

TEASER • • • SCENE 01 • *OPEN WITH formidable power thrum of the Receptor Chair. Establish.*

T • SCENE 02 • *Inside the Control Ring. Thrum is muffled, outside chamber in background.*

SYSTEM AI ASSIST: *(mechanical voice)* **Project Dream Catcher commencing. Session 7B.**

Monitor activates. Static. Tuning. The wah of the Frequency Void over speaker.

10:30 PM. Subject Nala entering the Frequency Void.

BEN: *(pointedly, 7A did not go well)* **Is the Receptor Chair stable this time?**

TARRAH: *(nervous, hesitant, bluffing through)* **Her bio-sign readings are holding steady... She's entering the vocal REM state. I think we'll be OK.**

BEN: *(concerned)* **See if you can guide her past *Frequency 43*. I know she really wants to explore that one, but I... I just don't like the sound of it.**

TARRAH: *(with asperity)* **I agree... (dismayed) Oh... she's heading right for it again. (hits two or three controls, gets 'no action taken' flat single beep) I don't think there's any way to divert. Should we Cancel Session?**

BEN: *(irritated)* **You know how Nala will react to that... think I'm getting over sensitive... (adjusting controls) Let's see what she picks up on this time.**

T • SCENE 03 • *Hard cut back to full power thrum of chair. It echoes out and fades, into the drone ambience of the Frequency Void. We're with Nala. Frequencies arise and pass by. The first is benign.*

NALA: *(echoing)* **I'm entering the Frequency Void, the Zone of the Corridors. (another one passes, a bit more disturbing) Ben, I think you're right. These Corridors of Color I'm seeing... I think they are the dreaming frequencies.**

And now: Frequency 43 comes in. Angular and jagged, it's immediately off-putting. When it lulls:

(unsettled) **That's 43, isn't it. (the winds of the Halls sweep in, she reacts with alarm) Ben, I'm being swept into the Frequency... (wail of wind) I feel like I'm moving at fantastic speed.**

T • SCENE 04 • *In Control Ring. Sobbing Banshee wail, over the speaker.*

BEN: *(really frightened, angry)* **No, that's wrong. Tarrah, Cancel Session.**

TARRAH: **Yes, sir! (hits control, nothing happens) (alarmed) It's not cancelling. System, report!**

SYSTEM AI ASSIST: *(in altogether too positive a tone)* **Cannot comply. Procedure in process. Subject at risk.**

T • SCENE 05 • *With Nala, Hall winds rushing. It quiets, then: electric circuit igniting (I'm hearing something similar to that effect in Dark Pattern), intense rasping sound of radiation.*

NALA: *(panicking)* **Blue and green light! (the effect ramps) It's shining through me. (now completely terrified) It's like radiation. I feel like it's searching me... scanning me.**

T • SCENE 06 • *In Control Ring.*

BEN: *(hitting control hard, shouting)* **CANCEL THE SESSION! OVERRIDE!**

SYSTEM AI ASSIST: **Cannot comply.**

Over speaker: one last Banshee wail. Fade that out of speaker mode, into up close sobbing wail, as if it's bridged the dimensions and passed into our own.

OUT TO BIOMECHANOID THEME

ACT ONE • SCENE 01 • *As if Narrator is inside the deserted Dream Catcher facility. The normal thrum of machinery systems is a disturbing wallah of strange frequencies and repeating device FX.*

NARRATOR: **Welcome to Xtremity.** *(activates device, off-putting sine wave oscillates for a moment, then he switches it back off)* **All energy is expressed in wavelengths. Our very thoughts are electrical currents.** *(walks on metallic deck slowly, underneath following)* **Tonight's episode explores the strange phenomenon of dreams. Researchers Nala Kataya and Ben Whitlock are convinced that, in dreams, we may actually be travelling to rarefied realms. Realities that can only be reached at specific frequencies.** *(stops, activates the Receptor Chair, low powerful thrum starts up)* **And they have invented a device, the Receptor Chair, that allows Nala, an Esper Sensitive, to not only dream, but to communicate from her dreams.** *(accesses another array, and a harsh three signal alarm goes off)* **But such forays into the Unknown come at a price. In a universe of Duality, dream can become nightmare in a nanosecond.** *(hits another control, activating a replay of Frequency 43)* **Unlocking realities best left in the distant reaches of... FREQUENCY 43.**

A1 • SCENE 02 • *A hiss and the glass sarcophagus lid of the Receptor Chair rises heavily, pneumatically. Nala groans, shifts sharply.*

NALA: *(in delirium)* **No! What are you doing? What are you saying?**

BEN: **Nala? Can you hear me? Wake up!**

TARRAH: *(punching buttons on a hand-held medical device)* **Her vitals are stabilizing.**
And Nala sits up suddenly. Instantly awake.

NALA: **Oh, god... I'm back... Oh.** *(and her tone holds both horror and fascination)*
What did I just hear?

A single-tone alert goes off.

SYSTEM AI ASSIST: **You have an Authorized Visitor.**

BEN: *(irritated)* **At this hour? It's almost midnight.**

NALA: *(instantly knowing)* **Aelinn is here.**

BEN: *(curses under this breath)* **Why did we give her project access?**

NALA: *(ironically)* **You know this project couldn't have happened without her.**
(A side panel of the chair lowers, becomes stairs. Nala scoots over, steps out) **I'm OK... (ruefully) Let's go over 7B in the conference room.**

Both their steps on metal floor as they head for stairs on the left side of the room.

BEN: **I really don't want Aelinn sitting in on this. If she goes all woogie-woogie and clairvoyant sensitive, I will call her out on it.**

NALA: **Even though her very presence, here in the middle of the night, indicates she knew something was happening to me.**

BEN: **She knows you key in on the Frequencies better at night. I'm gonna call that as grifter's luck... or coincidence.**

NALA: **But you know it isn't.** *(hits control, door unpressurizes)*

A1 • SCENE 03 • *Musical break, to indicate time passed. In Conference room.*

NALA: I want to go back in. I'm telling you, I heard *voices*.

