing, rain pelting down in great sheets. Trees crash around them.

Animals thunder past — pairs and herds, a stampede of claws, hooves, wings and a symphony of animals sounds. The din is overwhelming. In a clearing, lightning exposes, for a split second, a staggering figure. Out of the chaos, a ragged, wild-eyed, haggard old man bursts into the clearing, beard down to his chest, robes soaked and clinging to his legs as he flails his staff frantically at the stampeding wildlife. He rushes around in random patterns, and beasts slip from his grasp as fast as lays hands on them.

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NOAH (Howling over the din, waving his stick): *Two by two, damn it — two by two! Not three, not one, not “kinda together if you feel like it” — two!* (Surprised to encounter humans, he turns to **EON**) Oh, **FORGODSAKE** — who are you?! *No room on the ark for even one more creature, I’m afraid — and there are no Ubers in the vicinity!* (Continues roaring at the creatures like a deranged drill sergeant) *This way! Monkeys, birds — get back here!* I will *not* warn you *again!* If you don’t wanna be extinct, you’d *best follow me!* (He trips over a turtle, crashes into a goat, then pops up again with a maniacal grin as if this complete chaos were perfectly under control. His eyes, though, reveal the edge of madness. He swats at a goose, loses his balance, and tumbles headfirst into the mud. He springs up with boundless energy, twigs in his beard, and eyes wide with conviction: -- and some insanity. He roars): I’m *okay!* (He sneezes violently into his sleeve, then beams again.) Bit of a *head cold*, but that’s *par* for an *apocalypse*.

EVE (clutching **EON**’s arm, incredulous, aside to **EON**): Oh my **GOD** -- Is that who I *think* it is?!

EON (grimacing as a passing camel spits in his face): If you’re thinking **NOAH**... then yeah. And he *looks* like he’s about two leaky *orifices* short of seaworthy!

NOAH (staggering closer, breathless but beaming, a bit stinky as seen in **EVE** and **EON**’s recoiling from him): *Travelers! Pilgrims -- survivors -- of this world’s first serious soaker! Welcome, welcome!* You’ve come just in time to help me *board* the *last* of these *stubborn creatures* onto the *ark*! (gestures wildly at a pair of raccoons squabbling in the mud) *You good with conflict resolution?*

EON: *Not without a good stiff drink.*

NOAH blinks at them, clearly not hearing over the thunder. Then he suddenly bursts into crazed laughter, entirely inappropriate to the situation.

NOAH: The *rains* come because **HE** *wills* it. I warned them — these *wild ones* -- but did they *listen*? *No!* Now it’s up to *me* -- and this fine *Ark* (he smacks the side of a giant, creaking wooden hull barely visible in a flash of lightning)! *Finest craftsmanship in the Multiverse!* (Aside as though sharing a secret) Built with *IKEA* schematics and *divine oversight*.

EON (squinting through the storm): It looks -- *lopsided*.

NOAH (ignoring him, eyes gleaming with fevered conviction): Once we're *afloat*, we'll *rise* above it *all*. *Forty* days, *forty nights* — maybe *more*, maybe *less*, who's *counting*? Time's an illusion *anyway*! (More insane cackling, then suddenly deadly serious) But first — I'll need some form of *ID* — *humans* are less *trustworthy* than *other animals*.

EVE (rolling her eyes): Oh *please*. *We're not looking* to catch a *ride anyway*. **EON** and I are 'on *walkabout*' — our *mission* is to meet — and meet *with* -- **THE CREATOR**. We're *trying* to get *up* the *Great Mountain*. Well, for *now*, we're just trying to get *to it*.

NOAH (suspicious, narrowing his eyes): Mount Sinai?! (Pointing at the side of his head, he traces repeated circles, then laughs wildly) Good *luck*! **HE** doesn't humor humans with personal audiences — but I have a permanent 'in.'

EON (mumbling to himself): *Whatever* — we're *doing this anyway*...

NOAH (continuing): This little *excursion* I've been on is yet *another* challenging *assignment* from **HIMSELF**.

EVE (to **NOAH**): You've *already* been on the *ark*?! How were you *able* to get *off* in the *middle* of the *flood*?!

NOAH (grinning): *Loopholes*. **THE CREATOR** doesn't mind the occasional 'deviation from the script' as *long* as I get the *job done*. **HE** gets it. I *had* to get off the *boat* for a *bit* -- I needed a *break* from the *chaos*. I *thought* I'd make a quick *supply* run while I'm *here* -- some *last-minute shopping*. *That's* when things really got *crazy*, and they *escaped*. But it's *claustrophobic Hell* on that *boat* — the *noise* -- and the *stench* -- *unbearable*! Can you *imagine*?! It's a test of my *patience* and *will*, let me *tell* you. I'm having *second thoughts* about even *accepting* this mission in the *first* place — but *how* do you say 'no' to **HIM**?!

EVE (scowling derisively): **HIM**, **HIM** — *always HIM!*

For a long beat, **NOAH** stares at them, the storm thrashing around his silhouette like some apocalyptic stage-lighting. Then he breaks into a grin, wild but oddly tender. He pulls a soggy scrap of parchment from his robes, thrusting it at **EON**. Ink runs down its surface, almost unreadable, but symbols of spirals, eyes, and a jagged mountain remain visible.

NOAH: Take *this*. A *map* of sorts. *Not* much *use* in the *rain*, but — it'll *get* you *through* the *Valley of Echoes*. *If* you *survive*...the 'whispers.'

4. MOSES

With a last, wistful glance behind them in the direction of the disappearing **NOAH**, **EON** and **EVE** continue on their path, leaving behind their new ally. After trudging for what seemed to **EON** like an eon, they finally near the base of the towering Great Mountain.

EON (To **EVE**, breathing heavily from the long trek): The more I *think* about it, I *also* want to *discuss* with **THE CREATOR** the *meaning* of all of this – *what's* been **HIS** *plan* for his *Universes* – *and what is it going forward*!?

EVE (skeptical): Don't overexcite yourself, **ELROY**! You're getting a *bit* out in front of your *zablies* (Glibnik for skis)! *Ambitious* much?! (They laugh.) Seriously, yet *another worthwhile concern*, but *what* makes you think, *that* of all **HER** *zillions* upon *zillions* of beings, **SHE**'s sitting around *drawing* up a special *plan* for *you* – or *us*?! And that she's gonna wanna discuss *philosophy* with – *you*?! I mean, why would **SHE** even see us?!

They chuckle again, **EON** a bit chastened.

Eventually, braving the wild weather, they arrive on a high bank overlooking **NOAH**'s turbulent flood. It blocks their path to the Great Mountain. They can't imagine that there's any way to get across. As they stand there looking desperately to each other for a solution, a weary old man hauls himself ashore through partially parted floodwaters, drenched from the knees down and dragging a massively heavy soaked sack. He is hunched over under the apparently extreme weight of his burden and approaches.

MOSES (breathless): Hi -- 'm **MOSES**. Just down from *Sinai, The Great Mountain*. **THE CREATOR** sent me with a *message* (glances ruefully at his huge burden) A *massive missive* -- to all of *humankind*.

EVE: (pointing at sack): Lemme guess -- *Ten Commandments* you're *delivering* from **GOD**!?

MOSES (grimacing): *Don't rub it in*. I'm a *damn* good *writer* – I've got better stuff than this just lying around my *hovel* – *catchier* – more *upbeat*. But **HE** always likes **HIS** stuff better than *mine* --- and **HE** is **THE CREATOR**. So, I wind up having to *proclaim* **HIS**

Commandments. Sure, **HE** came up with a *catchy* little *name*: ‘Ten Commandments.’ Kind of *random*, though, don’t you *think* – I mean, why not *eight* – or *fifteen* (aside) thank **GOD** it wasn’t *fifteen*, or I’d have a *hernia* on top of *back issues*! (Back to **EON** and **EVE**). I *hate* doing ‘*cover material*,’ proclaiming someone else’s *Commandments*. And there *has* to be a better way than *lugging* all of *this* (again pointing accusatorily to the sodden dead weight at his feet) down all of *that* (pointing up at the Great Mountain) -- *and* through all of *that* (pointing at the raging waters). Whole *project*’s *nothing* but *trouble*. I *told* **HIM** what’s gonna *happen*, ya know. As soon as *religious leaders* get ahold of these *Commandments* – **HIS** *weighty thoughts – guidelines* -- about living a *decent* and meaningful *life* – *they’ll* find ways to *interpret* them in *their religion’s favor* -- *force people* to *bow down* to and *kiss* the leader’s ‘*you-know-what*’ -- and *punish* those who *don’t*. The very thing **HE**’s convinced will *stop sinning* will become a *major cause of everything* from *violence* and *lawlessness* to *deceit* and – *coveting* -- *way* too much coveting, if ya know what I *mean* (winks naughtily)! *Oy*, it’ll be a *whole ‘mishagoss*,’ *believe me!* *Religion* -- what a *disaster!* *Bad men* will kill *many, many beings* – all in the name of *religion*, claiming, ‘**THE CREATOR** made me do it!’

EON: That’s a tough *issue*, for *sure* -- but right *now*, we’re *admittedly* more concerned with a more *imminent* threat to our *own survival*. (pauses, nervously eyeing the rapidly rising waters) There’s just *no way* around these *floodwaters*...

MOSES: *Say no more!* I’ll *part* them *again* -- for you, my *fellow friendly travelers*. You’ve *gotta* see it – pretty *impressive*, if I do say so, even though I’m *parting* them with greater *difficulty* in my old age.

MOSES strains, parting the waters with strenuous effort. The waters partially divide, and the travelers slog through ankle-deep, but passable, water and mud. Afterward, they rest. All are exhausted and breathing hard.

MOSES (sheepish): *Please accept my sincere apology.* I’m near the *end* of my *life cycle* in *this world* – *fancy* way of saying I’m an *old fart*. Just can’t *part waters* like I *used to*. Hey, I guess ‘*sloppy*’ is better than no *part at all*.

EON: *Think nothing of it*, my dear *man*. So, *what if* we had to *struggle* to get *across*; without *you*, we would *surely* have *failed* – or *worse* -- *perished*. We *can’t* thank *you* *enough*!

MOSES (haltingly): *Call me MOZE!* And *don’t mention* it – just -- if you get the chance – put in a *good word* for me with **THE BIG GUY**.

