

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*, **EYORE**.

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 '*krebbling*' 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 know. 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 *fucking 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 smiles 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**.

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 Slease 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 **YOURS**AKE?!

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). **EON** 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 latch). 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?!

?

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 *cleans*e 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 he lays hands on them.

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.*

DORTHY/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 part 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 *fishing*...

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 *miniscule* 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 miniscule, 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 miniscule *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. **DOROTHY/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 RULLER 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 directon), 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) *Awwwww, 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