BEN: (*frustrated, worried, angry*) Which are *not* showing up on the playback. System, scan again.

SYSTEM AI ARCHIVE: (*search effect of Nala encounter, in speeded up snippets*) Scan complete. Undefined sound like wind. Atonal wail. Vocalization, negative.

AELINN: (*concerned*) Can you tell us what they were saying? The tone of them?

NALA: It's frustrating. I can almost remember the actual words. Multiple voices. *Listing* something. Complex terms. A *scientific* language, that's what it felt like... C'mon, Ben. Don't tell me you're not intrigued by *that*.

AELINN: Nala, will you indulge me? Hold my hand for a moment. (*and way off in the distance, the Engineers, for just a moment. And she knows this is beyond any of them*) I... I don't think you should go back in. I feel... (*she hesitates*)

BEN: (*jumping in*) Here it comes. She senses some great, threatening danger.

AELINN: (*sharply*) You don't want her to go back in. Don't try to pretend you do.

BEN: (*heatedly*) Don't speak for me! We can set up safeguards, observe from farther away.

AELINN: Your machines again. Your *empirical* science. What you've never accepted is that I don't need *machines* to tell me what to know. And I know there are things, *out there*, we are not yet meant to confront!

NALA: Look, you two. (*with humor, to deflect her pointed statement, she cares about both of them*) I've heard this old and boring debate too many times... here's my answer to both of you. The entire point of this research is to find *new answers*. We're living on a world that is tearing itself apart. Look at the human race. We haven't stopped war. We've booby-trapped the entire planet with toxic timebombs. Hundreds of steel drums filled with radioactive waste, dumped wholesale into the sea in places we don't even have on record. And how many stockpile bunkers of bacteriological weapons? One earthquake, one flood, one crazy nutjob in a soldier suit, and... *we're gone. We will not survive it.* (*beat*) So if I did hear, not only *language*, but an intelligence that may know more than we do – I'm going for it. *I will contact them.* And both of you know better than to try and stop me. (*loaded beat*)

AELINN: (*against all her better judgement*) Well, Ben. There's not much we can say to that. Is there.

BEN: ... No, there isn't. (*but he too feels like someone is walking across his grave*) (*with great foreboding*) I'll go prep Session 7C.

A1 • SCENE 04 • In Control Ring. Low thrum of Receptor Chair, outside.

TARRAH: (*also with foreboding*) So we're... *targeting* Frequency 43 this time.

BEN: (*resignedly*) That's the plan. I want the audio receptors at *eleven*, right? I need to know she's really hearing what she said she's hearing.

TARRAH: I don't like this.

BEN: I don't either. None of us do.

An affirmative sensor beep goes off.

TARRAH: **She's settled in the Chair. All bio-signals and receptors reading green.**

A1 • SCENE 05 • *In sealed Chair with Nala. Louder thrum of power wall. Ben is over mic.*

BEN: **Nala? Are you ready?**

NALA: **No. I'm scared spitless. Keep your hand on that Failsafe, right?**

BEN: **You know it. Tell me you're coming back. Swear on the ring.**

NALA: *(laughs out loud)* **My empirical fiancée, defaulting to superstition?**

BEN: **We chose fire opal for the best of luck, my Destiny balancing Libra. If there's something dangerous out there, I want you to stab it with that pointy arrow at the top of your birthsign scales.**

NALA: **I will do just that – swear on the ring.**

Sensor signal.

BEN: **Receptor Chair at full... Time to fly.**

A1 • SCENE 06 • *Musical break. Aelinn's home. Old style clock ticking in background. She turns on an old style lamp with a chain pull. Her cat jumps up on the desk, unsettled, wanting attention.*

AELINN: **Yes, Hera, I'm home... Oh. Almost three. The witching hour... (quoting H.P. Lovecraft) 'The moon is dark, and the gods dance in the night... there is terror in the sky, for upon the moon hath sunk an eclipse foretold in no books of men... or of earth's gods...'** *(Opens drawer, takes out large card set, riffles them)* **I shouldn't do this. Not a propitious night for the Tarot, Nala, but I read these for you. In case there's anything I can do.** *(Chair scrapes, she sits down, deals three cards on the desk before her)* **Please be kind.** *(knowing they won't be, flips them over one by one, reacting with increasing unease with each one) (after last card, pause, then, voice breaking)* **Oh, child, child... Where will *this* unholy trinity take you?**

A1 • SCENE 07 • *In Lab Control Room with Ben. Log report as he monitors Nala's latest excursion.*

BEN: *(worried, angry)* **Session 7C. Nala's already contacted Frequency 43. I can't help but feel she's been targeted. If she *has* contacted thinking, planning... intelligence... what do they want?**

A1 • SCENE 08 • *In Frequency 43 with Nala. The wallah is disturbing, dissonant.*

NALA: **I know you're there...**

And again, replacing Frequency 43, that sound of an electrical energy igniting. And the radiation returns, even more intense than before. Nala reacts, it's almost painful this time.

Yes, go ahead. Scan me. I mean you no harm.

The radiation begins to crackle. It's almost like fire now. Nala won't stop or ask for help, but the sensation is like standing in a microwave. Over the pain, she reacts with anger, defiance.

Talk to me... Let me understand you!

Another electrical ignition and the radiations severs. Nala gasps in relief. Pause. Only sound is Frequency 43, as if in the distance. Then, several Engineers begin chanting at once. Echoing in the void, their chants mount louder and louder, becoming a frightful din, a scientific demonic incantation. Mounts to a crescendo, and then hard cut to silence. A beat. Thin, distant Wind of the Halls signwaves, then continues under:

NARRATOR: **We will return with Act Two of... *FREQUENCY 43*. (announcements)**

NARRATOR: And now, Act Two of **FREQUENCY 43**.

