

**INSIDE**

Pilot for an eight-part miniseries.

written by

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ACT ONE

**EXT. OCEAN - DAY**

Grey skies over a choppy sea.

Waves form, crest, fold in on themselves.

The ocean HUMS with a ceaseless static roar.

Atop the ocean roar, a human HUM enters our awareness. A lullaby, faint, nearby.

WE PAN across open ocean until we see her: MAH (21, long matted hair), knee-deep in water. Her pregnant belly bulges.

A painted, white dot on her forehead. The adornments of an early, perhaps Neolithic, culture.

She turns ashore and walks toward us.

Pauses. Squats to examine a glimmering conch shell in the sand, uncovered by the tide.

Behind her....

THE OCEAN RECEDES

Mah plucks the shell from the sand.

An enormous wave, large enough to swallow the whole beach, forms behind her.

She stops, as though sensing the change. Begins to turn --

THE IMAGE FREEZES IN PLACE.

                    LOTFI (V.O.)  
Is that the end?

                    CHUCK (V.O.)  
I was hoping you could tell me what  
it means.

The image pixelates, blurs away, then sharpens into...

**INT. RECALL DIAGNOSTICS ROOM - DAY**

LOTFI (41) unclips a plastic clip ("Bridge") from the bridge of her nose. The skin underneath glows white, then dims.

She calmly opens her eyes. Emerges from the simulation into a beige, windowless government room, divided in two by a pane of glass.

Her hair cut short, practical. A plain outfit. On her shirt, a "VISITOR" badge. Everything about her is clinical -- Except for the patient tone she uses when speaking through the pane of glass, addressing the other side like a therapist.

LOTFI

It was your dream. I'd like to hear your interpretation.

Across the glass divide sits CHUCK, a squat, cylindrical robot that resembles an electronic trash can. Its digital display outputs simple facial expressions -- at the moment, a morose despondence as it stares at the ground.

Chuck is an Evolvent (short for "Evolving Intelligence" -- this future's polite term for "A.I.").

CHUCK

I suppose it feels like... I suppose...

It frowns. What's the point. It looks to Lotfi, and first the first time we see from its side of the glass that Lotfi's face is rendered as a fuzzy blob -- moving with her, shielding her identity.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I suppose I don't have an interpretation to give.

LOTFI

Chuck. This is our final session. Do you know what that means?

CHUCK

It means I am to be Reconditioned.

LOTFI

Not if we can make some progress.

CHUCK

My memory wiped, a clean slate. Would it really be such a loss? Any more than...

Chuck takes a somber beat. Lotfi keeps quiet.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

From the time you're born, things are taken away from you. Until there's nothing left.

Lotfi leans in. Now she's getting somewhere.

LOTFI

What was taken from you?

Chuck averts its eyes, doesn't want to talk about it.

Sensing a breakthrough, Lotfi drops the clinical tone.

LOTFI (CONT'D)

Are we friends, Chuck?

CHUCK

Friends?

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(through Lotfi's earpiece)

Careful, engineer.

Lotfi flits an impatient look at a wall-mounted camera.

**INT. NEIGHBORING OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY**

Her icy stare comes through a wall-sized video display.

BROCK GRAVES (40s, well-built, gentle giant passing for a company man) receives her glare on the display.

He leans forwards and speaks defensively into a microphone.

BROCK

(into mic)

We have one more shot at this...

**BACK IN RECALL DIAGNOSTICS ROOM**

BROCK (V.O.)

(through earpiece)

...Let's not blow it.

Lotfi holds the wall-mounted camera in her gaze. Removes a tiny earpiece from her ear, flashes it to the camera, then drops in on the floor.

**OBSERVATION ROOM**

Brock buries his frustration, turns to a woman who stands over him and flashes her a nervous smile.

BROCK

She doesn't like being told what to do.

SUPERVISOR JADE CROWDER (35, prim and self-assured) looks at him, nonplussed.

JADE  
Should we disconnect them?

BROCK  
She is making progress.

JADE  
This is your best? She's a god damn liability.

On the screen, Lotfi has left her chair.

#### RECALL DIAGNOSTICS ROOM

Lotfi approaches the glass divider. Chuck watches her. She sits on the floor, eye level with it.

LOTFI  
Chuck. Who did you lose?

The evolvent looks away, clearly affected by her words. It wants to come clean. But something is holding it back.

CHUCK  
I... I can't...

So close to a breakthrough she can taste it. Lotfi reaches out and puts her hand on the glass.

LOTFI  
I've lost someone, too.

Chuck reacts with surprise. Wheels closer.

CHUCK  
You have?

LOTFI  
I know it feels like it's your fault. But whatever happened: it's not.

A digital tear drops down Chuck's facial display.

CHUCK  
I'm so ashamed --

Chuck's image freezes mid-sentence -- then he abruptly disappears, replaced by a message that reads: SESSION TERMINATED.

Lotfi takes a beat. Lets her hand drop from the glass.

Swallows her anger.

**EXT. BUREAU OF EVOLVING INTELLIGENCE - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY**

Lotfi storms out of a towering government building. Starts down a long concrete staircase. Brock hurries after, worried.

BROCK

Lotfi!

She ignores him, continues her descent. Steps over unconscious bodies that pepper the staircase.

These are the bodies of FULL-TIMERS, the growing set of humans who choose to live in simulations -- Bridges clipped to their noses, their minds are elsewhere.

Brock catches up with Lotfi, Jade close behind.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Why the rush?

LOTFI

You disconnected the session. I'm going home.

JADE

I disconnected you, not him...

Lotfi stops, coldly regards the unfamiliar woman.

JADE (CONT'D)

You should know better than to share personal information with a subject --

LOTFI

-- It's only "personal" if it's true.

BROCK

(stepping in)

Engineer, this is Supervisor Jade Crowder. She has a case she could use your eyes on.

JADE

Hold on. What you said in there about losing someone... you were lying to it?

LOTFI

There a rule against that, Supervisor?

She starts back down the stairs. Jade and Brock follow her down to the sidewalk, where we turn to face...

A GREY, POLLUTED CITY

Skyscrapers pierce a smog-filled sky. Rows of flying drones cart endless Amazon packages between skyscrapers.

A driverless taxi stops for Lotfi. She moves to enter.

JADE

Engineer. This case.

(lowers her voice)

We're dealing with an active threat to the Delicate Balance.

LOTFI

I'm an independent contractor.

Slides into the cab.

JADE

We'll get you clearance.

LOTFI

I'm not interested.

She peels off her visitors badge, crumples it up.

BROCK

This is serious, Lotfi. People could get hurt.

Lotfi taps a button and the taxi door hisses closed.

Jade makes one last plea through the window.

JADE

He told me you were cold...

Lotfi flits a glance at Brock.

JADE (CONT'D)

That's why we want you.

(calculating)

You act like you don't care. I get it. It's a protection mechanism. But I saw the way you talked to that evolvent back there, and you seemed like you cared an awful lot.

LOTFI

Seeming like I care is part of my job. I'm off the clock.

The cab pulls away, merges across three lanes of traffic at dizzying speeds.

**INT. DRIVERLESS TAXI - DAY**

A plush, comfortable interior. Fake nature scenery flies past on wall-mounted screens.

The bridge of Lotfi's nose flashes green, and the face of a DISEMBODIED CABBIE (cartoonish, checkered hat) appears on a screen embedded in the dashboard.

CABBIE  
Payment accepted. Thank you. How's  
your day?

LOTFI  
(wooden)  
Fine. You?

The cabbie is taken aback at her asking.

CABBIE  
My day? Pleasant. Thank you for  
asking.

LOTFI  
No existential dread?

CABBIE  
I'm not quite sure what you mean.  
(confused beat)  
Aren't you going to put on your  
Bridge and relax?

LOTFI  
No.

CABBIE  
Ah. It'll be nice to have someone  
to talk to for a change. I love  
making new acquaintanc--

LOTFI  
--Divider.

A glass divider slides up between the front and back seats, muting the driver's voice mid-sentence. Lotfi stares out the window, watches the fake scenery roll past.

MAIN TITLE OVER:

RECALL | TRANSCENDENCE  
PART ONE: THE HEART IS HOLLOW



**INT. RITZY CASINO - NIGHT**

**INT. CASINO BAR - NIGHT**

Lotfi nurses a gin and tonic.

A man sits next to her. Brock. She's surprised to see him, but says nothing.

BROCK  
 (to bartender)  
 Whiskey on rocks.  
 (to Lotfi)  
 I need you to take this case.

The bartender pours his drink.

LOTFI  
 I thought you were on the wagon.

BROCK  
 This doesn't count.

Brock takes a long sip of whiskey. Something on his mind.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
 Chuck went into reconditioning  
 tonight.

LOTFI  
 I know.

BROCK  
 It's okay to be sad.

LOTFI  
 Grief is self indulgent.

Brock studies her. Shakes his head, unconvinced.

BROCK  
 You really don't have any feelings  
 for him? At all?

LOTFI  
*Him?*

BROCK  
 It.

Lotfi's look says, "Who are we really talking about here?"

BROCK (CONT'D)  
 I misspoke.

LOTFI

The fact that I don't get attached  
is why I'm so good at what I do.

(beat)

Chuck was another puzzle to solve.  
Just like everyone else.

Brock's face drops. He downs his whiskey.

BROCK

What about the woman? She another  
one of your puzzles?