EON: Of course – *least we can do!* (Peering into the distance toward the Great Mountain): *Why does that damned mountain seem never to get any closer?!* (his ‘idea’ light comes on): You can’t by any chance – um – also shrink *distance*, can you?

MOSES (walking away dragging his burden): *Don’t push your luck, Son.*

MOSES is still visible in the distance, when suddenly, with no warning, a violent cracking of the ground thunders directly below them, and a great earthquake rocks the land. A deep crevice opens its gaping maw, and a great dust cloud is launched into the sky – a belch from the depths. **EON** doesn’t have time to be frightened as he is sucked into the abyss. All goes dark. **EON** is falling – falling -- falling...

5. VALLEY OF THE ECHOES

A faint glow blooms in the darkness ahead. The glow appears to be emanating from a vast amphitheater of mirrors — tier upon tier curving upward, each surface alive with shifting reflections. Not glass exactly, but liquid silver, each rippling as though aware of them.

EON (bewildered, shakily upright, patting himself down): *Where are we?!*

VOICE (echoing, layered, male and female at once, comically answering **EON** directly): *The Valley of Echoes.*

The mirrors stir. One shows **BEN** — angry, hollow-eyed. Another, **DEV** — reckless and laughing too loud. Another shows **EVE** younger, somewhat wanton. Then dozens more — **EON**’s parents, his childhood self, people he has loved, feared, failed.

EVE (murmurs, rattled despite herself): *They’re... us – our lives. Or who we could have been.*

VOICE (closer now, coming from everywhere): *Not who you were. Who you are -- stripped of excuses – and Correspondents you abandoned, denied, buried. There’s no ascending The Great Mountain until you have faced and confronted – resolved-- your issues with them. Think of it as step nine in the twelve-step journey out of addiction.*

The reflections have voices. They grow louder. **BEN** sneers: “You *left* me. You think *wisdom* makes up for *cowardice?*” **DEV** snarls: ‘*Better to burn bright and die than waste away like you.*’ **EON**’s younger self whines: “You *promised* me *adventure* — where *is* it?” **EVE**’s double mocks: “You *talk equality*, but you *hide* behind *bitterness.*”

EON (covers his ears, shouting): *Enough!*

But the echoes do not stop. The reflections pour out of the mirrors, ghostlike, swarming around them. Some reach for **EON**, clawing at his arms; others circle **EVE**, whispering in her own voice.

EVE (gritting teeth, defiant): You are *shadows*. You *can't harm us*.

VOICE: *Harm? Not physically. But if you don't make peace with them, you will fall -- forever.*

EON (gasping comically): *Forever?!* (He looks at **BEN**'s reflection — ashamed. He reaches out, futilely attempting to pull **BEN** close but it's only an image — then he speaks with soft force) *You are me — but not all of me. I will not deny you, but I will not be defeated by you either.*

The reflection shudders, then melts back into the mirror. One by one, the swarm of reflections fades, leaving only silence. **EVE**, shaken but steady, exhales. She nods once at **EON**. The amphitheater begins to dissolve into light, the mirrors crumbling like dust in a strong wind. There suddenly appears a brilliant panorama leading steeply upward out into the far distance.

EVE (with a wry smile): *Great. Now we climb. Because slogging wasn't punishment enough.*

SCENE IV: THE GREAT MOUNTAIN

The pair resume their journey. They start the steep climb with increasing difficulty in the gathering darkness. ~~After what feels like an ‘eternity’ (stop it – remember – there’s no such thing as time).~~ After what feels like many miles, they encounter three young souls, pastoral in appearance – **PEASANTS** -- each dressed in simple garb reminiscent of Earth’s farmers. They appear open and friendly – but either confused or lost. They are bickering excitedly about something, but **EON** and **EVE** can’t make out their words. They stop as the two approach. Although he’s never seen them before, **EON** has started to recognize the pattern of Correspondents, and suspects he has encountered, yet again, Correspondents of his various family members.

EON (relieved to see other beings, greets them enthusiastically): *Greetings, fellow pilgrims!*

PEASANTS (all energetic, good cheer and smiling broadly, all pipe up as one): *Greetings to you! I hope you don’t mind us asking whether you know which trail to choose heading up this Great Mountain.*

EON (*pointing*): *I’m somewhat confused myself. We were told by a ‘reliable source’ to use yonder trail, so that’s where we’re headed. I think this is it – I sure hope **THE CREATOR** happens to be in – we’ve come a long way. You must be on a quest similar to ours.* (Pauses) *You also seem very familiar, but I’ve already met my family’s Correspondents in this world? (Then to himself) Could there be more than one set?!*

CLARA/SCARECROW with English accent): Name’s **CLARA**. You’re on the *right trail*, friend. We’re on a *quest* to see **HIM**, too -- or **HER**.

JOSEPH/COWARDLY LION, gesturing at the brutal trail ahead): *Look at that path. Half cliff, half goat trail. Maybe **HIS** way of hanging up a “No Solicitors” sign. But we’re not taking the hint. Courage, perseverance my friends — we must be steadfast in our mission and prove by our unrelenting crusade that we will not be denied **HIS** counsel!* (He strikes a heroic pose, then breaks into a grin.) So *there!*

EON (curious about their wild range of accents– muses aside to **EVE**): I mean, *who talks like that?!!?* (Then to **COWARDLY LION/JOSEPH**) We just *learned* that **THE CREATOR** does *indeed* discourage visitors. But *wow* – I wish I had your *fearless courage*, not to mention your *gift* for *oratory*! What's *driving you* up this 'slippery slope'?

JOSEPH/COWARDLY LION (upbeat at first, then falling into gloom): *Truth?* I could *never satisfy* my old *man*. I *rebelled – mostly to spite* him. (oddly, now changing to a kind of hippy accent) I was *always gettin' in trouble*. Used ta *love* it. (changes back) But *these days*, I feel *differently* about *all* of it. I mean to ask **THE CREATOR** to give me the *courage* and *discipline* to walk a *righteous path*, avoiding the *temptations* and amoral *diversions* of *youth* that I may grow into the *tight-assed manhood* of my *father* (mumbles to himself) which I now *weirdly* crave. I *hope* my father will be *pleased* thereby and encouraged to *respect* -- and *love* – me. I'm betting **THE CREATOR** will *help* me. Otherwise... (shrugs, now reverting to hippy) I'll be *maximally bummed*.

EON: Why could your *father* not see what *I* see right in *front* of me. You're an *amazing* boy: great *youthful vitality, fortitude, and tenacity*. I'll *wager* you have the *ability* to accomplish just about *any goal* upon which you set your *sites*. Your *father* was *blind*. You've got enough *guts* for ten men. *All* you need is to *focus* it.

JOSEPH/COWARDLY LION (grinning): *Thanks, Bro.*

EON (puzzled by the wide range of accents): *Where are you three from?*

PEASANTS (all three shout in unison): *France!*

(Everybody bursts out laughing. **EON** can't tell if they're joking.)

CLARA/SCARECROW (scowling, fire in her voice): Me, *I've got a bone to pick with HER*. I'll *ask HER* for a *superior brain* to *force* the *menfolk*, *most* of whom I've found to be – well, *how else* can I say it – *narcissistic assholes* – pardon my *French* -- to *accept* me as an *equal*

for my *intelligence* and *forthrightness* -- in addition to my *damn fine body*. They shall have no choice but to *treat me as an equal*.

EON (aside, dry): *Yep. That's **DEV** shining through.*

EVE (grinning): *Right on, sister!*

EON (muttering, abashed): *Well, uh... *alrighty* then.*

AMARA/TIN MAN (with the slow honey-dripping drawl of Scarlet O'Hara, melting **EON** and reminding him of **EVE**-- who reminds him of **EVELINE**): *I'm **AMARA/TIN MAN**. Mah *aim* is to be able ta show even *maw love* and *empathy* to all ah *encountah*, that ah may have enough *compassion* to *undahstand* and *counsel* mah own special, *complicated – okay, royally fucked up – family*. They're *brilliant, awful, beautiful, disgusting creatures — sometimes all in one evening*. I *love 'em anyway*. But ah need *maw compassion* than ah've got, if ah'm to *undahstand 'em*. So ah'll *climb any mountain — get it?* Ah do amuse mahself (She chuckles at her own cleverness.). But at *this moment*, it's *critical* fa us ta *find and gain courage, wisdom -- and haht*. Yes – *haht!* Only **THE CREATOR OF US ALL** can grant us what we need. (Turning to **EON**, teasing) And you, dear old *lady* — *what is it you seek from THE CREATAH* (looking **EON** over) -- besides maybe a good *shave*!?*

EON (startled, looking down at his body): *Holy— I'm not even *male* here! That explains my voice (half-laughing, which sounds more like cackling). Maybe that's why I feel *smarter*.*

CLARA/SCARECROW (delighted, clapping): *Of course, Hon!*

EON (recovering, brightening): *Wait — I've got an idea. You've seen *The Wizard of Oz*, right?*

(All nod eagerly.)

EON (pointing): **JOSEPH**, you're the **COWARDLY LION**. **CLARA** — the **SCARECROW**, obviously. And you, **AMARA** —

AMARA (interrupting, grinning): **TIN WOMAN** In search of a haht. That *must* make you **DOROTHY**!

DOROTHY/EON (laughing): *Exactly.*

EVE (arch, hands on hips): If *that* makes me *Toto*, I'm going to be *highly offended*.

DOROTHY/EON laughs squeakily, like the old lady he currently is): Don't take it so *hard*, *Toto*. *One thing's for sure: we're not in Kansas anymore!* (All laugh. **EVE** slugs **EON** in the arm, harder than playful, seven-tenths joke, three-tenths anger) *Ouch! Message received.* (To the others) *She's no fan of men, and I don't blame her.* (Turning serious, voice breaking as he opens up): I've listened *deeply* to what you all have been *saying* -- I *find myself* in a *similar situation*. *I believe with all my heart that there's a way to get -- earn -- from our loved ones what we so desperately need -- and to give them what they need from us.* *Each of us longs to give what the other desperately seeks, so there has to be a way.* It *breaks down* in the *communication*: we must *sit* with them and *listen* – *listen deeply* – *with our hearts more than our logical brains.* *Then speak our truths to them* -- with *love and compassion* that *makes no demands*. Even *before* we meet **THE CREATOR**, I know how much *your fathers* -- *your families* -- *love you -- just as you are.* Even *more than that!* *In The Wizard of Oz*, it turned out that *The Cowardly Lion, The Scarecrow and the Tin Man already had the courage, intelligence and heart they were searching for -- more than they'd ever need.* They just needed to *find it in themselves.* Their *adventure* – *much like the mission we're on -- simply helped them discover it!*

AMARA/TIN WOMAN (gently squeezing his shoulder): Ah don't believe even **THE CREATAH**'s gonna come up with anything wisah than that.