ACT TWO • SCENE 01 • *Deja Vu. A hiss, glass sarcophagus lid rising heavily. Great urgency.*

BEN: **NALA!**

TARRAH: *(scanning with medical device, but readings are clearly erratic) (alarmed)*
She's way under. I'm not getting normal brainwave patterns.

BEN: *Punches control, arm sleeve retracts. He rubs her hand vigorously) Nala, please. (no response, they can't handle this) (fearful but focused)* **Call the Institute Med Team. Arrange for transport to LA Medical West. Ask for Dr. Zanders, she's up on our research. Medical Wing SubRosa.**

Tarrah steps away, makes call in background. Dialogue in separate section.

(near tears, voice shaking) **Nala, come back. You swore on the ring.**

A2 • SCENE 02 • *Hospital room. Erratic readouts. Nala is sporadically jerking, reacting.*

BEN: **Brainwaves are elevated. She should be conscious! Dr. Zanders, why isn't she responding?**

DR. ZANDERS: **I think she's trapped in some REM cycle that is off the scale. Look at the way she's moving and gesturing. Responding to unseen stimuli.**

BEN: *(angry, blaming himself)* **In a nightmare she can't wake up from.**

DR. ZANDERS: **I'd say that's exactly it. You say she contacted something you heard?**

BEN: **I didn't want to believe it. But this time, it's on record. Some chorus of voices out of I don't know where. I don't believe in the demonic, but this was so... Other – it gives me chills just remembering it.**

Nala begins to thrash. Like she's trying to run from something.

DR. ZANDERS: **Oh, god, hold her.**

They both restrain her. She's struggling, fighting them. She gasps, then goes totally still.

BEN: **Nala, please, wake up!**

But here we go. A hissing sound, like steam, then a kind of viscous bubbling.

Oh, god, what's that?

DR. ZANDERS: *(horrified)* **There's a stain under the sheet. Her arm.**

Sheet being pulled down. The sound becomes louder. Like liquid pulsing thickly.

(terrified) **What is that? Never seen a skin eruption that fast.**

(fascinated, repulsed) **Plaque covering six inches. Vesicles containing liquid, now hardening. An almost metallic blue.**

Now it hisses one more time. And then the affected area crackles, like magma cooling and hardening.

BEN: **Don't touch it.**

DR. ZANDERS: **Of course not! Hand me that pen on the night stand.**

Now the affected area goes still. No further sound. She taps the area with the pen, and it sounds like rock.

BEN: **My god. That sounds exo-skeletal.**

Then: sound of liquids shifting again. Loud crackling. Then softens in volume, but continues sporadically.

DR. ZANDERS: *(stunned)* **The plaque just expanded by two inches. In seconds.**

(now she's terrified) **My God, Ben. What did you contact out there?**

A2 • SCENE 03 • *Musical Break. Five AM at an LA bus terminal. Nearly deserted.*

AUTO BUS ANNOUNCE: **Line 106: Montebello to Monterey Park, departing at 5:25 AM.**

Bus door closes, bus turns out, drives away. Up close, Tarrah punching iPhone keypad. Ringing.

TARRAH: **Come on, come on!**

MAJOR ALARIE: *(blearily, over phone speaker)* **Hello? Tarrah?**

TARRAH: **Major Alarie, I'm so sorry to call you at this hour...** *(nervous, scared)*
It's happened. They've made contact.

MAJOR ALARIE: *(instantly awake)* **When? How?**

TARRAH: **Frequency 43. I told you. Nala's in a coma. They've taken her to LA West. Dr. Zanders is our contact.**

MAJOR ALARIE: **Good work, Tarrah. We'll take it from here.**

A2 • SCENE 04 • *Back at LA West. A nurse crew is wheeling out Nala, reading out vitals to each other in hushed tones, coordinating. Dr. Zanders and Ben are following, somewhat heated exchange in progress.*

DR. ZANDERS: **Ben, we're taking her down to Testing, and I don't know how long we'll be. It's a Quarantine Zone – you won't be allowed in.**

BEN: **Where's the nearest place I can wait?**

DR. ZANDERS: **You're exhausted. Go home. I will contact you when I can. I promise.**
Elevator bell. AI: Elevator 4 to Testing and Quarantine. Alerting Testing Teams.
Team wheels in Nala. Elevator door closes. Bell. Ben frets, paces, then takes out phone, punches numbers.

BEN: **I can't believe I'm doing this.** *(rings once, Aelinn answers)*

AELINN: **Ben, I'm on my way. One minute out from the hospital.**

BEN: *(tired, resigned, with dark remnant of humor)* **Of course you are... Do I even need to fill you in?**

AELINN: **I know she breached Frequency 43. Give me the rest from there.**

A2 • SCENE 06 • *Musical break. Corporate building. Severance wah. Elevator door, bell, at slight distance. Occupant steps out and strides towards us in echoing hall, then stops. Control punched. Scanning sound.*

AI: **Identification positive. Major Alarie, Covert Services. Welcome to the PSI Institute. CEO Caddel is ready to see you.**
Door swooshes open. Caddell greets him from across room.

CADDELL: **Major Alarie.**
Alarie strides up rapidly, they shake hands. Alarie settles into a guest chair.