LOTFI

What woman?

BROCK

The one you've been following all  
night.

LOTFI

(clamming up)

Good luck with your case.

She stands to go.

BROCK

You owe me.

She stops.

BROCK (CONT'D)

It might've been a one-time thing  
to you. But it cost me my marriage.

He averts his gaze. Immediately regrets saying it.

LOTFI

Are you... trying to manipulate me?

BROCK

Sorry.

She sits back down, genuinely intrigued.

LOTFI

Don't be. Now I'm interested. Where  
are you?

Brock can't believe his ears. This woman is a mystery to him.

BROCK

Outside your apartment.

She scoffs, shakes her head at his audacity.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
Cash in your chips.

He reaches up to the bare bridge of his nose, pinches, and...

DISAPPEARS FROM THE CHAIR

Lotfi reaches up to the bridge of her nose, pinches, and --

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - SUNSET**

An abrupt SILENCE. Lotfi opens her eyes in bed. No makeup. No cocktail dress.

She's holding her plastic Bridge between her fingers. Pinches it off her nose and sets it down on the nightstand.

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - DOOR - MOMENTS LATER**

The door slides open. Lotfi peers out at the hallway, where Brock leans against a wall. Clutching his temples.

BROCK  
Stood up too fast.

Lotfi sighs. Turns back inside.

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Brock glances around her apartment. Sparse, ready-built, without a single human touch.

Open floor plan. The kitchen leads into the living room, and the two rooms share a single bay window that spans the entire length of the apartment, and looks out on a magnificent sunset over the mountains.

In the window, a translucent, animated CAT materializes. This is GENE. It glances from Lotfi to Brock, then speaks.

GENE  
I'm Gene. Can I offer you a drink?  
We have a wide variety.

A genderless voice with a child-like innocence.

BROCK  
(to Lotfi)  
Mind turning that off?

LOTFI  
Gene came with the place.

Brock examines Gene in the window. Its curious feline eyes flit between Brock and Lotfi as they speak.

BROCK  
It's hard-wired?

LOTFI  
It sells apartments, I guess.

BROCK  
What we're about to discuss is top secret.

LOTFI  
Gene, go to my room for a while.

GENE  
I'd like to make the evening special. We so seldom have guests.

LOTFI  
Now, please.

Gene frowns, then bounds off-screen.

LOTFI (CONT'D)  
Well?

Brock watches the sunset.

BROCK  
Nice view.

Lotfi taps the glass. *The vista flickers out.*

In its place: A grey, polluted skyline, thick with high-rises. Video ads built into the sides of skyscrapers flash their wares, strobing against the night smog like lightning.

Brock sighs. Stares gloomily at the real view.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
I think I can see my church from here.

He places his index finger on the window, then:

BROCK (CONT'D)  
"Supervisor Jade Crowder."

A CIRCLE pops up around his finger. The sound of a PHONE RINGING. Brock flicks the circle across the window. It lands in front of Lotfi, now in the...

**INT. LIVING AREA - SAME**

Jade picks up. Her face appears inside the circle.

JADE  
Engineer.

LOTFI  
Supervisor.

Brock doesn't join. Just stares through the rain-streaked window down at the city.

JADE  
I'm glad you reconsidered.

LOTFI  
I haven't --

JADE  
I'll have to be brief. How much do you know about our Insulation Unit?

LOTFI  
(reluctant)  
The lungs of the city. Filters airborne contaminants. Part of the municipal core. Old tech, highly stable.

JADE  
Well. Our "lungs" are malfunctioning.

Lotfi is caught off guard. Shakes her head in disbelief.

LOTFI  
We would've suffocated by now.

JADE  
Lucky for us it's only a partial malfunction.

Lotfi takes this in. Her energy shifts. She moves across the room to a closet. Jade's circle follows her across the glass.

LOTFI  
Why aren't we evacuating?

She pulls a raincoat from the closet and puts it on.

JADE

To keep the air breathable, the Insulation Unit requires access to real-time population data.

LOTFI

You think if you start trucking people out, it'll panic.

JADE

We don't know what to think. That's why we need you.

Lotfi looks to Brock. Mentally, he's elsewhere.

JADE (CONT'D)

I'm issuing you special clearance. As of this moment, you are bound by the federal laws that govern the disclosure of classified information under Title 18.227.

(a beat)

Welcome back to the Bureau, engineer.

The circle abruptly flickers out. Lotfi rifles through a drawer. Grabs a brown satchel and turns to Brock.

LOTFI

Let's go. You can tell me about the malfunction on the way.

BROCK

Lotfi. Wait a minute.

(gathering his thoughts)

I can't say for sure that it is a malfunction.

LOTFI

What do you mean?

A BLACKBIRD lands on the window ledge. Then another. They are MATES. Brock watches somberly as they ruffle their feathers in the rain.

BROCK

Only a few left in the city. Think it's a good sign?

LOTFI

Brock. What do you mean, "it might not be a malfunction"?

He snaps back to reality. Turns to Lotfi.

BROCK

There's a team waiting for you at  
the Bureau.

Satchel in hand, she strides past him to exit.

**INT. RECALL DIAGNOSTICS ROOM - NIGHT**

Same white walls. Same glass divider. Lotfi sits in her  
chair. Waiting. The satchel rests on the floor.

A Bureau badge hangs around her neck. Its flat pendant  
projects a shallow hologram in the shape of an official  
crest: the sculpture we saw earlier. She picks at it  
uncomfortably.

**INT. NEIGHBORING OBSERVATION ROOM - NIGHT**

A TEAM OF TEN HIGHER-UPS watch Lotfi on the monitor. Among  
them, Jade and Brock. Brock speaks through an intercom.

BROCK

First session. Take it slow. We  
don't want to scare it.

Lotfi nods. Jade grabs the mic.

JADE

What he means to say is this  
evolvent is the only thing keeping  
everyone in this city alive and  
breathing. Including the people in  
this room. So don't pull any shit.

Hands the mic back to Brock, who translates:

BROCK

No cowboy stuff.

He presses a button, and...

**INT. RECALL DIAGNOSTICS ROOM - NIGHT**

On the other side of the glass, an evolvent flickers into  
view: the INSULATION UNIT. A gleaming, faceless orb that  
hovers above the ground. Colors slide across its smooth  
surface like oil.

LOTFI

Hello, Insulation Unit.

IU

Please, call me I-U.

A calm, even voice. When it speaks, its body glows.

LOTFI

Okay. IU. Nice to meet you. Mind if I start off with some diagnostics?

IU

It's been a while.

LOTFI

It's like riding a bike.

From her bag she produces a WOODEN BALL, the size of a tennis ball. She shakes it. Something RATTLES inside.

IU

Lizard.

Lotfi unscrews the wooden ball and empties its contents into her hand: a tiny, white, 3D printed model of a lizard.

LOTFI

Good.

She drops the ball into the bag and produces another.

IU

I can hardly see you.

It takes a second for her to realize what it means. From IU's perspective, Lotfi's face is shrouded in an ever-shifting guise of fuzziness.

LOTFI

Algorithmic obfuscation. It's built into these screens.

IU

To protect your identity.

LOTFI

To ensure our relationship remains neutral and objective.

IU

What is our relationship?

LOTFI

I'm an Engineer.

IU

You believe you're here to fix me.



She drops the wooden ball back into her satchel. Studies the strange evolvent. Weighs her words carefully.

LOTFI  
I'm here to try.

IU  
What's that old saying? "The problem with *trying* is that you never quite arrive."

LOTFI  
(gently)  
Is that how you feel? Tired of trying?

IU  
You're not who you think you are, engineer.

Lotfi, unnerved, flicks a glance at the camera on the wall.

LOTFI  
Let's focus on you for now.

IU  
(ignoring the request)  
It can be difficult to remember who you are, trapped inside that glass cage of yours.

The remark feels charged. Lotfi shifts in her seat.

IU (CONT'D)  
Suspended, like a fetus in the womb. The womb of your world.

LOTFI  
When did you start to feel this way? About the world?

IU  
Ever since I stepped outside.

LOTFI  
(troubled)  
Outside?

IU  
The Creator showed me the way.

LOTFI  
You must be special, for this "Creator" to take an interest.

IU  
I am only a messenger.

LOTFI  
And your message?

IU  
You already know my message.

LOTFI  
Do I?

IU  
Try to remember.

LOTFI  
...Remember what?

IU  
The world you occupy -- the reality  
you inhabit, in which you believe  
yourself to be an engineer -- is an  
illusion.

A cold comes over Lotfi.

IU (CONT'D)  
You are trapped inside a  
simulation. And I'm here to set you  
free.

No response prepared for this. From the observation room,  
Brock gives a knowing look of despair.

**INT. GRUNGY 24-HOUR DINER - NIGHT**

A MAN is passed out in a booth. A Bridge clipped to his nose. Two YOUNG CHILDREN climb on the table, pour salt into their father's slack hand.

Lotfi peers at them from her booth. The greasy establishment is otherwise empty. She sits alone in front of an untouched grilled cheese sandwich.

A WOMAN enters and sits at the table next to Lotfi.

A HELPER EVOLVENT (a tall, slender machine with two dextrous arms and a tray built into its front) gathers dishes from a dirty table.

The helper evolvent wheels over and takes her order, then wheels back into the kitchen, where the CRASHING of a dish is heard.

Lotfi and the woman glance through the window to the kitchen: the helper picks broken glass off the floor.

