

EXT. BACK YARD

The BROTHER, now young, sits in a tree in his family's back yard, reading a book. The book rustles-it is cheap and shiny. A pleasant breeze trickles through the leaves.

The SISTER runs to the gate, but stops when she sees her brother. She pauses for a moment before opening the gate with a sly grin.

The sister approaches the brother. She stares up at him for a moment, planning without his notice.

SISTER

Would you like to look out the window?

BROTHER

(putting down book)

What do you mean, the window, like there's only one window. And if you haven't noticed already, we're outside!

The brother pauses, glaring at his sister.

BROTHER

(muttered)

*stupid...*

SISTER

What was that, I couldn't quite hear you?

BROTHER

Stop it. I won't say it any louder than that and you know it.

SISTER

Afraid of the ears of the world like a baby, are you?

BROTHER

Well, mom said it was true! Do think she was wrong?

CLOSE UP

The sister's sly grin gets bigger.

SISTER

What if Mom lied to us!

The brother doesn't like this, but the sister grins. He hides his feelings with anger.

BROTHER

What did you even bother me for a window that you made up, just to bother me? You're the liar!

The brother's words have no edge. The sister brags.

SISTER

(slowly)  
There is a window,

BROTHER

You already told me that!

SISTER

But this window is *different*.

BROTHER

What, different from a door, or a book, or a food bar, what?

SISTER

This window shows the outside.

BROTHER

All windows show the outside! They show the inside too! Don't you even know what a window is?

SISTER

(defensive)  
I know what a window is! This window shows outside the ship!

Realization dawns, and the brother now looks disappointed with his sister.

BROTHER

Have you been talking with the old Professor who lives in the little shack on Oak Street? He's almost a thousand years old. He doesn't know anything. Pretty soon he'll go off to live in a happy tank.

SISTER

He is nine-hundred and forty seven, and he has more than half a century before he could even apply for the happy tank. I was talking to him about the Truth.

BROTHER

(sliding down from the tree)  
The Truth isn't real, everybody knows that. The Professor is just so old he thinks he remembers things that he Forgot@.

SISTER

(mimicking the Professor)  
He didn't Forget@. He opted out. He was an adult when the Government stopped the Truth. But the Professor never Forgot@, and he always remembered. Now he waits for the young and ignorant children to come to him, and he will teach them the knowledge that he kept, even at great pain to himself, so that they may carry on the torch of human achievement, to-

The brother yawns dramatically, cutting his sister off. He leans against the tree.

BROTHER

Stop it, sis. If you keep praising him so much, you'll blasphemy against the Government.

SISTER

No! No, because I know the Truth. And I know it's true. It's true because the Government said so. But then, people stopped wanting to know, and the Government let them forget! Now I'm telling you it's true! There is a window! Help me find it!

The brother rolls his eyes at his sister's anger, but suddenly

ROBOTIC VOICE

**BE-ep**

**Attention: Kindly refrain from speaking about the Truth.**

**be-EP**

All is quiet after that one loud blast. The brother and sister look at each other, looking for evidence of what just happened.

WIDE

The children and the tree.

INT. THE FAMILY HOUSE

The brother and sister grab their backpacks and rush to the door. The sister is looking for something- then finds it- her journal. The brother teases her for it. The MOTHER 1 and MOTHER 2 look on. The brother and sister say goodbye to their parents and are out the door.

The mothers sit across from each other. They both pull out screens, and mother 2 also brings architectural papers out of a briefcase. Carefully, she looks through and re-arranges them. Mother 1 reads the news, and her brow narrows.

MOTHER 1  
I don't like it.

Mother 1 looks over to the Mother 2's screen. When she sees that it's the news, she sighs.

MOTHER 2  
Honey, no one does. This just too big of a mess. Even the Government admits they made a mistake in releasing the Truth, even though we know it wasn't their fault. Honestly, if people would simply stop over-reacting, life could be much simpler.

MOTHER 1  
It's not that, although you are right, sweetie. It's people! First they want the information, then they want to forget it! And so the Government lets them Forget© it.

Mother 1 makes the sign of the G on her chest, like a half-hearted prayer.

MOTHER 2  
And they should have just left it at that.

MOTHER 1  
And they should have just left it when the Government told them the Truth! None of this, oh, no thank you, sorry you had to go to all the trouble of getting me this nice

(MORE)

MOTHER 1 (cont'd)  
meal, just give it to the dogs,  
*thanks!*

MOTHER 2  
People can't make up their minds.

MOTHER 1  
Well, not in groups this size. This  
corresponding community is only 17  
billion. I've heard the golden  
number for mass decisions is 5.7  
trillion, roughly the size of the  
Government.

MOTHER 2  
Well, you do know things, according  
to your degrees.

Mother 1 laughs and says

MOTHER 1  
That's debatable. Honestly, I learn  
more from the Sociologists' Union's  
classes.

MOTHER 2  
Well, if you learn so much, maybe  
people should listen to you more.

MOTHER 1  
Oh, listen to me? Honestly, one  
person can only learn just how  
little they know. Now, people  
listening more to the  
Psycho-Analysis Collective...

MOTHER 2  
That'll be the day.

Both laugh. A lull in the conversation. Mother 2 reshuffles  
her papers, looks at the time, leans back in her chair.  
Mother 1 stares down without looking, and plays with a pen  
on the table.

MOTHER 1  
You know, I've always wondered why  
our corresponding community is so  
small. We must be on the far  
reaches of the Horsehead Galaxy  
area, maybe our whole galaxy is  
orbiting a black hole or something.  
I mean, it's the Government's

(MORE)

MOTHER 1 (cont'd)  
 choice, the population, but it  
 always seemed strange.

MOTHER 2  
 Well, for such a small group we've  
 still made a few decent decisions.

MOTHER 1  
 (surprised)  
 You think?

MOTHER 2  
 We knew that people couldn't handle  
 the information. Even though the  
 whole planet was buzzing mad and  
 yelling at each other, we still  
 managed to pull together and decide  
 that something had to be done. And  
 maybe it wasn't the best course of  
 action, but the Government let it  
 happen and that makes it alright  
 with me.

MOTHER 1  
 Wasn't the best course of action?  
 Forgetting© was horrible! Removing  
 information from a brain is  
 horrible! We're still recovering  
 from the side effects, two  
 generations later. Reduced  
 creativity, focus, and intelligence  
 for a whole population, it's  
 just... a tragedy.

MOTHER 2  
 (curt)  
 It keeps me in business.

MOTHER 1  
 Yes, and if you had to Forget©, you  
 wouldn't be able to be the best  
 architect you could be. You would  
 be dulled.