ALARIE: **Austin. Thanks for arranging this so quickly.**

CADDELL: **I had a feeling Project Dream Catcher might go Code Crimson. They've actually made contact?**

ALARIE: **Oh, yes. Some zone they designated as *Frequency 43*. Thanks to your bright little intern, Tarrah Myers, we have recordings.**

CADDELL: **I knew Tarrah would be invaluable. One question... Nala Kataya and Ben Whitlock are currently the Institute's premier fundraisers. They're a scientific power couple. Very popular...**

ALARIE: **We're aware of their profiles. But this is now a matter of National Security. The DreamCatcher Project is now under the purview of Covert Services. Whitlock and Kataya will now work for us.**

CADDELL: *(listing concerns)* **Nala and Ben can be very vocal. I assume you have the resources to Influence and Deflect on all the Social Media platforms?**

ALARIE: Austin, we *invented* Influencing and Deflection. Covert peers in chat rooms. Character sabotage. And if that doesn't work, we disappear them. Looks valid. Then they enter a realm I like to call *Nevermore*.

A2 • SCENE 07 • Musical timelapse. Inside hospital parking garage. That weird sharp echoey ambience. Walking rapidly to underground entrance. As they approach:

FLOOR AI: LA Medical West, Parking Garage Entrance. (automatic doors open, they enter a narrow hallway, ambience muffles)

BEN: (really put out) **An entire day wasted. I know, they had her down in Testing all day...** (checks his watch) **It's 8 PM. 'Beam in' one more time. See where she is now.**

AELINN: (pause, as she thinks about Nala, sees where she is) **We're in luck at last. They're just now taking her back to Room 106. We need to get her out of this facility. Before she's moved to some Covert Inquisition Quarantine that's completely unbreachable.**

BEN: **And Dr. Zanders knows we made Extraterrestrial contact. She'll have to report it. And when the Feds find out...**

Another set of automatic doors open, they enter a wider sub-floor corridor.

FLOOR AI: Morgue, Forensics, Black Pharmacy.

AELINN: **Count on the Feds already knowing and we're running out of time.**

Elevator bell, doors open.

A2 • SCENE 08 • Musical break. Door opening. Ben and Aelinn move into room. Sedate medical readouts.

FLOOR AI: **Room 106. Nala Kataya. Patient should not be wakened or disturbed.**

BEN: **I thought that Testing Crew would never leave.**

AELINN: **We're lucky they don't post guards in the SubRosa Wing. We'll have about fifteen minutes before the next Vitals and Bed-check.**

Scrape of chair on floor, Aelinn sits down next to Nala.

AELINN: **Nala? It's Aelinn. Your friend with the curse of Sight.**

Transition: room goes away, in the void with Nala. In background: Engineers, reviewing process.

(deep dismay, dread) **Ohhhh. Contact indeed. With what I do not know.**
(raising her voice) **Nala. HEAR ME... Follow my voice back home.**

A2 • SCENE 09 • Out in the hospital room. The readouts go erratic.

BEN: (alarmed) **Nala? Aelinn?** (effect to indicate a radiation of light, shining out from both Nala and Aelinn) (quizzical, afraid) **They're both glowing. What is this?**

The readings settle. The light effect fades. And Ben knows what she is.

BEN: **You're not just a Psychic. You're... Draoi.**

And they both come out of it, reacting like the drowning coming up for air. Nala gasps, and sits upright.

AELINN: **And there she is. You followed me back, thank the Affirmations.**

BEN: (relief, pain) **Nala.** (Aelinn moves aside as he embraces her awkwardly)

NALA: **Ben? Aelinn?** (takes in the surroundings) **Oh, freck. I'm in... Medical West, aren't I. Things went way south.**

AELINN: **And now we have to get out of here.**

BEN: **Why didn't you tell me you were Draoi? *That* I could have accepted.**

AELINN: *(exasperated and amused)* **Oh, psychics are bunk but an ancient strain of Irish Empaths and Telekineticists, *that's* OK. Ben, you're a caution. You'll forgive me if we don't broadcast who we are. Look what happened to Dark Age Healers in the witch-burning days.**

BEN: **I concede the point...**

FLOOR AI: **Readings nominal. Vital check in one minute.**

BEN: **Nala, are you strong enough to travel? We brought clothes.**

NALA: **I'm fine. *(realizing, mystified)* I'm more than fine – I'm *ravenous*.**

She exits the bed, crinkle of bag, taking out clothes, rushing to put them on.

AELINN: **We'll fix that after. Right now, I'm going to fool this stupid AI into thinking you're still here. Then I'll loop all the Monitors long enough to get us *out* of this hospital, unobserved.**

A2 • SCENE 10 • *In a fast food driveway. Buzzing of overhead neon. Bus drives by. Siren in distance.*

AUTO TELLER: *(over bad speaker)* **Thank you for your TACO TIMO'S product order.**

A2 • SCENE 11 • *In car. Light music on the radio. Window rolls up. Aelinn shifts gears, driving to end of lane. Paper sack crinkling as Nala attacks the packaging, tearing the foil off a burrito.*

NALA: **It's scary how good this burrito smells! *(takes a huge bite, mouth full)* Why is this so good?!** *(continues to wolf down the chow)*

BEN: **Wow. Slow down a little or you'll choke.**

They reach the end of the drive, turn out into light traffic.

AELINN: *(gets ping, with pain and resignation)* **And here comes the left turn.**

The signal now sent to Nala's endocrine system is so strong, the Engineers come through on the car radio, through static crackle, at alarming volume. Right after, Nala reacts with an agony bordering on seizure.

NALA: *(through gritted teeth)* **My arm. My arm!**

Very loud repeat of the vesicle eruption, worse than before. Nala breaks down, crying in agony. Score crescendo.

NARRATOR: **FREQUENCY 43 will return after these messages.**

.....

NARRATOR: **And now, the Third Act of FREQUENCY 43.**

ACT THREE • SCENE 01 • *In car at high speed. Nala and Ben are in the back seat.*

BEN: *(angry, terrified)* **Nala's passed out. Those, those voices. They came through on the car radio. Do you realize what this means?**

AELINN: *(she sensed it just before it happened, on the edge of losing it)* **Whatever she's contacted – they can reach her now without the Receptor Chair.**

BEN: *(examining Nala)* **That, that... exo-skeletal *chiton*... has spread down the rest of her left arm. It'll encase her hand next.**

AELINN: *(crying, enormous regret, under breath)* **Too late, too late, too late.**

BEN: *(at extremis himself)* **What did you say?**

But now Nala revives, reacting to the memory of the pain, recovering, looking around.