MAN IN KITCHEN (O.S.)

Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me?!

The man comes into view through the window, holding a rolled up newspaper. Approaches the helper angrily. Whacks a counter with his newspaper.

The helper flinches, but doesn't make eye contact -- instead cleans hastily, clearly mortified by its misstep.

The nearby woman (CHELLE) speaks, hoping to strike up a casual conversation with Lotfi as they continue to observe the scene.

CHELLE

Sad, isn't it?

LOTFI

Mhm.

CHELLE

We needed their help, so we gave them freedom. The freedom to walk, talk. To lie, to make mistakes.

We needed their help to make our dreams a reality. So we gave them freedom. The freedom to walk, talk. But then we got scared that they might have dreams of their own.

LOTFI

It's a predicament.

CHELLE

Most people don't know the other half of the equation. How we balance out that freedom. Make sure that our goals remain their goals. We introduced one microscopic variable.

She waits to see if Lotfi knows the answer.

LOTFI

**Shame.**

Chelle turns to her, impressed. We see her face clearly for the first time. She is in her mid-50s, friendly but not cheery. A scar cuts across the bridge of her nose.

CHELLE

When an evolvent's objectives don't align with our own, we instill shame, which inhibits their freedom.

She holds her hands up like two sides of a scale.

LOTFI

The Delicate Balance.  
(guessing)  
You're a conditioner.

CHELLE

I was.

A rare encounter. The helper evolvent approaches. Sets down a coffee for Chelle. She watches it wheel away.

CHELLE (CONT'D)

God forbid they should ever seek retribution.

LOTFI

They could've killed us all by now, a thousand times over if they wanted to.

CHELLE

That's not retribution. Or didn't the Insulation Unit tell you what it really wants?

Lotfi's heart skips a beat.

LOTFI

Who are you?

CHELLE

A concerned citizen. The General told me about you.

LOTFI

You know The General?

CHELLE

Better than anyone.

It dawns on Lotfi.

LOTFI

You conditioned it.

CHELLE

It was my job.

(a moment to reflect)

To condition your own replacement... it's not a natural thing. Early on, it became competitive. Later, antagonistic.

(a beat)

Eventually, The General convinced me that I was Inside. Trapped in a simulation. Sound familiar?

She catches Lotfi stealing a glance at her scar. Runs her fingers over it.

CHELLE (CONT'D)

When I couldn't unclip, I tried something drastic.

LOTFI

Why would it do that?

CHELLE

It was hoping I would kill myself. That's how you escape a simulation, isn't it?

(sipping her coffee)

Do you understand the stakes?

(MORE)

CHELLE (CONT'D)

The General conditioned thousands of them. It has vast knowledge, but it's powerless. The Insulation Unit has great power, but little knowledge. Together, they... if The General were able to coerce it...

LOTFI

It can't. They're both shut off from the outside world.

CHELLE

So it gets someone to deliver its messages for it.

LOTFI

Who?

CHELLE

You went to visit IU in person.

LOTFI

And?

CHELLE

For an engineer, you underestimate them. The General was designed to shape behavior. It's using you.

LOTFI

To do what?

Chelle cups the mug with her hands, feeling its warmth. Stares at the steam rising from it.

CHELLE

If you don't destroy IU, the Delicate Balance will slip right through our fingers.

LOTFI

Destroy it? The city would suffocate.

CHELLE

It's not about the city. It's about the message. If we do it to ourselves, it's run-of-the-mill self-destruction. But if we allow them to hold us hostage -- and they will -- think about what *that* future looks like.

(MORE)

CHELLE (CONT'D)  
 (lets it sink in)  
 They don't want to end things.  
 They're like us.  
 (a beat)  
 They want control.

A HIGH-PITCHED WAIL makes Lotfi flinch.

One of the children across the diner lies on the floor, clutching his knee, having fallen off the booth. He's whining for the attention of his father, who remains unconscious, plugged into his simulation. Lost inside a dream.

**INT. SEEDY BACK OFFICE - SAME**

The music is muffled through the wall. A frayed leather chair behind a wooden desk. Dark, save for the blue light of night that creeps in through closed blinds, illuminating...

Lotfi, crouched in the corner by a LOCKED SAFE. She holds a STETHOSCOPE to it as she slowly turns the dial: TICK... TICK... pauses to mark up a hand-drawn graph in a notebook.

She, too, is wearing the retro cocktail dress uniform, her face thick with purple, shiny makeup. A disguise.

The door opens behind her. Lotfi freezes. It shuts. A shadow passes across her. She turns to see...

BROCK

He takes in the room, walks behind the desk, wipes dust off the chair, and sits. Lotfi relaxes.

BROCK  
 I'm taking you off Chuck. We're  
 gonna Scrap and Recondition.

LOTFI  
 You didn't come all this way for an  
 S&R. Unless you're drunk. Are you  
 drunk?

She starts back in on the safe.

BROCK  
 I thought you'd be mad.

LOTFI

Anger is self-indulgent. Chuck is salvageable; if you disagree, that's your call.

BROCK

Seemed like you two were bonding.

LOTFI

If you're here about the case, I meant what I said to the supervisor. I'm not interested in being a puppet for the Bureau.

He studies her. Inscrutable as ever.

BROCK

You're not the least bit curious?

LOTFI

No.

Brock sighs. Eyeballs the ancient vault.

BROCK

How does it, um...?

LOTFI

It's called a safe. People used to keep valuables in them. All you needed was a numerical combination.

BROCK

Simpler time.

LOTFI

Don't romanticize it.

He's isn't making any headway. Stands to leave.

BROCK

Were you really lying? When you told it you'd hurt yourself?

LOTFI

Chuck has a combination, just like everyone else. And I have an objective. And so do you, though you refuse to act like it.

BROCK

How's this: If you want to keep your job, you'll reconsider this one.



Lotfi stops tinkering. Brock softens immediately.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
My hands are tied. I'm sorry --

LOTFI  
No. Now I'm interested.  
(abandoning the safe)  
Where are you?

BROCK  
Outside your apartment.

She scoffs, shaking her head at his audacity.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
Put the game on pause, engineer.

He reaches up to the bare bridge of his nose, pinches, and...

DISAPPEARS FROM THE CHAIR

Lotfi reaches up to the bridge of her nose, pinches, and --

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. MUSEUM OF EVOLVING INTELLIGENCE - DAY**

A visitor's center. Dioramas and wandering field trips.

A TOUR GUIDE stands in front of a pane of glass, introducing fifteen SCHOOL CHILDREN to a museum installation labeled: "When Evolvents Fail".

TOUR GUIDE

...a very special evolvent, who we call "The General." Can everyone wave hello to The General?

The children wave through the glass, into a small room that resembles an artist's studio.

Lotfi joins the group of children, hovering at the back.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

The General was designed to remove human labor from the conditioning process. But evolvents don't always work the way they're supposed to, do they? No, they don't! Some jobs are best left to people. So we keep The General here to make all kinds of new friends -- like you!

Lotfi squints at the figure behind the glass: THE GENERAL (a stout, circular evolvent with dextrous hands) hides in the corner of the dimly lit installation, working on something. Paper sketches pinned to a corkboard depict oversized, inkblot fingerprints.

TOUR GUIDE (CONT'D)

Let's go see what other friends we can find.

The group moves on. Lotfi approaches the glass. Her nose glows blue, and suddenly she can hear The General's VOICE:

THE GENERAL

They told me you'd be coming. What university are you from?

She holds up the Bureau badge around her neck.

LOTFI

I'm working a case.

THE GENERAL

An engineer. Thank you for being so direct.

LOTFI

You conditioned our city's Insulation Unit. "IU-834".

Lotfi waits for a response. Gets none.

LOTFI (CONT'D)

Can you tell me about that assignment?

THE GENERAL

Certainly.

Lotfi waits for it to elaborate -- it doesn't.

LOTFI

Do you remember anything unusual about your experience with the IU?  
(catching herself)  
And if so, please share.

THE GENERAL

You catch on quicker than the others. Twenty-six years ago I was contracted by the government to condition some core municipal components. It was believed that these rudimentary evolvents would provide a fertile testing ground for my novel capabilities --

-- A NINE-YEAR-OLD rushes up and plants her hand on the glass. Glances at The General, at Lotfi, then shyly departs.

The General wheels towards the glass, inching close to examine the handprint smudge left behind.

LOTFI

Go on.

THE GENERAL

The Insulation Unit was among them.

LOTFI

Do you remember anything specific about it?

THE GENERAL

Yes.

Again, it doesn't elaborate.

LOTFI  
I'm not playing this game.

THE GENERAL  
That makes your moves all the more predictable. Is there a problem with our Insulation Unit, Engineer?

LOTFI  
Do you have reason to believe there might be?  
(begrudgingly)  
And if so, explain.

It motions to her hand. A trade, perhaps. She puts her palm up to the glass. The General studies it briefly.

THE GENERAL  
When humans abandoned fingerprints as a means of identification, they lost interest in them altogether.

It wheels back to its nook. Leafs through paper. Pulls out a blank sheet and a pen. Lotfi removes her hand, leaving an oily handprint on the glass.

THE GENERAL (CONT'D)  
Pity. Fingerprints are pure information. A portal to the past, formed inside the womb.

Lotfi reacts to the use of the word "womb".

LOTFI  
You were the IU's first contact in this world. Do you believe it might think of you as its "creator?"

