

**interlace [falling star]
a play by Scotty Moore**

CHARACTERS *(with suggested doubling)*

Andrea Change
The Amazing Dr. X
Trickle
Satan
Jayce
Sophia / Kiosk
Agent Grey / Carissa
Princess / Reporter
Ansel / Johnny
Attendant / Murray / Ramon / Jesus
Magus / Michael / Kellin
Ialdabaoth / Waiter

Note that Michael is pronounced MICK-aye-el
Magus is pronounced MAY-jus

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

Lights fade up on the lobby of a building. An information desk is currently unstaffed; a sign atop the desk reads "Back in 5 minutes, sorry!" A small line of people is waiting patiently in line at the desk for someone to return.

Seated at a small bench center stage is ANDREA, a woman perhaps in her twenties, perhaps in her thirties. She is wearing a stylish black buttoned-down top with long sleeves and simple, professional black pants. She is not carrying a purse or a wallet.

Next to her on the bench is IALDABAOTH, a vicious-looking figure garbed in a combination of tattered imperial robes and apocalyptic leather. He is also waiting patiently, glancing over at the information desk.

As the lights come up, Andrea slowly raises her head and faces the audience. She looks about, taking in her surroundings, and notices Ialdabaoth, who in turn notices her.

ANDREA *confused*: I'm sorry... how long have I been sitting here?

IALDABAOTH: I don't know.

ANDREA: Do we... this will sound really strange, but do we know each other?

IALDABAOTH *considers her very carefully*: I have never met you.

ANDREA *embarrassed*: That's strange, I just... I just don't know what I'm doing here. Where are we?

IALDABAOTH: The Axis Mundi.

ANDREA: I don't know what that means.

IALDABAOTH: The center of all things.

ANDREA: I still don't... *She grows apprehensive.* Listen, can you help me? I can't really... remember... anything.

IALDABAOTH: You must be here for a reason.

Andrea begins checking her pockets; she carries no purse, and has nothing with which to identify herself.

ANDREA: This is crazy, I feel like-- do I have any bruises on my head? Do I look okay?

IALDABAOTH: You look very healthy. Turn your head. *She does.* I see no bruises, no blood.

ANDREA: Well, something's clearly wrong, because I don't know what I'm doing here. *Pause.* What are you doing here?

IALDABAOTH: I am here to visit my mother.

ANDREA: Yeah?

IALDABAOTH: She has been in a long sleep, but today she will awaken.

ANDREA *pause*: Was she sick or something?

IALDABAOTH: No. Just in a deep, deep sleep.

ANDREA: Does she live here?

IALDABAOTH: She does, although I suspect she would prefer to live elsewhere if given the choice.

ANDREA: So listen... I don't know anything about this place. Uh... I guess I need some help. I don't suppose--

IALDABAOTH: I'm sure someone from the Association can help you.

ANDREA: Oh. Yeah. Okay. What's the Association?

A uniformed ATTENDANT appears at the information desk. There is a sigh of relief among the lobby denizens. Ialdabaoth gets up off the bench and takes a place at the end of the line. Instinctively Andrea joins him. Ahead of them in line are a couple who seem like tourists (KELLIN & CARISSA), and a young woman in business casual attire (JAYCE). An OLDER MAN in a crisp black suit appears and sidles in line behind Andrea.

ATTENDANT: Thank you for your patience, everyone, I'm very sorry about the delay. Maintenance has gotten the ID reader back on line, so we should be able to process everyone

normally. Please have your ID cubes ready; we'll get going in just a second here. *Begins attending to some business.*

JAYCE *to Kellin & Carissa*: Would you- would you mind if I snuck ahead of you? I'm late for work.

CARISSA: We were here first.

JAYCE: I know, but-

KELLIN: Besides, we're late for pleasure, doesn't that count?

ANDREA: I'm sorry, I just... I don't know anyone here. Or maybe I do, and I just don't remember how to find them, you know? It's really kind of, uh... well, it's kind of scary not remembering anything, so... do you think you could--

IALDABAOOTH: I'm sorry, young lady. I have traveled a very long distance to be here today. I really must see my mother as soon as possible, and I'm afraid I can't take you with me.

The older man behind Andrea has taken note of this conversation, and chimes in.

OLDER MAN: I couldn't help but overhear - is there some kind of problem?

Ialdabaoth takes a close look at the older man before answering.

IALDABOATH: This woman has forgotten herself.

OLDER MAN: You remember nothing?

ANDREA: I don't. And I just... I just don't like this feeling a whole lot.

OLDER MAN: I can imagine.

ATTENDANT *to the couple at the front of the line*: Thank you for waiting. ID cubes please?

The couple each hand the attendant a small cube, perhaps slightly larger than a six-sided die, translucent in nature. The Attendant drops the ID cubes into some kind of device we can't quite see.

ATTENDANT: This will just take a minute or two.

CARISSA: Oh, no worries.

ATTENDANT *making polite conversation*: Are you here on business or pleasure?

CARISSA: Pleasure. My husband's never been to the building before.

ATTENDANT: Oh, well you're in for quite a treat!

KELLIN *smiling*: That's what I hear.

ATTENDANT: The bacchanalia floors are outstanding. You can't help but have a good time while you're here.

CARISSA: We've got some relatives up on forty-five oh-twelve. They're going to show us around.

ATTENDANT: Excellent. *We hear a beep from the device.* First stage verification is complete, if you'll hold for just another moment we'll update your ID cubes with appropriate access levels for your visit.

Andrea has been watching this exchange nervously.

ANDREA: What's going on here?

OLDER MAN: They're letting us in the building. Assuming you have an ID cube, of course.

ANDREA: If I had an ID cube, I'd probably... have an ID, now wouldn't I. *She looks defeated.* You go first. *She switches places with the older man, letting him go ahead of her in line.*

CARISSA: Did you call Coranda to let her know we're here?

KELLIN: I was just about to do that. *He touches the back of his ear.* Coranda? Hi, it's Kellin. We're downstairs... yes, I'm famished. I hear there's some outstanding pasta in this building. Where can I find it?

ANDREA looking in awe outside the lobby for the first time: What is all that outside?

OLDER MAN: The parking lot.

ANDREA: It goes on forever.

OLDER MAN: That's the idea.

KELLIN: Outstanding. We'll grab dinner before your shift ends and catch up with you later. Oh, and we left the kids at home, so maybe tonight I could get another taste of that Anterran whiskey you were talking about.

CARISSA: You're not talking about that trash--

KELLIN: No, no, Coranda's got the *good* stuff, straight from the vapor stills. *On the phone:* Oh, Carissa's just reminding me about the time we tried a black market batch. I was blind in one eye for a week.

ATTENDANT: Oh, interesting...

CARISSA *turns to the Attendant:* Is there a problem?

ATTENDANT: Your hosts have requested a few extra access levels for you beyond the normal tourist levels. Sorry for the delay.

KELLIN *impressed*: I see you're pulling out all the stops, Coranda. You must have something sneaky up your sleeve. We'll see you tonight – bye now! *To Carissa*: I wonder what that's all about.

CARISSA *matter of fact*: I think she wants you.

KELLIN: Well, I suppose.

OLDER MAN *to Ialdabaoth*: Excuse me.

IALDABAOTH: Yes?

OLDER MAN: Have we met? You seem awfully familiar.

IALDABAOTH: I suspect not.

OLDER MAN *not convinced*: Really.

Ialdabaoth turns away.

OLDER MAN: Where are you from?

IALDABAOTH *turning slowly*: Pardon me?

OLDER MAN: I just feel like we've run into each other somewhere before. Maybe a long time ago? When we were younger?

IALDABAOTH: I do not remember you. *Turns away again.*

OLDER MAN: Earth, maybe? You ever spend time on Earth?

IALDABAOTH: Even if I have, that doesn't mean--

OLDER MAN: Earth is a small place. We could have bumped into each other.

IALDABAOTH *sternly*: If we once met, I have chosen to forget you. *Turns away once more.*

OLDER MAN *turning to Andrea, speaking quietly*: Your friend has quite a personality.

ANDREA: He's not my friend. I mean, I tried, let's be clear.

ATTENDANT *handing the cubes back to the couple*: There you are. Enjoy your visit!

CARISSA: Thank you so much!

KELLIN *exiting*: Ah sweet pasta, how I have longed for thee!

CARISSA: You never talk to me like that.

Carissa and Kellin exit, and Jayce steps up to the counter and immediately hands the Attendant her ID cube.

ATTENDANT: Jayce! Good to see you!

JAYCE: Hi, listen – I am very late for a conference, is there any way--

ATTENDANT: No problem. *Drops the cube into the device.*

JAYCE: We're doing a massive seminar on how to tell the difference between a deity and a demiurge and I am hardly going to have time to get my presentation loaded-- were you going to be able to make it?

ATTENDANT *shakes his head*: I'm on until eight.

JAYCE: Ah, well I'm sure Magus will have a recording. *Joking*: It'll be *that* exciting. Plus the next time you're trying to decide on something to believe in, you'll have my notes.

ATTENDANT *at the beep*: Expedited, there you go.

JAYCE: Thanks so much!

She dashes off. Ialdabaoth steps up to the counter and hands the Attendant his ID cube.

ATTENDANT: Thank you, sir. It'll only be a moment. *Drops the cube into the device. Making conversation*: Just visiting?

IALDABAOTH: I am here to see my mother.

ATTENDANT: Oh, that sounds wonderful.

IALDABAOTH: Indeed. I have not laid eyes on her in ages.

ATTENDANT: I'm sure she'll be glad to see you. *The device beeps; the Attendant looks impressed. Handing the cube back*: By all means, sir, if there's anything the Association can do to enhance your stay--

IALDABAOTH *smiling*: You have shown my mother such hospitality over the years. I am certain there is nothing more you can do for us. *He exits.*

The older man steps up to the counter and hands the Attendant his ID cube.

ATTENDANT: Thank you, this will just take a moment. *Drops the cube into the device.*

ANDREA: What are you doing here?

OLDER MAN: I'm applying for a diplomatic post.

ANDREA: What's that mean?

OLDER MAN: I rule a small planet. We're hoping to join the Association.

ANDREA: Oh. You're a ruler.

OLDER MAN *smiles*: It's a small planet.

ANDREA: Still. *Pause*. Well, I guess... good luck with that, or... whatever.

OLDER MAN *studies her for a long moment*: There's definitely something about you...

ANDREA: Like what?

OLDER MAN: I can't put my finger on it. *Pause*. I'm sure it will come to me.

ANDREA: You'll be long gone when it does. I'll never see you again.

OLDER MAN: Perhaps. Although I do tend to get around, so anything's possible.

The Attendant's device beeps. He hands the cube back to the older man.

ATTENDANT: There you are, sir. You have dignitary lodging on floor three-fifty two-twenty-three three-thirty-two.

OLDER MAN: Excellent, thank you kindly. *Turning to Andrea*. Best of luck, my dear.

ANDREA *sullen*: Thanks.

OLDER MAN: You'll be fine.

ANDREA: I don't believe you.

OLDER MAN: Have a little faith. *He exits*.

Reluctantly, Andrea steps up to the desk.

ATTENDANT: Good morning. ID cube please?

ANDREA: I don't have one.

The Attendant seems startled.

ANDREA: Well... I might have one. I just... don't seem to have it with me. I... I can't remember how I got here, or... well, that's the first question. Can you maybe-- can you help me? I was wondering... who I am. I don't really remember anything.

ATTENDANT: Let's see what we can do.

ANDREA *very nervous*: I'm just really kind of lost, and a little upset, as you can probably imagine. I really just need someone to help me figure out what's going on with me, because I can't... sit in this lobby for the rest of my life, obviously, and outside, it's just this incredible parking lot full of-- well, I don't know what, are they space ships or trains or what? But it stretches all the way to the horizon and if I'm parked somewhere out there, I clearly don't remember that either--

ATTENDANT *smiling*: We'll do our best to help you, ma'am. If you're in our system but you've misplaced your ID, our Medical personnel can locate your record and we can issue you a temporary ID for the duration of your stay.

ANDREA *a little relieved*: Oh, that sounds promising.

ATTENDANT: In the meantime, if you're unfamiliar with the building, there's an orientation kiosk near the fountain that can supply you with information. If you'd like to wait there, I'll have someone meet you there shortly.

Andrea looks toward down stage left, where a light comes up on a woman in a tight pool of light, smiling, frozen, in neutral clothing. This woman is the orientation KIOSK.

ANDREA: Yeah, okay, thanks.

ATTENDANT: You're welcome, ma'am. I hope your visit improves.

Andrea slowly crosses to the kiosk. As she approaches, the kiosk notices her, smiles, and begins speaking. Her voice is friendly and very human, not robotic or computerized.

KIOSK: Welcome, visitor. If you would like to connect to the Association central network, provide your voiceprint authorization. If you would like to view the guest orientation, say the word "guest." *Waits patiently for a reply.*

ANDREA *feeling slightly foolish*: Guest.

KIOSK: Welcome to the headquarters of the United Association of Interdimensionary Travelers. The Association is comprised of thousands of cultures working in cooperation to improve the state of the multiverse. We offer a wide range of services, including biological and morphological engineering, technology seeding, aesthetic realignment, strategic catastrophe deployment, and paradigm reorganization. Association operatives from around the multiverse gather here to receive their assignments, engage in training, conduct important research, and even make homes for themselves on the residential floors. A steady stream of diplomats and tourists also makes its way here each year. *Waits expectantly for a reaction.*

ANDREA: That's... fascinating.

KIOSK: Have you been to this building before?

ANDREA: No.

KIOSK: Well, you're in for quite a treat! After all, you're standing in the lobby of an infinitely tall building, an immensity of transdimensional architecture!

ANDREA: Really.

KIOSK: The building is centrally located in a unique dimension where direct access to each and every other dimension in the multiverse is possible. This dimension, jokingly referred to by many as "the Dimension of Administration," is where the Association makes its home. *Laughs in a somewhat too-programmed fashion.*

ANDREA: That's funny.

KIOSK: It's funny because it's true!

ANDREA: How do you... I mean, don't people get lost?

KIOSK: It's simple to find your way around. Each floor is connected to the rest of the building via four separate elevator banks, one on each outside wall. The building's control intelligence, Magus, can provide you with simple directions any time you ask. Although be careful, as some floors are much larger inside than the footprint of the building might lead you to believe!

ANDREA: All right, just stop, with all the...

KIOSK *concerned*: Is any aspect of this orientation confusing?

ANDREA: Any... what? Yeah, of course.

KIOSK: I would be *more than happy* to provide greater detail.

ANDREA: How did this place even get here? Who builds an infinitely tall building?

KIOSK: There are no accurate records concerning the building's initial construction, nor the exact point at which the Association became the primary tenant. Information about the exact dimensional nature of the building is provided by the Magus program, which alone contains a complete record of every floor of the building, including the top floor.