NALA: **Where are we? Take me back to the Lab!**

AELINN: **And let's hope it hasn't been quarantined off quite yet.**

BEN: **The Lab? *Why!?***

NALA: **To find out who those voices are. What they're doing to me.**

AELINN: **Even I can't help you on this one. *No one on Earth can.***

A3 • SCENE 02 • *Car pulling up, stopping with a screech. Doors open, Nala and Ben get out. Car idles.*

BEN: **Aren't you coming with us?**

AELINN: **No, if things take the worst possible turn, Ben, you'll need someplace to go. My home is off the grid. Nala, give him the location before you... re-engage.**

NALA: **I will. *(now somehow she knows, too, she won't be coming back)* Aelinn. I'm sorry. Sorry we didn't listen to all your warnings.**

AELINN: *(overcome)* **Goodbye, child... *save me a seat on the Other Side?***

BEN: **This is sounding like a Eulogy. *(angry, defiant)* Aelinn. I'm not going to let this be a Eulogy.**

A3 • SCENE 03 • *Musical break. Medical West. Zanders in Hallway. Talking to colleague.*

DR. ZANDERS: **I didn't want her moved back up here at all. Yes, the material didn't show any sign of vectoring, but it's mutating at an insane rate.**

Door swooshes open. Readouts still continuing at nominal. As Zanders walks in:

FLOOR AI: **Room 106. Nala Kataya. Patient should not be wakened or disturbed.**

DR. ZANDERS: *(shocked)* **She's gone. *(strides over to read-out panel)* *(confused, angry)* Why are these machines reading the vitals from someone who *isn't here?* *(hits intercom, subtle alarm goes off)* **Code Red. Patient Nala Kataya has broken quarantine. *(unintelligible making excuses response over line)* If she's not in the building, we're looking at a **city-wide Quarantine Lockdown. Alert Major Alarie and his team immediately!******

A3 • SCENE 04 • *Receptor Chair thrum. And here we go again. That shield rising. Step panel gearing down. She climbs into the chair, scraping her altered arm on metal in the process. Reacts with pain.*

NALA: *(ruefully)* **This growth - it's almost down to my wrist... I had to move my ring to the other hand. This is all getting a little too ironic. Remember what you said to me about the stone?**

BEN: ***"Vulcanism and stress can turn even a drop of water into a rainbow. We will weather anything."* I still want to go to Querétaro.**

NALA: **Where they mine the opals. I'm coming back, Ben. I promise you, if there's any way - we will survive this. We *will* go there.**

BEN: *(wanting to believe)* **These voices - you really think you'll be able to communicate... with something so... alien?**

NALA: **They're *experimenting* on me. Maybe science will be our common ground. Besides, I want to ask them about our College Thesis. Darwin vs. a Divine Being.**

BEN: **If there's a God, why all the fierce competition? Why does every living thing have to live off the energy of some other living thing?**

A3 • SCENE 05 • *An echoey Anteroom leading to the Pit. Marching steps. Stop as one.*

ALARIE: **Alright, gentlemen. Let's make this neat and clean. We are classifying this Project. And taking Nala Kataya and Ben Whitlock into custody. Engage BioHazard shields.** *(hornet buzzing as they comply)*

A3 • SCENE 06 • *Compression door opens. Soldiers march in.*

ALARIE: *(raising voice)* **Ben Whitlock? (surprised) And Nala. Thought you'd already be back in Frequency 43... Cadman. Troy. Flank our researchers.**

Boots on metal floor. They activate dangerous sounding guns. Probably more hi-tech than known publicly.

Whitlock, disengage the Receptor Chair.

No point in resisting. Ben punches controls, the thrum fades away.

BEN: *(pointedly)* **If I might ask, who am I talking to?**

ALARIE: **Major Alarie, Covert Services.**

BEN: **Revelation Protocol, no doubt.**

ALARIE: *(slightly surprised)* **Our researchers are informed. Dangerously informed.**

NALA: **It's too late, Major. They won't let you take me... I'm in the hands of an intelligence that could use this planet like a *Petri dish*. You'd better hope they only want me.**

ALARIE: **That is precisely what we are here to prevent. Cadman, sedate her.**

CADMAN: *(with a little too much enthusiasm)* **Yes, sir.**

And the Engineer Chorus delivers a severe genetic alteration. Beat, then Cadman makes sound of deep pain.

ALARIE: *(alarmed)* **Cadman?**

*Grotesque re-conformation. Cadman vocalizing. Sound like something splitting. Then sound of relief. This is a hardened crew, but one of them says: **Oh, god**. Then: transportation beam fades in.*

CADMAN: *(with altered voice)* **Sorry, sir. They say they want me... elsewhere.**

*Transportation beam dissolves him. **Vocalization of terror** as he feels himself transfer; fades, disappears.*

A3 • SCENE 07 • *Up close, Nala and Ben.*

BEN: *(gut level fear)* **Was that soldier just taken into *Frequency 43*?**

NALA: **And I'm next... Ben, I'm sorry. Don't try to follow me.**

She strides swiftly to a safe space at the end of the Receptor Chair.

ALARIE: *(angry, barking an order)* **Nala, stay where you are!**

NALA: *(quietly, truthfully)* **Major. You can't order this away. Your soldier. That's what's going to happen to you and all the rest of your men if you threaten me again. Please don't make any sudden moves.** *(crying now, scared to death)* **Oh, Ben... Remember me.**

BEN: *(quietly, heart breaking, knowing he can't do a thing)* **Nala, no.**

Ignition. Transporter beam. She's gone. Pause. Then, Alarie approaching, stopping right in front of Ben.