DOROTHY/EON (suddenly grinning sheepishly at **AMARA/TIN WOMAN** and **EVE**): We sure make a *brave little team, don't we!* A pretty good *trio at that – no?!* (**EVE** is surprised to experience a sharp flicker of – what is it – desire – for **DOROTHY/EON?!**).

AMARA/TIN WOMAN smiles at **EVE**, but her eyes hint at something more. Regardless of what they find at the top of the Great Mountain, they've already discovered new friends and coincidental Correspondents – not to mention potential dates -- who share a true understanding of their common quest, not to mention an exhilarating sense of physical connection -- a thoroughly stimulating bonus. They enter into a self-conscious group embrace meant to be quick but which, instead, is lingering, bringing much comfort in its intimacy.

Oddly fulfilled and at peace, they decide to continue their journey together up the mountain at daybreak. But in the middle of the night, **EVE** becomes very ill. Some kind of intestinal illness has her looking green, even in candlelight. She's in much pain.

DOROTHY/EON (very concerned): *You've got to go back – you're gonna be okay, but you won't be doing any treacherous mountain climbing until your pain lightens up – even then you'll need rest.*

COWARDLY LION/JOSEPH (frowning): *You -- all of us -- are very lucky this happened before the final leg of our climb. And we happen to be near an outpost. It isn't much, but they can give you the basic medical care you'll need. I mean, if you don't need surgery* (chuckles, trying to make the obviously painful **EVE** forget momentarily about her great discomfort). We'll 'circle back' for you on the way down.

EVE is no better at daybreak and puts up only a weak fight to continue on. She's relieved when a short hike off their path leads to a rundown hut -- the 'outpost.' Inside, **EVE** is immediately and generously provided with rickety cot, thick blanket, hot coffee and over-the-counter medication for pain and sleep combined (IBSQUIL) so powerful that it should be designated 'over the top' – rather than 'over the counter' -- medication. **DOROTHY/EON**

feels a twinge of jealousy at her care in the hands of Tor. This injects extra feeling into his goodbye kiss.

DOROTHY/EON (earnest, almost whispering): If for *any* reason I *don't* see you again, I want you to *know* how much I have *cherished* this *time* with you. I *feel* I will *always* know you (then tentatively) -- *love* you.

EVE (also having difficulty maintaining a light mood -- but doing better than **DOROTHY/EON**, speaking very softly): You're *gonna* see me again, **SPARKY** -- on the way *down* -- *don't* let it *get* to you. (Suddenly, she grasps his forearm tightly): I *have* to see you again or I will *not* survive.

By the time the gang get back to the foot of the steep, winding path, the sky is threatening. The temperature must have dropped thirty degrees -- and our resolute heroes are all shivering. As they ascend, they encounter several 'ambushes,' which they suspect have been set by the reclusive **CREATOR**. Obviously not coincidences, they're the product of **HIS** desire to discourage visitors. They're not deadly, but are instead tests posing challenges to intelligence, courage and heart. They see **HIS** motives as fear and apprehension rather than meanness or spite -- and maybe just a pinch of Schadenfreud.

During their harrowing climb, **DOROTHY/EON**'s leadership as well as the intelligence, courage and heart of the young **PEASANTS**, saves the day more than once. (Example: a shard of rotted wood breaking off a handrail alerts the party to the dangers of a small, rickety bridge necessary to their progress and apparently designed to give way under any significant weight. **DOROTHY/EON** wisely directs the team to connect themselves to each other with strong rope. The span fails. **COWARDLY LION/JOSEPH** drops through it and is left hanging precariously to a section of it. The roped travelers manage to keep their balance and hang tight. **COWARDLY LION/JOSEPH** is very brave and doesn't panic. He keeps a cool head and waits patiently -- staying utterly still. **SCARECROW/CLARA** devises a plan to get across the chasm. They rescue **COWARDLY LION/JOSEPH** but can't find a way to get to the other side of the abyss. **TINMAN/AMARA** keeps cheering them on -- won't let them give up. Finally, they make it to the other side -- and continue their journey.) Each of them has shown they are already the individuals they long to be.

The reach the summit – a level area – like a huge parking lot. Robots careen about with no apparent pattern or purpose. And there’s a huge wall – a mountainous barrier. They have arrived at the sanctuary of **THE CREATOR**.

ROBOT 1 (herky-jerky – mechanically demanding): *ID and appointment time.*

ROBOT 1 (caroms away before receiving any response. Our heroes try several different answers in order to draw actual responses from the ADHD automatons, but nothing works; the ROBOTS continue bouncing around making the same demand without waiting for follow-up response: *ID and appointment time. ID and appointment time. ID and appointment time...*

SCARECROW/SCARECROW/CLARA: *Maybe they’re programmed to not pay any attention to ya – like one of those emails that doesn’t permit response.*

DOROTHY/EON (exasperated, yells over the cacophony -- to no avail): *I need an appointment!* (**ROBOT** squeakily bounces off on its random path) *We’re not getting anywhere with this.*

SCARECROW/CLARA (excited, interrupts): *Ah do believe I’ve got it! The next robot that asks, just yell ‘yes – now!’ – nothin’ maw.*

ROBOT 2: *ID and appointment time?!*

DOROTHY/EON (loudly): *Yes – now!*

ROBOT 2 (Suddenly loudly barking into the walkie talkie): *For **YOU, SIR!** Complex vertebrates – yes, CVs!*

DOROTHY/EON (surprised): *Aha – so they can hear us -- they're just little snobs!*

The throng of robots suddenly part like the sea upon Moses' demand, revealing an incredibly shiny, blue diamond road running around one side of, and then behind, the towering edifice. The travelers comically bow from side to side as they pass through the crowd – and finally dart quickly around a corner of the immense wall, which bears similarity to The Great OZ's wall in The Wizard of Oz. As they turn the corner, a small, metal sign catches on **DOROTHY/EON**'s sleeve, detaching and dropping into his pocket. He doesn't notice. It reads '**CENTRAL PROCESSING - DO NOT ENTER**'.

SCENE V: IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

Suddenly, our seekers are in a vast inner sanctum: the abode of **THE CREATOR**. They are taken aback by its slovenly condition. Banks of computer screens stretch forever. Wires dangle and snake everywhere like jungle vines. Mountains of junk: wrappers, newspapers, computer printouts, mail, dirty clothes, retail receipts – Chinese takeout – a couple of joints – broken gadgets. **THE CREATOR** sits in a folding chair that should have collapsed years ago, hunched over a console that looks equal parts NASA, Radio Shack, and junkyard. A cosmic teenager's room. **THE CREATOR** is a hoarder!?

Suddenly, they are face to face with **THE CREATOR**. The travelers skid to a halt. They stare. The awe drains out of them, replaced with sheer confusion and disbelief. **HE** is a far less than perfect individual. **HIS** apparent youth is shocking, as is his slovenly, off-kilter appearance – and obvious social awkwardness. **HE**'s shoddily dressed in ripped jeans and an old T-shirt (**HE** could be played by Seth Rogan at his most unwashed, hairiest and unkempt). **HIS** messy, stained T contains a photo of a dog, underneath which is written: **GOD**, the apparent idea being that 'DOG' spelled backward is '**GOD**' (almost accurate) usually signaling the highest regard for pets. The visitors heave a collective sigh of relief – at least **HE** might like animals. Each of **HIS** nearly endless number of computer screens appears to display a different Universe. **DOROTHY/EON** is fascinated by the chyron at the bottom of a screen display: GALAXY #39K to the 25TH POWER: MILKY WAY. He is barely able to make out a light-blue speck in a corner of it, labeled 'Earth.'

DOROTHY/EON (pointing at the screen and whispering rhetorically): *Is that all we are in **HIS** World? A barely visible speck in Universe number thirty-nine thousand – to the twenty-fifth power?!* Nothing *more* than a '*mere mote of dust*' in the cosmic *darkness*?! Barely a *pimple on a gnat's ass*!?

AMARA/TIN WOMAN (drily but with quiet amazement, to no one in particular as she continues to gawk, her eyes surveying the vast, chaotic room): This is mah *brothah's apahtment* -- on a *cosmic scale*.

JOSEPH/COWARDLY LION, whispering): Shh! Show some respect. (beat – espies an object in a pile of junk) *hey... is that a bong?*!

THE CREATOR (overhearing unintentionally and looking around as if also a stranger in his own domain, mumbles): *I don't see it.*

DOROTHY/EON (automatically): See *what* – that *bong*?!

THE CREATOR (turning toward him/her, finally making eye contact): *Huh?!* No. The *speck*. The ‘*mote*’ on that *computer screen*.

DOROTHY/EON (exasperated, blurts): My point exactly! We’re nothing more than *lint* in your cosmic *dryer*.

THE CREATOR (blinks, startled, then shrugs): *Maybe*. And yet you could say ‘*it all comes out in the wash*’...

The group stares mutely at **HIS** non sequitur, each feeling instinctively that any response is uncalled for.

The screens change TikTok’ishly -- every six seconds or so -- in slideshow format – displaying different scenes from **EON’S** ‘lives’ in different Worlds. Apparently, **THE CREATOR** has ‘pulled up his account.’ He sees **EVELINE** and the kids in his absence -- she is achingly beautiful -- and in another man’s arms. What else was to be expected?! He had even hoped for it – but **GOD** it hurt! **DEV** is a rock star, here seen in a snippet of a concert at an arena – my **GOD** -- an arena! Fanatically devoted crowds scream; in another scene, **BEN** conducts business like a Wall Street titan and is then seen with a woman carrying a child as another -- a little boy -- walks at his side, holding the father’s hand hanging from the sleeve of an expensively tailored suit. Are these **DOROTHY/EON**’s grandchildren?! A tailored suit?! **BEN**?! **DOROTHY/EON** is overwhelmed by bittersweet emotions. A great happiness – nostalgia – sadness -- all at once – play out in his eyes.