MOTHER 2  
 (stands)  
 But everyone else would be dulled  
 too. You may know what exactly  
 forgetting does, but I studied how  
 it affected the world. The art and  
 architecture from the F-generation  
 is some of the most minimalist,

(MORE)

MOTHER 2 (cont'd)  
 focused, and pure demonstrations of  
 emotion and function. Never  
 forget that *dulled* does not mean  
*bad*.

A silence follows. Mother look away from each other, and  
 mother 2 begins to pack up her things. Mother 1 looks into  
 her lap, tense.

MOTHER 1  
 The people never needed to Forget©.

MOTHER 2  
 The people never *needed* to know!

Mother 2 yells. Mother 1 looks hurt, and the mother 2 is  
 hurt at her hurt. She takes a moment to calm herself, then  
 sits down again. She takes mother 2's hand.

MOTHER 2  
 Bad things need to happen,  
 sometimes. The Government knows it.

MOTHER 1  
 I know it.

MOTHER 2  
 I know you know it. It keeps you in  
 business, right?

MOTHER 1  
 It keeps us all in business. Keeps  
 us all moving. The human race grows  
 stagnant if it doesn't have  
 something to adapt to. We can't be  
 happy if we aren't sad.

MOTHER 2  
 And we can't have art without  
 adversity.  
 (gets up, still holding the  
 mother's hand)  
 I'm going to go to work now.

Mother 2 grabs her bag, and mother 1 smiles at her. They  
 smile together (even though they are both a little tense),  
 and the mother touches mother 1's shoulder as she is about  
 to leave.

MOTHER 2  
 Agree to disagree.

MOTHER 1  
We'll laugh about this later.

MOTHER 2  
(chuckles)  
I'm laughing about it now.

MOTHER 1  
Well, I'm glad that *I'm* not the one  
making these decisions.

MOTHER 2  
I'm glad there's not just one  
person with all this  
responsibility.

MOTHER 1  
There's a reason these decisions  
are made in groups.

MOTHER 2  
The Government does more than just  
make decisions.

MOTHER 1  
The Government's saved our  
marriage!

They laugh.

MOTHER 2  
I'm off to work.

She leaves. Mother 1 picks up the screen, as if to continue  
reading- but thinks better of it. She looks out the window  
and thinks.

INT. BROTHER'S ROOM AND NOOK

INTERCUT

The brother, now a little older, more obviously a teenager,  
is studying at his desk, when his phone rings. He looks at  
it, then rolls his eyes. He answers.

BROTHER  
Hello, sister.

The sister is wrapped up in a sleeping bag in a chair in a  
dark dining room we have never seen before.



SISTER  
Ugh. You were right.

BROTHER  
And how was I right again?

SISTER  
You're going to make me say it.

BROTHER  
Just say it.

SISTER  
Cool girls have boring sleepovers.

BROTHER  
This is something everyone but you  
knows by now.

SISTER  
But they're models! I thought  
they'd talk about... I don't know,  
being models!

BROTHER  
What are they doing now?

SISTER  
They're all painting each other's  
nails.

While studying.

And talking about diets.

BROTHER  
*Really?*

SISTER  
I'm so bored.

BROTHER  
You must be. You're talking to your  
brother at a sleepover.

The brother re-adjusts his phone, it's now a real  
conversation.

SISTER  
They don't have any food here. I  
managed to find a food bar at the  
bottom of my bag, but I thought  
they'd have fun food, like normal  
people have at a party?

BROTHER

These are not normal people. That's why you went to this party, right?

The sister makes a noise. She glares, her brother gloats.

BROTHER

So, not that I'm unthankful for a distraction from calculus, but why call me of all people?

SISTER

Because I forgot to tell you something. Remember that window that the Professor used to always talk about?

BROTHER

Stop being vague and cryptic.

SISTER

I'm not being vague and cryptic.

BROTHER

Yes, you are.

SISTER

No, I'm not!

BROTHER

Then tell me what you're talking about.

SISTER

I'm talking about the window.

BROTHER

Thanks. That tells me so much.

SISTER

Shut up

BROTHER

Suddenly all my questions have been answered.

SISTER

(continually)

shutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutup

BROTHER

That's a great rebuke. I'll have to  
rethink my whole argument.

SISTER

(cont.)

shutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutup

BROTHER

How are you even on the debate  
team?

SISTER

But I think I found the window.

The Brother sits up suddenly, the phone version of a double  
take.

BROTHER

What? You mean the one that doesn't  
exist, that you made up when we  
were young? You found it?

SISTER

Yes, I found it.

BROTHER

Then send me a picture of this real  
window.

SISTER

I took pictures.

BROTHER

Send them to me.

SISTER

But they were deleted from my  
phone.

This confirms what the brother already knew.

BROTHER

No. It's not real.

SISTER

Look, the day after tomorrow's  
Sunday, alright, we'll go look at  
it then. It's just out past the  
woods a little ways.

BROTHER  
Can you describe this very real  
window.

She pauses to think.

BROTHER  
Well?

SISTER  
It's hard to describe.

BROTHER  
It generally is hard to describe  
things that aren't there.

She pauses again, really thinking.

BROTHER  
I'm waiting.

SISTER  
It's like... It's like a chunk of the world is missing  
like, someone came up to the sky, pulled it down and cut out  
a chunk and then they built a brick wall around it to hide  
it, but the wall can't fill in the gap, nothing can fill it,  
it's a wound in the world.

And the stars fall out like blood.

BROTHER  
I believe you.

ROBOTIC VOICE  
(they pull their phones away)  
**BE-ep**

**Kindly refrain from speaking about  
the Window, or the Truth.**

**be-EP**

BROTHER  
Did you...

SISTER  
That was it.

BROTHER  
Now I really believe you.

SISTER

You better!

BROTHER

We'll go see it Sunday.

EXT. WOODS

The brother and sister adjust their backpacks, jackets, flashlights and coats in the early morning light, as they walk towards the edge of the woods. They pause at the line between the open and the trees. They look at each other, making sure they want to do this. The sister nods, and they both walk into the woods.

As they walk they pull food bars out of their bags and munch on them. They walk, further and further into the woods, finishing their bars but still going on and on through the forest. The forest is familiar to them, and they are comfortable in it, so they mostly look forward.

They approach the edge of the woods at sunrise, warm light gives the edge of the woods a pleasant golden glow. They step out of the woods into the warm light and open up previously crouched postures. They look around for a moment. Then the sister re-adjusts her bag with newfound determination and continues on, and the brother follows.

The brother and sister walk on through tall grass. They reach a brick wall. It is large, it goes on and on with no visible end. The bottom of the wall is covered in green, neat grass. The sister reaches the wall first, and places her hand on it. She looks forward and walks, following the wall, keeping her fingers drifting over it, and the brother follows, now cautious.