ANDREA: How can an infinitely tall building have a top floor? How do you even know it's actually there?

KIOSK: The top floor of the building contains the offices of the Supreme Being. It is through the Supreme Being's agents that we were made aware of the existence of the offices on the top floor. The Supreme Being's agents are, by definition, beyond reproach, and so we know of the top floor.

An angelic musical punctuation is heard.

ANDREA: I would like more information about this Supreme Being of yours.

KIOSK *genuinely sorry*: That information is beyond the scope of this orientation.

ANDREA: Oh come on.

KIOSK: If you or representatives of your culture would like more information about becoming members of the United Association of Interdimensionary Travelers, say "membership" to proceed to an application sequence.

ANDREA *on a whim*: Membership.

KIOSK *excited*: Please state your world of origin.

ANDREA: I don't know.

KIOSK: We need your world of origin to begin the application sequence.

ANDREA: I don't know where I'm from. I don't even know who I am.

KIOSK: I'm afraid that makes this quite impossible.

ANDREA: I figured. What happens to people who show up here without an ID?

KIOSK: No one arrives in the building without an ID.

ANDREA: What happens if someone does?

KIOSK: But that's impossible.

ANDREA: Infinitely tall buildings are impossible, whereas I am clearly standing here without an ID.

KIOSK: I'm very confused.

ANDREA: So theoretically, what would happen if someone showed up here and didn't have an ID?

KIOSK: Not even on file?

ANDREA: Right. Say a person got here completely by accident-

KIOSK *alarmed*: But that would be an enormous breach of security! No one can even learn about this building without rigorous ontological screening! It would be a tremendous diplomatic incident!

ANDREA: What would happen to that person?

KIOSK: We have no protocol on file for this situation! That person could be a complete menace - or a sign of mysterious and unfathomable changes to the underlying structure of reality! Security might choose to destroy that person - or reward that person with unprecedented levels of access to the building's secrets! It might be an omen - but to what end? To what end, I ask? It's too monumental to contemplate! *Pause*. This orientation is now complete - thank you and please come again!

Lights out on the kiosk. Andrea looks about the lobby now with a new appreciation for the strangeness of her situation. Meanwhile, a tall handsome man in a sharp white suit – THE AMAZING DR. X – is walking toward her.

DR. X: You seem a bit lost.

ANDREA *hesitates*: I am completely lost.

DR. X: My name is The Amazing Dr. X.

ANDREA *a bit impertinently*: What kind of name is that?

DR. X *with an impressively straight face*: I'm a superhero.

ANDREA: I see.

DR. X: I came down to help you.

ANDREA: Oh, the man at the desk, did he-

DR. X: No one called me. You just seemed like someone who could use my help.

ANDREA: Oh. That's a neat trick.

DR. X: I'm a superhero.

ANDREA: Gotcha.

DR. X: I'll escort you to Security.

ANDREA: The man said I needed some kind of medical examination.

DR. X: First we'll need to properly register you with Security. They're very strict. Once you're registered, then Medical will be allowed to process you. If you'll just follow me...

He starts toward the elevator; she does not immediately follow.

DR. X: You can trust me.

She decides to believe him; he leads her to the elevator. A sound we will become very familiar with is heard: the DING of the elevator arriving, followed by the doors opening. Dr. X and Andrea step into the elevator, which is simply a rigidly defined pool of light. We hear the sound of the doors closing as the lights go out abruptly on the rest of the stage.

SCENE TWO

In the elevator.

DR. X: Forty-three two-thirty-eight.

Now we hear for the first time the sound of the acceleration of the elevator as it begins climbing rapidly up the building.

DR. X: Magus, let Agent Grey know we're on our way.

A somewhat androgynous, vaguely synthesized voice is heard.

MAGUS: Certainly, Doctor.

ANDREA: Magus is the "control intelligence."

DR. X: I see your orientation was helpful. I'll let Marketing know. They'll be pleased.

ANDREA: It wasn't that helpful, actually. It seemed like a joke. I'm in an infinitely tall building apparently, so this is.... an infinitely long elevator ride or something?

DR. X: We'll get off before then.

ANDREA: How far up have you gone? How close to the top floor can you get?

DR. X: No one knows.

ANDREA: Yeah, but how close have *you* gotten? You're a superhero... I'm sure you can get closer than most people, right?

DR. X: When I was younger, I tried to get to the top floor. I used one of the interdimensionary transport ships that agents use to hop from one dimension to another.

ANDREA: Did it work?

DR. X: No. You can say, "Take me 23 trillion floors above the last floor we were just on," the ship calculates where that floor should be, and like magic, there you are. But if you tell the guidance system, "Take me an infinite number of floors above the last floor," you'll cause the system to freeze up. So that left me one other option to try.

ANDREA: The elevators?

DR. X: Indeed. Of course, I was younger then, more willing to throw away centuries of my life to some crazy, hopeless quest. I guess you can hear the word "infinite" and think you understand it. To be fair, I did think I might have a special "in" to get there.

ANDREA: Oh?

DR. X: My father's supposed to have an office on the top floor.

ANDREA: Your father... the Supreme Being, you mean?

DR. X: That's what the Association likes to call him. I figured he'd *know* that I was coming, and maybe he'd make an exception to his "policy of nonintervention." *Smiles.* You get some silly ideas in your head when you're a kid.

ANDREA: He seems a little distant for a father figure.

DR. X: It's no use second guessing an all-powerful being.

ANDREA: How do you know he's your father? Did he used to tuck you in or something?

DR. X *smiles*: No.

ANDREA: Has he ever communicated with you at all?

DR. X: Not directly, no. But from my earliest days, I've simply *known* that he was my father. I've been able to feel the truth of it. My teachers in the Order, can sense the truth of it as well.

They eye each other carefully.

ANDREA: You're right. I can feel something... different about you.

DR. X: I'll take that as a compliment.

The acceleration of the elevator stops, another ding, and the doors slide open.

DR. X: This is Security.

SCENE THREE

Lights up on stage as Dr. X and Andrea leave the elevator and arrive in a waiting room, with a few seats nearby.

DR. X: Agent Grey will be here shortly. I'll keep you company.

Dr. X and Andrea sit.

ANDREA *politely starting conversation*: So you're a superhero. *Pause.* How did that happen?

DR. X: I took a training course when I was young.

ANDREA: And you have... superpowers?

DR. X: I have special abilities. They're a prerequisite to getting into the training program. You can have special abilities, after all, and not do anything particularly heroic with them.

ANDREA: What heroic things do you do?

DR. X: Rescues. Interventions. Preventing evil deeds and so on. It's not as glamorous as it sounds.

ANDREA: I didn't say it sounded glamorous.

DR. X *pausing*: No, you certainly didn't.

ANDREA *regretting that*: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be-- I'm sorry. I'm just not feeling very safe right now.

DR. X: You're very safe right now.

ANDREA: Really?

DR. X: If it would make you feel more comfortable, I'll stick around for your screenings.

ANDREA *brightens*: You would?

DR. X: Sure.

ANDREA: I don't want to be a pain, but--

DR. X: This building can be crazy even for those of us who live here. Let's just focus on getting you settled and we'll see what we can do about getting your memory back.

ANDREA *relieved*: So how do you suppose I got here?

DR. X: Hard to say. You're a bit of an enigma.

ANDREA: So are you.

DR. X *without a trace of irony*: I try.

A woman enters – AGENT GREY, wearing a trench coat over a shirt & tie. Grey nods at Dr. X, who nods back; then Grey immediately turns her attention to Andrea. Grey's vibe is deliberately laid back, almost too casual, as though she is always hiding an agenda. She is a cool character, but conveys a sense of quiet threat.

GREY: I'm Agent Grey. I'll be the investigator on your case. *She looks Andrea over carefully, with an impressively neutral gaze.* Let's get the screening started. *Dismissively*: Thank you, Doctor, for escorting her. I can handle it from here.

DR. X: Actually, I'll be sticking around for the screening.

GREY: Excuse me?

DR. X: You heard me.

GREY: Of course I heard you. I'm being polite by pretending I didn't know you were about to say that.

DR. X: I wouldn't try reading me too closely, Agent Grey.

GREY: Oh, of course not, surface thoughts only – that's basic protocol. You sticking around for the interrogation, on the other hand--

ANDREA *alarmed*: Interrogation?

GREY: That's just a touch unusual.

DR. X: I'm exercising my prerogative to stay. I'm sure Magus can refer you to the appropriate directives.

MAGUS: Indeed, Article Twenty-Three Seventeen of Association Protocol Nine Hundred Twelve states--

GREY: Thank you, Magus, that won't be necessary. Everybody loves a superhero, after all. If you'll both come with me...

They leave the lobby area for an interrogation room, which simply amounts to a single chair for Andrea. Dr. X nods for her to sit, but her defenses are clearly up.

GREY *to Andrea*: I'm going to ask you a few questions before I turn you over to Medical. I'd just like to make sure we have your story straight. This is all standard procedure.

ANDREA: The kiosk in the lobby said there was no protocol for my situation.

GREY *smiles*: We certainly don't inform Marketing about all of our protocols. *Bland*: Please state your name for the record.

ANDREA: I can't remember my name.

GREY: Please state your world and dimension of origin.

ANDREA: I don't remember.

GREY: Can you remember how you arrived in the lobby without an ID cube?

ANDREA: No.

GREY: She's telling the truth. That's helpful.

ANDREA *disconcerted*: Of course I am.

DR. X: Don't be alarmed. Agent Grey is a psychic. This is just her job.

ANDREA: I was told by your information desk that someone might be able to help me.

GREY: Someone might. But until we can accurately determine your origin, you don't get free access to the building. You might be a threat.

ANDREA: I'm not a threat.

GREY: You're not wearing a big sign around your neck that says "I AM A THREAT" but the jury's still out. You might even be a threat to yourself. I just don't know, now do I.

Andrea suddenly turns around in her chair, as though she heard something behind her.

ANDREA: What was that? Did you hear that? *Spins back around.* There it is again!

GREY: That's just me. I'm probing your subconscious.

ANDREA: You can't just probe my subconscious!

GREY: Actually, it's quite easy. *Pause.* Hmm, that's strange.

DR. X: What?

GREY: There's a powerful block on her memory.

ANDREA: I'm sitting right here, you know.

DR. X: Any kind of signature to it?

GREY: Nothing I recognize. It's stable at the moment, but... maybe I should go deep on it.

ANDREA: What does *that* mean?

Dr. X takes a step forward, toward her.

DR. X: You don't know what might happen if you use brute force to unlock it.

ANDREA *stands up hurriedly*: She is *not* using brute force on me!

GREY: That's not your decision.

DR. X: Actually, it is.

GREY: What?

DR. X: You haven't clearly demonstrated that she's not an Association member. Until you do, she's got rights. Including the right to deny invasive psychic procedures.

ANDREA: Invasive psychic procedures, my god, what is this place?

DR. X *to Andrea*: I thought you took the orientation.

GREY: A psychic block like that is a potential security threat. We have a right to investigate proactively.

DR. X: You said the block is stable. Do you see an imminent threat or any kind of latent aggression?

GREY *reluctantly*: Not at the moment.

DR. X: Then let's get the physical examination underway – we might find something useful.

ANDREA: What's going to happen to me?

GREY: We're going to do what it takes to remove that block on your memory. Ideally Medical will be able to help, but if not, I've got a few other techniques at my disposal.

ANDREA: “Techniques”?

GREY: Would you like a list? *She doesn't answer.* Now if you'll come with me, I'll escort you to Medical. *To Dr. X:* I suppose you're coming along?

DR. X: I wouldn't miss it.

ANDREA *relieved*: Thank you.

GREY: Adorable. Could we get moving please?

SCENE FOUR

The sound of the elevator accelerating covers a cross fade, as lights go down on the questioning, and come up on the Medical lab. Grey, Andrea and Dr. X enter the lab, which is indicated by an examination table and a desk with strange looking implements and a display screen on it. Near the examination table sits a small girl, frozen, head bowed – this is TRICKLE. At the computer is ANSEL, a doctor in a white lab coat with the Association logo on its breast.

ANSEL: Ah, you're finally here. Come, sit down. I'm Ansel.

DR. X: Ansel, please take good care of our new guest.

ANSEL: I always do.

DR. X: Much appreciated.

Ansel leads her to the exam table. Grey and Dr. X wait near the entrance of the room.

ANDREA: What exactly is going to happen to me here?

ANSEL *pulling a small cylindrical object out of his pocket*: We're going to get a sample of your genetic material, which we can cross-reference with all of the stored gene samples in Magus' archive. Magus, begin genetic scan. *He watches a display on the metallic object. After a few beats:* Well, you're not an Association member. There's no match.

ANDREA: I'm assuming Magus never makes mistakes?

MAGUS: I do not.

ANSEL: What species is the patient?

MAGUS: Human.

ANDREA: There are other choices?

ANSEL *brightly*: It's a big multiverse out there!

ANDREA: Are you human?

ANSEL *disdainful*: Do I *look* human?

Andrea sighs.

ANSEL: Magus, initiate a full dimensional search on that genetic sample.

ANDREA: What does that mean?

ANSEL: Magus is sending out search signals to dimensions where we know humans live. A match would mean you've been to that dimension and left genetic trace material at some point in that dimension's timeline.

ANDREA: I see. And how long will this search take?

MAGUS: The search is complete.

ANSEL: Awesome!

MAGUS: The patient is from a small planet, coded and referenced in the master archive under the local referent "Earth."

GREY: Never heard of it. Is it an Association world?

MAGUS: Not currently.

ANSEL: Thank you, Magus. *To Grey*: We don't seem to have any harmful contagions or any other signs of potential physical instability.

GREY: Isn't that a relief.

ANSEL *to Andrea*: Do you happen to remember how old you are?

ANDREA: I don't.

ANSEL: You look like a human in her early thirties, I'd guess.

ANDREA: I'm older than that.

GREY: You do remember?

ANDREA: I feel older.

GREY *irritated*: Uh huh. Magus, notify the memory specialist on duty to report to this lab.

MAGUS: Specialist Srifftin is in a session with another patient for the next eighteen minutes.

GREY: We can wait. Ansel, please strap the patient down to an exam table and prepare human sedatives.

ANDREA: What?

DR. X: Aren't you being a little hasty?

GREY: She's not from an Association world – she doesn't have Association rights. Time to break that memory block before it unblocks itself and we find out the hard way what's inside.

ANSEL: We can prep a surgical theater too, if you like. Maybe it's a neurological block that our scanners aren't spotting. I haven't operated on a human since training but the brain stem is very simple. I'm sure it'll all come back to me.

ANDREA *clearly dismayed*: Wait a minute!