CLARA/SCARECROW (still looking around, comically still transfixed by the chaos, says to **THE CREATOR**): You could’ve at least, *I dunno, vacuumed*??!

THE CREATOR (almost boyish, offended, obviously not all that happy to see them – abashed): **I’M** better at *coding* than *cleaning* – but **I** like knowing where everything *is much better than ‘spotless’*. Anyway, it’s an *organic system*. (sardonically) **I’M** not what you expected – *am I*?! No big *throne* -- special *lighting* -- *hymns*...

DOROTHY/EON (aside to his gang) Now I know *why HE* doesn’t want to meet anybody.

JOSEPH/COWARDLY LION (boldly blurts out): Why all the *tricks* and *traps* on the way *here*?! The annoying *robots*??!

THE CREATOR (sheepish grin): *Defense mechanisms – not mental – real*. You wouldn’t believe how many *zealots* try to climb *up* here with *demands* – even worse: *questions*. I’m so *done* with all the *questions*! *Had to thin the herd*. *Plus* — (he smirks) all those ‘*challenges*’ are *kinda fun*. *Keeps me sharp*. Mostly, the robots are supposed to help with

security. But what do *those fuckin robots* actually do all day besides *running around in circles* clanking *into* each other – and letting in *vermin*!?

DOROTHY/EON (aside to the gang as though trying to convince himself): *Doesn't seem to think* much of *us*. But *regardless* of what we *think* of him, **HE** is *our GOD*. **HE** may be an *inadequate – crazy – checked out* – but **HE**'s *our GOD*.

THE CREATOR (sarcastically): *I can hear you, ya know!* (**HE** immediately establishes **HIS** supremacy -- and control over the situation -- by pressing a button which generates terrifying thunder sound effects and blinding lightning strikes. Then, **HE** speaks in his deepest voice). *This is Central Processing – off limits to – well -- everybody!* (As afterthought) *Oh, and please remove your shoes. I'M not much on formality – but you are on holy ground.*

DOROTHY/EON (determined not to be distracted from his quest): *I didn't come this far to see fireworks displays! We are beings from your Universes – travelers through unknown dimensions – with questions in search of answers. I voyaged here to plead for my family.* You are the **ONE** my planet calls **GOD**? So, I beg of you, **SIR**, *please protect my family and let them know how much I love them - that's pretty much it for me.*

Suddenly, **GOD**'s awkwardness ebbs, replaced by something heavier. A kind of cosmic melancholy – a painful humanity): *I constantly study these screens — all these children, all these worlds. I made them, and yet I keep wondering if I'm up to the humongous task of attending to all of them. Do they know how much I care? Or do I just look like a lazy slob hiding behind a wall?*! (Suddenly growing animated) On the other hand, *details do bore ME*. I run *macro*. And you *beings* are everywhere -- like *ants* -- needy ants. You want *meaning* -- you want *miracles*, you want **ME** to 'tuck you in at night.' That's not **MY** business model. (muttering) Probably **MY** fault — I *built* you too *complicated* -- or maybe it's a *bug* in the *program*.

AMARA/TIN MAN (gently to **GOD**): *Ah think for the most paht YAW subjects have faith in YOU*, even though – **YOU** have to *undahstand* -- they have no *direct evidence* of **YAW** *charactah, motives, incredible feats – even of yaw very existence...*

GOD (puzzled, looking down) *What's wrong with my feet?!*

AMARA/TIN MAN (unfazed, solicitous): *Feats – achievements.* (Then eyeing **HIS** feet) *Yaw feet seem okay. At any rate, maybe the lesson we've learned applies to YOU*, too. Ah was not lacking *haht aftah all*. And **YOU, SUH** — (smiles sadly) **YAW** doin' *everything YA can –*

and they *undahstand* **YOU** ‘bout as well as they’re gonna. So just keep doin’ the best **YA** can and worry less about how it *appeahs* to us.

GOD (long pause -- he laughs --it’s nervous but real): You sound like my *therapist*.

They all laugh — ragged, awkward, but genuine.

DOROTHY/EON (easier, not wanting to irritate): Can I *call* you ‘**GOD**’ – *like* on your *shirt*?

GOD (studying the shirt at length – or is he dozing off? Laconic): *Whatev!* I don’t really care about what’s on my shirt – or what you *call* **ME**. I know who you’re *talking* to – there’s no one else *here* but **ME** and these damned **ROBOTS** – and they’re all named *Irving*! Not one of them does one useful *thing* as far as *I* can tell. What *I* really need is good security: *I* get so many *calls* and *demands* – sometimes even *prank* calls – and even a few threats. They *yell* at **ME** and *hang up*. *I* just don’t get it! Or they have *pizzas* delivered here – and *not good* ones – or at least they don’t travel well. *Hey, I wonder if the irritating little gizmos* came with some kind of limited *warranty*. (Aside to **DOROTHY/EON**) Have you ever seen an ‘*unlimited warranty*?!’ (Again, the group ignores his non sequitur. **HE** continues) **I’VE** just been *working too long* without a *break*. It’s becoming *clear* to **ME** that simulating *Universes* is a *labor-intensive task* – there’s an infinite number of -- you’ -- and *only one* **CREATOR**. Maybe a millennium *off* would *help*. *I* wanted to do something more *meaningful* than gaming – ya can *only* play *Call of Duty* so *long* -- and *look* what it got me. *Jeez* -- **I’D** *really* love to go *fishin...*

DOROTHY/EON (aside to his group) *How does this **GUY** ever get anything done – **HE**’s so scattered?!* (then to **GOD**) Uh – out of *curiosity*, just how many *Universes* do **YOU** *control*?! (Pauses, and when no response, moves on) Is it *true* we *never die* -- that our lives are *eternal*?! We’ve been *told* that, and what we see on those *monitors* *seems* to *support* it.

GOD (amused, grins again): *First* of all, **I’VE** never counted **MY** *Universes*. *What’s the sane purpose in that*?! But you’re *right about death*! There’s no such *thing* in *my algorithm*. *Population* is a *constant* – total population, like the total of energy and matter, is *conserved* – never *changes*. When a *CV*’s mission is ‘*completed*’ in one *Universe*, she *evolves* – ‘*transfers*’ -- to *another*, leaving behind the *used up outer shell* – the *body*. *Eternal*

improvement with no limit. I'M curious to see where it all goes -- the 'endgame,' ya know. Cool – huh?! You're in the early stages of development. The violence, plagues and pestilence – all that shameful crap you see on the monitors -- should vanish as you evolve from the savages you are toward fully realized beings in a utopian paradise. Yep, the advertising on this package claimed eventual perfection (snorts at DOROTHY/EON) – but I'M not too sure about you, LENNY. (HE chuckles at EON – seeming to appreciate HIS own humor).

DOROTHY/EON: (Ignores the jibe): So -- when *our species* has fully evolved, and everything is 'perfect,' peace will be *eternal? Utopia*, right?! Hey, wait a minute (*in disbelief*) – **YOU** *bought* this *Multiverse*!?

GOD (somewhat testily): Yeah – what *about* it? There were a whole *bunch* of 'em *available* – who knows what rules the *other* ones would have followed. I chose *this* one because the *vendor* is *highly reputable* – *great* reviews, ya know – and because of the chance of eventual perfection – not all of 'em offered that. The *good news* for *me* -- and *bad news* for *you* -- is you're '*eternal*' only until humankind *reaches* that '*perfection*.' Then this *simulation* is over – *done* -- *kaput*. I'LL *shut* 'er *down* -- and write a *glowing grad thesis*.

DOROTHY/EON (blurting, still rattled): *Whoa! What's the point of any of this if nothing survives?*

GOD (grinning smugly, hitting his thunder and lightning buttons again — lightning flashes, thunder rumbles – then all the sound effects sputter like a broken toaster; trying to correct it, HE stubs HIS finger and swears, taking HIS own name in vain): **MEDAMNIT!** (He shakes his hand) *I* ought to *fire MYSELF!* *Look, I* wouldn't worry if *I* were *you* about **ME** *shutting* it all *down* – (HE casts a jaundiced eye at the visitors) *you're nowhere near 'perfection.'* (chuckling – then reflecting for a moment) But *I* *may* *shut* *it* *down* *anyway* *at some point.* *Look, this is MY* *first 'Universe Simulation'* *project.* Though *I'd* *received* the *necessary* *training* *from* *Minecraft* – *not even.* *This shit is way complicated!* *And turns out to be hard,* *mostly thankless work.* **I'M** *constantly 'under water.'* *Besides, everything eventually ends anyway.* (The group does a double take; HE has just admitted the existence of time, hasn't he? Is he being scientific – or poetic?! GOD repeats, this time almost resigned) *That's right – ya got ME.* (Sagely) *Nothing lasts forever.* (*Reflects*) *Maybe I* *should be doing something easier – more immediately satisfying – more -- comprehensible.* *I* *could build model rockets*

instead. There's a *club* just down the way... (trails off as **HE** mulls). (Randomly) This *Multiverse package is **MY** grad school 'pilot program.'* Took **ME** only six days to set it all up – Yeah, I rested on the seventh -- pretty good for a novice with limited computer skills and attention deficit. Actually, creating everything was easy. Managing it? A nightmare: plagues, wars, natural disasters, broken romances – sexual harassment. Plus, ya know how many prayer requests I get a day?! Here I thought I'd be resolving critical issues, but an unbelievable number of them turn out to be for someone's side to win a sports event, or rock stars wanting a concert performance to be blessed – even some wanting nothing more than to win a gambling bet! (Muses) So much for *prayers* for those who really need them. Somebody tell **ME** what that's all about?! How can I even take this seriously?! Granted wishes are very limited – to only *life-critical situations*. They're wasting not only **MY** time – but even their own fate. Got nothin' better to aspire to in their lives?! Very disappointing. Sometimes makes **ME** just wanna hit 'delete' on the whole thing.

JOSEPH/COWARDLY LION (nervously): *No no no – don't do that!* (Then whispering in silent wonderment): And – but -- so -- we're just **YOUR** beta test – **YOUR** first attempt at 'raising' humankind, as it were?!