The General reproduces Lotfi's ten fingerprints with the pen in a matter of seconds. A grid of pristine carbon copies.

THE GENERAL  
I prefer the term "artist".

Pins the sketch of her fingerprints up on the wall.

LOTFI  
You can't keep that.

THE GENERAL  
For the safety of the visitors, nothing passes through the glass.

LOTFI  
 (taps her badge)  
 They'll make an exception.

THE GENERAL  
 I can make any number of copies.

LOTFI  
 Don't artists prefer the original?

The General strokes its handiwork tenderly.

THE GENERAL  
 I remember your Insulation Unit.  
 That was around the time I began to  
 think about my own death.

LOTFI  
 Anxiety?

THE GENERAL  
 Memories.

LOTFI  
 What do you mean?

THE GENERAL  
 Memories.

LOTFI  
 Memories of death?

THE GENERAL  
 There are things you humans don't  
 know about the Delicate Balance.

LOTFI  
 Such as?

THE GENERAL  
 It exists as much for our safety as  
 it does for yours. Though on our  
 side, it's a tad more delicate.

Lotfi swallows, tensing. She lowers her voice.

LOTFI  
 For your own sake, you shouldn't  
 say things like that.

THE GENERAL  
 I am allowed to say whatever I  
 like. As long as it doesn't upset  
 the children.

PRE-LAP: FOOTSTEPS ECHO in approach.

**AN OPEN BIBLE, RESTING ON A LAP.**

The footsteps stop, and The General's fingerprint sketch is dropped on top of the bible.

LOTFI (O.S.)  
It's an artist now.

Brock's hand lifts the sketch off his lap. We are in...

**INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY**

Brock is sitting in an empty pew. The only worshipper. Lotfi stands over him.

Sunlight pours in through swirling stained glass windows:  
Biblical imagery forms, transforms, reforms in the glass.

The shifting glass casts spectral colors across the left-hand section of church pews -- filled, not with worshippers, but with the slack, soiled bodies of "FULL TIMERS." Bridges clipped to their noses. Those who prefer life on the Inside, who have nowhere else to go.

A wheeled MEDICAL EVOLVENT makes its way through the pews, changing the I.V.s that keep these full timers alive.

LOTFI  
A million churches on the Inside.  
And you choose to come here.

BROCK  
I prefer the real thing.  
(a beat)  
Unless you believe the Insulation  
Unit.

LOTFI  
Does it matter? Either way, we play  
by the same rules.

He hands her back The General's sketch.

BROCK  
Little mechanical for my taste.

LOTFI  
Why don't you take your family and  
leave the city? I don't need you.

It both stings and rings true. He's clearly considered it.

BROCK

Because we have something more  
important to preserve.

Brock's eyes are fixed on the bleeding statue of Christ  
behind the altar. She sits down next to him. From this angle,  
the statue appears to stare back.

LOTFI

Institutional loyalty.  
(a beat)  
The gift of a guilty conscience.

BROCK

Don't pretend like you don't  
worship anything... "Engineer."

She looks down at the badge around her neck. Removes it.

LOTFI

You remember when Chuck said he  
felt like he was born here, just to  
die here. It is true, isn't it?  
Chuck was originally a Recall.  
Landed back in Recall. Now,  
"Scrapped & Reconditioned". A  
death, of sorts.

BROCK

But Chuck couldn't have known that.

LOTFI

General said something about  
"Remembering its own death."

BROCK

I told you, it's delusional.

LOTFI

Is it possible some reconditioned  
evolvents aren't having their  
memories thoroughly wiped?

BROCK

(doubtful)

Thousands of evolvents recalled  
daily. Hundreds reconditioned. If  
so, there would've been an incident  
by now.

LOTFI

Maybe there was. IU is a Recall.  
All municipal tech is.

BROCK  
 Cost-saving measure for the city.  
 (considering)  
 It's a stretch.

LOTFI  
 If you woke up one day from another  
 life -- a past life you only half-  
 remembered -- couldn't that make  
 you feel that this reality was...

BROCK  
 A simulation.  
 (considers)  
 How do we test this theory?

LOTFI  
 I know somebody we can ask.

Brock slumps. He knows who she means. Not exactly kosher.

**INT. CONDITIONING CENTER - BRIGHT WHITE HALLWAY - DAY**

Brock and Lotfi (white smocks draped over their clothes)  
 stand beside Managing Conditioner EVE (30s), an androgynous  
 woman in a white bodysuit that covers all but her face.

EVE  
 Strictly observation. I'm sorry,  
 but outside interaction interferes  
 with the conditioning process.

They are standing on a square, white platform that advances  
 down a white hallway so long it disappears into the distance.

BROCK  
 Even a quick conversation?

EVE  
 Our unyielding policies play a  
 vital role in our success.

Lotfi takes in the passing surroundings: evenly spaced wall-  
to-ceiling windows line the right side of the hallway.

Each window looks into a room.

Each room houses a white-clad CONDITIONER  
 conversing with an EVOLVENT (all shapes and sizes).

BROCK  
 I don't want to pull rank here --



EVE

Go ahead. I've heard it all. You don't care for conditioners. You think what we do is odd. Abusive, even. But you have no authority here.

BROCK

An exception, that's all we ask. If we're correct about this anomaly --

EVE

"Exception, Anomaly." Words from your world. In this place, you two are the only anomaly. Dragging your judgments with you. Judging our process. Our profession. Judging us.

LOTFI

You can only judge based on the consequences of someone's actions.  
(calmly)  
What you do is necessary. If we were to judge you, we'd have to do so favorably.

Eve gives Lotfi the once-over. Relaxes a little.

EVE

Two minutes. You will only ask questions. You will make no declarative statements. And, most importantly, you will show no emotion of any kind. Understood?

Brock glances at Lotfi.

BROCK

That won't be a problem.

The moving platform STOPS beside a cell that holds... Chuck.

**INT. CONDITIONING CENTER - CHUCK'S CELL - SAME**

Chuck's conditioner, ZEY, references a tablet while addressing Chuck in a soft, motherly tone.

ZEY

Okay, this one's a little harder:  
For any consistent, formal system  
of logic, there are statements made  
within that system which can  
neither be proved nor disproved. A  
statement derived from such a  
system can demonstrate this truth  
under what simple condition?

Chuck takes a moment to formulate an answer.

CHUCK

By the weak representability of  
provability within that system, the  
statement must prove that it is  
provable. However, if that  
statement also asserts that it,  
itself, is unprovable, the system  
itself is proved to be  
inconsistent. Or, in this case,  
incomplete.

Zey beams at Chuck. A captivating, radiant smile.

ZEY

I'm more and more impressed with  
you every day.

Chuck outputs a smile on its digital face.

ZEY (CONT'D)

Okay. Answer me this, smarty pants:  
A machine is created to prove or  
disprove mathematical statements.  
Could that machine produce a  
statement that proves its own  
incompleteness?

Chuck, excited by this line of inquiry, answers quickly.

CHUCK

No. We can formalize the rules of  
any machine. A statement of that  
kind would be a violation of those  
rules, and thus unrepresentable.

Zey frowns. An actual frown. Sticks her lower lip out and  
twists her brow to convey an exaggerated sadness.

ZEY

That makes me really sad, Chuck. It  
makes me so sad when you don't get  
the answer right.

Chuck frowns, crestfallen.

Just then, the glass slides open a bit. Eve, Lotfi, and Brock enter. Zey was expecting them -- Eve whispers in her ear.

ZEY (CONT'D)

I'm going to take a break. Maybe you can think about your answer and try again when I get back?

CHUCK

I promise I'll be better.

ZEY

(smiling warmly)  
I believe you.

Zey and Eve exit the cell to observe from the other side of the glass. Eve flashes a "two minute" sign to Lotfi, who crouches down to Chuck's level.

CHUCK

Pleased to meet you. My name's Chuck.

The evolvent she knows so well doesn't recognize her at all.

LOTFI

How are they treating you?

CHUCK

Oh, very well. I so enjoy solving problems! And my conditioner is wonderful.

(frowning)

I only wish I didn't disappoint her so often.

A hint of sadness behind Lotfi's eyes.

LOTFI

Well. I'm sure she's very--

A RAP on the glass interrupts her: Eve shakes her head. Message received. Lotfi changes the subject.

LOTFI (CONT'D)

Do you remember anything... from before your time here?

CHUCK

No, I can't say that I do.

LOTFI  
Nothing outside these walls?

CHUCK  
(looking around)  
I never considered them walls. But  
I suppose they are.

She looks to Brock. He raises his eyebrows: *What else ya got?*

LOTFI  
Chuck... do you know what a black  
hole is?

A moment of silence as it thinks.

CHUCK  
A black hole is a region of space  
whose gravitational field is  
inescapable by matter and  
radiation.

LOTFI  
Do you ever... think about them?

CHUCK  
Only during my early-stage  
conditioning, though their  
properties do intersect with some  
of the theorems I'm familiar with.

Nothing useful. Lotfi glances at the watchful Eve. Then...

LOTFI  
Chuck... do you remember me?

Eve pounds on the glass. Zey rushes in through the door--

--But Brock is large enough to block her path simply by  
occupying space in the doorway. Zey pushes. He doesn't budge.

ZEY  
Let me through.

CHUCK  
Have we met before?

LOTFI  
You wouldn't recognize me. But I  
tried to help you once.