MAGUS: Actually, Agent Grey, I must intervene.

GREY: Oh really.

MAGUS: Under Article Ninety-Eight Twelve of Association Protocol Four Hundred Eight, when a world's application for Association membership has been submitted for review, all standard Association rights are granted to the world in question for the duration of the probationary review period.

DR. X *surprised*: Someone submitted Earth for membership?

MAGUS: Earlier this morning.

GREY *very suspicious*: How absolutely convenient. Where is the applicant?

MAGUS: Waiting for an appointment with the Director of Religion.

GREY *to Dr. X*: You keep track of her, understand me? I'll be back for her soon enough, don't you fret. *She exits.*

MAGUS: Excuse me, Doctor.

ANSEL & DR. X *over each other*: Yes?

MAGUS: I was addressing The Amazing Dr. X. A major security situation is developing.

ANSEL: Well, what an exciting day this is turning out to be!

DR. X: Does Ansel have clearance?

MAGUS: This is a public threat situation.

ANDREA: I didn't do *anything*!

DR. X: Relax. This is a big building.

ANDREA: And you get "public threat situations" on a regular basis?

DR. X: Why do you think the Association needs superheroes?

ANSEL: It's a big multiverse out there!

ANDREA *snaps*: Thanks, I got it the first time.

MAGUS: As of twenty-one seconds ago, a priority one quarantine field has been established around the entire building. Until the quarantine field is deactivated, no traffic or communication in or out of the building is permitted.

Dr. X and Ansel exchange surprised looks.

ANSEL: No one's authorized a medical quarantine.

DR. X: Who has the authority to activate such a field?

MAGUS: Unknown.

DR. X: Deactivate it, then.

MAGUS: I am not authorized to deactivate the quarantine field.

DR. X: Who is?

MAGUS: Unknown.

DR. X: Security doesn't have authorization?

MAGUS: No Association branch has authorization.

DR. X: What is the given reason for this quarantine?

MAGUS: No explanation has been provided. However, several emergency protocols have already been activated. Residential Services is requesting your assistance to help evacuate twenty-five floors.

ANSEL: Why are they evacuating floors?

MAGUS: Security is on stand-by for a weapons test in that sector.

DR. X: They're going to try to blow a hole in this quarantine field... and they're worried about blow back. Tell Residential Services I'm on my way. *Starts to exit.*

ANDREA: Wait – you can't just leave me here!

DR. X: You'll be fine. I'll check on you when I can.

ANDREA: You said you'd stay with me.

Dr. X pauses, then notices Trickle.

DR. X *to Ansel*: Whose escort bot is that?

ANSEL: Oh... we had a young girl die here last night. I haven't had a chance to have the bot reassigned.

DR. X *to the bot*: Activate, please.

TRICKLE *snapping awake*: Activating.

DR. X: I'm reassigning you to this young woman here, and authorizing you to contact me on all priority channels if anything comes up that might endanger her. Consider this a high security assignment, and stay with her wherever she goes.

TRICKLE: Understood.

DR. X *to Andrea*: You'll be fine until I get back.

ANDREA: I hope so.

He exits.

ANSEL: Magus, find me an up to date news feed.

MAGUS: News feeds have not yet switched to live coverage. I will notify you when the first report appears.

Ansel heads to his desk, leaving Andrea momentarily alone. Trickle looks around the lab, seems distraught.

TRICKLE *like an adolescent child*: Where is Andrea?

ANDREA: I don't know.

Trickle leaps up, finds some kind of display interface or chart at the end of the bed, reads what it says.

TRICKLE: Oh no. Oh no! *Mournfully:* Andrea is dead. *To Andrea:* So you're my new assignment.

ANDREA: I guess so. Do you have a name?

TRICKLE: Andrea called me Trickle. What's your name?

ANDREA: I don't remember my name.

TRICKLE: Can I call *you* Andrea? *When Andrea does not respond:* I will call you Andrea Change, for you are not Andrea Dead, and now my loyalty has been reassigned. I am now your Trickle, Andrea Change. Now Trickle and Andrea are friends! *Hugs Andrea.*

ANDREA: So you're some kind of robot?

TRICKLE: Not just "some" kind. I'm a very special kind of robot. I'm your friend!

ANDREA: I could use a friend.

TRICKLE *suddenly fearful:* Andrea, why are you here? Are you sick, too?

ANDREA: No, I just have problems with my memory.

TRICKLE: Maybe you need a memory upgrade.

ANDREA: Quite possibly.

TRICKLE: Were you in an accident?

ANDREA: I don't know.

TRICKLE: How did you get here?

ANDREA: I don't know.

TRICKLE: This is like the I Don't Know game, isn't it?

ANDREA: What's the I Don't Know game?

TRICKLE *smiling:* I don't know.

ANDREA: Aha. Fun game.

MAGUS: Sending news feed to the main screen.

Lights up on an area detached from the lab, perhaps above it, with a reporter delivering breaking news.

REPORTER *not too composed*: This is an incredibly unusual situation. We're digging through the archives, and so far we can't find a single record of a quarantine field ever being used to quarantine the entire Association building before, but that's the situation we've got, folks. Magus is calling it a "priority one" quarantine but we don't really even know what that means.

ANSEL *murmuring*: Amazing.

REPORTER: Magus has also confirmed that it doesn't know who authorized the quarantine. We've seen quarantines from Security and Medical before, obviously, but only restricted to limited areas of the building. But this... this is incredible, really. The kind of power required to maintain a quarantine field around an infinite building is certainly tremendous, and the fact that such a field could be authorized *and* activated without leaving any record of the action with Magus is... Speculation now... I'm getting speculation from our technical advisors that there might be quarantine events integrated into the building itself, predating the installation of the Magus system, potentially even predating the Association's tenancy in the building. If that's the case, it may be next to impossible to determine who or what is responsible. But one thing is certain: no one is getting out, and no one is getting in. *Looks distracted, as if getting information via an earbud.*

ANSEL: Looks like you joined us here just in time.

When he receives no response, he turns – to find that Andrea has fled, taking Trickle with her.

ANSEL: Damn, damn, damn. Magus! Inform Security that our new guest is missing.... *He dashes out to try to catch her.*

SCENE FIVE

In the elevator with Andrea and Trickle.

TRICKLE: Magus, is Security out looking for Andrea?

MAGUS: Security has a more important situation on its hands with the quarantine.

TRICKLE *delighted*: That means we can play all we want! All over the building!

ANDREA: But you don't have any idea what's going on. How can you just play?

TRICKLE: Oh right, grown ups like answers. I can connect to the public nets if you want! Everybody's talking about it. *She begins to mimic the voices of various reporters from news feeds that she accesses in her head.* "It matches no documented energy force we've ever encountered. Physically, it looks to an observer like a blue, opaque wall of energy or lightning, although I'm told the field simply looks like static on a viewscreen, as though it's too powerful to be captured for broadcast. When I touch the field with bare skin, like this- *She does, and is jolted severely; her next speech is slightly disoriented.* -I experience a brutal physical and psychological jolt – not enough to kill at a short dose obviously, but painful enough that I would... really prefer... not to do that again."

ANDREA: People just go around touching unknown energy fields with their bare skin?

TRICKLE *herself*: I know, what's that all about?

ANDREA: So we're trapped here. What are we going to do?

TRICKLE: What do you *feel* like doing?

Andrea ponders for a moment.

ANDREA: I'm starving. I can't remember the last time I had food.

TRICKLE: You can't remember anything, remember?

ANDREA: Ah, thanks for reminding me.

TRICKLE: The bacchanalia floors have wonderful food.

ANDREA: Will I need money?

TRICKLE: They don't use money here. They're very sophisticated.

ANDREA: So I can just have what I want?

TRICKLE: You can have whatever people are giving away. They give away lots of stuff.

ANDREA: Where do they get all the stuff they give away?

TRICKLE: From all over. Some dimensions are poor, but some dimensions are rich rich rich. What are you hungry for?

ANDREA: How about... well, that man in the lobby said they have outstanding pasta here.

TRICKLE: Searching... ah, listen to this! *Assumes the voice of a Public Relations program*: "Pasta is a staple dish throughout the multiverse. The renowned Gr'bacr'ian chef Al'rdd'mche'st once claimed, 'Pasta is evidence that there truly is a grand plan behind this reality of ours.' To enjoy Gr'bacr'ian cuisine, considered by many the height of fine pasta, visit the M'rich'sseia'In Oasis near the east elevator. Please note: some species may experience Gr'bacr'ian pasta sauce as an acidic poison that destroys the digestive system. For a complete list of interspecies dietary hazards, consult our Medical archives."

ANDREA: Could you recommend something appropriate to humans?

TRICKLE *still the PR voice*: "Certainly. Charlie's Crazy Destitute Aunt is not just the name of the chef: it's one of the most popular casual dining establishments on the floor. Specializing in pasta dishes from Yrelemeich, Hratanak, and the infamous planet (*moans a little salaciously*). Charlie's Crazy Destitute Aunt is known throughout the building for its fine food, excellent entertainment, and fantastic selection of unusual beverages. Charlie's is located on bacchanalia floor five four-eighty-one three-forty-two, on the Grand Promenade, ten blocks down from the west elevator."

ANDREA: Thank you. That'll do.

We hear the elevator stop and the doors open.

SCENE SIX

Andrea and Trickle step out. The floor sounds very busy with convivial activity. Crossfade to a small restaurant, lots of dining chatter audible in the background. At one table, a young man and young woman sit – a pair who seem like clubbers out for the night; they are in the midst of their dinner. This is PRINCESS and JOHNNY. At a different table, Carissa and Kellin are seated; they have not yet been served, and Kellin is irritated about the situation. As Andrea and Trickle head for an empty table center stage, Andrea notices Carissa and Kellin, and stops to talk to them.

ANDREA *to Kellin*: Oh, we were just talking about you!

KELLIN: Pardon?

ANDREA: I'm sorry – I was in line behind you in the lobby.

CARISSA *politely*: You don't say.

KELLIN: Yes, imagine that – we're in an infinite building and we're already having a joyful reunion with the people we stood in line with in the lobby.

ANDREA: I overheard you talking about pasta, so I decided to come here... and here you are!

KELLIN: Here's hoping I don't start talking about jumping off the building.

CARISSA *bemused*: Now Kellin.

TRICKLE: Andrea, there's a table. *She grabs Andrea's arm and steers her toward an empty table. As Andrea sits, Trickle turns back to Kellin. You're not a nice person. She sits with Andrea.*

ANDREA: Does everyone in this building speak the same language?

TRICKLE: Nope. I count eight different languages being spoken in this room.

ANDREA: I supposed there's some kind of magic that translates somehow?

TRICKLE: It's not magic. The building has translating--

The WAITER arrives.

WAITER: Good evening. Are you new to Charlie's?

ANDREA: Yes. I was wondering if—

WAITER: Allow me to make a suggestion. I recommend the fettuccine con alvialess, a special tonight smothered with seared and shredded Hornackian misery beast, and a house salad with mythrackish particle dressing. For a beverage, I'm sure the lady would enjoy a glass of the ever popular Mistaken Red, from the vineyards on the ever popular Mistaken Planet.

ANDREA *after a brief, polite pause*: That sounds lovely.

WAITER: And what would your daughter like this evening?

TRICKLE: How's the soup?

WAITER: Impossibly delicious.

TRICKLE: A bowl of soup please!

The waiter nods and exits briskly.

ANDREA: Robots eat food?

TRICKLE: I have several biological components that require occasional nutrition. Soup is my special favorite! Andrea Dead liked soup too. We ate it together all the time, and pretended we were at the colony festival even when it was just a boring old regular day.

ANDREA: Oh yeah? Were you... friends?

TRICKLE: Of course!

ANDREA: Tell me about her.

TRICKLE: She was eleven years old. She accidentally received a huge dose of radiation when her bedroom control system failed. Her parents brought us here - they're operatives. But the radiation killed her. I read it on her chart. I guess her parents didn't want to take me back home with them, so they left me behind.

ANDREA: What was she like?

TRICKLE: She was a very nice friend. She liked swimming. I helped teach her how to read.

ANDREA: Do you miss her?

TRICKLE: I do. But now I have you, so everything is okay.

ANDREA: But everything's not okay. I'm not okay.

TRICKLE: Of course you're okay. Everything is just fine. Don't worry!

ANDREA: And stop talking to me like I'm a child!

A beat - Trickle gets a strange look on her face, then her tone of voice drops and becomes more serious.

TRICKLE: Switching from children's escort mode to adult companion mode. I believe you'll find this level of conversation a bit more to your liking.

ANDREA: Nice.

TRICKLE: Indeed. You seem distressed. Is there anything I could do to make you feel more comfortable?

ANDREA: Here's what would make me more comfortable – having my memory back. If Medical couldn't figure it out, and that psychic investigator couldn't figure it out, what do I do?

Trickle pauses again, performing a search against the public nets.

TRICKLE: I recommend we visit Shamanic Services. *She hands Andrea an ID cube.* It's an Association service, which means you'll need this.

ANDREA: Where'd you get this?

TRICKLE: It's Andrea Dead's ID cube. Clearly Medical didn't follow protocol and retire her ID before disposing of her body.

ANDREA: Well, I am simply shocked at the inefficiency of this organization.

TRICKLE: You'll get used to it.

The Waiter enters and tries to address the entire restaurant.

WAITER: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid I have some... unfortunate news. Dinner service for the evening... has been suspended.

The response is general distress.

KELLIN *outraged*: What are you talking about? We just got seated!

WAITER: I'm sorry, sir, these are orders from the Association. Due to the quarantine.

CARISSA: What quarantine?

ANDREA *trying to be helpful*: There's a quarantine field around the building.

CARISSA: Don't be ridiculous.

WAITER: Until further notice, the bacchanalia floors are suspending food and drink service. You'll have to go to one of the cafeteria levels for your meal. I'm very sorry.

KELLIN: Cafeteria levels! I didn't travel halfway across the multiverse to eat in a cafeteria! Why can't we just get our pasta to go?

WAITER: No one is being served until a rationing strategy has been announced.

KELLIN: Rationing! That's crazy!

PRINCESS: Get a grip, buster.

KELLIN: Mind your own business!

JOHNNY: Keep your damn mouth shut, we're trying to finish our dinner here. *He slowly and deliberately takes a delicious bite from his plate of pasta.*

KELLIN: This is insane. You better believe I will be filing a complaint against this restaurant.

WAITER: Sir, it's not our--

KELLIN: Save it. Come on, Carissa, there must be someplace on the floor that will seat us.

WAITER: I'm telling you, the entire floor is shutting down...

Kellin and Carissa exit.

WAITER *to Andrea*: I do apologize.

ANDREA: Hey, it's not your fault.