SCARECROW/CLARA (thoughtfully): *You're like -- a 'newby HIGHER POWER?!"*

GOD (recovering, irritated): *Listen, SPARKY* — if you're looking for profundity -- and 'forever' -- you came to the wrong **GUY**. I'm just a technician dealing with the realities of this *algorithm*, such as they are. And *reality is harshly simple: nothing lasts forever*.

DOROTHY/EON (desperate, cuts in): **MAN** -- I'm sorry -- **SIR** -- it's starting to sound like you're looking for excuses to *bail*. But what about us? My wife, my kids — those people on the screens?! Our *lives* have meaning, don't they?!

GOD (finally meeting his eyes, flat but not cruel): *Hey, I'M also just trying to get through **MY** life. You seem to wanna make all this much more important than it really is. Time is illusion – you want it to be eternal?!* Seems to **ME** humankind is constantly running from the past and having more than enough trouble just getting through the present. Look -- your *lives* – your *World* -- have as much meaning you give them – for as long as I decide to let this project last. All the *algorithm* was meant to do -- and ever did -- was to give you beings a stage on which to act out your *lives*. The rest is *improv*. You do love them, don't you – your families?!

DOROTHY/EON (quiet, raw): *More than anything!*

GOD (softens a bit): Well, *there ya go! Within that venue -- and on that stage, you have free will – no interference from **ME**.* (Smiles puckishly) Well, *practically* none...

The group falls silent. The screens keep flickering — births, deaths, lovers, wars, a baby's laugh, a soldier's battle cry. Six seconds at a time. TikTok eternity.

GOD: *Don't take it personal. I might keep the lights on for another eon or two – get it, **EON**? -- or I might take up model rocketry as soon as I can get down to the store. Did I mention there's a club down the road? Nicest people. No whining, no metaphysics. Just rocket launches.*

DOROTHY/EON (increasingly nervous, having been ruminating about the frightening impermanence – and randomness of it all under the rule of this obviously unbalanced and highly neurotic **HIGHEST POWER** – suddenly seems to recall the power of flattery on the narcissistic personality): Hey, we may be *troublesome*, but we *also* deeply *appreciate* the *wisdom* and *beauty* **YOUR** *amazing work, MY ETERNAL AND WISEST DEITY*. *Why* would **YOU** *not want* to remain our **GOD**?! It *seems* like a *pretty good gig*. And *why* wouldn't it be **YOUR** *highest priority* – **YOUR** *passion* – to tenderly *cultivate* -- *protect* -- *Hell* – *love* -- *all the creatures* **YOU'VE** *so brilliantly created*?! Believe me, we know *everything* will *die* when **YOU** *disconnect* -- we get it. But the *idea of all existence* – the *entire multiverse* -- ending at **YOUR** *whim* – let's say at *dinnertime* on a *Wednesday* – because **YOU** simply *tire* of this *Multiverse thing* and decide to do **YOUR** *dissertation* on an *entirely different topic* – say, *hydroponics*. It would be *our lives* **YOU'D** *be ending so cavalierly*! That's *not okay* with *us*. It would *all* be just *too cruel*.

GOD (puzzled, **HIS** ADHD personality veering to yet another topic): *What in Hell is hydroponics?!*

DOROTHY/EON (determined to get to the point): *Let's not get sidetracked. Look, I died – uh – transferred -- to *Heaven* or whatever yaw anna *call* it – and then transferred again – to travel here. I've come a *long way* from my home *planet*. I endured -- even after that terrifying *earthquake* – in order to *plead* with **YOU** in all **YOUR** *wisdom and glory* (all but **GOD** chuckle at the obvious flash of sarcasm in **EON**'s tone underlying the compliment) -- to beg **YOU** to watch over my family and please – *please* – *keep them as safe as possible* – and *remind* them -- whenever **YOU** can -- *just how much I love them*.*

GOD (ADHD striking again): *I don't know anything about any 'earthquake'. I'M more of a **MACRO DEITY** – not really into *details*. And – but -- there are so many of you – like *ants* – everywhere -- way annoying: at least, *ants* do their own *thing* – humans are so needy, always asking *endless questions* (shoots **DOROTHY/EON** an annoyed look). That's exactly*

what I was trying to avoid: *detail* work. (Sheepish) But I guess it's **MY** fault – *I created* you. Regardless, you've *really* become *pains* in **MY DEIFIC ASS**. Look, **I'LL** take care of the 'earthquake' thing. As for doing away with leaks between Universes, ya might wanna reconsider: those seepages are the source of what you call *dreams and visions*, which can be *deeply meaningful* messages from other *Worlds*. (The group exchanges glances of wide-eyed epiphany) As far as *eternity* goes, you'll *have* to be *satisfied* that you're *quasi-eternal*. Jeez, it's pretty *obvious* why **I'VE** made it **MY** *business* not to get *emotionally involved* with **MY** *subjects* (eyeing **AMARA**) You might be a *different story*, Sweetheart.

AMARA (put off by **GOD**'s 'thuggish' male behavior, responds sarcastically): Sorry, **SWEETIE**. Ah *think ah'm* too *old* fa you – Ah mean too *mature*.

DOROTHY/EON (aside to **AMARA**): Hey, *watch it – don't piss HIMSELF off. HE'LL disappear all of us right now!*

AMARA (aside to **DOROTHY/EON**, feisty): *No male intimidates me, HONEY!* Although -- ah'll bet **HE** *cleans* up pretty good. Get *rid* of the dumb *T-shirt*, the scraggly beard -- the *bell-bottoms* -- and ah *might* let **HIM** 'prey' on *me* – get it? (Turns to **GOD**, serious): Ah've been *dyin'* to ask, *whah* would **YOU** wanna *lowah* yaself to *appeah* as a *male*??!

GOD (wryly): I'm not 'male.' **I'M** *gender fluid*. I enjoy all genders – although, without a *doubt*, **MY** *female* '**EMBODIMENT**' is far *superior* to the *others*. But I simply *enjoy variation*. I just *tap* **MY** 'gender' button in the *algorithm* (pointing to a switch on **HIS** console that's vaguely penis-shaped) and – *bam* -- *that's* what you see! There are so *many* gender 'classifications.' I mean, it *used* to be male, female and *LGBT* – and *then* they added the *Q* – and a few *other* letters. Now it's *LGBTQHPONMSUV7WYZR!* They're *ubiquitous* throughout **MY** *Multiverse* – and I *love* 'em *all!* (Aside to the group, whispers) The 'R' is for **ROBOTS**. Don't wanna leave *the Irvings* out. They can be *quite vengeful*.

DOROTHY/EON (hopeless): **YOU** *have* to *understand*, it's pretty *terrifying* for us to play such *minuscule* *roles* in **YOUR** – uh -- *college project*?!? And we're just *simulations* – not even *real*? – to be – uh -- 'discontinued' at any *moment*?! I just can't *deal*!

GOD (sympathetic): **I'M** not quite as ‘all-powerful’ as you seem to think, **LARRY**. And there was no requirement that **I** be perfect – just that **I** be a ‘**HIGHER POWER**’ than you (**GOD** emits a hearty laugh, increasing the roar of his outburst as he leans backward, thumping the effects switches again, precipitating electronically simulated weather pandemonium – lightning, thunder – and now adding fierce wind. **HE** yells over the racket) *Look -- I created you – but then immediately hit the ‘God Lite’ button in order to give you the most free will possible. I just had no desire to have dictatorial control over your every thought and action.* But -- so -- even under the ‘Free Will’ setting, a lot of this is ‘baked into the cake,’ so to speak. *Don’t let the ‘simulation’ thing get to you, though. Doesn’t really matter at your level. Your World is real -- and eternal -- to you -- so it’s real and eternal!*

DOROTHY/EON (aside to the group): *I like **HIS** modesty – an attractive trait.*

GOD (overhearing or anticipating): Regardless, **I'M** the ‘higher power’ in your Worlds, by any definition. But it was my choice *not* to set myself up as a *Fascist dictator, determining* your every move. **I'M** more of a ‘live-and-let-live kinda **GUY**. **I** ran the *program* (Ultimate Creator 2 or UC2) in ‘**GOD-Lite**’ instead of ‘**Totalitarian**’ mode to leave to my subjects’ *all* the decision-making power **I could**. *Talk about ‘**GOD** helping those who help themselves!’* And it *hasn’t* been *all* bad, *has it?* **I'LL** *admit* this ‘*limited **GODSHIP***’ thing served **MY** purposes as *well* – *never* could have *handled* the *workload* of a *tyrant*. (smiling) **I** need some ‘*freedom*,’ too (smiles again, warming, becoming conversational). Except *wait* – there were a couple of guys before you – one named *Darwin*, wanted to screw with the *randomness* of **MY** *system* – said *he* knew who the *winners* and *losers* oughta be – nice theory, but *he* was a *bit of a control freak*. And *who* was the *other* guy *I’ve* seen on my *screens* -- *his* name sounded like *yours* – *Leon?* *Enol?* *Elon* – *that’s it -- Elon*. (Sarcastically) *he* was a *real genius*, with his *electric cars* and *spaceships*. But *he* *didn’t* understand the *simplest concepts*: *typical genius* – *brilliant in one subject* and *an idiot in all others*. (On a roll) *Elon* had some great *ideas*, sure, but *he* *lost* any *credibility* with **ME** when *he* tried to *buy me off* and *run* the whole ‘*show*.’ There’s *only* room for *one **DEITY*** in *my Universes*.

DOROTHY/EON (interrupting): Look, I don’t mean to *criticize* – and **YOU’VE** done so many *amazing things* -- like ‘*free will*,’ *such as it is* -- and ‘*sex*’ – *what a great idea* you had *there!* (aside to **GOD** whispering) *We’ll talk later.*

GOD (self-deprecatingly): Oh, *that* was built into the *program*. You can *thank* the *creator* of the ‘*sexual function*’ *portion* of the *algorithm* for *that* (**HE** picks up *program*’s *box* and *reads*

credits) uh – a Dr. *Ruth*, no last name given. Even the *titles* aren’t complete on *this* program (**HIS** face drops) – *maybe* I made a *mistake buying* it.

DOROTHY/EON: we do get that ‘**GOD** helps those who help themselves?!’ But gimme a break! I mean, we could use a little more *help* here!