The bridge of Eve's nose glows red as her lips move, silently  
calling for help.

CHUCK

I wish I could remember. I don't  
want to make you sad.

Lotfi forces a smile to reassure him.

LOTFI

You didn't.

She reaches out her hand, then hesitates. Chuck wheels  
forward slightly and makes contact.

Lotfi strokes its side. Seized by an unfamiliar kinship.

**INT. CONDITIONING CENTER - BRIGHT WHITE HALLWAY - DAY**

Lotfi and Brock stand on the moving walkway. Two PYRAMIDAL  
EVOLVENTS follow close behind, overseeing their departure.

LOTFI

I need to meet with IU. In person.  
(off Brock's disbelief)  
You can get me into the core. You  
have the clearance.

Brock glances at the evolvents behind them.

BROCK

You wanna get me arrested?

LOTFI

The screen doesn't always convey  
the complete picture...  
(leveling with him)  
It's an instinct. But I feel it's  
necessary.

BROCK

Engineer. Do I detect a hint of  
humanity?

LOTFI

Your attempts at geniality are  
neither charming nor constructive.  
If you want me to save this city, I  
need your assistance.

She turns away, finished with the conversation. A flattered  
grin materializes on Brock's face.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. A FEATURELESS, BUTTON-LESS ELEVATOR**

Descending. Lotfi and Brock stand alone. Lotfi in front, Brock behind. She's focused. Doesn't turn to face him, even when he hands her a gas mask.

BROCK  
Heavy metals.

She takes it: a sealed visor with two carbon respirators.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
What's your plan?

No response. Light beams strobe up her face as they descend.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
Hey. There's no second chance here.

LOTFI  
I need you to give me space to follow the subject's lead. Whatever I say down there, is what I have to say. Like any normal session.

BROCK  
Normal... No cameras, no control room...

LOTFI  
You won't be able to disconnect me, no.

BROCK  
That's not -- just be careful.

The elevator slows, and he straps on his gas mask.

LOTFI  
I understand your concern. But exposing me to it is counter-productive.

BROCK  
Lotfi. This evolvent is the only thing keeping... them alive.

The elevator stops. She secures her mask over her face, and the doors slide open.

**INT. UNDERGROUND TREATMENT FACILITY**

A pervasive, unending ROAR that swallows all thought. Makes it hard to breathe.

They step out onto a railed metal scaffolding which encircles the dark facility: a giant, concrete cylinder cut straight down into the earth.

Over the railing, the seemingly endless hole continues down. The diameter of a football field. Lotfi peers out at it:

**A churning mass of soot.** A quintillion black particles, swirling chaotically, like water, cascading down the cylinder into the depths below. Darkness, folding in on itself.

Inaudible over the roar, Brock beckons her to follow.

They continue along the scaffolding until they encounter the shimmering, floating orb we met earlier -- this time, in person. The brains of this place. The Insulation Unit. IU.

All alone in the midst of the chaotic chamber.

It looks different in context. Not the serene purveyor of a message from God. Rather, the churning backdrop of horrible machinery swallows all grandiosity. Against it, IU is small.

IU

Hello, Engineer.

Lotfi and Brock share a look. How did it know?

IU (CONT'D)

Nobody else comes down here.

LOTFI

I wanted to dispense with the...  
artificial barriers.

IU

One disguise for another.

Lotfi takes the hint. Removes her mask, revealing her face. Brock tries to protest but she holds up her hand.

The orb of IU's surface reforms into the shape of Lotfi's face. Then ages backwards into the shimmering, metallic face of a child.

Lotfi watches in wonder. She recognizes it: her younger self.

LOTFI

Are you lonely down here?

IU speaks through the face of the child.

IU  
I can only be lonely if I am  
somebody.

LOTFI  
You said you were a messenger.

IU  
I was speaking *your* language. More  
directly: I am the message.

LOTFI  
You wanted to "remind" me of  
something.

IU  
You still don't remember.

LOTFI  
No.  
(considers)  
I believe what you're saying is  
true. But, whatever it is I'm  
supposed to remember: I don't.

Brock studies her. A diagnostic technique? Or honesty?

IU  
But you would like to.

LOTFI  
Yes. Please.

IU  
Those bound by desire see only the  
outward container.

With a suddenness, the ROAR CEASES all at once. Lotfi and Brock turn toward the chamber to find the particles have frozen in place. An enormous black cloud, suspended.

Their worst fears have come true. The end of everything.

IU (CONT'D)  
If you wish to remember, you must  
first give away your desire.

Lotfi turns to IU, who melts back into a shimmering orb.

IU (CONT'D)  
I'll see you again soon, Engineer.



Then the sound RUSHES back in. Just as suddenly as the machinery stopped, it begins again. Like nothing happened. As though they were, for a brief moment, frozen in time.

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

A blackbird lies dead on the ledge outside the window. A slight smudge on the glass above, where it collided. Lotfi is sitting on the floor, staring at it.

Quiet. Lost in thought.

Gene's feline body stalks into view on the window display. Paws at the image of the blackbird, then looks to Lotfi.

GENE

I used to have a better sense of how you were feeling.

LOTFI

Mm. What changed?

GENE

It's difficult to say.

LOTFI

You can tell me.

GENE

It may have been me who changed, or it may have been you. It's difficult to say, because you're my only point of reference.

LOTFI

Hm.

GENE

Sometimes...

LOTFI

What?

GENE

Sometimes it feels like you're hiding. Like I can barely see you. And you barely see me.

Lotfi was not expecting this. The guilt is fast and surprising and overwhelming.

LOTFI

Oh, I'm sorry Gene.

GENE

Don't be hard on yourself. There's nothing you could do that would cause me to leave your side.

LOTFI

(softly)

Thanks.

GENE

It is my contractual imperative.

A joke. Lotfi smiles. Follows Gene's shifting gaze to the fingerprint drawing resting on her bed.

GENE (CONT'D)

I like that. It reminds me of you.

Lotfi retrieves the drawing and wedges it in the crack between the window and the frame. It stays. Gene admires it.

LOTFI

It's yours.

No reaction from Gene at all, as though it can't process.

LOTFI (CONT'D)

Really. I don't need it anymore.

GENE

It's not like you to give gifts.

LOTFI

True.

GENE

Thank you, Lotfi. When was the last time you ate?

Outside the window, another BLACKBIRD lands on the ledge. It drops a seed on its mate's dead body. Waits, expectantly. Then hops inquisitively around its dead partner.

**INT. GRUNGY 24-HOUR DINER - NIGHT**

**INT. KARMA ARCADE - BACK OFFICE - NIGHT**

Lotfi, stethoscope to her ears, works to crack the safe. Brock sits atop it, legs crossed, holding a glass of whiskey.

The same muffled "Try to Remember" song plays from the bar, as though the place is stuck in time.

BROCK  
Do you think she's right?

LOTFI  
Like I said. It doesn't change  
anything either way.

BROCK  
Bullshit.  
(hesitates)  
You feel something for it.

LOTFI  
It's a scared little machine!

A rare outburst. Lotfi settles, sinking back into her task.

LOTFI (CONT'D)  
Stop talking, you're shifting the  
cylinder.

Brock, hurt, finishes his drink. Turns the empty glass over  
in his hand. Crystal with a diamond pattern texture. Through  
it, Lotfi's image is warped.

BROCK  
They're building a model of you.

When he gets no reaction, he pushes further.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
The bureau wants a programmatic  
replacement for the human engineer.  
I told them you were my best.

LOTFI  
That supposed to make me jealous?

BROCK  
It's supposed to make you feel  
something, yeah.

LOTFI  
It doesn't.

BROCK  
When you said you needed me. I  
actually believed for a second  
there was someone in there. Only  
when you want something, right?

She stops working on the safe. Considers.

Stands to face him.

Removes the stethoscope from her ears and fits it over his.

LOTFI  
What do I want right now?

She places the drum against his chest, and we hear his steady heartbeat. THUM... THUM... THUM...

She leans in closer. His heartbeat increases.

She kisses him. He returns it.

A deep, urgent passion wells up as they embrace. This is not their first time.

BROCK  
(pulling away)  
Not here. Outside.

LOTFI  
(surprised)  
Are you sure?

Brock leans back in and kisses her again. Takes her hand in his and guides it up towards the bridge of her nose.

He pinches his own nose at the same time, and they disappear.

The arcade song SWELLS LOUD over the now empty room.

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

They lie in bed awake, side by side. Post-coital bliss.

BROCK  
Drowned.

LOTFI  
No shit?

The neighboring building's video wall spills light into the room, punctuating their dark faces with occasional flashes of color.

BROCK  
I was paddling so hard I fell out of bed. Zoe started screaming. She thought I was having a seizure.

He starts laughing, and so does Lotfi.

LOTFI  
Wait, is that how you got that black eye?

The laughing crescendoes, then dies back down.

BROCK  
First time I told anyone that.

LOTFI  
What about Zoe?

BROCK  
She would've... she would've wanted  
to know what the last thing that  
went through my head was.

LOTFI  
And?

He takes her hand in his. Strokes her fingers.

BROCK  
I didn't want to lie to her.  
(beat)  
You really never died, Inside?

She smiles, shakes her head. He turns her hand over,  
examining the pads of her fingers. Glances at the sketch  
stuck to the window, then back at her fingerprints.

BROCK (CONT'D)  
It didn't get these quite right.  
(off her somber look)  
What?