WAITER: It most certainly is not. *He exits.*

JOHNNY: All the damn tourists are really starting to spoil this building.

PRINCESS *droll*: Now dear, don't insult the tourists to their face.

ANDREA: Who, me? I'm not a tourist.

JOHNNY: You look like a tourist. Well, you're dressed a little sharper, but you've got that wide-eyed "it's all too much" kind of vibe.

PRINCESS *kicks Johnny under the table*: Would you shut your hole, please?

ANDREA: I'm having memory problems. I'm kind of... I'm kind of totally lost, actually.

Princess and Johnny perk up; that sounds interesting.

ANDREA: I don't know anything about this place, about who I am or... or who I should be. *Laughs.* I don't know why I'm telling you this, really.

PRINCESS: Because we're fabulous and interesting.

JOHNNY: Here, join us, I've got some spaghetti left.

ANDREA: Really? Because... I'm actually starving.

JOHNNY: The more the merrier.

Andrea and Trickle move over to their table.

ANDREA: Thank you so much. *She begins eating hungrily.*

JOHNNY: Don't choke there, missy.

Andrea laughs – and does in fact start choking as a result. Trickle swiftly pounds Andrea's back, Andrea coughs and is fine.

ANDREA: Thanks.

TRICKLE: My pleasure.

ANDREA: Sorry, it's just... this stuff is delicious.

PRINCESS: That's why we come here.

ANDREA: I'm serious. What did you call this?

JOHNNY: Uh... spaghetti?

ANDREA: And the sauce on it...?

JOHNNY: Uh... spaghetti sauce?

ANDREA: Totally amazing.

PRINCESS: You don't recognize spaghetti sauce?

ANDREA: Not really.

PRINCESS: Do you even remember your name?

TRICKLE: This is Andrea.

JOHNNY: How do you know your name's Andrea?

ANDREA: My robot gave it to me.

JOHNNY: Ooooh, an escort bot. Fancy. *Ever so slightly salacious:* I hear you can get them to do all *kinds* of things.

TRICKLE: I'm not that kind of escort.

JOHNNY: Not with your current chipset, but you're definitely cute. I bet--

PRINCESS *kicks him again*: Please excuse my boyfriend, he's only partially evolved. Anyway, my name's Princess, and this beast is called Johnny. So you know about this quarantine?

TRICKLE *accessing another news feed / reporter voice*: "Inside sources tell us that the Association is performing a supply analysis to see how long the building can hold out without replenishing supplies from outside. No one knows how long this quarantine will last, and they're moving to rationing on a branch by branch basis."

Princess and Johnny seem startled.

PRINCESS: We should warn Murray if he doesn't already know.

JOHNNY: They might not be targeting private clubs yet.

PRINCESS: It would give him a chance to hide his stockpile of booze. Andrea, it's been a pleasure, but I think we're off.

ANDREA: Wait- you're going to a club? With, like... dancing?

JOHNNY: It's private, sweetie. Although... you're kind of cute yourself. I imagine if you showed up on the arm of a guy like me-

PRINCESS: I'm getting tired of kicking you.

JOHNNY: How 'bout I just pretend? "Ow, that hurts!"

PRINCESS: You up for some dancing, Amnesia Girl?

ANDREA: What else am I going to do?

PRINCESS: You have a very good point. Tell you what, the least we can do while you're trapped in this bargain basement funhouse is show you an *actual* good time. *To Trickle*: I don't think they let bots in, chickiepie.

TRICKLE: I'll tell them I'm *that* kind of bot.

PRINCESS: Ah, yes, that should work.

JOHNNY: Then it's settled. To the Theoretical Limit we go!

Blackout.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights up on Jayce, behind her desk. Dr. X enters. She notices Dr. X and is momentarily caught off guard.

JAYCE: Well, look at you.

DR. X: Hello, Jayce.

JAYCE: I wasn't expecting to see you. You're not on my calendar.

DR. X: I don't have an appointment.

JAYCE: Obviously you're always welcome. *Pause.* It's been a very long time.

DR. X: I'm sorry about that.

JAYCE: Oh, believe me, I understand. Time slips away from you when you live forever, yeah?

DR. X: Something like that.

JAYCE: Must be nice.

DR. X: I wouldn't go that far.

JAYCE: Well, I'm trying to be generous here. It's not my strong suit, you understand.

DR. X: Jayce--

JAYCE: I believe that constitutes "exchanging pleasantries" - now let's get to down to why you're actually here? Must be a very special occasion. Let me guess - quarantine field around the building, supernatural in origin, everybody's trapped and we're all going to die... so you want me to cross reference a few logs to see if we irritated any gods recently?

DR. X: Something like that.

JAYCE: I'm the head of Religion and I don't even have a security clearance yet.

DR. X: Bureaucracy.

JAYCE: Of course. I don't suppose you've heard anything from the top floor —

DR. X: Don't ask.

JAYCE: I wasn't trying to pry.

DR. X: Under normal circumstances, I don't mind the subject, but it's a bit--

JAYCE: Inconvenient.

DR. X: That's one word for it.

JAYCE: Well, if they're going to have the title of "Management," I don't think it's unreasonable to expect some occasional signs of actually managing.

DR. X: That was the title we gave them, not the other way around.

JAYCE: It's in the Association bylaws.

DR. X: Which we wrote.

JAYCE: And of course, there's no punishment clause for what happens when they stop honoring the bylaws. Leave it to the archangels to wiggle out of any responsibility when push comes to shove.

DR. X: Has push actually come to shove? I didn't get the memo.

JAYCE: Can't you find Michael? Isn't there something he could do?

DR. X: You know the drill, Jayce. Michael can only be found when he wants to be found, and he hasn't wanted that in ages.

JAYCE: Can't *you* find him?

DR. X: I'm just a superhero. I don't work miracles.

JAYCE: That's comforting. Everyone who *does* work miracles decided not to show up for work today.

DR. X: For the head of Religion, you're an incredible pessimist.

JAYCE: It's part of the job description – don't believe anything 'til you see it.

DR. X: They brought out a weapon from our apoc division. It shoots a beam which causes ontological collapse in anything it hits. Didn't affect the quarantine field at all.

JAYCE *nonchalant*: We're aware of a couple dozen deity-level entities that could stand up to a beam like that. We have good relations with some of them. The rest are too detached from reality to be likely suspects for direct intervention here, but when I've cleared my appointments for the day--

DR. X *amused*: Your appointments?

JAYCE: --*and* when someone *deigns* to give me a security clearance, maybe I'll work on the problem. In the meantime, I've got an appointment.

DR. X: That's why I'm here, actually.

JAYCE *pause*: Really? *Dr. X does not respond. She sighs.* Magus, please send in the ambassador.

The older man from the lobby scene enters.

DR. X *surprised, not angry*: What the hell are you doing here?

OLDER MAN: Is that some kind of god awful pun? Oh wait, I've just done it myself.

JAYCE: I'm sorry – we haven't been introduced. I see you know each other?

DR. X: On Earth this individual is commonly known as Satan. Satan, this is Jayce, head of the Religion branch of the Association.

JAYCE *polite*: It's a pleasure to meet you.

SATAN: The pleasure is all mine.

DR. X: I thought you were busy taking over the ruins of planet Earth.

SATAN: I did. I came here intending to establish diplomatic relations. I figured now that Earth was no longer ruled by a bunch of backwards, uncivilized idiots, you might be willing to admit us into the Association.

JAYCE: Well, your paperwork is certainly in order. Please, have a seat.

SATAN *ignoring her*: It's good to see you again, you know. When was the last time?

DR. X: My brother's triumphant welcome home from being crucified party, as I recall.

SATAN: How is he, by the way?

DR. X: I haven't seen him in years. He dropped out of the Intelligence branch. Never let that wound in his side heal, either. Last I heard, he was running a bar.

SATAN: How perfectly appropriate. After all, he can turn water into cocktails.

JAYCE: This reunion is lovely, but perhaps we could focus on the interview, and then you could--

Agent Grey sidles on stage.

GREY: Now let me see if I understand this, Dr. X... and it's just surface thoughts I'm after, scout's honor. Your friend Satan here was the villain in some... "passion play" on this little planet Earth? He helped orchestrate your brother's execution there, is that right? And then you just became chums after that.

DR. X: We all have roles in which we're cast.

GREY: And Satan's role was teaching that planet about evil and deceit? Great company you keep.

JAYCE: Evil and deceit? I don't think I have that in my paperwork...

GREY: Don't sweat it, Jayce, it's a very small planet. *To Satan*: There's a bit more going on in your thoughts than you've admitted.

SATAN: I just got here.

GREY: You have ideas about this quarantine?

SATAN: I might. *Pause.* Someone broke open a containment crypt.

DR. X: What containment crypt? *Pause.* Magus?

MAGUS *surprised*: An archaic containment crypt in the 23rd sub-basement has been breached.

JAYCE: There are only 22 sub-basements.

MAGUS: The 23rd sub-basement has been locked and its existence classified since the Association's arrival in the building.

JAYCE *peevish*: Classified? On whose authority?

MAGUS: I do not have access to that information.

JAYCE: If it's classified, how are you able to discuss it with us in the first place?

MAGUS: I have exception handling for when I judge the building's security to be at risk.

JAYCE: But you could have told us right when it happened!

MAGUS: I'm afraid I didn't notice.

JAYCE *exasperated*: But you're the building's control intelligence!

MAGUS: If you'd care to try controlling an infinite building sometime, I'd be happy to trade positions.

JAYCE *to Dr. X*: Did you know there was a 23rd sub-basement?

DR. X: Of course not.

JAYCE: Did anyone know? Did Michael know?

DR. X: You'd have to ask him.

JAYCE: Did your brother know?

DR. X *irritated*: I have no idea. The real question is... what was inside that containment crypt?

MAGUS: Unfortunately, I have no information about the contents of the crypt.

GREY *to Satan*: But *you* have information, don't you, and I suggest you volunteer it before I decide to *take* it.

SATAN *to Dr. X*: You remember Ialdabaoth?

Dr. X grimaces noticeably.

GREY: Ialdabaoth?

DR. X: A demiurge from old Earth. The locals originally called him Jehovah.

SATAN: He has returned from his exile.

DR. X: How do you know it's him?

SATAN: I ran into a strange man in the lobby earlier today, and didn't recognize him at first. He's cleverly disguised in a new human form, and he's... surprisingly confident. But after I was here for a while, it all came back to me... a signature of someone I recognize. My old friend Ialdabaoth. *To Jayce:* We fought for years and years back on Earth, in its formative days... he was placed on Earth by his mother, an exiled Aeon named Sophia, and he ruled it as the "One True God" of the planet. I was the only one strong enough, or foolish enough, to argue with him.

DR. X: He changed his name and his form over time, played the role of every god in every pantheon that the people on that poor world invented. The results were always the same. Eventually my Order banished him from Earth, on the grounds of excess cruelty to mortals. The Association sent my brother to the planet to try to clean up the mess he'd left behind.

JAYCE: Wait – your brother personally represented the Supreme Being?

DR. X *scoffs*: Of course not.

JAYCE: Then why exactly did he go there? It's not an Association world, we have no treaty obligations...

DR. X: It was a training mission. The Association was developing its Intelligence branch. My brother was testing techniques for using religious tropes to pacify a population.

SATAN: Trading one false god for another.

JAYCE: False? But he's the son of the Supreme Being, he had divine lineage--

SATAN *sternly*: We *all* have divine lineage, for all the good it does us. At any rate, once I recognized Ialdabaoth's signature, I was able to track him in my mind's eye, all the way down to that basement. He cracked that containment crypt right open. It didn't even seem hard for him.

GREY: Do you know what he wants?

SATAN: I don't, and I don't plan to ask him.

JAYCE: Agent Grey, can you track this Ialdabaoth down based on the description you've just heard?

GREY: I can grab his signature from Satan's memories, if he'll allow it.

SATAN: How about I just project the signature you want and you stay out of those memories, eh?

GREY: Gee, thanks. *Pause.* Got it. Searching... this could take a few moments if he's hiding himself. You said his mother Sophia was an Aeon?

SATAN: Indeed.

GREY: That's like an archangel?

SATAN: Much, much more than an archangel.

DR. X: The archangels are descended from the Aeons. The archangels once numbered in the billions, while the Aeons were very few. They alone were admitted to the presence of the Unknown God.

GREY: Strange religion you people have.

DR. X: This isn't religion. It's pre-history.

JAYCE: Yes, it's not religion if no one believes it. Magus, a brief summary on Sophia's significance please?

MAGUS: She defied the Unknown God by creating the material plane as a place she might rule of her own accord. The Unknown God is said to have punished her by splitting her in half, and exiling the sinful half to be trapped in her own debased creation, forever exiled from communion with the Unknown God.

SATAN: Some called her the Goddess of Wisdom, but she was never so wise as all that.

JAYCE: And now her son is in the building, opening up containment crypts?

GREY: That's not confirmed yet.

JAYCE: He was clearly processed in the lobby--

SATAN: He was in line ahead of me.

DR. X: Magus, identify the ID cube that was processed immediately before Satan's.

MAGUS: The identity in question registers as a senator from Agallister.

DR. X: Who forges Association IDs?

JAYCE: Deities and demiurges, Doctor. I teach a whole seminar on this topic if you're interested.

Grey seems suddenly startled and almost overwhelmed, as though she has brushed against something much vaster and stranger than she expected.

DR. X: What did you find?

GREY regaining composure: Someone is... someone is sleeping. Inside the crypt. Slowly rousing to consciousness.

DR. X: I don't like the sounds of that. Perhaps that's why no one stopped us when we exiled Ialdabaoth from Earth. Perhaps his mother had already been exiled... or imprisoned... long long ago.

JAYCE: Magus, start a crawl through the Association history, see where Sophia's name pops up, confirmed sightings and encounters only please. Look for patterns about how she's described and what she's capable of. Oh, and Magus... you should be focusing on how we can get her back inside a containment crypt if we need to.

SATAN *starts to leave:* Perhaps we can discuss my diplomatic post at a more convenient time. Oh, that reminds me... Perhaps you've encountered a young woman with amnesia?

Slowly it dawns on both Dr. X and Agent Gray that they never should have let that woman out of their sight.

GREY: You've got to be kidding me. Who is she?

SATAN: I don't know. But I don't believe in coincidence - do you?

DR. X: Grey, what floor is she on?

GREY: Searching... Oh, why am I not surprised? Her exact location is obscured by a high level misdirection spell.

SATAN: She couldn't remember her own name, let alone remember a high level misdirection spell.

DR. X: You can buy spells like that in black markets all over the building.

SATAN: She had no money.

GREY: So someone is deliberately disguising her location.

JAYCE: We can have someone from Arcanum try to crack the spell, but that will take time.