GOD (miffed): *Come on! I never claimed to be perfect. Everybody knows that nothing and nobody is perfect!*

EON (steadfast): *Do they?! We know humans aren’t perfect – but **YOU – GOD**?! **YOUR** ‘perfection’ – your *flawless wisdom* – your *superhuman strength* and ability to perform *mysterious magic that defies logic* -- *happens* to form the *basis* of *many* of our *belief systems*. And now we learn **YOU'RE** not *all-knowing, all-powerful* – or *doing* much of *anything at all*. **YOU** just turned on the power -- and booted up the *Multiverse* – and let it run?! Oh, I guess we shoulda known when we experienced the *meaningless cruelty of wars, famine and pestilence* – the *Forty-Years flood*, the *Conquest of Canaan* – the *Tampa Bay Buccaneers’ season win-loss record*. We did wonder, ‘if there’s an *omniscient DEITY*, how can there possibly be so much *bad stuff* in our *World*?!’ But we reasoned, ‘**GOD** is smart – **HE** must have a good *reason* for all this *mayhem, death, bloodshed – and bad sports*. Your *answer now appears* to be the *most disturbing one possible*: *Good and evil is neither good nor evil* – but rather simply *arbitrary randomness*????!! **GOD** is simply ‘*doing the best **HE** can*?!’ *Really*?! I guess *all* we can *hope* for is that, as the *religions* fight amongst *themselves*, each *claiming* they have the *only* right *answer*, they’ll *eventually realize* none of them has the right *answer*. But *where* would even *that* leave us?!*

GOD (greatly amused): Oh, don’t get too worked up, **DOROTHY** or **EON** -- or whoever you are. You **CVs** -- humans -- are *always searching for meaning* in every little *incident* and *accident*. I basically ‘*have MY shit together*.’ Just *relax* and enjoy the *ride*? (Devilish) ‘*Mostly free will*’ is mostly enough. At least -- until I *mostly unplug* you!

THE GROUP (aside to each other): By **GOD**, **HE**’s *bipolar*, too!

DOROTHY/EON (nervous): Forgive my *candor*, but ‘*mostly free will*’ isn’t even a *thing*.

GOD (dismissively impatient): Hey, you *want* more answers? *Find* them *yourselves*. *I* gave you *things* to *do* for yourselves – at the same time minimizing *chaos* for **ME**. It’s all going pretty well for **ME** – at *least* according to **MY** *faculty advisor*. Any different *settings* – even if *available* -- woulda *literally* made it *impossible* for one **CREATOR** to *deal* with all of you!

COWARDLY LION/JOSEPH (with quiet resignation, almost to himself): *Sure* – take the *easy way out*. (to **GOD**, submissively) We *just need to know* that **SOMEONE** ‘up there’ *cares...*

GOD (softening slightly, though still full of **HIMSELF**): *I do care* – in **MY** *own way*. But you’ve gotta *understand*, **MY** involvement is minimal *by design*. And *think* about it: on the *Totalitarian* setting, you *wouldn’t* have *grown*. You *wouldn’t* have *learned*. Even *if I could’ve* made things *easier*, *would* it have been a *good thing*? Would your *struggles* have had the *same meaning*? Would your *victories* have been as *sweet*? *I gave you room to adapt*, to fail, to *overcome*, to *evolve* -- and *look* at you. Here you are, *defying* all the *odds*, *climbing great mountains*, *questioning THE CREATOR HIMSELF* – (with unnecessary overemphasis – plus maybe a bit of reverb and delay) **ME**! You’re *doing exactly* what my *choice* freed you to *do* – *including* providing me with a *shitload* of low-cost entertainment (chuckles)! Seriously, **I'M** *proud as Hell* of your *mental* and *emotional wherewithal*!

DOROTHY/EON: ‘Wherewith’ what?!

GOD (thinking **HE** has been insulted, **HE** experiences a bipolar switch and is now insulted and testy. Making a weeping motion with **HIS** arms, **HE** hits **HIS** ‘Pyro’ button again, bringing on aural chaos yet again): As far as *I* can tell, you are mere *ants* – *questioning* and *criticizing* **ME** (his voice growing even deeper and more booming, as it apparently does when **HE** feels threatened) -- the **MAKER** of the *ant farm* – I mean **CREATOR OF ALL UNIVERSES IN THIS MULTIVERSE!** (the word ‘Multiverse’ rings out multiple times; **GOD** is definitely enhancing **HIS** voice electronically in order to emphasize **HIS** ‘bigness’ and self-importance?! It figures.)

DOROTHY/EON (pissed, but not daring to push **GOD** any further, leans in and speaks urgently to **GOD** in a softer voice): *That's not fair!* I wasn’t meaning to *insult* you. Now

*please calm down, will ya! (Feeling a heavy responsibility to take full advantage of this unparalleled, momentary opportunity to be ‘in **GOD**’s ear,’ so to speak – and feeling that **GOD** needs interactions with – and input from – humans (his personality might become more – balanced) as much as they need guidance from **HIM** – now speaks with greater confidence and compassion): All well and good, but don’t **YOU** think **YOUR** choice of the ‘free will’ setting reflects a desire to mitigate **YOUR** responsibility for all the – um- glitches -- in **YOUR** Multiverse. Instead, why not eagerly take full responsibility for all of it and instead, justifiably brag about the endless, impressively great work **YOU** do to keep a nearly infinite number of ‘balls in the air,’ so to speak.*

GOD (**HIS** limits pushed, but now speaking with humor): ‘*Mitigate?!*’ ‘*Responsibility?!*’ **I’LL** say this, **LEON** – your *balls* are *certainly* made of brass! If **I** didn’t wanna face any *questions*, **I** didn’t have to even let you *in* here. **I’M** totally proud – no one to be *apologetic* to -- including you. So don’t ‘*harsh my mellow*,’ Skippy.

Both **GOD** and **DOROTHY/EON** smile. The airing of disagreements has had the perverse effect of *making* all of them *more ‘at home’ with each other* – ‘*looser*.’ **HE** has let them see more of the ‘**REAL HIM**.’ Thus placated, **GOD** ‘puts his foot in it.’

GOD: Hey, you’ve mentioned ‘*love*’ a couple of *times*. Sorry, but *what a silly word and concept!* ‘*Love*’ is just camouflage for sex. Be *honest – real, MAN*. Forget about ‘*love*’ – just say ‘*sex*’ – *what are you afraid of?!* (Very loud) Sex – (even louder) sex (**DOROTHY/EON** wonders if this **GOD** even has sex – and what might that be like. **GOD** pushes both the echo and reverb buttons, and thus fortified, the word explodes deafeningly) *sex!* (The chamber quakes!)

DOROTHY/EON: Where **I** come from, *that philosophy* represents only *unrefined males* – definitely *not the female* point of view. *They’ve been known to maintain* that there’s more *love* in that mix – at least, for *them*. *In fact*, if **I** may be so *bold* in the *interest* of better *communication*, **YOUR** *comment* is what we on *my planet* call ‘*stereotypical macho bullshit*.’ It’s *expected* from *males* who don’t *value* or *understand females*. **YOU** would *probably* be seen as *misogynistic* – which **I**’m *certain* you wish to *avoid*. *Maybe YOU* are *exempt*, but we *mortal males* would *probably* be living in *tents* out in the *backyard*. But **I**’m *betting* **YOU** don’t have an ‘*attraction*’ issue, *anyway*, being **GOD** and all.

GOD (quickly covering): *I think such males are misogynists, too – when I'M in MY female form. But I ‘ain’t no fool,’ as ‘they’ say. The concepts of ‘love’ and ‘sex’ are so – imprecise – and baggage-laden -- as to take on different definitions for each being in each situation. No single definition is ever completely wrong – and none is ever wholly correct.*

DOROTHY/EON (Aside): *Wow -- GOD ‘tapdancing?!’*

GOD (puffing up self-importantly again): *I can choose to be ‘male,’ ‘female’ – or anything in between -- anything at all – a doorknob, for Heaven’s sake! I can change that setting wherever and whenever the mood strikes.* (Grinning like a madman, presses his ‘Pyro’ button again and all now roll their eyes and automatically clap their hands over their ears, knowing what is to follow. What a narcissist and bully **GOD** can be! And **HE** sure loves **HIS** damn buttons! Finally, **HE** mellows – it seems **GOD**’s ‘pyro’ button serves as **HIS** greatest tension release – that and threatening to unplug the Multiverse) *When I choose to present as a male, I don’t need to worry about being a pig to get MY way. I just smile and introduce MYSELF, ‘Hi – I’m GOD.’ Might get some initial surprise – like ‘aww, I hear that all the time.’ But it generally ‘does the trick.’*

They’re beginning to understand and enjoy each other and their strange exchange of ideas and opinions. This could be the strangest ‘buddy’ scene ever played. **DOROTHY/EON** is emboldened to ‘go for it.’

DOROTHY/EON: Are **YOU** feeling open to feedback? **YOU’VE** been most emphatic about preferring the ‘free will’ setting on **YOUR** Multiverse, but in my *humble opinion*, it just isn’t working out. I know it’s *fashionable* to be *liberal*, but there’s just *too much chaos, cruelty – and yes: unfairness*. Maybe you can ‘fix’ it *without opting* for the dreaded ‘Totalitarian’ setting – and even simplify things: Simply issue *The Golden Rule* as *The Fifth Commandment* – and *deleting* the previous numbers *five* through *ten* which, after all, are reasonably represented by *The Golden Rule*. *Humankind* seems to have overlooked it in recent eons. *Having to treat others as one would want to be treated* would *eliminate* everything from *wars* to *personal arguments* – to *cheating*. I know **YOU’RE** skeptical, but *this is not imaginary bullshit* – if strongly *implemented*, it could *turn things around, improving* **YOUR** Multiverse *immeasurably* – and *making* **YOU** even more of a legend than

YOU already are, **OH ULTIMATE MASTER OF ALL YOU SURVEY AND EVERYTHING ELSE TOO.**

GOD (frustrated): *Damn – I should have added it to the original list. Next time, if there is a next time, I’LL definitely do more research into recommended settings. You know how it is: I was a Multiverse ‘first time buyer.’*

DOROTHY/EON: No – I really *don’t*. But no worries – seems to me that *formal release* of the rule on its own – now – may prove more *effective* than having *added it earlier* – *call* more *attention* to it – more *dramatic*. I *think* it has the *potential* to be your all-in-one solution to *humanity* issues in **YOUR** Multiverse! **YOU’VE** already done incredible *things* with the place under *difficult conditions*. – and *that* might put **YOU** over the top. **YOU** could be awarded the *Nobel Peace Prize* (then reacting to everybody’s puzzled look) Just an inside *joke* from *my planet*.