Suddenly, the brother stops. He looks down at the neat grass. He crouches, touches it.

BROTHER

Is this fake?

He looks at his sister, who has stopped, and is looking back at him.

SISTER

What?

BROTHER

The grass. It's astroturf. Someone put yards and yards of astroturf out here.

The sister snickers. The brother chuckles. They both burst out in laughter, loud, letting loose all of the tension of the scene. They lean against the wall, laughing.

SISTER

Astroturf!

The laugh again. Now they get up, and start walking next to each other, the sister's hand still trailing along the wall.

BROTHER

No one has astroturf anymore. Have you ever seen so much fake grass?

SISTER

No, I can honestly say I have never seen so much fake grass.

BROTHER

Who would put this much grass out here?

SISTER

I don't know, Mr. Sinebeck?

BROTHER

Your P.E. teacher?

SISTER

You never know...

BROTHER

Yeah, he just sneaks out here in the middle of the night

SISTER

with a huge bag of fake grass!

BROTHER

with a huge bag of fake grass, and lays it all out

SISTER

Now my students can run without the fear of tripping, even near a weird brick wall in the middle of nowhere!

BROTHER

That is Mr. Sinebeck.

SISTER  
In a nutshell.

WIDE

They laugh. They continue talking and walking along the wall.

Eventually, they become quiet. Then suddenly, they stop walking.

POV

They stare down, into the camera, in wonder. The sister first becomes thoughtful.

SISTER  
This is it.

The brother nods, staring deep into the window.

BROTHER  
(overcome with wonder)  
It changes things.

SISTER  
Things have already been changed.  
This just... makes us have to face  
the changes.

BROTHER  
We needed to face the changes. It's  
a good thing.

SISTER  
What we should have done doesn't  
matter anymore. This is it, this is  
now. This is the truth.

BROTHER  
The Truth. You can say that again.

Both paused, waiting for the robotic voice. When it does not come, they relax a little, become more thoughtful.

BROTHER  
So it's all true, then?

SISTER  
Yeah, the fuel supply needs to be  
checked, the air supply is  
outdated, the gene pool needs to be  
periodically supplemented with old  
(MORE)

SISTER (cont'd)

DNA so we're adapted to planet life when we land, I mean, we could be a new species now. It's responsibility, and a new way of life, but humanity will pull together.

BROTHER

No, well, yes, all that is true, but the history? All of those horrible things humanity has done, even the history of this ship has been, well, interesting. We'll all have to relearn the things we thought we knew.

SISTER

We just have to accept history. What worries me is our power of decision.

BROTHER

What do you mean?

SISTER

None of our decisions are valid on their own anymore. Legally, we're not citizens, we're a ship's crew and cargo. We need to have councils and supervision and paperwork, and anything not directly related to how the ship is run will be slower; decisions will take months.

BROTHER

It's change.

SISTER

Yeah. More change than the last generation was able to handle.

BROTHER

It's beautiful.

SISTER

Yeah. The stars spin around us. Around us, and our family, and everyone on this ship. They spin us around and throw us very slowly towards our planet, our very own planet that none of us will ever see.



BROTHER  
That's depressing.

SISTER  
I guess.

BROTHER  
But it's also very hopeful.

SISTER  
It is.

The wind blows through the grass.

LOW ANGLE

The children's feet and they walk away, into the grass and the world beyond.

BROTHER  
People will talk about this.

SISTER  
They'll *all* talk about this. Until they've decided something.

BROTHER  
How do you know that?

SISTER  
I'll make them talk myself, if I have to.

BROTHER  
Yeah, I will too.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. THE ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

A machine sits in a corner of the entertainment center at the beginning of the day.

CLOSE UP

The machine adjusts its inner workings. Mechanical parts whirr. The machine's small plastic balls are in order. The mall is mostly empty, but as the day progresses it fills.

An old lady, Margret, makes her way to the machine. She smiles at it fondly.

MARGRET

Now, what do you have for me today?

She presses the single button.

CLOSE UP

The machine's inner workings, as Margret looks down into it, buzz around. She is patient as the machine works.

Margret carefully removes the bubble from the machine, and splits it open. Inside is a wad of paper, which she carefully unfolds. She puts on her glasses and reads the paper, standing there.

MARGRET

Mmm... let's see, Cass is doing well...busy day tomorrow, that's always good. And Charlie, oh dear. Hm. Ah, but... Well. Hm. All's well.

She looks up at the machine and smiles.

MARGRET

Save one for me tomorrow, won't you? The usual time.

She folds the paper over looks at it and chuckles, and puts it in her pocket.

INSERT

The paper in her pocket, as she walks away, reads:

Of course, Margret.

TIME PASSES

A few teenagers are walking by the machine. They laugh, and joke, pushing each other around. One falls into the machine and hits the button, starting the whirring. As they pick up the one who fell, the machine prepares the ball.

The machine spits the ball out. One of them points out the ball that just fell out of the machine. They all reach for it, but the ball narrowly rolls past every one of their outstretched hands, and gets stuck behind the trashcan. Oh well. The one who fell presses the button again, and again the machine cranks and spits out a plastic ball. It looks like it fell again- but the teenager who fell catches it.

All of the teenager's friends cheer. So they open up the ball dramatically.

TEENAGER WHO FELL  
A-hem. Watch out for suspicious  
characters.

All the teenagers are quiet, waiting for more. They realize that that's it- the fortune was a dud. The teenager who fell throws the fortune over their shoulder.

TEENAGER 1  
It's a dud.

TEENAGER 2  
My dad says it's just about how old  
you are--how much of your future  
you're allowed to know.

They move on, leaving the machine behind.

TIME PASSES

It's night, and a young woman, TALI, approaches the machine, walking fast, listening to music. She looks over at the machine, and turns off her music. She steps up to it and smiles in remembrance, then looks sad. She looks down at the button, weighing her decision. She presses on the button, and the machine cranks out a little plastic ball. Tali smiles again as she takes the bubble, opens it easily, and unfolds the paper.

As she reads the paper, she becomes sad and angry. She crumples the paper in her hand, shoves it in her pocket, and drops the plastic bubble before walking away forcefully, re-starting her music. The plastic shell rolls under the machine with other cast-off futures and the liter of the mall.

INT. MARGRET'S SHOP

Margret is behind her desk at her shop, calling her daughter, Cass. Her desk is cluttered with interesting knickknacks, various odd, cheap, or broken objects. The little of the shop we can see is messy, cluttered with interesting objects in unstable piles.

CASS  
Hi Mom. Are you calling to give me  
my daily report?