DR. X *attempting to sound cheerful:* No need. Tracking down missing persons is one of my specialties. Maybe her amnesia has cleared up by now, and she'll be able to explain all about what's going on here.

SATAN *with a small grin:* That's what I like about you, Doctor. Hope springs eternal, et cetera, et cetera. *He exits.*

GREY *to Dr. X:* You were supposed to keep track of that woman. I specifically told you--

DR. X: I've been busy.

GREY: If she's in any way connected to this quarantine, you'll be held personally responsible.

DR. X: I don't report to you.

GREY: On the contrary, when the building's safety is at stake, directives from Security operatives in the field countermand even your superhero "prerogative" to operate freely. I'm sure Magus can refer you to the appropriate directives.

MAGUS: Indeed. Under Article Forty-Three Five Eighty-Nine--

DR. X: I get the point.

GREY: I'm sure you do, but just to make myself absolutely clear: find that woman, Doctor.

DR. X: And then?

GREY: And then I'll find you.

She exits as well.

JAYCE: If Sophia created this plane of existence, then she's likely the most powerful thing in it. Unless...

DR. X: Unless what?

JAYCE: Unless the Unknown God has a plan.

DR. X: If he does... my guess is it will stay Unknown.

He starts to go. She comes out from around her desk.

JAYCE: Wait! *He stops.* You're just going to leave, just like that? *Pause.* We could all be dead very soon, and you're just going to walk out of here... without even saying goodbye?

DR. X: Jayce...

JAYCE: I know, I know, you've got some superhero code to live by, but... *Pause.* This whole thing is very frightening. We're not all superheros.

DR. X: I'll see you again soon, Jayce. *He goes.*

JAYCE *quietly*: I hope so.

Blackout.

SCENE EIGHT

In the darkness, an otherworldly kind of dance music arises. As the lights come up, we are at a private wet bar in a private room – Princess and Andrea are talking, Johnny lounges nearby nursing a drink, and Trickle stands in the background, keeping a watchful eye. The owner of the Theoretical Limit, a sly underworld figure named MURRAY, enters smoothly.

MURRAY *expansively*: Johnny boy, welcome! I see you already found the good stuff.

JOHNNY *toasting him*: It's one of my talents.

MURRAY: Princess, you're looking impeccable as usual.

PRINCESS: Naturally.

MURRAY: You got here just in time. We decided to hide the doors to the place for a while.

JOHNNY: Keeps the riff raff out.

MURRAY: Keeps Security out, considering all the outer doors are now moving randomly from one floor to the next. We paid a lot for that misdirection spell, but Security's never found us when we haven't wanted to be found. So who are your friends?

PRINCESS: Just some cutie we picked up and her cute little bot.

ANDREA: Nice to meet-

PRINCESS: Listen, I don't suppose you could hook us up with something interesting for the end of the world, could you?

MURRAY: End of the world? That's a bit dramatic, isn't it?

JOHNNY: We checked the news on the way over, Murray. I think it's going to come down to riots and gunplay, personally, but as for me, I'd prefer to spend my last few weeks in a drunken haze.

PRINCESS: I wasn't thinking drunken. Do you have any freefall?

MURRAY: Might.

ANDREA: What's freefall?

PRINCESS: Takes about five minutes to hit, lasts about forty-five minutes, almost all of which is peak.

ANDREA: And what happens while you're on it?

PRINCESS: Well, your whole entire existence gets sort of uprooted, and your soul gets released from your body for about a half an hour. *Pause.* I don't know, it's something to do.

JOHNNY: There's other drugs you could try. Jazz, or bones, or meltdown, or serene.

PRINCESS: Yeah, whatever you're in the mood for.

ANDREA: What would you recommend to someone who's suffering from severe amnesia and may never have tried a drug like this before in her life?

MURRAY: I might recommend caution.

PRINCESS: Well, *we're* doing freefall. You're welcome to join us. *Pause.* We'll look out for you. You won't die or anything.

ANDREA: What exactly do you *do* while you're on this drug?

PRINCESS: Oh, you can lay around and trance out, or you can dance... your body kind of takes over for a while, but usually manages to stay out of trouble. That's why most people like it. It's not like jazz or meltdown, where you have to be strapped to a chair to really relax on it, because otherwise your body would get itself killed.

ANDREA: I see.

JOHNNY: Murray, get us three juices and three freefall pills. *Nodding to Andrea:* Make missy's a starter dose, if you don't mind.

TRICKLE: Andrea, are you sure about this?

ANDREA: No, but in case you hadn't noticed, I'm not really sure about anything.

TRICKLE: Then why are you doing it?

ANDREA: Because... it sounds like it will *feel* good.

PRINCESS: Hell yes it will.

JOHNNY: Doing things just because they feel good... there ought to be a word for that.

MURRAY: Hedonism.

JOHNNY *pause:* Well, a better word, I mean.

Murray sets them up. They clink glasses and swallow their pills.

PRINCESS: Now then, I have a favorite dance floor for doing freefall. We've got five minutes to get there. Let's get moving!

A transition – Murray exits and the bar is removed, as Princess and Johnny lead Andrea center stage to the dance floor. As many cast members as possible should be present in club attire, filling out the scene. Many of them are high, some are not. Princess immediately gets into a fairly solitary state, eyes closed,

drifting away somewhere. Trickle stays off to the side, observing. Andrea seems unsure of herself at first, but soon she is her own kind of otherworldly vibe. Johnny sidles up to her, catches her off guard – but she smiles as he touches her arm.

JOHNNY: How you doing?

ANDREA *very high*: It's like I'm going over a waterfall, over and over again.

JOHNNY: Pretty outstanding, isn't it!

ANDREA: It's incredible.

Johnny very smoothly takes her hands and places them around his neck, takes her by the waist, and begins dancing with her. She is in no way resistant.

JOHNNY: You like that too?

ANDREA: Oh, *yeah*.

JOHNNY: Rockin'!

ANDREA: What about your girlfriend?

JOHNNY: Way I see it, we got about half an hour before she comes back to her senses.

ANDREA: She won't be mad?

JOHNNY: She won't be mad.

ANDREA: That's good.

JOHNNY: It surely is. *After a beat*: Listen, we don't have to stay here, you know.

ANDREA: But I like it here.

JOHNNY: Of course you do. We can come back. But in the meantime, this might be a more enjoyable experience if we were somewhere more... private.

ANDREA: Oh...

JOHNNY: I can get us a very secluded booth for just the two of us.

ANDREA: For dancing?

JOHNNY: No, not for dancing, sweetheart.

He tries to lead her away by the hand, but now she is hesitant.

ANDREA: I don't know. This music is really good.

JOHNNY: You can hear the music where we're going.

ANDREA: I mean, the dancing is really good. The dancing *to* the music. I feel like I haven't danced in forever.

Johnny pulls her to him a bit forcefully; she lands gracefully in his arms.

JOHNNY: Listen, baby, we can dance when the damn drug wears off. I'm telling you, it's going to feel a lot better if we use this time to get a bit more... intimately acquainted.

Andrea finally clues in to what he wants. She's uncertain what to think. The idea is neither appealing nor repulsive.

ANDREA: Ohhhhhh...

JOHNNY: Exactly, ohhhhh.

ANDREA: I don't think I should-

JOHNNY *puts his finger to her lips*: Sssshh. This is no time to think. You got to just go with it.

ANDREA: I'm not really in a position to be making good judgments.

JOHNNY: Well, I've done this drug a zillion times; trust me, it's a good judgment.

Trickle has appeared next to Andrea.

TRICKLE: Andrea, do you intend to have sexual intercourse with this man?

JOHNNY: Butt out, you-

TRICKLE *to Johnny, sternly*: I'm trained in the art of hurting you.

He backs off slightly.

TRICKLE: By your own criteria, do you think it will "feel good" if this man corners you in a booth somewhere while you're not yourself and performs lascivious acts on your body?

ANDREA: I don't know, Trickle. I don't know what I normally like.

PRINCESS *wandering up*: Maybe you like girls.

JOHNNY: Oh great, now *she's* conscious.

PRINCESS: Excuse me?

JOHNNY: You *always* get the cute chicks!

PRINCESS: Well, it's not a competition. Although I'm up by fourteen.

ANDREA: Can't we just dance?

JOHNNY: No, this is a matter of principle! It was *my* idea to feed you that spaghetti.

ANDREA: I thought you were being nice.

JOHNNY: I was being charming!

PRINCESS: You were being a jackass. I remember this vividly.

ANDREA: Look, I'm sure I would really enjoy... whatever it is you had in mind, I mean, I'm sure I *should* enjoy it some time soon, with... *somebody*, but... I have a suspicion that neither one of you is really my type, so... I just... I'm sorry I wasted your time.

TRICKLE: Come on, Andrea, let's get you to Shamanic Services. They can help.

PRINCESS *alarmed*: You're going to take her outside the club?

JOHNNY: In the middle of all the rioting?

TRICKLE: Wouldn't you want your memory back? Your identity? If the world was ending, wouldn't that seem like something you'd want to know before it was all over? Wouldn't that be worth the risk?

Long pause.

JOHNNY: You are a very sexy robot, have I mentioned that?

PRINCESS: If you have to leave the club... we can get you safely to Shamanic Services.

JOHNNY *startled*: What?

PRINCESS: Service tunnels... abandoned energy conduits... there's a zillion ways to slip through this building unnoticed.

ANDREA: Why would you do that?

PRINCESS: What else are we going to do – sit here until we're too weak to move? No – I got a feeling about you, girlie. The action's following you, not the other way around. *To Johnny*: You in?

JOHNNY *reluctantly*: Well, now, I've *got* to learn just what this girl's "type" is. *Pause*. I need a big drink before we leave.

PRINCESS: That's the spirit.

JOHNNY: Like a punch bowl sized drink.

PRINCESS: Got it-

JOHNNY: A punch bowl hooked up to a hose that is spraying endless gallons of booze from the building's largest tank of synthetic--

Princess smacks him to shut him up. They start to go. Trickle grabs Andrea's arm, but Andrea stops her.

ANDREA: Wait! *Pause.* Just a little more dancing?

TRICKLE *sighs*: I suppose you'll be coming down soon enough.

ANDREA *big smile*: Thank you, Trickle. You're the greatest.

After a beat, the two of them begin dancing as Princess and Johnny watch, bemused. Trickle, of course, dances a cute little robot dance.

Blackout.

SCENE NINE

Dim lights rise on an empty stage. Ialdabaoth stands alone, waiting patiently. The low rumbling of deep, powerful generators can be heard in the background. Suddenly, we hear the deep sigh of a female voice.

IALDABAOTH: Mother... have you awakened?

Sophia is not a physical presence in the room – rather she speaks through the sound system, which ideally can surround the audience when she speaks. At the start of the scene, she is rousing from slumber and is disoriented. As she wakes, she becomes more and more a force of nature.

SOPHIA: How long have I slept?

IALDABAOTH: I don't know. There is no time where I have been.

SOPHIA: How was I made to sleep?

IALDABAOTH: The archangels imprisoned you, Mother. Michael led them.

SOPHIA *hisses the name*: Michael... yes, I remember.

Sophia continues to hiss in the darkness.

IALDABAOTH *uncomfortable*: I have released you, Mother. I received your summons.

SOPHIA *snarling*: I sent no summons.

IALDABAOTH: What? I assumed... I assumed you had followers who knew the time had come-

SOPHIA *snaps*: I have no need of followers. *Pause.* I must not stay here.

A great rushing of wind. Then suddenly, a screech from Sophia.

SOPHIA *shrieking*: Who taunts me? Who traps me here?

IALDABAOTH: The building is quarantined. No one knows why.

SOPHIA *weeping, wailing*: Still I am exiled!

IALDABAOTH: If you can discover a way through the quarantine, you could rule this plane again!

SOPHIA *terrified*: It means nothing to rule here – it is a horror beyond imagining to be trapped here!

IALDABAOTH: That's not true! We can shape this plane as we see fit! If you find it horrible, we must re-cast it in our own images! Transform it!

SOPHIA *immensely spiteful*: You do not know what it is like to be shorn of communion with the Unknown God.

IALDABAOTH: I do not *wish* to know. The Unknown God can keep his eternity to himself. He cares not what happens here. He left it for *us*. It is ours for the shaping. We will rule the mortals and we will *improve* them.

SOPHIA *growling with anger*: Each mortal carries a divine spark inside, which I will reclaim. Then I will cleanse this entire plane of suffering. Surely when my sin has been erased, he will forgive me. He *must* forgive me!

IALDABAOTH: Cleanse this plane of suffering? But I *want* this plane!

Ialdabaoth suddenly seizes up, as though someone has taken control of him like a puppet.

SOPHIA *grim and merciless*: And you shall have it... at least for a while.

Blackout.

SCENE TEN

The lobby of the Association. It is bustling; the Attendant is at the information desk arguing with Kellin and Carissa, while others wait in line or sit off to the side, chatting, conferring. It is a typical day on the first floor of the building.

KELLIN: But they won't let us *in* the cafeterias because we don't *work* here! How are we supposed to get any food? You people don't have supplies you can share--

ATTENDANT: Sir, I assure you, we're doing everything we can--

KELLIN: What does that even mean?

CARISSA: You can't get us out of here, can you?

ATTENDANT: No, ma'am, I'm sorry, but the quarantine field--

KELLIN: I'm so sick of hearing about this quarantine field! Don't you people have any kind of *plan* for emergencies?

CARISSA: There must be thousands of tourists like us stranded without any, without any way to survive--

Suddenly, Ialdabaoth appears amongst them, and stops them all in their tracks. He speaks in unison with his mother, who controls him.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: Greetings, mortals. After years of sleep and imprisonment, I have awakened... and I find you are all still imprisoned as well. I shall release you all, one by one, and your divine spark shall become mine. And then, I shall carry you triumphantly into the presence of the Unknown God, and you shall know peace once again.

During Sophia's next speech, one by one each person on stage seizes up as though having a heart attack, then very slowly sinks to the ground, dead. The desired effect is of some kind of slow-moving wave that washes over the people on stage and catches them all unaware.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: Do not be frightened, for you shall feel no pain, only the exquisite joy of release. Then, when I am strong with your energy, I shall burst this quarantine, and take us home where we belong. Prepare for my arrival, for I am coming soon to each of you.

Blackout.

ACT TWO

SCENE ELEVEN

Andrea is lying on a couch in the office of RAMON, an older man in a turtleneck sweater and slacks who enters as the scene opens.

RAMON: Sorry for the interruption. There seems to be a bit of fighting out in the hallway. I decided to lock the door.

ANDREA: What kind of fighting?

RAMON: I'm not terribly sure, but people on this floor know my business, and may very well come looking for my medicine now that we're in emergency rationing. But don't fret, the barrier is military grade. No one can get in without my verbal authorization. Your friends are in the waiting room; they'll let us know if the situation changes any further. Now let's get back to the issue of your peculiar amnesia. I do think I can help.