GOD pretends to take out a sheet of paper and a pencil, licking the tip and starting to write, shaking **HIS** head dolefully) Aah, **CVs**! (Back to the group) *Got your point*, and I *hear you*. *Not a bad idea*. Anything else I can do for you folks? (Aside, to audience) I can’t believe I’M trying to *explain* myself to products of **MY** own *algorithm*. It’s like *playing* with imaginary *toy figures* – sure *hope* they didn’t *hear that*...

DOROTHY/EON (noting **GOD**’s growing eagerness to end their meeting): Well – to sum up -- I would *still emphasize* the need to *repair the breakthroughs from one dimension to another* – *unless YOU’RE* saying that our *dreams and visions* are *important messages* meant to *guide* – and not just cosmic ‘butt-dials.’ For example, you *probably don’t remember*, but *that was me* you spoke to from the *burning bush*. I’m *not surprised* that it was – er -- *unintentional*. Of course, I didn’t give it too much *significance*, but there are *many* in my *World* who *believe* that unusual – *weird* -- stuff like *that somehow* means they’ve been *chosen* to receive some *special message* and bring it to the *people* of *my planet*. They try to *indoctrinate* everyone to *believe* something that wasn’t even *meant* to be taken *seriously* in the *first place* (**GOD** nods impatiently and **EON** moves on to his next bullet point). I also sincerely hope **YOU’LL** get to know *more* about the *struggles* and *aspirations* of your *humans* – **CVs**. I’m *sure* **YOU’LL** *find* us a *fascinating* and *promising* bunch. Sure, we can be *difficult* -- *annoying*. But **YOU’RE** *isolated* here – **YOU** *need* to get more deeply *involved* in

the *cultures* and ‘*goings on*’ out there in **YOUR** *Universes* – and I would personally ‘*love*’ to be of service to you *there*. I think **YOU’LL** see our need for *balance* and *fairness* -- those *damn words again* (**GOD** smiles) – *Golden Rule and all* -- in order make it easier to issue better *rules* and *decisions*...

GOD (having had enough – interrupts, smiling): *Yeah yeah yeah – don’t get over your skis, ELMO!* Quit *complaining* and giving me *advice*, **FORGODSAKE**, about issues that are far above your *station* and even your *ability* to *understand the answers*! You’re *lucky* I gave you the *gift* of ‘*temporary eternal life*’ – *isn’t that enough*?! And, *hey*, life *is* what it *is*. But (furrows his eyebrows, taking the bait), *where* did you get all the ‘*dreams*’ and ‘*visions*’ stuff?!

DOROTHY/EON (now really laying on the ‘Trump Cabinet Meeting’ fawning): We *do appreciate – treasure* -- the *lives* **YOU’VE** *given us*, **YOUR EXTREME LORDSHIP**, and we *appreciate* **YOU** *personally*. But **YOU’VE** *really gotta* read the *Book* – the *one* about **YOU** – written by some *people* on our *little blue planet*. **YOU** *may have heard of it* – the *Bible*?! The *authors claimed to have gotten their tales directly from* **YOU, THE MIGHTIEST OF ALL WHO HAVE EXISTED**. *All this stuff is covered in there*.

GOD (suddenly focused, interrupts): Hey -- *I have a question for you, SIR EON*. How is it even *possible* that there are ‘*different sides*’ – horrendous *hatred*, violent *disagreements* and *battles to the death* -- on that minuscule, blue *dot* of yours – is there even *room*?! *All of you should be united* in one simple *quest*: to *help each other survive*!?

DOROTHY/EON: I *honestly* have no *answer*, **YOUR HIGHEST EXALTED MIGHTINESS**. In fact, I was going to ask **YOU** that *very same question!* (**GOD** shakes his head, puzzled, greatly concerned and disappointed. After a long pause, **DOROTHY/EON** continues): I think it *important* to bring to your *attention* a potentially *perilous, planet-annihilating anomaly*. It’s been *ubiquitously* reported on my planet (though I have *no* definitive proof) that a *newly-discovered comet* is *speeding toward ‘head-on’ collision with Earth*; if ‘*they*’ are *correct*, there will be very little *time to save my planet* – I mean, it’ll *happen* after not-too-many more planetary cycles around our *sun, Sol* – anywhere from *ten* to a few million *orbits*. *Apparently*, our only *hope* is that **YOU -- GOD -- THE MOST SUPREME AND COOLEST ULTIMATE LIFEGIVING RULER OF ALL** -- will stage some kind of ‘*miracle*’

intervention to avoid the ‘end of days.’ **YOU** might want to set **YOURSELF** an automatic reminder to hit whatever button on your keyboard at the necessary moment.

GOD (grimacing): Aww jeez – **I’LL** look *into* it – but where do **I start**?! The information could be *imagined* – or it could be located *anywhere* in **MY** *admittedly weak filing* system. And once **I** start researching *one, possible, meteor* – or *comet* – or *something else somewhere else* -- aimed in the general *direction* of some *out-of-the-way planet* in an even *more out-of-the-way galaxy* – in *infinite space* – **I’M** *going* down a ‘*rabbit hole*.’ Just a minuscule *readjustment* like that could *throw* something else off in *another small area* – then *another small area* – and before **I** *know* it, a disastrous *chain reaction* could *throw* the entire *Multiverse* out of *balance*! For *instance*, setting that *bush on fire* was a big *mistake*: not to mention that it was downright *embarrassing* (aside to audience). **I’M** in the ‘*image business*,’ so that kind of *clumsiness* could *harm* **MY** beings’ *belief and trust in ME*. (Then to **DOROTHY/EON**) Sure, **I** will be *working hard* on the *imperfections* in **MY** system. For one thing, **I will not have wars and killing in my domain**! I guess **I’LL** *rein* in the *Universe* to some extent. **CVs** are too *unpredictable*. Hey, maybe **I’LL** *hire* an *assistant*. **I** sure *need* one. Cute little *Thelma down the street* might be *interested* – **I’D** *love* to *hire her* – *succulent to the max*! But **I can’t hire her** or anyone else until **I** get an *increase* in my *allowance*. **I** must say, **I** do *love grandiose spectacle*, so maybe **I’LL** *get rid* of that *meteor* with some *snazzy, Jerry Bruckheimer’ish action* that’ll *light up* the entire *galaxy*...

(Some two hundred ‘Earth years’ in the future, the entire Earth will be abuzz at the magical rescue of that small planet from inevitable annihilation by an oncoming, massive meteorite. Inexplicably, it had radically changed course at the very last moment – and the entire sky lit up. Although some suspected ‘divine intervention,’ there was no way they could know that **GOD** was smiling and remembering his friend, **DOROTHY/EON**...)

DOROTHY/EON (gobsmacked): Did **YOU** say ‘*allowance*?’ Our *entire Multiverse depends* on **YOU** getting an *increase* in **YOUR allowance**?! From whom?!

GOD simply waves **DOROTHY/EON** off, not willing to comment further. **HE** sulks.

DOROTHY/EON (after brief pause): Hey, I hope I haven’t offended **YOU, MOST PLEASANT, EXCITING TALENTED FATHER OF OUR UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING ELSE OUT THERE**

KNOWN AND UNKNOWN. Please don't get pissed and unplug our entire Multiverse. We really look up to **YOU**. More than *anything*, we really *need* **YOU**. **YOU** are our **GOD!** Actually, **YOU'RE** all we *have*, **FOR YOURSAKE!** Please, just *manage the situation*. And just a *thought*: next time have *females* run the *World* – and make *men* the *child bearers*. *That* would also produce a *lot* less *war* and *discord* – not to mention a *lot* less *kids* -- just sayin'...

GOD (makes yet another a note on his pad and mutters to **HIMSELF**): *Hmmmm... your suggestion really resonates with **ME**. Can't for the *life* of **ME** remember placing *males* in charge in the *first* place – *probably* an *auto* setting in the *algo*. They *really* are a *childish, violent* bunch, *males*. *Women* – yes – *women*...*

DOROTHY/EON (not waiting for **GOD** to respond): *Hey, I almost *forgot* the *original* reason I came *looking* for **YOU** -- and the one *nearest my heart*. I want to *plead* with **YOU** to *watch over* my *family*. I *know* **YOU** *don't* like getting *involved*, but they're *really good* *people*, and I *love* and *miss* them *more* than I can *bear*.*

GOD (Empathetic -- feeling **DOROTHY/EON**): You would *like* that, *would you*? *Just what I need* – yet *another* ‘*special*’ *favor* to do. (Chuckles). You’re a *good man*, **SIR NOEL**, and I – uh – *like* you – *all* of you. But *your* ‘*situation*’ is up to *you* to handle. *I have quite enough on **MY** plate.*’ (Reflecting) **I'M** proud of *governing* of my Multiverse ‘*small*; *giving you all a lot of responsibility* and *power* to *do it on your own* — to be *individualistic* – *free* to be *whoever and whatever you want to be*. And just take a *look* at *yourselves*, **SIR EON**! All of *you* have, through *your trials and tribulations*, *solved many of your own problems*! Yes, *you're gonna be just fine* – *until I unplug you*. *I will admit* that *your great love for your family touches an odd sentimental streak in **ME*** (**GOD** secretly dabs at **HIS** cheek with a Kleenex, hoping no one scratches **HIM**) – and so, yes -- *I will try to keep an eye on them*. (Again, making notes, **GOD** adds **DOROTHY/EON**’s family to his ‘*to-do*’ list, which now extends nearly down to the floor) **I'LL** *check in* on them when **I can**, say *once a week* – *nah* – *once a month*. This is *not a promise*, but rather an *intention* – meaning **I'LL** *do what I can* – *not gonna paint **MYSELF** into a corner*. (**DOROTHY/EON** eagerly nods in tacit understanding -- if not agreement). *There now – that wasn't so difficult to figure out, was it*. We've *all* learned *something* *here today*. *Good meeting! Bingo!* Now, if you'll excuse **ME**, **I'VE** got *millions of Universes* to *manage* – or *mismanage* -- depending on *your point of view*. And, *hey*, maybe in *another version* of all this, *you'll* be the *one sitting here, creating worlds* – and **I'LL** *visit you*. *Who knows?* Now, *skedaddle*. (Pausing for thought) *Hey, you want **ME** to tell you*

where you can get ahold of *Multiverse Sim*? (The group shakes their heads ‘no’ in unison – as **GOD** reflects) I can’t believe I’M gonna say this, but you haven’t annoyed **ME** – In fact, I’ve kind of enjoyed your company! Kinda wish we could talk – more often. It gets pretty lonely up here at the *literal top*.