MARGRET  
Yes I am. You probably know it's  
going to rain tomorrow.

CASS

That's what's been going around.  
It's funny your old future-machine  
still tells you weather. Now we  
know we're in a spaceship, and the  
weather is planned, it seems kind  
of silly to keep guessing at it.

MARGRET

Well, the machine tells me, I tell  
you. Charlie is going to call you  
today.

At this point, Margret has picked up something on her desk  
and is handling it- polishing, fixing, spinning. Her hands  
are always doing something. Now, as Cass talks, Margret  
shoos away a cat from her desk.

CASS

Finally! He keeps saying that  
college is too busy. I tell him,  
the bakery is busy and I still have  
time for my mother!

MARGRET

Yes, you do, dear. And it's very  
kind of you to still listen to your  
old mom at your very difficult job.  
Takes a lot of concentration,  
baking.

CASS

We can't all be brain surgeons,  
Mother. I'm happy right now.

Margret looks over to the books of neurosurgery that sit on  
the side of her desk.

MARGRET

I just always felt you had more  
potential.

Why not enter some contests, now  
that the boys are in college,  
expand the business?

CASS

You know I won't, mom.

A silence follows. Margret puts down whatever is in her  
hands. She looks sad and angry, and for a moment is going to  
say something, but she stops, and lets it go in a breath.

CASS

So what's going to happen tomorrow?

Margret smiles a little at this, her daughter showing she still cares.

MARGRET

The bakery will still be doing well. Busy tomorrow. It's been busy today.

CASS

There's a holiday this week, that always brings in customers.

MARGRET

There is one other thing...

Margret picks something up again. She isn't sure whether she should be saying this, so she pauses.

CASS

Mom? What is it?

MARGRET

Charlie is going to end up in the hospital.

CASS

What! How? How is he- I mean how will he be- I mean, Mom, tell me!

MARGRET

It's going to be fine. It's just a chemical leak in the lab, everyone has to be checked out. Everyone will be fine. That's all I can tell you.

CASS

We should tell someone.

MARGRET

You know we can't. I shouldn't even be telling you this. Besides, you know. It will all work out.

Cass pauses, and we can hear her breathing calming down.

CASS

I know it will, mom. Things work out okay, in the end. Thank you for telling me. I don't think I would

(MORE)

CASS (cont'd)  
 have been able to handle a busy  
 day, with Charlie in the hospital,  
 and not knowing.

Alright, one of the new interns  
 just burned something. I love you.

MARGRET  
 I love you. I'll call you tomorrow.

CASS  
 (to someone else)  
 And get the fire extinguisher  
 already-  
 (back)  
 bye, mom.

Margret puts the phone down. She picks up another little  
 useless thing, a toy car, and runs it along her desk. She  
 looks out to her shop-it's a mess, stuff is everywhere,  
 animals run around, stuff lies in towers around the room.

MARGRET  
 A baker isn't so bad, is it?

Margret looks down to the car in her hand, thinking. To the  
 empty air she smiles.

MARGRET  
 "Things work out okay, in the end."  
 I would have never said that, at  
 her age.

There are worse things than a  
 baker.

Margret is thoughtful.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. THE ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

MARK, an old janitor, is picking up the litter in the  
 entertainment center, near a bus stop bench. On the far end  
 Margret sits, content and waiting for the bus.

Mark plops down onto the far end of the bench. Margret puts  
 her purse on her lap, even though there is plenty of room  
 for both of them to spread out comfortably. They sit in  
 silence. Mark is just exhausted for a while, but as he rests  
 he gains more energy. He sits up, and looks out to the  
 street with hopelessness.

MARGRET  
Are you alright?

Mark pauses and really thinks about this question.

MARK  
I'm afraid I'm not.

He collects himself.

MARK  
It's my last day.

MARGRET  
Of being a janitor?

MARK  
No, of (gestures to himself) this.

MARGRET  
Oh. Good luck, in the next life.

Mark nods, just to acknowledge that Margret said that.

MARGRET  
It's your last day, today?

MARK  
Yes.

MARGRET  
Why are you still working? Why not  
take the day off, be with your  
family?

MARK  
I never really had any.

MARGRET  
Oh. Friends, perhaps?

MARK  
Everyone has sort of...drifted.  
Well, I've drifted from them. This,  
right now, it's over. it's reached  
it's end. I want to start over.  
It's just--it's really, new. I  
haven't faced anything this new  
for--years. Years and years.

MARGRET  
I wouldn't know. I only recently  
switched to my third career.

MARK

Ah. That's a good time, in life. Third career--yeah, kids have moved away, everything you've learned is behind you. It's a good time to look at your life and see what you want to add in. What do you do?

MARGRET

I own a little antiques shop.

MARK

Mm. Well, I'm a janitor.

MARGRET

I can see.

Both laugh a little.

MARK

I didn't use to be a janitor.

MARGRET

I suspected.

MARK

I used to run a little shop, for fresh fish. Went out, every day, just me and the sea. Have you ever been to the sea?

MARGRET

A few years ago.

MARK

That's good. The sea--the sea is incredible. I know it, I know the sea. In my boat, that's all I had, the feel of the currents and a little engine power. The sea has teeth, like nothing else I've ever seen, ever been near. I wanted to loose myself in those teeth.

(He pauses, remembering)

I used to let tourists pay to come out on the boat with me. Up at the crack of dawn. Hauling nets, out in the sun for hours. They paid me to work, and I put 'em to work. They said I made it look easy, the work, especially navigation. I guess now anyone can go out with a chart of

(MORE)



MARK (cont'd)  
the whole damn ocean and steer  
their boat around like they've  
lived there.

(a pause in anger)

But I couldn't stand it. The sea  
was everything to me. Just  
everything, beautiful, evil,  
rotten, wild, free. You live on a  
coast town long enough, you get  
sick of hearing about kids getting  
sucked out into the waves. But what  
was worse was, I could feel it.  
Like you wanted to bury yourself in  
the most real thing around you, to  
just run headlong into the greatest  
being you can find, to fight with  
it, become it.

So I headed inland, because I was  
scared. I worked for a while as a  
restaurant manager for a chain.  
Kept moving inland, always inland.  
Finally I got this job, landlocked,  
dead center of the continent.

(turns to Margret)

I'm sorry. That was a lot to dump  
on a complete stranger. I'm Mark.

(he reaches over for a  
handshake)

MARGRET

Margret. And it's fine, it's your  
last day. You're allowed to ignore  
social niceties.

MARK

So that's my life, the whole thing.  
All the way until the last day.

MARGRET

It's not the last day.