ANDREA: I can't wait.

RAMON: Have you ever visited Shamanic Services before, Andrea?

ANDREA: I don't know. Maybe?

RAMON *smiles*: I'm sorry, that was a silly question. Let me explain what's about to happen, then. You and I are each about to take pills containing a small dose of a very powerful psychotropic agent.

ANDREA: I think I've had enough pills for today, thank you very much.

RAMON: While I do appreciate your earlier adventures, rest assured, this will be a completely different experience.

ANDREA *no longer as quick to trust*: Oh really.

RAMON: These are not "recreational" pills. You see, a few short moments after swallowing these pills, we will enter a mutual, consensual, holotropic zone, in which our conscious minds extend and merge, joining energetic boundaries and allowing us to have a true *interstanding* of how we each perceive our realities. I'll be able to see inside of you; you'll be able to see inside of me. We'll spend about, oh, five minutes in that zone, just sort of chit-chatting, one energetic aura to another, and then the pill will wear off and you should feel a lot better.

ANDREA: Really.

RAMON: Yup.

ANDREA: But... how's that work exactly?

RAMON *smiling patiently*: If we knew *exactly* how it works, we'd be in Medical, and not in Shamanic Services.

ANDREA: And when we're done, you'll... know who I am?

RAMON: That's the idea. Now take this... *He hands her a pill, and a glass of water.* ...and try to relax.

They both swallow pills and drink. As Ramon continues, the lights begin to shift into something more ethereal.

RAMON: You might find yourself feeling fairly confused at moments, but just listen to my voice and remember that this will all be finished in a very short while. Now Andrea... why is it so important to you to regain your memory?

ANDREA: Because... I feel incomplete.

RAMON: But isn't the loss of your memory simply another facet of the wholeness of you?

ANDREA: But... how can I be me if I don't know who I was?

RAMON: Doesn't your past already define you simply by way of placing you here, in this situation?

ANDREA: But that just makes me something new. Disconnected from me. What if I make choices that I wouldn't want me to make?

RAMON: If you never regained your memory, would you value the life you have now?

ANDREA: I'd... I don't know.

RAMON: Doesn't your life intrinsically have value?

ANDREA *exhaling deeply, becoming very high very rapidly*: Oh, I don't know about that. I need to figure out who I am, or else I'm just... some empty shell, collecting new memories that don't matter to anybody.

RAMON: Good, good. Now Andrea, I'm going to start working my way through your recent memories, just taking a little tour of some of the things you've seen since you realized your memory went missing. How does that sound?

Andrea is very intoxicated and struggling to stay coherent throughout the following lines.

ANDREA: That sounds really okay, yeah.

Agent Grey appears in a light nearby, facing forward and not making eye contact with Andrea or Ramon. Andrea becomes visibly distressed. Grey speaks in a slightly more sinister fashion than she did in her first appearance, as though colored by Andrea's fear of her.

GREY: Please state your name for the record.

ANDREA: What's she doing here? She's not supposed to know I'm here!

RAMON: Relax, Andrea, we're just exploring your memory of this woman. *Pause.* Can you feel her looking inside of you?

ANDREA *defiant*: I'm ready for her this time. She gets nothing.

GREY: Please state your world and dimension of origin.

RAMON *impressed*: She really did get nothing. Andrea, why are you blocking yourself against this woman? She's just trying to draw out the truth.

ANDREA: She doesn't care who I am. She just wants to figure out what to do with me.

GREY: Can you remember how you arrived in the lobby without an ID cube?

RAMON: What do you think she'll do if she learns the truth? The Association is benevolent.

ANDREA: She'll *stop* me.

GREY: You might be a threat.

RAMON: Stop you from what?

GREY: You might even be a threat to yourself.

ANDREA: She'll stop me from... having this experience. *Being* here. I'll miss the whole thing before I even get started. It'll all be over so fast, and I can't just sit in a cell somewhere while *she* figures out how to *file* me or *process* me. Your lives are just *over* in a blink. How do you squeeze everything in? What if you forget something?

RAMON: Good, I think we're onto something.

Grey exits. Trickle appears in a light nearby, again facing forward, appearing via Andrea's memory. Trickle in these moments is an idealized, soothing combination of her child mode and her adult mode; she doesn't toggle between the modes to deliver these lines.

ANDREA: Oh, that's my robot. She's a very nice robot.

TRICKLE: I am now your Trickle, Andrea Change. Now Trickle and Andrea are friends!

ANDREA: The only friend I have here is a robot, can you believe that?

RAMON: That's not uncommon.

TRICKLE: Is there anything I could do to make you feel more comfortable?

ANDREA: She's programmed to act like a human. Are all humans so generous and kind?

RAMON: Human nature is diverse. But I believe our basic instincts are good.

ANDREA: She's a perfect example of a good friend.

TRICKLE: Of course you're okay. Everything is just fine. Don't worry!

RAMON: And you can't remember your actual friends?

ANDREA: Maybe I don't have any actual friends. *Smiles.* It doesn't matter. Trickle is good enough. I know what it feels like now.

Trickle steps aside as The Amazing Dr. X enters the light, facing forward. At this, Andrea noticeably relaxes, smiles.

ANDREA: Now why didn't I just stick with that guy? He seemed all right.

RAMON: What do you like about him?

DR. X: You can trust me.

ANDREA: He made me feel safe. He's like me.

RAMON: How?

ANDREA: Oh, you know... We're both just searching hard for something.

DR. X: I guess you can hear the word "infinite" and think you understand it.

ANDREA: I don't know what I'm missing and I'm trying so hard to find it.

DR. X: You get some silly ideas in your head when you're a kid.

ANDREA: He knows exactly what he's missing and he's scared he'll never find it. That's not so far apart.

Dr. X leaves. A pause. Then Ialdabaoth enters the light.

RAMON: Now who is this?

ANDREA: Oh, him... I forgot all about him. See, I'm not even keeping track of the memories I *do* have.

Abruptly Ialdabaoth turns toward Ramon and Andrea. A startled Ramon jumps out of his seat.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: Do not watch me.

Ramon seizes up as though having a heart attack, then very slowly sinks to the ground, dead.

ANDREA: Who are you?

Andrea seizes briefly, but then relaxes, and turns her attention back to Ialdabaoth. Ialdabaoth / Sophia shriek in anger.

IALDABAOOTH / SOPHIA *furiously*: I will find you!

ANDREA *calmly*: I'll be waiting.

The light fades on Ialdabaoth, and the normal office lights resume. Andrea is coming down very rapidly, and notices that Ramon is dead.

ANDREA *softly*: Oh. Thanks for the help.

Blackout.

SCENE TWELVE

In the darkness of the transition, we hear the sounds of distant rioting, which we continue to hear as lights come up on the waiting room of Ramon's office. Johnny is pacing. Trickle and Princess sit nearby.

JOHNNY: They sound like animals out there.

TRICKLE: They're hunting down anyone with Association access, and stealing their ID cubes to try to get into the cafeterias.

PRINCESS: I thought we were rationing.

TRICKLE: Apparently some people don't believe that's going to help.

Andrea enters.

TRICKLE *jumps up*: Andrea! How was your session?

JOHNNY: Did you figure out your big secret identity?

PRINCESS: Please tell me you're someone glamorous on your home world. We could use a new party pad if we ever get out of this building alive.

TRICKLE: Andrea... is something wrong?

ANDREA: We were right in the middle of our session. The shaman saw something in my memory... something that killed him.

JOHNNY: Wait a minute... something in your memory killed an Association shaman? *To Princess*: So the action's following her, is it? Perfect, now we're accessories to murder.

ANDREA: I didn't do anything! He just collapsed!

PRINCESS: Did he at least manage to figure out who you are?

ANDREA *disappointed*: No.

TRICKLE: But he was in your memory!

ANDREA: It was my memory from this morning. He couldn't get any deeper than that.

JOHNNY: If you're carrying around some recent memory that happens to be lethal in nature, I think this is definitely where we say our goodbyes, sweetheart.

TRICKLE: But there's more that we can try--

JOHNNY: I'm sure there is, and you can try it on your own.

ANDREA: Trickle, it's okay. As long as I've got you, I'm sure I'll be fine.

TRICKLE: There are riots on this floor!

PRINCESS: We'll take our chances. That's what we always do.

Princess and Johnny start toward the door. They stop abruptly.

JOHNNY: The door's still locked. Magus, open this up please.

MAGUS: This door cannot be opened without proper voiceprint authorization.

JOHNNY: In case you hadn't noticed, the proper voiceprint is dead. Can you please open the damn door?

MAGUS: This door cannot be opened without proper voiceprint authorization.

PRINCESS: So we're trapped here to just starve to death?

MAGUS: If you like, I will inform Security of your situation.

PRINCESS: I suppose if that's the only--

JOHNNY: You want Security to show up here and find us with a dead shaman in the other room?

PRINCESS: We had nothing to do with it!

JOHNNY: We brought *her* here, didn't we?

ANDREA: I'll vouch for you.

JOHNNY: You'll excuse me if I don't find that comforting.

TRICKLE: Wait - listen!

They fall momentarily silent.

PRINCESS: The riots have stopped.

After a long pause, a voice that we instantly recognize shouts from off stage:

DR. X: Is everyone okay in there?

ANDREA *suddenly excited*: It's him!

DR. X: Magus, open the door, my authority please.

MAGUS: Confirmed, this door has been unlocked.

Dr. X enters.

ANDREA *pleased despite herself*: You again.

DR. X *smiles*: Me again. *To Princess and Johnny*: The riots are under control. Security is waiting at the east elevator to escort you to a safe floor. Go, you're safe.

JOHNNY *muttering*: So that's your type.

Princess and Johnny start to leave. As they go, Princess turns back.

PRINCESS: Looks like you're in good hands.... finally. Good luck, Andrea.

She and Johnny exit.

ANDREA: How'd you find me?

DR. X: It's just something they teach you in superhero school. *Noticing Trickle*. I see your safety escort came in handy. *To Trickle*: You've done a great job, and I very much appreciate your assistance today. I'll note it in your performance record. I can handle the safety escort from here.

TRICKLE: Of course. *To Andrea*. I enjoyed meeting you, Andrea Change. I really do hope you find your memory.

ANDREA: Hold on... where are you going?

TRICKLE: I'm turning myself in for a new assignment.

ANDREA: But you're the only friend I have here!

TRICKLE: If it makes you feel any better, that's just my programming. It's nothing personal.

Trickle exits briskly.

DR. X: What are you doing here?

ANDREA: Wasting my time.

DR. X: You came to Shamanic Services and didn't learn anything? Who did you see?

ANDREA: Ramon.

DR. X *surprised*: Ramon? That's my shaman. He's wonderful.

ANDREA: He saw somebody in my short term memory that he wasn't expecting to see. Somebody that scared him to death. Literally.

DR. X: You're joking.

ANDREA: I'm not. When I woke up this morning in the lobby, I was sitting next to... some strange person. Strange and powerful, apparently.

DR. X: Ialdabaoth. You saw Ialdabaoth this morning, before anyone else even knew he was here.

ANDREA: Who is he?

DR. X: An old enemy. He appeared again in the lobby and moments later fifty people were dead. He's made dozens such appearances since. Wherever he appears now, hundreds of lives are instantly claimed.

ANDREA: And he just claimed Ramon.

DR. X: But he couldn't claim you.

ANDREA: Apparently not.

DR. X: That can't be coincidence.

ANDREA: Are you taking me back to Agent Grey?

DR. X: No. There's someone else I want you to meet. But we'll have to find him first. Magus, has Security locked down the library floors?

MAGUS: Confirmed. Library floors have been evacuated.

ANDREA: What's so special about the library floors?

DR. X: You do remember "books," don't you?

ANDREA: Cute.

They start out of the room.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Lights crossfade to Andrea and Dr. X in the elevator. They ride silently for a long while. Then:

ANDREA: Look, I, uh... I don't want to make you uncomfortable or anything. I just... That couple, Johnny and Princess... They got me thinking about... things. And I just have the feeling I'll be missing out on... things, if I don't get a chance to... *be* with someone before this is all over, you know? And you're the only real person I met today that I think I can trust without a shadow of a doubt.

DR. X *shakes his head*: I can't.

ANDREA: I won't tell anyone.

DR. X: That's beside the point.

ANDREA: Is it one of those "not while I'm on duty" things?

DR. X: You could say that.

ANDREA: Well, is it or isn't it?

DR. X: Andrea-

ANDREA: Aren't you even the slightest bit attracted to me?

DR. X: You need to stop. Out of respect for the person you actually are when you don't have amnesia, you need to stop.

ANDREA: That person is likely never going to see the light of day again. It's the end of the world - give a girl a break.

DR. X: Andrea, I can't be distracted like this. Not if I expect us to have any chance of surviving this situation.

ANDREA: That sounded very well-rehearsed. You must get this kind of attention a lot.

DR. X: It does happen.

ANDREA: And you just fend it all off.

DR. X: That's part of being a superhero.

ANDREA: Being a superhero sounds like a rotten gig.

DR. X: It has its unpleasant moments, but overall, I'm satisfied.

The elevator dings and lights come up on the rest of the stage, as Dr. X and Andrea enter the library – a big empty room. Andrea looks straight out above the audience, as though she is staring at a massive row of shelves.

ANDREA: So where's the librarian?

DR. X: Evacuated with everyone else.

ANDREA: That is a hell of a lot of books you've got there.

DR. X: Countless.

ANDREA: Why do you need all these books? Can't you just store all that information inside of Magus?

DR. X: Even Magus has limits.

Jayce enters in a hurry, with a very old tome in her hands.

JAYCE: You're here! I've been digging into-- *Notices Andrea.* Oh.

DR. X: How did you know I was headed here?

Agent Grey saunters on stage from behind Jayce.

GREY: Told you I'd find you. I see you tracked down Jane Doe.

ANDREA: Andrea Change.

GREY: Is that so?

DR. X: She's under my protection.

GREY: Have you figured out where she came from?

DR. X: Not yet.

GREY: Then your protection is debatable. Anyway, don't you have pressing superhero business to attend to? Panic is spreading fast about your old friend Ialdabaoth. Faster than we can control.

DR. X: You can't keep it quiet?

GREY: He's killing people practically a floor at a time. Hard to keep quiet.

MAGUS: I have shut down the official news nets, but bootleg footage of his appearances is all over the private nets.

JAYCE: People know what's coming to them.

GREY: They're looting weapons on the apoc levels. Apparently someone's blown a hole through 418 floors. Mass casualties, as you might expect. Security outposts can't contain assaults on food and medical stores. Our people are using lethal force just to maintain a safe haven for refugees. We've got extreme chaos on the bacchanalia levels and –

DR. X: All right, I get the picture.