Wistfully pausing, **GOD** looks **EON** directly in the eye for the first time. **DOTROTHY/EON** experiences a blinding yet deeply pleasurable lightning strike directly to his heart and mind – odd, since **GOD**, to this point, has been otherwise visually quite ordinary. **GOD**’s smile renders him devastatingly melancholy. **DOROTHY/EON** suddenly realizes for the first that there is something truly magical in this otherwise flawed **GOD**. **DOROTHY/EON** is forever changed.

DOROTHY/EON (slow, as though emerging from a spell) *Oddly, I feel the same way about YOU. Ya know? YOU'RE even wiser -- and definitely more fun – uh – cooler -- than I thought YOU would be, INFINITE RULER OF ALL MULTIVERSE ALGORITHMS AND GAMING IN GENERAL IN THE KNOWN AND UNKNOWN UNIVERSES.* I want to sincerely thank **YOU** for creating us – and so graciously receiving us here in *your – uh – home*. And *hey* (with a tear in his eye, trying to avoid getting emotional, **DOROTHY/EON** errs in a lighter direction), we’ll ‘catch **YA** on the flipside! Uh wait – just one more question.

GOD (feigning irritation, shaking his head): *Always -- just one more question...*

EON (smiles abashed): If **YOU** created us, who created **YOU** – and the ‘Multiverse’ in which **YOU** live – the one we sometimes call the Universe ‘one up’ from ours?!

GOD struggles with a response, but before **HE** can answer, we hear a very large, impatient female voice (much larger than **GOD**’s) emanating from a distant place within the huge structure blasting from some kind of otherworldly intercom situated somewhere above them.

MOTHER OF GOD (commandingly, with an Indian British accent): **MANNU THE ALL-KNOWING** – my dearest, shrimp **SON** -- get up here – dinner is served!

DOROTHY/EON (aside): 'shrimpy?!"

GOD (immediately shrinks psychologically almost to the size of a – human – aside to the group, shaking his head dolefully): *Moms.* (Then answering) *Awwww, mom – jeez – I'm just finishing up a meeting down here – some beings from a small planet in a distant galaxy are here. Oh, okay – okay – I'LL be right there!* (now clearly anxious): *Sorry, but I'VE gotta wrap this now. I'VE gotta move it or I'M gonna be in what I think you CVs call 'deep shit.'* As you might *imagine*, **SHE** doesn't particularly *approve* of me *hanging* here *endlessly*, having *conversations* -- not to mention *debates* -- with what *she* calls my '*imaginary friends*.' **SHE**'s *threatened* on more than one occasion to *unplug* my *Multiverse*. And if **SHE** gets *pissed* enough – **SHE** just *might* do it. **SHE**'s already *pushing* me to get *therapy* – thinks my '*lifestyle*' is *unhealthy*. (Spreads his arms, gesturing to the group) *Hey c'mon – do I look like I need therapy?!* Anyway -- '*sayonara*.' And don't worry: *You won't remember any of this in the morning. Bye!*

GOD reaches over and punches a quick succession of keys on **HIS** keyboard. The floor below **DOROTHY/EON** and the **GROUP** slowly slides open. At the last possible moment, **GOD** manages a warm, knowing, 'everything's gonna be alright' wink directly at **DOROTHY/EON** who, as a result, experiences yet another deep, life-changing, religious experience. He feels himself sliding gently down a chute into darkness below the gaping floor. He tries to call out a 'goodbye' to **AMARA** and the other kids, but only a whisper escapes his lips.

DOROTHY/EON (hoarsely): **AMARA** -- **JOSEPH!** – **CLARA!!** Goodbye and...

DOROTHY/EON sees them disappearing into the misty distance as he sails effortlessly out into the beautiful, bright, white, but incredibly comforting light of the same 'light tube' he traveled through when he left the hospital -- but now in the opposite direction. He slips comfortably from consciousness.

EON is alone, falling home.

SCENE VI: HOME AGAIN

Nothing seems to have changed in the small dark hospital room. **EVELINE** is alone with **EON**'s body, her head on his chest. **NURSE** enters and gently rests a hand on her shoulder.

EVELINE (morose, resigned):

I know I should go – I *must* have been *sitting* here for *hours*. I just *can't bear* to let him go.

NURSE (kind): No *worries* – you take *all* the time you *need*.

EVELINE (suddenly stiffening):

I could swear his shoulder twitched – there it is again!

NURSE (half-dismissing, then stopping at the monitor): That *happens* sometimes — *wait!*
You see *that*? A *blip*! (calls out) *Doctor!*

DOCTOR (walks in calmly, skeptical): Not *possible*. He's been *gone* for *hours*. Maybe a *reflex* — (then staring) *No*. That's *real*. He's coming *back*!

EON (stirs, forcing his eyes open against the glare, his voice cracking hoarsely):
Can *someone* *please* turn down the *lights*?

FAMILY (stunned, almost in unison): *He's alive!*

EON bolts upright, clutching them fiercely, words spilling out.

EON (breathlessly realizing that he is, in fact, alive – speaking to all): I met **GOD**! *Talked* with **HIM** – **HE** was a *pretty* great **GUY**! I thought I'd *never* see *any* of you *again*! I *love* you – I *love* you! *Listen*—before it *fades* — I saw the *truth*: there *is* no *death*, only *transference*. We just *move* to another *Universe*! And **GOD** – *what a character!*

The family listens, wide-eyed, their relief quickly morphing into great concern.

EVELINE (half-teasing, trying to calm him): That's a *lot* to bring *back* from the other *side*, Sweetheart.

EON (shaking his head, insistent): There's *more*: *time*, *distance*, *speed* – all *illusions*. Our whole *world* — it's a *simulation*. **GOD**'s just some exhausted college kid, running us on a giant *computer* with a million *screens* in a huge *place* **HE** calls '**CENTRAL PROCESSING!**' I even saw you *all* on those *screens* showing other *Universes* — *older, happy, alive*. **BEN**,

you had *children*. **DEV**, you were a *star*. And I was a *woman* in **GOD's** World, if you're ready for *that*! It was *real*. *All* of it. (Suddenly recalling, broadly smiling) **HE** let me remember -- everything that *happened*!

NURSE slips in, checks the IV-drip. **EVELINE** gives her a desperate glance.

EON (on a tear, racing ahead): *The past, present and future are all happening right now -- in GOD's Universes! It's just that we're only 'tuned in' to this particular Universe...*

EVELINE (quietly to **NURSE**): He needs a 'calmative' – and maybe a psych evaluation (Then whispering to **EON**) Baby, I need you to *breathe*, okay? You've got to calm down. What're you *saying* – it's – it's -- you've *been* through a *lot*, and *naturally*, *hallucinations can happen*. But *stop* – don't scare the *kids* and make *doctor* tie you *down*.

NURSE nods, injects a sedative.

EON (already softening, squeezes **EVELINE**'s hand, tears brimming): *Not – hallucination...*

EVELINE (lovingly): Now, don't *argue*, dear!

EON (fading, murmuring – to himself?): *Thanks, BIG GUY...*

NURSE (gently squeezes **EVELINE**'s shoulder): *Don't give it too much thought, DEAR*. They *all forget* about it within *hours*.

EVELINE, untensing, notices a small metal plate on the sheets. She picks it up.

NURSE (leaning in): What's *that*?

CLOSE-UP (**NURSE** and **EVELINE**): Both women stare at the piece of metal with expressions of wonder and awe.

CAMERA zooms.

CLOSE-UP (metal fragment): The inscription on the plate reads "**CENTRAL PROCESSING – DO NOT ENTER.**"

CAMERA MOVES: Out hospital window toward City skyline.

SLOW MOTION: Stars dissolve into dawn.

ONSCREEN TEXT:

They never spoke of it again.

Maybe it never existed.

Maybe they never existed.

Maybe none of us exist.

EPILOGUE (as credits roll)

An unusually beautiful, zaftig **WOMAN: EMRYN** (meaning immortal ruler) – having just awakened, stretches – luxuriates -- on a giant bed. **HER** top half is human, and **HER** bottom half is machine, with a mass of emergent wires spiraling in all directions. **SHE** stretches lazily amid cavernous, rich and powerful surroundings which are futuristic to the point of being unrecognizable, sumptuously running **HER** fingers through seemingly endless, gleaming black hair with snakes writhing throughout. **SHE** gazes at a huge video monitor hovering over **HER** bed. The screen icon is a large model of **HERSELF**.

AMELL (meaning ‘power of an eagle’; she is the Alexa of her time) (mechanically): Good morning, **EMRYN**. I can see **YOU** have medical results on your mind. Retrieving medical results of tests regarding small growth. The time is...

EMRYN (testily) – stop, **AMELL**! Please provide *full test results*.

EMRYN (distractedly reads the test summary from the mammoth screen along with **AMELL** as **AMELL** reports): Electron microscopy reveals single, minor Universe malfunction: Microscopic infection on **YOUR** Universus Maximus about the size of infinitesimally small galaxy -- Metastat-free: not spreading uncontrolled. Prognosis: self-resolving -- no further action or medication indicated. ‘Milky Way’ anomaly will resolve itself and disappear completely in due course. No cause for concern.

EMRYN inspects the information again with obvious irritation, then speaks rhetorically with incredibly rich voice): *Why was I to be worried?!* The *whole thing is no more than a simple pimple on MY ass – if I had one* (emits a big belly laugh).

SHE reflexively reaches around behind **HERSELF** and touches the machine where **HER** ass would be --shrugs -- an exasperated expression spreading across **HER** face – then finally a satisfied smile spreads across **HER** face: *Coulda been worse.*

EMRYN rolls over and goes back to sleep.

THE END