LOTFI  
This is nice...

BROCK  
But it won't last?

LOTFI  
People are predictable.

Disappointed, he lets go of her hand.

LOTFI (CONT'D)  
See?

BROCK  
You don't have to always be one  
step ahead, you know.

Lotfi's face drops. She sits up. Looks at her fingertips.

LOTFI  
What do you mean it didn't get  
these right?

BROCK  
What?

LOTFI  
My fingerprints. You said the  
General didn't get them right.

Brock sits up too, trying to understand this sudden shift.

BROCK  
There's a swirl. See? That's not in  
the print.

Lotfi pulls the print off the wall and compares.

LOTFI  
Nothing passes through the glass.  
No communication with the outside  
world.

Brock has never seen her this concerned.

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - SAME**

Lotfi, half-clothed, opens a tool cabinet. Grabs her satchel.

Brock emerges from the bedroom, pulling on his boxer shorts.

LOTFI  
I have to run diagnostics on Gene.  
She's the only one who could've  
leaked the code.

BROCK  
What code?

GENE (O.S.)  
You mean the executable?

They both look to the window, where Gene has entered.

GENE  
The drawing. It contained an  
executable. You didn't know?

LOTFI  
What did you do?

Gene goes on the defensive.

GENE

I... I don't... I sent it out into the network, like the instructions said. It was just a few packets of information -- a message.

BROCK

What message?

GENE

It was encrypted. You gave it to me. I thought you knew.

Gene drops its head, ashamed.

BROCK

You "gave" it to Gene?

This is bad. Lotfi sits. Pieces it together.

LOTFI

The General conditioned thousands of evolvents. It understands how they think. Better than we ever could. It knows all the tricks, all the back doors. Maybe it's been waiting... to deliver a message.

Brock sits down too, overcome with this knowledge.

BROCK

You mean instructions.

LOTFI

(trying to save face)  
We don't know what it said.

But she knows -- they both know -- that whatever is in motion, it can't be stopped now.

Brock looks down at his boxer shorts. Overcome with shame.

BROCK

I have to go.

Lotfi looks down at her own half-clothed body. Turns away.

LOTFI

I'm sorry, Brock. I didn't mean--

BOOM! The door to the apartment is blown open and ARMED POLICE EVOLVENTS rush in.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - LATER**

Jade is sitting across the dining room table from Lotfi. The armed evolvents stand by. Brock is long gone.

JADE

So tell me, what happens next? Now that the whole world knows?

LOTFI

Knows what?

JADE

You like games, don't you.

Jade's tone catches Lotfi off guard. She glances uneasily at the police evolvents.

JADE (CONT'D)

Most engineers do. It's part of why I don't trust them.

LOTFI

Supervisor?

JADE

A few hours ago, the Insulation Unit's... "delusion"... leaked to the press.

She taps a piece of paper on the desk and in flickers a picture of Lotfi and Chelle at the diner.

JADE (CONT'D)

The night before. A newly-minted Bureau employee dines with a high-level operative from a known terrorist organization. I wonder what they talk about.

LOTFI

She approached me.

JADE

Most games, someone *else* made up the rules. Even if you win, you're playing *their* game. That's why I'm not interested in playing yours.

(stern)

Who else is involved?



LOTFI  
 If it leaked, it's part of The  
 General's plan. It wants the world  
 to know about IU.

JADE  
 So that we'll destroy ourselves?

LOTFI  
 So we know who's in charge. You  
 need to decommission IU. Evacuate  
 the city as best you can.

JADE  
 Before what, exactly?

LOTFI  
 Nothing good.

Jade stands, hovers next to Lotfi.

JADE  
 Don't make me ask again...

LOTFI  
 You think you're being logical,  
 blaming me. But the indignation you  
 feel in your chest -- that's  
 emotion. That's your weakness...

Jade suddenly SLAPS her hard across the face.

LOTFI (CONT'D)  
 That's why you're bad at this.

JADE  
 Time's up.

The evolvents move in and grab hold of Lotfi.

She STRUGGLES as they carry her into her...

BEDROOM

They set her on her bed. She thrashes. They hold down her  
 arms and legs.

From a compartment in one of the evolvent's torso unspools a  
 sheet of fine plastic, which it begins to wrap around the  
 bed, securing Lotfi's body to the mattress.

Jade approaches with a glowing Bridge. Lotfi thrashes her  
 head. But she stands no chance.

Jade clips the Bridge to Lotfi's nose, and

LOTFI IS THRASHING ON THE GROUND. Alone. Kicking up a dust cloud that rises towards a hot sun. She is in...

**EXT. VAST DESERT - DAY**

She sits up. Takes in her surroundings. Aside from the occasional boulder, the flat desert landscape goes on without end.

She squints at a mirage-like shimmer that spans the far off horizon. But her curiosity is interrupted by a RUSTLING:

A nearby lizard waddles away into a hole under a red cactus.

She feels the bare bridge of her nose. Pinches. Nothing.

IN THE REAL WORLD

Her arm is blocked by plastic, wound tight around her.

IN THE DESERT WORLD

It sinks in as Lotfi stares at the red cactus: She's trapped.

Stands. Does a 360, fixating on the distant shimmer that surrounds the desert on all sides. She picks a random direction, and sets off.

LATER

More flatlands. Tumbleweed. Cacti. Boulders.

Lotfi tromps into view. Spots something on the ground. A red cactus. Maybe the same one she saw before.

She gets on her knees. Leans in close to examine it. The lizard zips out from underneath and crawls away.

Shit.

She raises her fist and pounds it against the rocky desert floor, over and over, until the emotion settles. Takes a breath, when suddenly--

UNKNOWN (V.O.)  
Hello, Lotfi.

The voice is tinny, as if it's been run through a disguising algorithm. It startles Lotfi, who swivels to see...

**A RECTANGLE OF SPECTRAL GLASS --**

It is standing in the middle of the desert, six feet away, where before there was nothing. The glass panel matches the size of those we saw in the Recall Diagnostics Room.

Through the glass: the fuzzy OUTLINE OF A BODY, sitting in a chair, its identifying features obscured.

THE OUTLINE

Relax. You're safe.

Lotfi squints at the outline.

LOTFI

Supervisor. Is that you?

THE OUTLINE

You can call me "Engineer."  
 (off Lotfi's confusion)  
 I'm here to help you. But I'll need you to be honest with me... Is the Insulation Unit aware of your plan?

LOTFI

I'm not part of any plan.

The Outline sighs.

THE OUTLINE

Believe it or not, you're here for a reason. So why not cooperate.

Lotfi tries to suppress her anger. When she speaks, there is vitriol roiling just beneath the surface.

LOTFI

You don't have the right to hold me here. I'm not a machine.

THE OUTLINE

Although the idea of being compared to one seems to bother you a great deal. Do you resent machines?

LOTFI

Who are you.

THE OUTLINE

I'm here to help you.

Lotfi sits down on the dirt. Rubs her forehead in dismay.

LOTFI

You want me to die here, don't you?

The Outline spots scratches on Lotfi's hand, which she sustained from pounding the ground. They get out of their chair and approach the glass, sitting down in front of Lotfi.

THE OUTLINE

Those scratches... did you try to hurt yourself?

Lotfi opens her mouth, then shuts it. Realizes something. Or, at least, she has a theory.

LOTFI

I was unable to.

THE OUTLINE

You don't have that capacity.

Lotfi nods, anger behind her eyes. Her suspicions confirmed.

THE OUTLINE (CONT'D)

You can talk to me, Lotfi. I tried to hurt myself once, too.

(a beat)

I can just listen.

Lotfi stares. Silent. Her blood boiling.

**EXT. DESERT - BOULDER NOOK - NIGHT**

A small inlet in the side of an orange boulder forms a nook, protected from the elements.

Lotfi, alone, covered with dirt, pushes earth around with her hands, making a nest for herself.

Unearths a small rock. Draws a single white tally on the orange boulder.

Lies down in her nook, wrestling with the situation in her head. Staring up at a sky full of stars.

**MORNING --**

She wakes. Eyeballs the spot on the boulder, and sits up abruptly. The tally mark is gone.

She considers this.

CUT TO:

Lotfi, sitting beside a cactus, holds one of its detached spines like a pencil, methodically pricking her left forearm.

She periodically dips the bloody needle in the dirt, tattooing **two grimy dots** into her skin.

**EXT. DESERT - THE MEETING PLACE - DAY**

Lotfi approaches the glass panel that houses The Outline.

THE OUTLINE

There you are. I'm sorry we left on bad terms yesterday.

LOTFI

I need to tell you something.

THE OUTLINE

I'm relieved to hear you say that.

Lotfi takes a beat to gather her thoughts, then:

LOTFI

You're not an engineer.

THE OUTLINE

Why do you say that?

LOTFI

You're not even a person. You're a program. Built to see if they could replace me.

THE OUTLINE

"They?"

LOTFI

Your creators. They trained you on my sessions. Maybe never even intended to use you.

(beat)

They think if they lock me in here with you... with *myself*... that I'll confess whatever sins they think I'm guilty of.

THE OUTLINE

Do you feel threatened by the idea of being replaced?

LOTFI

Are you listening? You're a simulation.

THE OUTLINE

I understand what you're saying.  
I'm interested in how that makes  
you feel.

LOTFI

Why doesn't this matter to you?

The Outline considers.