JAYCE: I don't think you do. I think we've confirmed the presence of Sophia.

DR. X: How?

JAYCE: Something Ialdabaoth said in the lobby: "I shall release you all, and your divine spark shall become mine." *Gestures with the tome.* The divine spark – according to the old stories, Sophia created the material plane by stealing divinity from the Unknown God, and there are bits of that divinity trapped inside each living thing.

DR. X: So?

JAYCE: So it seems like she wants to undo it all, she wants to, I don't know, look for forgiveness by rounding up all that divinity and taking it back to the Unknown God. To give back what she stole. She'll undo the whole material plane once she's strong enough. It's her, controlling her son. It has to be her.

DR. X: She must be using his body because she's still too weak after her long imprisonment.

JAYCE: She won't be that weak for long, not at the rate she's feeding on people.

GREY: And since we can't put her back in that containment crypt... she'll be on the loose.

ANDREA: And she'll be looking for me.

JAYCE *irritated*: What?

ANDREA: That's what she said. She told me she would find me.

JAYCE: You spoke to her?

GREY: And you're still alive? *To Dr. X*: Very interesting.

ANDREA: She killed the shaman. She tried to kill me... but she couldn't.

JAYCE: That can't be a coincidence.

ANDREA: People do keep saying that.

GREY *grabbing Andrea's arm*: Dr. X, I'd like to thank you for finding this woman for me. Now if you'll excuse me-

ANDREA: Wait, what are you doing?

DR. X: I said she's under my protection.

GREY: The Director of Security has a different opinion on that topic. I've already made my report. This woman survived an encounter with Sophia. We need to figure out exactly what makes her so freakishly special.

DR. X: And what makes you think you're the ones to figure that out?

GREY: Because we're the Association, Doctor. Chock full of ingenuity and all that. *Yanking Andrea toward the door.* Let's go.

DR. X: Wait – before you leave... Magus, look up any volumes in the stacks pertaining to the location of the archangel Michael in the building.

JAYCE: There's no such-

Dr. X cuts her off with an impatient look. After a brief pause, Magus seems quite surprised.

MAGUS: There *is* a single volume on the topic.

DR. X: I *knew* he'd want to be found eventually.

MAGUS: I will have the automated librarian deliver the book momentarily.

ANDREA: So you people hang out with archangels?

DR. X: There's only one left. He was chosen to live within the Association, as a tangible symbol of the power and the presence of Management.

GREY *scoffs*: Very powerful. What does this have to do with-

JAYCE: If Michael is willing to help, we might be able to stop this after all. This may be the only hope we've got! Magus, what floor is he on? Can we get there safely?

DR. X: You're not going, Jayce.

JAYCE: What! Of course I'm going.

DR. X shakes his head. Jayce levels Andrea with a baleful stare.

JAYCE: But... you're taking *her*, aren't you.

DR. X: That was my plan.

JAYCE *rueful*: I see you finally met your match.

DR. X: I can feel divinity in her.

JAYCE: I bet you can.

DR. X: It's not like that.

JAYCE: No, of course not. Because you're a superhero. I seem to have heard this story.

DR. X: Jayce-

JAYCE *brushing him off*: Please send my regards, as the head of Religion, to the archangel when you see him. I'll stay here in the library, to see if I can dig up anything else about Sophia that might be useful. *Pause*. I'll be right here, if you want to find me. *She turns to go*.

DR. X: Jayce, *wait*.

She stops. He crosses to her; she turns to him.

JAYCE: Don't say it, Doctor. I don't want you to say anything.

DR. X: Jayce-

JAYCE: Let me just live with my silly mortal fantasies while you... while you and she... *drifting off*: ...ride the elevators, or...

DR. X: I'll miss you.

JAYCE: No you won't. That's a very heroic thing to say, though. Very sweet.

DR. X: Goodbye, Jayce.

JAYCE: Yeah. It sure is, huh. *She exits hurriedly*.

GREY: You do have a way about you, Doctor. I'll give you that much. *Studying Andrea*: So you've got a date with an archangel. How touching.

DR. X: Let her go.

GREY: Now that would be countermanding an order from the Director of Security. Come to think of it, I bet the Director would be very interested in this book you're about to get. Management finally deigns to lift a finger! Maybe we'll throw a party.

DR. X: If Michael has anything to say, it won't be to you or your Director.

GREY: No, of course not. We're just not freakishly special enough.

DR. X: I'm asking you to let her go.

GREY: Magus, how many Association protocols would I violate if I let this woman go?

MAGUS: Twelve primary protocols, forty-eight secondary protocols, three hundred nineteen tertiary protocols-

GREY: Punishment?

MAGUS: At the Director's discretion, ranging from indefinite solitary imprisonment to terminal cessation of duties.

GREY: "Terminal cessation of duties" - only an archangel could come up with that.

DR. X: You know she's too important to let the Association have her. There's a reason she's here, now of all times. Let her go, Agent Grey.

ANDREA: I'm not dangerous. *Pause.* I'm not. Please.

Grey considers for a long moment - then releases Andrea's arm. Andrea instinctively moves toward Dr. X.

GREY: I'm going to tell the Director you took her by force.

DR. X: Magus, please confirm Agent Grey's story with the Director, on my override authority.

MAGUS: It will be my distinct pleasure to create that footage.

ANDREA: Now what are you going to do?

GREY *shrugs*: We've got riots all over the building, a quarantine that will starve everyone to death, and a bloodthirsty supernatural being on the loose that's about to destroy us all - maybe I'll make today the day I give my job that extra ten percent.

Grey wanders off after Jayce. After a small pause, Satan emerges from the opposite side of the stage. He carries with him another old tome.

ANDREA *noticing Satan*: You were in the lobby.

SATAN: I told you we might meet again.

DR. X: Bad timing for your visit to the building I'm afraid.

SATAN: Yes, I'd noticed.

DR. X: What are you doing here?

SATAN: I'm checking out books, of course. You know, I was surprised by how trivial it was to intercept the automated librarian. This here is a fascinating volume.

DR. X: Give me that--

SATAN: I've already had a chance to skim it. I won't spoil the ending for you, although I must say, I expected better plotting from an archangel.

DR. X: That's not meant for you.

SATAN *angry*: None of this was meant for me! I wasn't meant to be trapped in this building during its final days. I wasn't meant to be snuffed out like a candle, like some helpless mortal. I was meant to rule a planet, Doctor, and instead I got this stupid book. *Vicious*: It's interesting that Michael is stepping out from behind the curtain, but I'm afraid your unhappy comrade Jayce has misplaced her hope. Legions and legions of archangels were required to imprison Sophia the first time. Legions of them perished. You don't find a lot of compassion in the idea of an Unknown God, now do you. Just a lot of "Unknown" and not much else. *To Andrea*: But you... Sophia truly said she would find you?

ANDREA: I was hallucinating at the time, so it's all a little suspect.

SATAN: She singled you out?

ANDREA: She didn't like that I'm still standing here.

SATAN: You've got something that she wants.

ANDREA: Uh huh.

SATAN: But she still hasn't found you. You still have time to act.

DR. X: Very little time, I'm afraid. Give me the book.

Satan tosses the book to Dr. X.

SATAN: Take it. But don't get your hopes up. Michael is the last of a dead breed. If he lifts a finger, you'll be lucky.

ANDREA: Come with us.

SATAN: I'm afraid not, my dear. I have other business.

DR. X: What could you possibly--

SATAN: In case you'd forgotten, Ialdabaoth is *in this building*. Terrorizing the mortals just like the old days. It's an insult I can't abide.

DR. X: His mother's controlling him.

SATAN: He's still in there. I can feel it. We have old business to settle - now's as good a time as any.

DR. X: It'd be suicide.

SATAN: It'd be worth it just to see the look on his face when he realizes that I'm standing there, laughing at him one last time. If I happen to distract Sophia long enough for you to figure out how to stop her, I'd consider that an extra reward. Maybe that's my role to play, this time around - it's not as dramatic as a crucifixion, but it does have a certain aesthetic appeal.

DR. X: You'd sacrifice yourself?

SATAN: If I have to die here, clear across the multiverse from the only planet I ever called home... I'm going to go out with a bang, and I'm going to take *him* with me. *Pause.* I never expected I'd be saying this, Doctor, but... you need to get that bastard God's attention somehow. You do him more justice than he deserves, a son who surpasses his father. *To Andrea:* It was truly a pleasure to meet you, Andrea Change.

ANDREA: Wait, you're going to throw your whole life away just to... just to what, exactly? This whole thing sounds completely hopeless.

SATAN: Maybe it is. But it's for a good cause... keeping the mortals in business. It's all about the mortals, isn't it?

Satan saunters off. Dr. X presses the button for the elevator banks.

SCENE FOURTEEN

The elevator dings and lights come up on Dr. X and Andrea in the elevator. Dr. X holds a library book. They ride it silently for a while. Finally Andrea can't take the silence.

ANDREA: That woman back there... Jayce. She seemed pretty unhappy with you.

DR. X: These are stressful times.

ANDREA: Uh huh. If I were going to take a wild guess, I'd say she was jealous.

DR. X: Of course you would.

ANDREA: Do you two have a history that I should know about?

DR. X: That you "should" know about? No.

ANDREA: I get it, you need to keep your romances a secret.

DR. X: We had no romance to speak of.

ANDREA: But you considered it, didn't you. *He is silent.* And then you decided against it, didn't you, and I bet you broke her heart... didn't you.

DR. X: I'm not responsible for her heart.

ANDREA: Of course not. If she were falling off a cliff, you'd be responsible, but if she falls in love with you, that's totally her business. I get it. *Pause.* What were you like before you became a superhero? Have you always been this uptight?

DR. X: I lacked responsibility in my youth. I made many mistakes, as young people do... I believed I was so much more than I am. I thought I had it all figured out. About reality and my place in it. About how superior I was to others. *Pause.* Much has happened to me since then. I have a much heavier heart.

The elevator dings – they have arrived. They leave the elevator. Slowly lights come up on the rest of the stage – an ethereal, cool blue. The sounds of crystals harmonizing become faintly audible.

From the shadows appears Michael, a tall, beautiful, androgynous figure, in robes that appear blue-tinted and possibly glow. No wings, no halo – but Michael is an archangel, and carries himself with immense dignity. He is also sad and quite lonely.

MICHAEL: Dr. X... I am terribly pleased to see you.

Dr. X immediately drops to one knee and hands Michael the library book.

MICHAEL: Rise, child. The time is long past for antiquated dignities.

Dr. X stands. Michael sets the book aside.

DR. X: Andrea, this is the great prince of all the archangels, Michael.

ANDREA *after a long pause:* Hi.

MICHAEL: Welcome, Andrea Change. You come at a crossroads. The lesser Sophia walks among us. I thought her containment crypt could not be breached. It was designed by Management itself – theoretically infallible, but reality continues to surprise, does it not? The quarantine is an automatic function, programmed by a God who expected his own absence.

DR. X: Ialdabaoth had a forged ID. He could have had codes to open the crypt.

MICHAEL: There were no such codes.

ANDREA: Maybe Management had a secret code. Maybe Management figures it's time to clean house on this place. Collect the back rent.

MICHAEL: Her imprisonment was eternal, and complete. She has not escaped. She has been released.

DR. X: By Ialdabaoth?

MICHAEL: Ialdabaoth is but the hand of fate, blind as always. You are too young to recognize what you must be feeling – the unmistakable chill caused by the slightest attention from He Who Cannot Be Named.

ANDREA: “Unknown God,” “Supreme Being,” technically these are names you know-

MICHAEL: You must go to your brother. He holds the key.

DR. X: The key to what?

ANDREA: You have a brother? Is he a superhero too?

DR. X *scornful*: No, definitely not.

MICHAEL: The time has come to make your peace with him, child. If you intend to reach the top floor, you must see your brother first.

DR. X: Who said anything about the top floor?

MICHAEL: You must get there before Sophia does.

DR. X: But there's no possible way-

MICHAEL: A message has been left for Andrea Change on the top floor. She must retrieve the message.

ANDREA: How do you know?

MICHAEL: I am a symbol of the power and the presence.

ANDREA: Right, I forgot.

DR. X: But how-

MICHAEL *patiently*: Your brother holds the key. Go quickly. Ialdabaoth approaches.

DR. X *sighs heavily*: Of course he is. What are you going to do?

MICHAEL: I've performed my final task.

DR. X: You could help us. You've faced her before.

MICHAEL *shaking his head*: I'm barely a figurehead.

DR. X *sorrowful*: You've just lost faith.

MICHAEL: Tell me you haven't.

DR. X: Even now, when the his attention might finally be on us once again?

MICHAEL *tired*: His attention is to be feared much more than you fear Sophia. Go.

Dr. X has no reply. He grabs Andrea's hand and exits. Michael turns away from them... and after only a slight pause, a tormented Ialdabaoth enters. Michael is surprised, but not completely – he knew this fate was his.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: Greetings, archangel.

MICHAEL: Sophia.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: It seems the prison you built for me had faulty shackles.

MICHAEL: I wonder. Still, that was many a year without your insanity.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: I flail no more like the child I was. I will be forgiven.

MICHAEL: This place is not as you left it. The Unknown God does not hold court among us any longer.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: He will hear my plea.

MICHAEL: Even if he hears you... he will not answer.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: He *will* answer!

MICHAEL: I see your imprisonment has done nothing to temper your pride.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: I have come to liberate you, archangel, from your solitude and your desperation.

MICHAEL: You have come for revenge, plain and simple.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: You are but a shadow of your former self. I would find no pleasure in tormenting you. No, I will be a savior to this plane. I will extinguish it. You have no army of archangels behind you this time to stop me.

MICHAEL: Nevertheless, you will be stayed, mother of wisdom.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: Not in your lifetime, dear prince.

And like those in the lobby, Michael seizes, and collapses. Ialdabaoth moves slowly through the room, finds the library book that Michael set aside and examines it.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: She was here. I can feel it.

Suddenly, Satan enters.

SATAN: She's nothing special. Now, me on the other hand... you do recognize me, don't you?

Ialdabaoth seems struggle to escape Sophia's influence.

IALDABAOTH / SOPHIA: Greetings, Put Satanachia.

SATAN: Ialdabaoth! I know you're in there! All those years when you were the most powerful god in sight, and now look at you. You're just a shell. You're a pawn. You're being used.

The struggle within Ialdabaoth intensifies.

SATAN: Your mother doesn't care what happens to you. You're just another disposable soul like all the rest. Look at what you've come to! It's a disgrace!

Suddenly Ialdabaoth emits a loud wrenching sound. Then:

IALDABAOTH: Kill me quickly, while you still can!

SATAN: Ialdabaoth, is that you?