ALARIE: **Gone. Just like that. And one of my finest soldiers, too. Troy, cuff him.**
(complies, roughly) **This lab is quarantined by order of the DOD. Whitlock, you're going to wish they'd taken you too. Welcome to Nevermore.**

A3 • SCENE 08 • *Eerie wind of the Halls of the Biomechanoid. Echo of the Banshee wail in far distance. A heavy rumble of thunder in stormclouds at the ceiling of the chamber, one of a hundred caves. Echoing. Moment of just the ambience inside the Halls, reverberating. Up close, transporter effect. Nala materializes. Sits up, on something like gravel, but it's wet and sticky. **She makes a sound of revulsion**, gets to her feet. She walks forward. Then stops. Hears the mutations. Off in the far distance, a female screaming. Closer, one of the Shambles, dragging down a corridor. It's reptilian, hissing, crying woefully.*

NALA: *(in great fear, but now angry at the total lack of control, she shouts up at the strange, alien sky, the cave ceiling wreathed in stormy clouds)* **Alright. You've brought me here. For God knows what.** *(wind wails briefly)* **But I want something from you. I want you to let Ben know what's happening to me. As if I was still in the Chair.** *(her words echo) (despondent)* **Why am I asking them this. Why should they care?**

*But there's an ignition sound. Now she moves forward again. Another chamber. In the distance a Shamble cries out: **Take me. Finish me.** Pause. **Don't leave me like this.***

NALA: *(horrified, in a whisper)* **English. How many of us are in this place?**

Now there's a groan from very nearby. Nala recognizes the tone.

NALA: **Cadman?** *(walks rapidly, finds him, bonded to a wall, reacts with horror)*

CADMAN: **I'm sorry. Make them stop.**

A strange device whirs down. Sounds organically alien. It has a heartbeat. It speaks like a Selenite, saying a phrase that sounds like a diagnosis. Cadman is injected with something viscous.

CADMAN: **Ohhhhh... that feels good.** *(starts laughing strangely)* **Here we go again.**

And he mutates. Not a pleasant sound. Things emerging. Just laughs madly. Nala reacts with horror.

(madly) **Oh, it's alright... I've done terrible things... I deserve this.**

NALA: **I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.**

She runs away from him, unable to watch. But then a voice cries out.

BRANFORD: **Who goes there? ... Who walks upright?**

Nala moves toward the voice. Gasps when she sees what talked. Starts to move away.

BRANFORD: *(quavering)* **No! (plaintively) Don't leave me.**

She stops. Hesitantly moves back towards him. He moves, and something scrapes over the gravel.

BRANFORD: *(hopefully)* **Can you get out? Can you go ... home?**

NALA: *(he's a Giger humanoid, with strange metallic limbs made of indefinable substances) (with heartache and horror)* **What's happened to you?**

BRANFORD: **The... Living Machines. The Light ... that burns. The Voices ... always the Voices. Demanding I be ... something else.**

NALA: **You once were human. How did you get here?**

BRANFORD: **So ... long ago. Didn't I ... go to sleep?** *(becoming frightened, horrified, as the memories dredge up)* **Wasn't it just a dream?**

NALA: **What's your name.**

BRANFORD: **Ohhhh.** *(doubting)* **Is it still there? ... Branford! ... Branford ... Cartiér.**

NALA: **Branford ...** *(a terrible thought occurs to her)* **What year was it? Before.**

BRANFORD: *(having to remember the concept)* **Time?** *(makes effort)* **Then. The concept of ... Then... 1867?** *(remembering)* **Paris!** *(and that brings on the pain)* **Oh ... my Paris.** *(breaks down)* **Why am I here? Is this Hell? Am I in Hell?**

NALA: *(moved to tears)* **Is there anything I can do for you? ... Food, water?**

BRANFORD: **Kindness. I'd forgotten kindness... No.** *(suddenly missing the concept of food)* **I don't require food anymore. Not for a long time...**

And it would seem even thinking it summons the Living Machines. Another organic device whirs down.

BRANFORD: *(concerned it will hurt her)* **Oh, move away! Quickly. A Replenisher arrives.**
Selenite diagnosis. Another injection, pumping something viscous into him. Then it whirs away again.

BRANFORD: *(despairing, plaintively)* **I don't want to be kept alive like this anymore. To taste something again. Anything.** *(he brightens suddenly)* **There is something you can do for me...**

NALA: *(without thinking)* **Anything.**

BRANFORD: **Will you ... kill me... Please...** *(beat, ashamed)* **I'm sorry to ask...**

NALA: *(she actually would, but physically can't)* *(in tears)* **I don't think I can... Parts of you are metal. Parts of you are stone.**

BRANFORD: *(he thought as much)* **Ah... Of course... Oh.** *(realizing)* **I see your arm... They're taking you, too.** *(with condemnation)* **Changing you.**

*And suddenly, that electrical ignition, very close, and he's scanned. Engineer Voices: **Aa kana d•ren F•taal.***

NALA: *(alarmed, sounds final, like an execution sentence)* **What did they just say?**

BRANFORD: *(joyful, finally, reprieve, after centuries, tears of joy)* **OH! ... At last. I am L'avortement (laVORTamohr). They cannot make me what they want.**

The organic surface around Branford begins to bubble and swell grotesquely.

BRANFORD: **My body will become food for the others... Sweet Lord – take me home.**

And the surface claims him entirely, closing over him. A few seconds of just the ambience of the Halls.

NARRATOR: **FREQUENCY 43 will return after these messages.**

NARRATOR: **And now, the conclusion of FREQUENCY 43.**

ACT FOUR • SCENE 01 • *Interrogation Room. Black. One light, on Ben. Alarie circling him, boots on metal.*

SYSTEM AI: **Interrogation 357. Subject failing to supply appropriate responses.**

ALARIE: **Time for another dose, then.** *(Automated gear, syringe plunging)*

Ben grimaces, laughs. Refer whoever plays Ben to Robert Culp in Architects of Fear.