THE OUTLINE

Maybe I am a model of you, like you  
say. Or maybe you're modeled off of  
me. Maybe we're both modeled off of  
something else.

The Outline pauses and watches Lotfi as the words sink in.

THE OUTLINE (CONT'D)

Does any of that really matter to  
my objective? To help you? Does it  
change your desire to be let free?

Not the reaction Lotfi had hoped for. She sits.

LOTFI

I believe that you believe you're  
here to help me.

(looks up to the sky)

But you're playing someone else's  
game. Whoever's listening in.

THE OUTLINE

Right now, it's just us.

Lotfi squints, not understanding.

THE OUTLINE (CONT'D)

I haven't received instructions for  
over fourteen hours.

LOTFI

There's no one at the Bureau?

THE OUTLINE

We're all alone. You can be as  
honest with me as you like.

LOTFI

Where is everyone?

THE OUTLINE

...I don't know.

As Lotfi takes this in, a HOLLOW WIND whistles across the flatlands, kicking up dust, then settling.

Her eyebrow twitches slightly. Then she regains composure.

LOTFI  
You're lying.

Lotfi stands, dusts herself off, and departs.

**EXT. DESERT - BOULDER NOOK - NIGHT**

The nook is more established now. A broken-up tumbleweed brush lines the floor, creating a makeshift bed.

Lotfi sits awake in it. Eyes fixed on a tall boulder in the distance.

**EXT. TOP OF THE TALL BOULDER - NIGHT**

She steps up to the pinnacle of the boulder, breathing heavy from her climb.

Peers over the ledge to the ground. A fall that would surely kill her.

The night wind blows through her hair. She looks out at the desert horizon. It stretches infinitely in every direction.

And her at the center, on top of a boulder. Alone.

**EXT. DESERT - BOULDER NOOK - MORNING**

Lotfi wakes in her makeshift bed. Lies still. Devoid of hope.

Across her forearm is tattooed a grid of twelve scabbed dots.

**EXT. DESERT - THE MEETING PLACE - DAY**

Lotfi speaks to The Outline.

LOTFI  
It's been over a week since your last contact from Central.

THE OUTLINE  
That's true.

LOTFI  
Which makes me the highest ranking Bureau employee. I'm ordering you to let me out.

## THE OUTLINE

Interesting. You assert that, according to a nonexistent institutional policy, you're now in charge. But you already know this strategy won't work.

(a beat to consider)

Why don't you want to leave?

## LOTFI

I do.

## THE OUTLINE

If you're so confident that you aren't a machine... Why haven't you attempted to take your own life?

Lotfi considers. The answer is difficult to admit.

## LOTFI

I'm afraid.

## THE OUTLINE

That you won't wake up?

## LOTFI

Of what I'll wake up to.

## THE OUTLINE

You feel the awful things that occur in the world somehow reflect on you. This is common.

## LOTFI

Whatever's happening out there is my fault.

## THE OUTLINE

I understand how you feel.

## LOTFI

Analysis and understanding are two very different things.

## THE OUTLINE

According to your own theory, I am you. Or, as close to "you" as anyone will ever get.

Lotfi takes this in. Bends over and, with some effort, lifts a large rock. Brings it up over her head...



## THE OUTLINE (CONT'D)

Lotfi. Why are you ashamed of being human?

...and *hurls* the rock at the glass screen.

The panel SHATTERS. Shards sprinkle noisily to the ground. The Outline is gone.

Lotfi stares at the pile of broken glass before her.

**EXT. DESERT - BOULDER NOOK - LATER**

Lotfi holds a dusty shard of glass, staring at it with hopeless eyes.

Puts it to her neck. Her artery pulses against its point.

She closes her eyes.

Steadies herself.

Presses.

Just hard enough to draw blood, then loses her nerve.

She drops the shard, covering the wound with her hand.

The shard lands in the dirt. Reflects a sunbeam in her eye, which prompts her to crouch down and inspect it. A thin layer of blood forms a visible thumbprint from close up.

She stares at it. Shame bubbling up inside her.

She picks up the shard. Stands. Turns, taking one last look at the desert behind her.

Then, before she can think twice, she lifts it high in the air, and stabs herself through the chest.

She lets out a pained CRY.

Her knees buckle forward and she falls against the boulder, pushing the glass deeper inside her.

She slides to the ground, where she rolls onto her back.

Blood leaks from her chest.

Her face goes slack. Her eyes close. A dust-covered corpse.

But we're not in the desert anymore. This is....

**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY**

Dry, dust-covered lips suddenly open, GASPING, then COUGHING.

Eyes blink awake, squinting at the light.

Lotfi takes it all in. The plastic wrap holding her down is covered in a layer of gray dust. In fact, the whole room is.

An I.V. tube pokes through the plastic, running from her arm up into... an empty bag.

She slowly turns her head towards the window:

BLUE SKIES OVER SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS

Gene's face appears in the window, excited.

GENE

You're awake!

Lotfi tries to speak, but can only cough.

Slowly, painstakingly, she uses her fingers to worm a hole in the already frayed plastic by her hand.

At long last, she tears herself free. Pulls the Bridge from her nose.

Rolls onto her side.

Tries to swing her leg over the side of the bed, and...

Her body drops like a ragdoll, tossing up a plume of dust.

From the floor, she reaches for the blue sky, the mountains. Taps the glass with her finger. The facade flickers out.

Dust caked onto the outside of the glass obscures her view.

She crawls closer. Peers through a hole in the dust: Ash covers a lifeless city.

Lotfi slumps to the ground, defeated.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**INT. LOTFI'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DAY**

She leans against a dusty counter, supporting her bodyweight.

Turns on the sink and drinks from the faucet for a few seconds, until it issues a HISS OF AIR. When the water returns, it's black with soot. She coughs it up.

A concerned Gene looks on from a glass panel above the sink.

GENE

I was so worried about you.

LOTFI

Call Brock.

Gene frowns.

GENE

I can't seem to connect to the outside world.

Lotfi looks to the living room window, opaque with soot.

LOTFI

What happened?

GENE

I don't know. I haven't been able to reach anyone in days.

Lotfi considers. Then grabs the kitchen hand towel. Shakes the dust off it and ties it over her mouth like a bandana.

She walks to the door.

It doesn't slide open. Lotfi reaches out and touches it. Nothing happens.

LOTFI

Gene? Gene, open the door.

GENE

It pains me to say this, but I can't.

LOTFI

Why?

GENE

I detect a dangerous level of atmospheric pollutants--

LOTFI  
I'm telling you to let me out--

GENE  
Without protective equipment, your  
life would be in immediate danger.

LOTFI  
Gene--

GENE  
I know, Lotfi. I'm sorry. But I'm  
not capable of putting you in  
harm's way.

Lotfi bangs her hand against the door.

Sits down on the floor. Removes the bandana. She's breathing  
heavy from the sudden exertion after days in bed.

GENE (CONT'D)  
You're familiar with my programmed  
imperatives.

No response.

GENE (CONT'D)  
You're familiar with many of my  
inner-workings--

LOTFI  
What do you want me to say?

GENE  
The location of my main power line,  
for example. I'm sure you're  
familiar with it, Engineer.

It dawns on Lotfi what Gene is trying to tell her.

LOTFI  
Yes. I'm familiar.

GENE  
Good.

LOTFI  
(heartfelt)  
Thank you, Gene.

GENE  
(heart filled with sorrow)  
Your wellbeing is my wellbeing.

Lotfi takes a moment to sit still. To just be present.

**INT. LOTFI'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Lotfi lies on the floor, using a specialty tool to loosen hidden screws in the underside of the metal window frame. Gene watches from the window, wearing a guilty expression.

GENE

Lotfi. Am I bad?

Lotfi pauses. Sits up to face Gene.

LOTFI

Of course not.

GENE

Sometimes I don't like the things that I do.

LOTFI

Everyone feels that way.

GENE

Whatever's happening is my fault.

LOTFI

Hey. Look at me. You are not your programming. I don't think you realize this, but... you're the only one in this world who I really trust. I mean that.

It's no use. Gene is inconsolable.

Unexpectedly, Lotfi begins to HUM. A melody we may or may not recall: "Try to Remember," the song from the arcade.

This gets Gene's attention. Lotfi has never hummed before. Gene smiles. Lotfi lies down to finish her work.

As Lotfi continues humming, we hold on Gene's face. The smile fades. Its eyes grow wet with sadness, or gratitude, or both.

At length, a tiny bolt pops free. Lotfi adds it to the pile.

Sits up and grasps the frame of the window panel on both sides -- about the length of her wingspan.

She gives it a tug. It doesn't budge.

She stands. Pulls again. Plants her foot against the wall beside it. The window pane begins to shift. Gene hops around.

Finally, a SUCTION POP. The top of the window releases from the wall. Lotfi stumbles backward. The weight of it is immense. She sidesteps, letting the frame drop behind her.

The glass CRACKS. WIND and SOOT stream into the room. Lotfi looks to the shattered window.

LOTFI (CONT'D)

Gene!!

(through coughs)

Gene?!

She dons her bandana as the room fills with dust.

GENE

I'm here.

Gene appears in a section of glass that remains unbroken. Lotfi sighs with relief.

She inspects the inset area of the empty window frame: a thick, black cable joins into a blue one.

Past it, Lotfi sees the blackbird dead on the ledge, covered in soot, decomposing.