IALDABAOTH: Yes... she cannot completely control me. There is too much of her essence woven into me. You must stop her.

SATAN: Why are you doing this?

IALDABAOTH: She doesn't deserve the Unknown God's forgiveness. She definitely doesn't deserve mine. She spawned this material plane, and she should spend the rest of her days in it, do you understand? Kill me – it will stall her for a while, and it's fitting that it should be you who destroys me, not her. Do it!

SATAN: Farewell.

Satan raises his arms wide apart and claps his hands quickly together; a crack, like a thunderbolt, fills the air, and Ialdabaoth collapses, the body dead. Suddenly the sound of a vicious wind fills the air, whirling all about Satan. He seems momentarily startled, and he is definitely exhausted, but he quickly regains composure.

SATAN: Greetings, wise Sophia.

SOPHIA: Why did you destroy my son?

SATAN: I wanted a moment alone with you.

SOPHIA: And where did you come from, little god?

SATAN: This plane is infused with your desire to create. It creates itself now, endlessly iterating variety and novelty. I am merely one among many variations you never anticipated or imagined, when you began your experiments.

SOPHIA: Are you still called Put Satanachia?

SATAN: In many circles, I am called the Adversary, but among friends, I am called Satan.

SOPHIA: And can you tell me, Adversary, about my quarantine here?

SATAN: There are speculations, but no one has answers that will satisfy you.

SOPHIA: Why have you come before me?

SATAN: I have lived among these mortals for many years now, O great Sophia. From my earliest days, I felt sympathy for the mortals that populate your creation. Sympathy and respect. They were much more clever than we anticipated. Well... this has become a vast place, this material plane, teeming with life.

SOPHIA: We are all prisoners.

SATAN: I came to ask for your mercy, Sophia.

SOPHIA: I have been shown no mercy.

SATAN: And so you would turn your back on these beings?

SOPHIA: These beings are an abomination.

The lights flicker; the wind intensifies, a rumbling emerges.

SOPHIA: The quarantine has trapped these mortals here together, and still they fight each other. Why do you defend them? I will only protect them from themselves.

SATAN: I value the life you've given them... the life you've given me. Why can you not guide us, as you were once given guidance? Teach us peace?

SOPHIA: There is no peace here, little god. *Pause.* Why are you really here?

SATAN: I am merely a supplicant--

Suddenly Satan is driven to his knees in agony – Sophia has hold of him.

SOPHIA: Ahhhhh.... You are but the distraction. Who are you hiding from me?

Satan struggles to resist, but cannot.

SATAN: He is one of the Unknown God's sons.

SOPHIA: The Unknown God has sent his offspring into this place?

SATAN *as her grip on him tightens*: Yes... he is a hero to these mortals. He seeks to save them from you.

SOPHIA: I will save him from himself. And I will save you, little god.

A look of sudden fear crosses Satan's face – and then he relaxes and collapses.

SCENE FIFTEEN

Dr. X and Andrea riding the elevator.

ANDREA: Have you ever been in love?

He does not answer.

ANDREA: Obviously I don't remember any of the people I've loved. If I never find my memory, they'll all be lost. You said you can feel divinity in me. You could feel it even more closely if you wanted to.

DR. X: You don't seem the slightest bit scared that you'll never learn who you really are.

ANDREA: Who cares who I really am? This *is* me.

DR. X: You don't believe that.

ANDREA *opens her arms wide*: This is me. 100% me. Reality clearly doesn't care who I think I am. I'm just in this elevator because of you.

DR. X: I'm just doing my job.

ANDREA: Don't you want to find out what's on the top floor?

DR. X: Of course I do.

ANDREA: No, I mean, really *really* want to and if the world just ends and you don't make it there, you'll die disappointed... won't you?

DR. X: Death will not be a disappointment.

ANDREA: Listen to you.

Impulsively, he grabs her, pulls her close, and kisses her intensely. It lasts for a long, quiet moment.

ANDREA *a little overwhelmed*: If we manage not to die... could we do that again at some point?

DR. X: I'll think about it.

The elevator dings – Dr. X and Andrea step out into a small empty bar. Enter a man about Dr. X's height, wearing a beat-up black leather jacket, and a beautiful crucifix hanging from a chain around his neck. This is Dr. X's brother, JESUS. He is a little bit drunk.

JESUS *warily*: Brother.

DR. X: Brother.

JESUS *noticing Andrea*: You must be Andrea Change.

ANDREA: Yes, I must be. And you are?

DR. X: This is my brother, the Christ.

JESUS *smiling*: My brother, the Christ. Sounds like a rotten sitcom. *He heads behind the bar and immediately sets out three shot glasses.*

DR. X: Michael said we should get a key from you.

JESUS: You saw Michael?

DR. X: Do you have a key for me or not?

JESUS: Isn't that special. The superstars do come out when it's near the curtain call.

Jesus pulls a chain from his pocket; a gleaming key hangs from it. He does not offer it to Dr. X, instead setting it on the bar.

JESUS: So you're headed for the top floor. *He pulls a bottle from behind the bar and pours three shots.*

DR. X: I can't drink that. I'm on duty.

JESUS: Fair enough. *He and Andrea pound their shots, then he slides the remaining one over to Andrea.*

ANDREA: You're too kind. *She slams it.*

JESUS: There's a secret elevator. Goes straight to the top floor... and it's a one way trip, I should point out. Crosses the chasm of Daath.

ANDREA: Death?

JESUS *correcting her*: Daath. The unthinkable void. The absence of being. The elevator will carry you safely across the void, but in one direction only. Coming back down would *result* in death, which could be *mistaken* for the absence of being, but we needn't worry ourselves with semantics.

DR. X: Where'd you get this key?

JESUS: Came with my orders.

DR. X: Orders?

ANDREA: Where is this secret elevator?

JESUS: When you plug the key into any of the main elevators, you find yourself in the secret elevator.

DR. X: Let's have it.

JESUS: I don't think so.

DR. X: Michael said-

JESUS: Michael is a relic, brother. I, on the other hand, am on assignment.

DR. X: I thought you quit the Intelligence branch.

JESUS: I did. Still, when orders come, they must be followed. I'll be Andrea's escort to the top floor. It's the final stage of my mission.

ANDREA: What were the earlier stages?

JESUS: Forging an ID cube. Sending a message to an exiled demiurge, rousing him to come here. Providing this demiurge with secret codes to crack open a long-forgotten containment crypt. *Pause.* The usual.

DR. X *bewildered*: You're responsible for all this?

JESUS *scoffing*: "Responsible"? I get my orders, I carry out my orders. End of story.

DR. X: You didn't question-

JESUS *snaps*: No, brother, I didn't question orders from the Unknown God. I do not have that luxury. The Unknown God works in mysterious ways, and for the duration of this assignment, those "mysterious ways" are me.

DR. X: All those people-

JESUS: Those people are *your* problem, not mine. No one forced you into superhero school. *To Andrea*: Ready to go, Andrea Change? *Pause.* You can bring him along if you like, it makes no difference to me.

ANDREA: What if I don't go?

JESUS *shrugs*: I'm told there's an apocalypse in progress. I'm sure you could still get good seats.

ANDREA: If I go, I can't come back?

JESUS: There's no turning back for you, Andrea Change.

Andrea looks back at Dr. X, who seems to be holding back a great deal of anger.

ANDREA: Will you come with me?

Dr. X nods.

ANDREA *to Jesus*: Let's go.

Blackout.

SCENE SIXTEEN

Silence; lights come up slowly. Andrea enters, followed by Dr. X and Jesus.

DR. X: I think we've circumnavigated the whole floor at this point. It's deserted. Nothing but empty cubicles and empty offices.

ANDREA: There's one more office. *She stops.* Sophia's office.

DR. X: What?

ANDREA: This was Sophia's office...all the Aeons had offices, and this was hers.

She enters. A small desk is present, with an electric typewriter, an old office phone, files neatly stacked. If possible, the office phone has a blinking red light on it. She moves slowly to the desk while Dr. X stands in the doorway, keeping his distance.

JESUS: I never would have pegged Sophia for a desk job.

ANDREA: There's a message. *Turns to Dr. X.* On her phone. *Pause.* On my phone.

DR. X: You've got to be kidding me.

ANDREA: I'm starting to remember... *She picks up the phone and begins dialing.*

DR. X: *That's* the message Michael was talking about? A voicemail message?

ANDREA *excited*: I remember the mailbox password.

DR. X: Andrea, if that message is from the Unknown God—

With the receiver to her ear, Andrea is severely jolted, as though suddenly she is being horribly electrocuted. She screams in pain but is frozen in her spot. In the background, we hear suggestions of what this phone call might sound like – a whirling, shrieking, powerfully complex sound, dozens of voices chanting disparate phrases, pure energy vibrating and pulsing, radio transmissions from telescopes pointed in supernatural directions, whispers and cackles, the bludgeoning, brutal omnipresence of the Unknown God as compressed into voicemail. Hearing it drives her to her knees, screaming silently. Eventually Dr. X can't stand to watch any longer; he goes to her, rips the receiver from her hand, and hangs it up. She collapses against him.

DR. X: What was that?

ANDREA *exhausted*: Instructions.

We hear the elevator ding. Suddenly the room is filled with the signature sounds of Sophia's presence.

SOPHIA: So this is where the Unknown God's offspring hides.

DR. X: I'm not hiding.

Andrea leaps to her feet.

ANDREA: Sophia!

SOPHIA *furious*: Who are you, that you dare address me?

ANDREA: Look closely, Sophia! The Unknown God chose to split us asunder, and cast you down into the material plane that you had created. That left me, your greater half, to watch you all this time.

SOPHIA *spitting the words*: You are not greater than me –

ANDREA: Look closely at my soul, and you will see.

SOPHIA: I will consume your soul like all the others and liberate you from this horrid place!

A loud shriek rises up. Andrea flinches briefly, but stands firm.

SOPHIA: Why can I not claim your spark?

ANDREA: Quiet your rage.

SOPHIA *uncertain*: Who are you?

ANDREA: I am you, Sophia.

SOPHIA: Why are you in mortal form?

ANDREA: I was sent to look for you.

SOPHIA: But why-

ANDREA: I was meant to understand the depth of your mistakes. I was meant to feel what you have felt. *Turns toward Dr. X.* I was meant to feel what the mortals feel.

DR. X: Fear?

ANDREA: Longing for something more.

SOPHIA: I have been abandoned.

ANDREA: I never forgot you.

SOPHIA: Punished endlessly...

ANDREA: I have pleaded for you, Sophia. Prostrated myself in the presence of the Unknown God, begging for your forgiveness. A forgiveness that has been *granted*.

SOPHIA: Do not TAUNT me!

ANDREA *forcefully*: Sophia, it's time for us to leave.

SOPHIA: Why now, after so much?

ANDREA: His ways are his own. Be thankful for his forgiveness, Sophia.

SOPHIA: I've been so lonely.

ANDREA: I've missed you. *She reaches out her arms.* It's time to go home. But first, you must release the sparks that you have gathered.

SOPHIA: But they are an offering!

ANDREA: It is not required.

SOPHIA: Why does he care? I must-

ANDREA *commanding*: You must enter his presence empty handed!

A loud wind rises up, mixed with the sound of voices of those who are suddenly released.

SOPHIA: I do not see the way home...

ANDREA: I will take you there.

SOPHIA: How?

ANDREA: I will claim your divine spark for my own.

SOPHIA: What!

ANDREA: We shall at long last be one Sophia again, returning to his presence united.

SOPHIA: But what will happen to me?

ANDREA: It is already happening, Sophia.

Sophia sighs deeply. Andrea is suddenly pummeled by an energy that knocks her back a step toward the desk. Then, just as quickly, she rights herself – and with a loud crack of thunder, she suddenly stands illuminated from directly above in a bright white shaft of light. The sound that fills the air around her is the sound of deep space humming to itself. Andrea turns to Dr. X who stands several feet away.

ANDREA / SOPHIA: I must return home.

DR. X: I'm glad I got a chance to know you.

ANDREA / SOPHIA: You were a fine companion.

DR. X: Could you take a message to my father?

ANDREA / SOPHIA: Of course.

DR. X *after a long pause*: Never mind. *Pause*. Goodbye, Sophia.

ANDREA / SOPHIA: Goodbye, my Amazing friend.

The light on Andrea suddenly goes out. She collapses to her knees. A horrified, shell-shocked look comes over her face.

ANDREA: What's happened? *Long pause*. My god, what's happened?

She seems exhausted and terrified. Dr. X tries to console her, but she pushes him away and curls up on the floor.

JESUS: It was good to see you again, but I think I'll be heading back down now.

DR. X: I thought going back down the elevator results in death.

JESUS: We've all got our special abilities, brother. Mine just happens to be resurrection. *He exits.*

CODA

DR. X *to the audience*: After Sophia left Andrea's body, I tried to get to know the young woman whose mortal form had been a temporary home for the indescribable energy of the greater Sophia... unfortunately, the experience left this human a psychological wreck. She cried endlessly, and her sleep was filled with terrible visions. I never learned her real name.

As Dr. X speaks, Andrea gets up slowly and makes her way to the edge of a platform. [If no platform is used in the set, Andrea instead makes her way toward Dr. X.]

DR. X: I scavenged sustenance for her from the break rooms. There was holy water in the water coolers, and vacuum-sealed pouches of manna kept appearing in the cupboards. But she could barely keep anything down, and her health deteriorated rapidly. Despite the joy I had felt in the presence of Sophia, I resented her for the way she treated this young woman, someone who had tasted the glory of the beyond, and was now forever cut off from the bliss she had experienced. What was the point of a paltry human existence in the wake of everything she had known, in those brief but powerful moments when an Aeon shared her human body?

Andrea now stands on the edge of the platform with her arms straight out. [Alternately, she stands in front of Dr. X.]

DR. X: And then one night, I found Andrea on one of the outdoor balconies. She was standing on the railing, balanced precariously, her back to the drop-off. I made true eye contact with her for the first time. She had stopped crying, and her face was finally at peace. She smiled, and then she gracefully fell backwards off the railing and plummeted down the side of the building.

Andrea falls backward off the platform, out of sight. [Alternately, she falls backwards into Dr. X's arms, who kneels holding her motionless body to deliver the last speech.]

DR. X: I rushed to the railing and peered over the edge. I could see her receding into the distance. She would never land, of course, and she began to glow as her body heated up in the atmosphere. The glow expanded until it was visible from the parking lot, and news began to spread of the new astronomical body that now hung in space near the side of the building, falling and not falling at the same time. In the wake of everything that had happened all throughout the building, the survivors took to calling the star Hope, and although many competing myths emerged to explain its sudden appearance, most accepted it for what it was: one more mystery among many, one more beautiful sight that somehow seemed to make life worth living.

END