MARK

It's the last day of this lifetime,  
these memories. It's fine, I'm done  
with it. What about you? I gave you  
my entire life story, what about  
yours?

MARGRET

There's not as much to say, really. I can either give you an overview or get caught in all the little memories and details, you know. I used to be a neurosurgeon, in my first career. I had a family in my second, just my one girl, and now I run a little antiques shop in town. Oh, I get my fortune everyday from the little machine in the mall. I call my daughter on her lunch break and tell her about it.

MARK

Every day?

MARGRET

Every day.

MARK

It's good, to have family.

MARGRET

It is.

Mark gets up.

MARK

Well, Margret, thank you for your ears. I really needed to say it, I guess. Tell the story, start to end.

MARGRET

It was a pleasure.

MARK

Thank you, really.

TIME PASSES

Mark is emptying the trash cans in the entertainment sector. He empties out the trash can near the machine, and the green ball rolls out from under the can. He looks at it, and decides to ignore it. But he thinks for a moment, and starts to walk after it. But it bounces away in the wind. He begins to run, chasing after the ball, dodging around trash cans and scampering after it. Finally, he scoops it up, panting.

Mark leans against the railing. He grins at the green plastic ball. He rattles it to his ear. He pulls it open, and unfolds a letter.

He reads:

A FREIND IN THE GOVERMENT  
(voice over)  
Dear Mark,

and is surprised. He looks around, wondering how this could have happened. He gives up, and continues reading.

A FREIND IN THE GOVERMENT  
I know you're scared. I was scared, I've been told, before beginning my second lifetime. But you won't remember that you're scared, or who you could have been. You remember what you're made of. The limits you were stretched to. You remember what it means, to have a new beginning. To learn everything over again, to follow old passions and find new ones. To have a lifetime under your belt, and still have room for another. Just keep going. You, Mark, the one you are now, you can do this. Because at the end, the end of this life, when you enter that operating room, scary as it may be, it will be fine. You're not leaving yourself behind. You're finding the pieces that you forgot.

-a friend in the Government

P.S. I think you'll make your peace with the sea someday, Mark. A little more learning never did anyone any harm, and remember, the sea will change with you, wherever you go.

Mark looks up from the letter, smiling, and crying. He laughs, building louder and louder.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Tali's music is still playing. She's crying but trying to hide it, so she sits down on a bench in the mall, and tries to compose herself. She lets out a sob before she calms down, but she's still obviously sad.

Mark sits down on the other side of the bench, completely ignoring Tali. He writes furiously in the journal for some time. Tali watches him, turning off her music. Eventually, he looks up.

MARK

I'm writing it for myself, you know, my next lifetime.

Mark continues writing. Tali stops watching him, convinced that he is absorbed in his task. She's barely holding on to her emotions, and she is trying to keep it together.

MARK

Are you-- are you alright?

TALI

Yeah, yeah I'm-

No. I'm not.

MARK

You know, talking helps.

Tali remains unresponsive.

MARK

(pauses, thinking)

Where did you grow up?

TALI

What?

MARK

Where did you grow up?

TALI

I grew up in Orchard, a small community north of here. My mom loved it, she was the reason we stayed.

MARK

How many people are in you family?

TALI

(She looks at him for a moment)

Just us five. People assume I've got a big family, with two siblings, but the rest of my family was pretty small. My parents always wanted a big family. Why are you asking-

MARK

Your siblings, what are their names?

TALI

Charlotte and Emmy.

MARK

And what do they do?

TALI

They're younger, one's in a specialized aviation school, the other just moved to an adolescent community. She's so young.

MARK

Why is she so young?

TALI

Because she's not ready, she can't deal with it, I feel like we're being torn apart- I don't know, why am I telling you this?

MARK

Because talking helps.

Tali just looks at him, sad and angry.

MARK

It's my last day in this lifetime.

TALI

(curtly)  
Oh. Good luck.

MARK

And I want to help someone.

TALI

Alright. My sister is still so young because she isn't ready to be living on her own, I mean, that's the point of an adolescent community, to strike out on your own. She's still balancing friends, and family, and the future.

(pauses)

The future.

My mother loved, loves the future. She always used to tell us, "No

(MORE)

TALI (cont'd)

fruit is juicier than the one you will eat tomorrow." I don't know where she got it, she probably just made it up. She was strict, you know, always told us to work a little harder, take on some extra responsibilities, just a little more effort. Once, she decided, since we had the day off, that we would build a playground in our backyard for summer- the thing was, we had a day off because it was a snow day.

(she laughs, sad)

It was such a shock when she got sick. I mean, you just don't think it can happen, with modern medicine what it is. But there will always be someone who slips between the cracks. You just don't think it can happen to you.

She loved the future. She invented that stupid little machine that tells your fortune, nearly every entertainment center has one. We always knew, that it was from her. We got test scores in advance, notes, reminders from her on it. She made us know that it was for us, that we were her girls and the future would be there for us, always. Even if she wasn't.

Tali stops talking.

MARK

Did that help?

TALI

Yeah. I think.

MARK

Well, if there's anything else you want to talk about-

TALI

No, no. It's fine.

Mark gets up and walks away. Tali sits still for a minute, thinking. Then she calls over her shoulder.

TALI  
You really did help, you know!

She sits, quiet. She takes the folded paper out of her pocket and stares at it.

INSERT

3:13am

I love you.

Goodbye.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. THE GOVERNMENT ADMISSION OFFICE

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
I first met the director on the  
last day I peed my pants.

The recruitment agent, CAMERON DIMANENZO, laughs.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
That's (snorts), that's not  
something someone has told me  
before.

They are sitting in a brightly-lit room, a desk in between them. Charlie is slick, calm, and collected at all times. Mr. Dimanzeno is obviously light hearted, and laughs easily. Charlie is the one being interviewed.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
(v.o.)  
Mr. Dimanzeno's smiles constantly.  
He obviously laughs easy, doesn't  
put his guard up. I can tell he's  
trying to act professional, but  
honestly, he doesn't have a chance.

Mr. Dimanzeno sits up in his chair, wiping his eyes.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
No one has gotten me to laugh like  
that in the first minute of their  
interview before.

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

Easy prey.

Mr. Dimanenzo ask Charlie another question, which he answers, but we can't hear them. When Charlie thinks, the interview continues, without sound.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

I'm Charlie Solstice. I make people laugh. Viciously, violently. I can stalk a target for days before they fall. Oh, and when they *fall*... I've sent people to the hospital.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

Oh, I'm sorry about that, Mr. Solstice. I'm trying to be more professional, but that's really not me. We do have fun here, usually.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

It's quite all right, Mr. Dimanenzo. And you can call me Charlie.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

Well, if I call you Charlie, you have to call me Cam.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

Now I've calmed him down. He thinks that's all I've got. Like that was my one joke, starting out this interview on a high note.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

I've got a good feeling about you, Charles.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

So do I.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

I'll let him think that for a while. As Captain Fredricson always said, toy with them all you want, just always keep them calm.



CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 What's the rest of that story?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 (v.o.)  
 Calm is weak, isn't tense,  
 prepared, won't flinch or brace for  
 impact.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 So, I've said the punchline of my  
 story, which is very simple. When I  
 was a kid I peed my pants, usually  
 whenever one of the other kids  
 would try and talk with me. It's a  
 bulletproof strategy, and has  
 gotten me through most difficult  
 problems in my life. And so one of  
 the other children, the new student  
 in fact, tried to borrow my  
 scissors. Peeing, I believe, is the  
 natural reaction there.

Mr. Dimanenzo is enthralled, snickering at all the right  
 moments. Charlie keeps telling her story, even as she thinks  
 over it.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 (v.o.)  
 This story is developed from truth,  
 by the way. Although the truth was  
 a little less picturesque. Yes,  
 some kid asked to borrow my  
 scissors, and I peed my pants. The  
 director of gross national  
 happiness came to speak to the  
 whole school, and every kid I knew  
 saw me and my wet pants. I was  
 already that kid, the weird one,  
 the third grader who wouldn't talk  
 to anyone. When the director told  
 us that we could be anything we  
 wanted to be, that our goals were  
 our own, I realized, for the first  
 time, that I did have goals. The  
 goals that I whispered to myself at  
 the end of the day, of getting back  
 at the people who hurt me by  
 comparing themselves to me, and  
 talking to me. I could be more than  
 them, in fact, I was more than  
 them. So I began to plan, to watch  
 and wait.

Mr. Dimanenzo is laughing again.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
And the director shook your hand?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
And the director shook my hand.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
I haven't even shook the director's  
hand!

Mr. Dimanenzo laughs, and Charlie smiles with him. But Charlie never laughs.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
(v.o.)  
I believe I eventually took out  
that kid's eye with his own pair of  
scissors.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
So then what happened?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
Nothing.

Mr. Dimanenzo is disappointed.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
For two weeks.

Mr. Dimanenzo lights up again.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
(v.o.)  
But that's my old work. Pain and  
fear is easy, anyone can make you  
angry, make you sweat. When you  
hurt someone, you don't control  
them, the fear does. You're just  
the button pusher. It's what  
Captain Fredricson taught me. Humor  
is art. You control people with  
jokes, make them want to be  
controlled. When you make someone  
laugh, you are better than them.  
There's a reason the only jokes I  
laugh at are my own.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
And the director inspired me to  
make people laugh. That was my  
(MORE)

CHARLIE SOLSTICE (cont'd)  
 goal, I realized. When people  
 laughed at me, and gave me their  
 attention, they gave me a piece of  
 themselves. I wanted that...that  
 openness. I wanted their laughter.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 Wow... really, I'm impressed. I  
 certainly never thought like that  
 when I was eight. And you never  
 peed your pants again, even though  
 it was a side affect of your social  
 anxiety?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 No. Well, no. There was...well, not  
 accidentally.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 (v.o.)  
 Lies are interesting. I like lies.  
 I like lying. It's smooth, easier  
 than chatting, explaining, talking.  
 Talking, I had to learn that. Learn  
 how to tell people the truth or, at  
 least, a consistent lie, something  
 people could use to talk to each  
 other about me, use to understand  
 me.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 Charles, I can see the passion is  
 there. And we know your history, of  
 course, and I've even seen your  
 resume personally. But now I want  
 to hear about your education in  
 your words.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 (v.o.)  
 Education! I'm saying the usual  
 things, things the Academy taught  
 me to say. All the little lies that  
 fill in the years that really  
 taught me everything I know. The  
 Academy of the Disturbed, and of  
 course, Captain Fredricson, took it  
 upon themselves to to unmake me and  
 tell me how to cut through this  
 world like the knife I was.

I did a lot more than stab out a  
 kid's eye with scissors. Mental

(MORE)

CHARLIE SOLSTICE (cont'd)  
 manipulation was my specialty. There were these two girls, best friends. By the end of third grade they wouldn't talk to each other, not a single word, not even make eye contact. I doubt they ever talked to each other again. But with pain and fear it's easy to get sloppy, my tactics weren't refined. I was put on a teacher watch list when the clumsy kid somehow became clumsier near me, got hurt in the halls when we crossed paths, had to go to the nurse. The scissor kid got a pamphlet on how to stand up to bullies and I decided to put him in his place.

So with a kid in the hospital there was an intervention. I had to switch schools, the only question was who would take me. My parents were distressed, as they would be for the next several years. It was two days before the beginning of the new school year when we were approached by a Government agent about The Academy of the Disturbed.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

And you didn't even specialize in performance?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

I didn't know what I wanted to do. I made people laugh, sure, but do that for the rest of my life, well... I wasn't sure. I didn't specialize.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

The program had an intense, nearly twenty-four-seven schedule. I worked. We covered general topics intensely, with no room for specialization. We had high level classes, trained in the exercise yards for two hours every day, and maintained the school grounds constantly, cleaning and fixing every square inch of the building.

(MORE)

CHARLIE SOLSTICE (cont'd)  
 Every one of my classmates was not only insane, but disturbed, a proven threat to themselves or others. I've been told that it was as intensive, if not more, than the old military schools. And apart from daily therapy sessions, we each had a mentor who lead us through our individualized recovery plan. That was how I first met Captain Fredricson.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 Who would you say is your greatest role model?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 I would love to say my mom, or my dad, but honestly, it would have to be my first comedy teacher.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 Really?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 Yes.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 That's how I would answer that question too.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 (v.o.)  
 Captain Fredricson is a recovering sociopath who had worked as a commercial fishing boat technician before finding his second career at the Academy. By day he had worked long hours alone on older boats, with only the raging sea and his repairman's tools to accompany him, but by night he was a different person. He let himself become the thing he wanted to be, and gain the control he deserved over others.

He was a stand-up comedian.