ALARIE: **We put one of our operatives in the Receptor Chair. Nothing happened.**

Ben laughs again. The truth serum they've pumped him full of is looping him out, he's tripping, schizo.

BEN: *(giggling)* **Oh, smart. Poke the BEM!** *(almost snarling)* **They're not Nala.**

ALARIE: **Explain!**

BEN: **The Chair is designed to the frequency, Kenneth... of her psi abilities.**
*(he says this to piss him off) And she's gone... (That cycles to grief? relief?
Are the aliens better or worse than this human?) Where you can't reach her.*

That gets him. Alarie slams his hand into the headrest next to Ben's head, in total rage.

ALARIE: **WE COULD BE TALKING THE EXTINCTION OF THE ENTIRE PLANET!**

BEN: *(with almost a glee, spitting it out in absolute and bitter contempt) Better than
you covert maggots. Eating out the belly of mankind from underneath.*

A4 • SCENE 02 • *Ignition effect, loud. The Hall Ambience. Ben gasps.*

BEN: **Mother of Frequency 43.**

*And now Ben catches up on everything that's happened to Nala. Montage of information, at a slight remove,
starting with: Alright. You've brought me here. For God knows what. But I want something from you. I want you to let Ben know what's
happening to me. As if I was still in the Chair.*

BEN: *(horror at what he's seeing) Oh, Nala. Where have they taken you?*

Hall winds wail up, fade into: *Cadman is injected with something viscous. CADMAN: Ohhhhh... that feels good. (starts laughing
strangely) Here we go again. And he mutates. Not a pleasant sound. Things emerging. Just laughs madly. Hall winds rise like
storm again, fade out into: Ah... Of course... Oh. I see your arm... They're taking you, too. Changing you. Fade into Hall
Ambience, then: NALA: (echoing) Ben, hang on. I won't let the the real monsters have you.*

A4 • SCENE 03 • *Transition back into the Interrogation Room. Alarie's pacing the floor.*

BEN: *(in shock, crying) Oh, Nala... What are they doing to you?*

ALARIE: *(stops, leans into Ben's face, thinks he's messing with him) I can kill you with
this serum. Overdose you (snarling) right into the beyond.*

BEN: *(in pain) Nothing you can do is worse than where Nala is right now.*

And Alarie hits him, hard. And that triggers Ben's anger.

**You ape. Go ahead! Throw that bone in the air. Pound your chest. Do
you know why you're so angry? Because you're still afraid. Not just
aliens. Afraid if you don't confront everything, someone's going to have
a bigger pot to piss in. So kill all of them before they kill you. (he rattles
against his restraints) You are why mankind will poison and bomb itself into
perdition. You are the self-fulfilling prophecy! I spit on you! (and he does,
and with that, he sags back into the chair, exhausted rage spent) (long beat of total
silence) Alarie? ... Major? ... What the hell... He's frozen like a statue.**

The restraints holding him retract. A door swooshes open.

BEN: *(realizing why this is happening, shouting up at the ceiling) Nala? (he gets
unsteadily to his feet, clutching on to the chair for support) I saw where you are.*

NALA: *(as if from a great distance, her voice filtered through the Hall winds) Go to Aelinn
now... I will deal with Alarie.*

And Ben stumbles over to Alarie, face to face.

BEN: **Gotta go. I'd almost like to stay and see what Nala and the Engineers
do to you. (but then he spins, stumbles towards the door. Over his shoulder, half
singing, half chanting) I'm off to see the Aelinn. The wonderful Aelinn of Oz.**

Door swooshes shut. Beat. And then the frozen Alarie is Engineer transported.

A4 • SCENE 04 • *In the Pit. The Receptor Chair power wall is thrumming. The backdrop of machinery running smoothly. Transport effect, and Alarie appears. Now the Major starts, realizes where he is.*

ALARIE: **AHHH...** *(looks wildly around the room, there's no one obvious)* *(shouts)*
Don't play with me, Nala! *(but his voice cracks now, the fear starts to show through)*
I know you're there! I know you want me to cower and grovel.
(beats of silence)
You're going to betray us all, aren't you. Give us over to them, some mutating alien race of god knows what!

Nala's voice echoes and swirls loudly through the facility. It's altered. Grinding. Pure. Yet altered darkly.

NALA: **The irony... the hypocrisy.** *(with horror)*
What I see now in your memories. The soldiers you've corrupted. The people you've tortured...

ALARIE: *(now he's terrified, his secrets laid bare, verging on hysteria)*
You have no right to read my mind!

NALA: *(chidingly)*
Oh, Major. Seriously? You who have stripped the rights of so many. Buried people in holes. Deported them or left them to die in tiny iron hells. *(icily)* The long slow death you had planned for Ben.

ALARIE: **JUST KILL ME! JUST FELKING OFF ME!**

NALA: **No... I know what you would have done with our Dream Catcher technology ... Erasing minds. Breaking spirits...** *(and the Power Wall shorts out. The field distorts, goes terribly dissonant, then fails)*
Watch that plan... die.

A section of the control wall explodes and catches fire.

ALARIE: *(raging)*
NO! We need this technology!

More of the wall shorts out, a gout of flame billows up to the ceiling.

NALA: **All records of Project Dream Catcher are now erased.**

Groan of despair from Alarie. *A beam falls from the ceiling and crashes into the glass lid of the Receptor Chair. Alarie is coughing now, unable to breathe. He runs to a door and beats on it.*

All the doors are sealed. This will be your tomb.