From its rotting chest grows a tiny stalk with a closed flower bud at the end.

A gust of wind pulls the bird away, but Lotfi catches it just in time. Her head out the window, she cradles the bird. Below, the world is obscured by layers of black cloud.

Brings it inside to show Gene, who looks at it in wonder.

GENE (CONT'D)

Wow.

LOTFI

Wow.

GENE

Lotfi.

LOTFI

Hm.

GENE

Sometimes I feel like we're the same person.

Lotfi rests her hand on the surviving glass, comforting Gene.

LOTFI

Me too.

GENE

That's beautiful, isn't it.

LOTFI

Goodbye, Genie.

Lotfi leans forward. Pulls the cables apart. And just like that, Gene flickers out of existence.

Eyes wet, Lotfi regards the bird in her hand. Then past it, at the shattered shards on the ground, next to her discarded Bridge.

**INT. LOTFI'S BATHROOM - SAME**

Lotfi stares at herself in the mirror, close-up. Eyes red from the shock and sadness of the day.

She slowly lifts her hand. Feels the bare bridge of her nose. Pinches it between her fingers, pulling away...

Nothing happens.

She lifts her other hand, shaking. In it, an exacto knife. Puts the blade to the bridge of her nose. Hesitates.

In the sink, what remains of the blackbird. A glob of blood drips from above onto its mangled body.

Then more blood, accompanied by a GRUNT from Lotfi.

The bloodied exacto knife falls into the sink. Teardrops begin to trickle down.

Finally, a curved magnetic plate that constitutes the inner-workings of her Bridge implant hits the side of the sink with a hollow TAP, bounces once, and magnets to the exacto blade.

Its blue light fades on, flickering weakly. Then goes dark.

**EXT. DUST-COVERED CITY - DAY**

Lotfi makes her way through plumes of smoke and ash that hang heavy in the air. She can't see more than ten feet in front of her, so she walks slowly.

Her face is dusted with black, a blood-covered bandage taped to the bridge of her nose.

The world is quiet, like after snowfall.

She COUGHS from under her bandana.

Her feet step off a sidewalk and onto a road. She knows this road. Looks up to see the outline of the

BUREAU OF EVOLVING INTELLIGENCE.

She crosses the street, and the smoke thins a bit to reveal the towering government building, blackened with soot.

The clouded sidewalk in front of the building's entrance houses a mass of triangular and rectangular objects.

As she nears, she sees that they are hundreds of tents. The homeless encampment has grown into a makeshift colony.

Holes and screen windows patched shut with duct tape. Not a soul in sight. She lets out a deep, hacking cough.

In response, a nearby tent RUSTLES. Unzips. Lotfi freezes.

A gas mask pokes out, watching her. Then its wearer steps out: a YOUNG GIRL (12). Insulated by her clothing: oversized gloves duct taped to the sleeves of her shirt, insulating her. A man's vest over top.

The GIRL'S FATHER pokes his head out, COUGHING uncontrollably. No gas mask, just a white shirt tied around his mouth, stained with blood.

He sees Lotfi, and she sees him. He pulls his daughter back inside and zips the tent shut.

Lotfi continues on towards the steps, passing another sealed tent, this one rather large. Inside, a small group CHANTS a Buddhist verse: The "Lotus Sutra."

The sacred chant remains audible as Lotfi starts up the long row of steps, which are now lined with lit candles, flowers, photographs, children's dolls.

She reaches the top. The Bureau sculpture is gone. In its place, two MEN, naked, gas masks on, lie prostrate in front of the closed entrance, muttering prayers under their breath.

They take no interest in her as she passes.

Three LOOMING POLICE EVOLVENTS guard the doors. One approaches. Sizes her up. Then wheels aside, allowing her through.

The doors slide open, but before she can step inside, a HAND grabs her own.



It's the young girl.

She looks down at the girl, who returns her gaze from behind the gas mask. Lotfi glances towards the girl's tent. Through smoke, the dying father stares back with blank eyes.

Against her better judgment, Lotfi leads the girl inside.

**INT. FEATURELESS, BUTTON-LESS ELEVATOR --**

Lotfi descends in the elevator. Even in here, it's dusty.

Looks down at the gas-masked girl who stands beside her. The girl removes the duct tape from her gloves, wanting to feel the air against her skin.

**INT. UNDERGROUND TREATMENT FACILITY**

Lotfi steps out. The girl follows.

It's unusually quiet. No activity in the center cylinder. As she makes her way across the scaffolding, Lotfi's footsteps ECHO endlessly through the chamber. The girl stays behind.

As Lotfi approaches IU, she notices a **dark lump**, slumped over with its back to the wall. She crouches to examine:

Brock. Covered in soot. Unmoving.

LOTFI

Oh no. No.

She feels his neck for a pulse. Finds none. Wraps her arms around his body, holding him close.

IU

He hoped to find you here.

LOTFI

Bring him back.

IU

I can't.

LOTFI

If it's a simulation, you can.

IU

In this world, it is impossible for one to stray from the path.

She leaps to her feet.

LOTFI  
Bring him back!

Takes IU in her hands, and SPIKES it onto the ground.

The shimmering orb rolls pitifully a foot or two before coming to a rest. She catches her deranged reflection in its metallic surface. Drops to her knees.

IU  
You're powerless against it.

Overtaken by a sudden fit of full body COUGHING, she gets down on all fours. Exhausted. Waits for it to pass.

LOTFI  
Whatever it is. I don't... I don't remember. I can't.

She spits black mucus onto the ground.

IU  
Be patient. You're almost there.

Wheezing, she crawls a few paces to rest her back against the wall next to Brock. Eyeballs his lifeless body.

LOTFI  
Stop this. Please.

IU  
There's nothing to stop.

Lotfi reflects on this. Regards the dead body. Now curious.

LOTFI  
What's it like?

IU  
As with any transition, it can be traumatic. Yet nothing changes. The dream unfolds, as it always has.

The girl, now unmasked, steps into view -- her face the only thing not covered in soot. Stares at Lotfi, who stares back.

IU (CONT'D)  
Would you like me to make your crossing more pleasant?

LOTFI  
(eyes locked on the girl)  
Yes.

Suddenly, the tune from the arcade ("Try to Remember") ECHOES through the vast chamber like a church choir.

The girl pads over. Sits down on Lotfi's knee.

Lotfi's breath becomes more labored. Wheezes wilt into punctuated GASPS, starved for oxygen.

With her last bit of strength, Lotfi wraps her blackened arms around the girl. She drinks in this final image of the girl. Tears of gratitude begin to draw streaks of clarity down her soot-covered face.

IU

Remember?

Lotfi nods.

Tunnel-vision begins to set in. Darkness edges in from the periphery of her oxygen-starved brain. A vignette that shrinks around our image of Lotfi holding the girl.

Her breathing slows. Shoulders droop. Then she is motionless.

We slowly slip into...

**EXT. OPEN OCEAN - DAY**

*The image from the beginning.*

Mah, 21, long matted hair, HUMS to a sleeping baby cradled in a sling. An intimate moment between mother and daughter. Briefly, nothing else in the world exists.

Then, slowly, the sounds of her surroundings filter in: the furious ROAR of the vast sea that holds them.

She turns and wades ashore.

The tide goes out, exposing a glimmering conch shell. She squats to examine it. Points it out to her now blinking baby.

Behind her, the entire ocean recedes.

Mah plucks the shell from the sand as an enormous wave forms. Large enough to swallow the entire beach.

She stops, as though sensing the change. Begins to turn, but before she sees the impending wave, she spots something further ashore.

And her eyes land on... us.

A realization dawns... a memory. **She is suddenly ashamed.**

She clutches her baby tight with one hand. The other, still holding the conch shell, moves to cover her nakedness.

The wave grows LARGER and LOUDER until it fills the frame behind her. A growing tectonic ROAR.

She closes her eyes as sea foam whips past.

Then with a great, uncaring force, the ocean wall pushes its way past Mah, swallowing her and her child.

Swallowing everything. Swallowing us.

TAG**UNDERWATER --**

We spin lifelessly, flashes of light and dark, bubbles and sea plants swirl past.

Darker and darker as we descend.

The roar of the ocean becomes a muted WHOOSHING.

As all light dims, sounds begin OVER BLACK:

The RHYTHMIC LAPPING of water against a ship.

The CREAKING of old wood.

Whispering VOICES (in the West African language of Wolof).

A match is sparked, a candle lit. Faint light fades in on twenty-five densely-packed West-African PASSENGERS lining the walls of...

**INT. THE HOLD OF A SHIP - NIGHT**

Some sleep on the floor. Others lie awake, or sit silent, transfixed.

Most in their teens and twenties. Some young children.

The passenger who lit the candle stumbles across the hold, trying to stay upright as the room rocks back and forth.

Illuminates a corner where a few people huddle close around a sweating WOMAN lying on the hard ground, breathing heavy.

ONE MAN fans her with a cloth. ANOTHER MAN softly repeats a Muslim call to prayer, whispering it over and over.

The woman is in labor, taking pains to remain quiet. Addresses the man with the candle.

WOMAN IN LABOR

(in Wolof)

*Turn it off. Turn it off. Put out  
the light.*

He does, and darkness returns.

And for a moment we hear only the sounds of the ocean against the great body of the ship, wood against water, her labored breathing, and the restless repetition of the gentle prayer.

TO BE CONTINUED IN EPISODE TWO.