He moved from town to town, following the boats and avoiding fame. At each bar or community theater he'd leave a fake name, do

(MORE)

CHARLIE SOLSTICE (cont'd)  
 a set, and leave, never to return,  
 unless in disguise, to hear what a  
 legend he had become. He held  
 people in the palm of his hand with  
 one joke, made crowds of people  
 abandon sleep for a whole night,  
 made millionaires sign over their  
 whole fortune to him. His greatest  
 feat, one February, in a dive bar  
 near the southern coast, was to  
 encourage an entire crowd to follow  
 him as he went deeper and deeper  
 into the cold winter sea.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 He wasn't famous, or a big deal,  
 not even know for comedy in my  
 school. Even now, I feel I've  
 surpassed him in talent, I think  
 he'll always have my respect.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 I think I understand.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 (v.o.)  
 He was an appropriate teacher for  
 me, then. He knew from the first  
 day, that I was something special,  
 a gem of talent. He just didn't  
 want to admit it. He told me that I  
 always had an ego the size of a  
 whale. I know I do. There's nothing  
 wrong with it. It's a good thing.

I was a quick learner. But comedy  
 is an art, and it takes years to  
 master an art. At first, I merely  
 considered comedy a distraction  
 amid the busy schedule of the  
 Academy. Over time, I came to the  
 conclusion that if I truly wanted  
 to show my powers over the teachers  
 and other students I would have to  
 show them the powers myself.  
 Captain Fredricson always told me  
 that I had to work my ass off if I  
 ever wanted to be anything more  
 than the sad, pathetic, refuse of  
 society.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

Do you believe you had a natural talent for comedy?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

Yes. I had a natural talent. That's the biggest reason I was so bad at first.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

What do you mean?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

I didn't work at it, at first.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

It took time, but eventually my jokes were given the response they deserved. I decided to dedicate my life to comedy. Every second of spare time I had, every book I read, every sentence I said and video I watched became for the singular purpose of perfecting my art, gaining that perfect control over others that I know I deserve. My innate talent shows through.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

So you were really kicked out of a comedy club for being too funny?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

I mentioned before that I sent a guy to the hospital.

CAMERON DIMANENZO

Now, Charles, you're obviously a funny guy, with the papers to back that up. You could rule any stand up group you wanted to, you could own comedy media, from the writing room to acting. Why do you want to be part of the Government?

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

Oh, Mr.Dimanenzo. You could never understand. You always think you have the upper hand because you play your life in a sandbox. You

(MORE)

CHARLIE SOLSTICE (cont'd)  
 think power is helping all the other kids build castles. You have never truly wanted anything in your tiny little loving heart, not in the way I have always wanted the things I deserve. I know who feeds me, who keeps a roof over my head, who carefully balances my life. I know who takes my variables out of the universal algorithm to decide what I'll have for lunch today, who I'll bump into on the subway. Who I'll marry.

Mr. Dimanenzo thinks the world can fit in his sandbox. But that's his purpose. He is a tiny gear in a machine that's bigger than his mind can understand. But I know who pulls the levers. And I know that it's my place to take.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 It's all about making people happy. And really, making the most people the happiest they can be. Media stays in a single population group. Where else can you impact the entire human race? I want to really change people's lives, not just the minutes of their day.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 It's a noble goal, Charles. And it's why I am happy to help you achieve it. Congratulations, Charles. You are now officially a factor, agent, and citizen of the Government.

Mr. Dimanenzo stands up, shakes Charlie's hand and makes the sign of G on his chest. Charlie smiles, a little predatory and for a moment, her real self shines through.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE  
 Thank you for you time.

CAMERON DIMANENZO  
 I'll go get your immigration papers before you go. It'll take you a while to fill them out-since those two kids re-discovered the truth

(MORE)



CAMERON DIMANENZO (cont'd)  
the rules have been a little more  
finicky.

Charlie sits back down, and looks out the window.

CHARLIE SOLSTICE

(v.o.)

Not my best work. I wanted the job,  
after all. I couldn't pulverize  
him, not like I do to strangers at  
parties. Plus, he was an easy  
target, didn't take my best work to  
get him to the level I needed him  
to be at. One little slice and I  
had him in the palm of my hand.

The sun is shining with the same  
intensity it always has. I only  
realized it's always been the same  
when those two kids revealed that  
the world we know really is a  
spaceship. It's caused a lot of  
changes, new workers and policies,  
a call for mechanics to fix ancient  
outdated air filters. We want to  
find out just where we're all  
going. Requests have been made to  
the Government, but they'll never  
tell. And everyone thinks them  
better for it.

I feel like I made this good  
weather, painted the sky with my  
powers. Soon enough I'll be in this  
universe's greatest point of power,  
among the greats and the giants,  
curving the human race to my whim.

Charlie smiles.

And I'll make them all laugh.

FADE TO BLACK

INT.THE SPIRITUAL CENTER

In a spiritual center, PETRA, a woman who looks young but  
acts like someone twice her age, walks out to her desk at  
the front of the room, holding a cup of coffee. She sits  
down, arranges her papers, starts doing paperwork at the  
front of the room. She scratches away, humming and hawing  
over the papers scattered over her desk. The center is  
empty.

In the back of the room, RACHEL, a teenager, is just waking up. She stretches and yawns. She stares at the ceiling, tired and angry. She sits up suddenly.

PETRA  
Eu-aaaaaaaaaaaaaagh!

RACHEL  
What! I'm sorry!

PETRA  
Oh, I'm sorry; you just startled me.

Petra puts aside her pen and walks over to Rachel.

PETRA  
Is there a reason you're in my spiritual center at this time in the morning?

RACHEL  
Yeah.

Rachel is somewhat unresponsive. Petra thinks for a while.

PETRA  
Were you here all night?

RACHEL  
Maybe.

PETRA  
Well, if you'd like to tell me about it, I'll be there at my desk, doing paperwork.

Rachel does not respond, so Petra walks back to her desk. She re-arranges the papers, and looks over at Rachel, who is staring forward, with a questioning look on her face.

PETRA  
If you have any questions, you know, we could talk about them. This is a wonderful place to have questions.

RACHEL  
I know.

PETRA  
I know I look young, but this is my second lifetime. I've been around  
(MORE)

PETRA (cont'd)  
for a while. Some have even called  
me wise.

RACHEL  
Hmm.

PETRA  
Well, do you have questions?

RACHEL  
Yeah.

Rachel flops back down to stare at the ceiling again. Petra is frustrated, but patient, and goes back to her paperwork. Rachel continues to stare at the ceiling. Petra looks up again.

PETRA  
Look, if you're just going to stare  
at the ceiling, why don't you move  
to this front bench. It's got  
pillows on it.

Rachel continues to stare at the ceiling, so Petra shakes her head and goes back to her paperwork.

RACHEL  
How does the Government decide who  
gets punished?

PETRA  
Oh!

Petra jumps, surprised by Rachel's appearance at the front bench.

PETRA  
Well, the Government watches us  
all, which was part of the  
agreement that began on the very  
first generational ship sent out to  
colonize the universe. An agreement  
that, as we now know, we uphold the  
tradition of. The Government tries  
to make us better people. The  
difficulties we face we can face  
better knowing that we will be lead  
to a solution eventually, and get  
slapped on the wrist if we try and  
stray from the best way to do  
things.