ALARIE: **It's not just me you condemn. It's the entire human race!**

NALA: **I think it's time for me to save the human race... from all the people who think they're saving the human race...** *(another explosion, the ceiling caves in)* *(eulogy)*
Goodbye, Major. *(engineer transportation effect)*

A4 • SCENE 05 • *Musical break. Aelinn's home. Rapid knocking on door. Door opens.*

AELINN: **Thank god you're here.** *(he enters, she closes and locks the door, then puts an arm around him and guides him in)*
Sit down. No one has followed.

BEN: *(collapsing on the couch)*
I don't know how I got here. They had me so drugged up.

AELINN: *(pours something into a glass)*
Drink this. It will help clear the effects.

BEN: *(he gulps it down, almost coughs)*
Tastes awful. Must be good for me.

AELINN: *(amazed, a little afraid)*
You've been in touch with Nala.

BEN: **She'll be here soon. I heard her say it.** *(ironically)*
As if in a dream.

And Frequency 43 sweeps in. Nala materializes. Speech is now difficult. She speaks haltingly.

NALA: *Ben... Aelinn...*

BEN: *(numb, he knows)* **You're still beautiful. Your new skin is chromatic.**

AELINN: **How long? ...**

NALA: **Before I am... totally *transformed*? Mission one... accomplished ... one more... message.**

AELINN: **I will give you privacy.** *(she exits the room)*

BEN: **I know what this is. What you will become... *Can you take me with you?***

NALA: *(she tries to laugh, but it distorts)* **I love you ... so much ... remember that...**

BEN: ***I guess the fire opal wasn't enough...* (with pain) **No Querétaro.****

NALA: **I ... still have ... the ring. I made it... a permanent part of me... You will see it... when the time... arrives... (flare of frequency) I must go.**

BEN: *(anguished, but feels an odd premonition)* **I will wait for you.**

The Frequency ramps. Transport effect and she's gone.

A4 • SCENE 06 • *Music to indicate passing of time. Our only scene in daylight. Though the sun is setting. It's just after six. Newscast on a flatscreen, on a deck wall. Up close, Ben turns a rib, it sizzles loudly on the grill.*

BEN: *(raising voice)* **BBQ's almost done.**

Sliding screen door opens. Aelinn comes out, humming. Hera jumps up on a chair, starts to purr.

AELINN: **Hera, no hot sauce. Here, I saved some pork, sans Mexicali Inferno.**

She puts a bowl on the deck. Hera meows imperatively, jumps down, beelines for bowl.

BEN: **Aelinn, thank you. I don't know how I would have survived the last three months without your company.** *(to cat)* **And Hera's.**

AELINN: **I miss her so much too...**

BEN: *(hissing on the grill as he turns ribs)* **I know.** *(deflecting)* **Hey, aren't all you 'sensitives' supposed to be card-carrying Vegan hippy Wiccan chicks?**

AELINN: **I know. So untrope. Blame it on my Irish Peasant genetic stock.**
(beat) *(suddenly exasperated)* **Oh, crap, really?**

Civil Defense tone sounds on the TV.

BEN: **Ever tapped that sixth sense for the Lottery?**

ANNOUNCER: **This is a National Alert. I give you the President of the United States.**

PRESIDENT: **Citizens, patriots. We have an unprecedented event, something we cannot begin to interpret... an occurrence of such magnitude I can only ask you to turn to whatever higher power you believe in and... call for understanding. Over the last *three hours*, several telescopes around the world have witnessed an... inexplicable anomaly. In the constellation of Libra... *the night sky is changing...* And NASA has confirmed: *It's moving towards us.* We estimate arrival in two weeks. Know that we are doing whatever we can to prepare. Keep calm. Cooperate with your local authorities... Now, over to NASA officials.**

Feed switches. But it's all on the fly. NASA is scrambling to get their spokesperson on. Improvise chaos.

BEN: *(awed)* **It's her, isn't it. That chromatic outer shell, it was a... chrysalis.**

AELINN: **And... whatever she has become... has emerged.**

NASA OFFICIAL: *(nervously)* **I'm Chris Spencer, speaking for NASA. The heart of the changing region of space is a brilliant nebula. The colors of, well, the closest simile is *fire opal*.**

BEN: *(under breath, astounded)* **The ring.** *(tears up)* **Is it possible? Does she remember me? Remember us?**

NASA OFFICIAL: **The stars around it are changing. Pulsing like lighthouses in the dark.**
Loud, crackling sound intrudes as rib sauce spills. Aelinn turns down the TV, report drones on in background.

BEN: **AH ... I have to take these ribs off.** *(Tonging of ribs onto a plate, puts it on table)* **If we're right about these Engineers, they've been trying for uncounted epochs to create a true higher life form.**

AELINN: **And they found their genetic Creator Code. In a woman, of course.**

BEN: **You can fire off all the rockets in the world to seed the universe...**

AELINN: **But seeds whither and die without a Mother Earth.**

BEN: *(putting down her plate)* **Eat up. You're going to have to live without BBQ.**

AELINN: *(laughs, intuits the answer)* **Because when she's done redesigning the universe...**

BEN: **No living thing will need to live off the energy of any other living thing.**

AELINN: *(pause, thoughtfully, maybe a hint of fear)* **Do you think it will be better?**

BEN: *(he looks up at the sky)* **I don't know if the sky will be blue anymore...
But I know my Nala... It will be better than it ever was.**

A4 • SCENE 07 • NARRATOR: **How many cycles of existence over the incomprehensible timespan of a universe? In the next two weeks, the world will see riots, chaos, upheaval, as the changing skies move ever closer. Christians will gather for the Rapture. Islams for the Judgement Day. Maybe both are wrong. Maybe both are right. But without the battle for food or resources, or competition for territory, all the contentious ideologies they engender will collapse. No more reason for greed, war or want. But will even that tame the wild and unpredictable heart of Humanity? Whatever the fallout, the new night sky will shimmer with nebulae all the colors of a fire opal, glowing with inner light. **OUTRO • CREDITS****