Petra smiles at the end of her answer, glad to have helped.

RACHEL

You didn't answer my question.

Petra has to re-think for an instant.

PETRA

Well, if the Government sees that you have been making life more difficult for other people, if you obstruct their happiness, then you will be removed from that equation, regardless of your own personal happiness. You will be put on the track to achieving some of your own happiness, but whenever you block someone else's opportunity, their happiness come first. Call it punishment if you want.

Rachel chews the answer over. Petra watches her, waiting for the next question. Rachel thinks for a while.

RACHEL

Then why the hell haven't my parents been removed from the equation yet?

Petra starts to say something but pauses, and gives Rachel a critical look.

PETRA

If you weren't in my spiritual center at five in the morning asking me questions about who deserves punishment I would tell you that the Government is thinking about the future happiness that comes from personal growth, and oftentimes friction with one's parents is a natural part of growing up. But I don't think that answer applies to you.

Rachel isn't looking at Petra, but she is listening, deeply thinking, staring off into the distance. She nods.

PETRA

I can't help until you tell me what's happening.

Rachel is still silent, staring forward.

RACHEL

I promise you that I won't tell anyone. I have a promise of confidentiality of all information that we discuss in this center.

Rachel looks down.

RACHEL

And if my parents come to this center?

PETRA

Yes, you were here. I can't outright lie to them. But we did not talk, and although I asked why you were in my center, you refused to answer. So I let you be and you eventually left.

Rachel looks over Petra critically, then looks away again, thoughtful.

RACHEL

So, we live on a ship now?

Rachel looks at Petra expectantly. Petra is frustrated, but quickly recovers her sense, and answers the question.

PETRA

Yes. We were always on a ship, it was just hidden from us when we didn't want to know it. We always wanted to believe the world was real, that what we did here would have a major impact on the worlds around us. But now that we know why we're so cut off from the rest of the world, why very few of us can travel to the Government's headquarters, much less anywhere else in the universe, and we have to deal with the futility of our actions head on. We can't vote. We aren't part of the human race, and we won't be until planet-fall.

Petra looks up at Rachel, looking for some sign of emotion. Rachel is staring blankly ahead, so Petra sighs and goes back to her paperwork.

Rachel starts talking quietly, and Petra looks up and listens intently.

RACHEL

My parents think I'm not ready for an adolescent community. They say if I don't get straight A's I couldn't deal with balancing school and friends and living on my own. But I wouldn't be living on my own- I just- hm.

PETRA

Do you think you're ready?

RACHEL

Well, I... I think I should be. I should go. Otherwise I'll be behind, getting used to it with people who have already been living there for a year. I won't be ready at first. That's why you go.

Petra smiles kindly.

PETRA

Well said.

Rachel is a little surprised, and glances over at Petra before continuing, staring at the ground.

RACHEL

Thanks. I just think I'm allowed to be scared.

PETRA

You are. You're supposed to be scared. Terrified even. Your parents should be dragging you out of the house, kicking and screaming. But they should feel like you're dragging them.

RACHEL

I've never dragged my parents anywhere in my life.

PETRA

But in a way you've never stopped dragging against them.

Rachel looks up at Petra, surprised that she got to the heart of the issue, and Petra smiles kindly.

PETRA  
Is that why you decided to let go  
of them?

RACHEL  
(yells, defensive)  
I never decided to let go of my  
parents!

Rachel looks scared. Petra pauses, then makes a small  
thinking noise.

PETRA  
How old are you?

RACHEL  
Fifteen.

PETRA  
It is the year that most people  
move to the adolescent community.

RACHEL  
I know. I've tried everything. I  
got them to visit it--see the  
rooms, talk to the RAs, the  
counselors, the transition  
teachers. They said I would be too  
far away, that I would never visit.

PETRA  
Would you visit?

Rachel is quiet. She looks at Petra with a kind of  
desperation.

PETRA  
It's a difficult situation, I take  
it?

Rachel nods.

PETRA  
So you left.

RACHEL  
No!

PETRA  
Then why are you here?

Rachel swallows.

RACHEL

We got into a fight. They said that they would let me go to this special community. I would go to a new school, where none of the kids knew each other, they all have crazy parents like mine. Except you don't really live there. You "practice independence in a safe and nurturing environment", just take classes about responsibility and they watch you the whole time until around seven, when you get shipped back home to your parents with a sheet about everything you did that day.

Petra thinks for a while. Her hand hovers over a drawer in her desk. She opens it.

PETRA

What school do you go to?

RACHEL

New Century Specialty. I'm in the music track, but my parents don't know that. I'd be moving into the music track community by "accident", hopefully.

Petra searches through her desk until she finds the right form. She pulls it out, and hesitates for a moment before handing it to Rachel.

PETRA

This is the New Century Specialty School independent adolescent re-application form. If you fill this out the school becomes your legal guardian. It's similar to the shared guardian privileges of an adolescent community, but I think it might be helpful in your case.

Rachel looks at the form, a little scared. She picks up the pen, and then looks over at Petra.

RACHEL

I'm not sure I should be making this decision.



PETRA

But it is your decision to make.

Rachel becomes determined, and begins to fill out the form. As she fills out the form, Petra watches her, worried. Petra re-arranges the papers on her desk. She searches in her desk until she finds something.

Rachel pauses, then looks up from the form, putting the pen aside.

RACHEL

Thank you.

Rachel looks down at the form.

RACHEL

I really hope I mean that.

PETRA

I hope so too.

Petra hands Rachel a bag of cookies.

PETRA

You look like you need these.

Rachel takes them, and looks confused for a moment. But when she eats, she smiles for the first time.

PETRA

Now, you should walk over to the school with that, and you'll give it to the man in charge of the adolescent community for that school. I know him fairly well. I'll walk over with you as soon as I get these papers organized, alright?

Petra again re-organizes the papers on her desk. Rachel finishes the cookies.

RACHEL

My parents are probably looking for me by now.

PETRA

I don't doubt it.

RACHEL

I hope I'll be able to visit them.

PETRA

You will!

RACHEL

I hope I'll be able to visit them  
and still go back.

Petra looks at Rachel, worried.

PETRA

Someday. If you really want to.

Petra finishes organizing the papers, and they start to  
leave.

RACHEL

Has this ever happened before?

PETRA

No. No one I know has ever had  
exactly this problem before. No two  
problems in a million people are  
exactly alike, even though they may  
have similar solutions.

The Government, really, provides a  
system, which works for so many  
people, that somewhere else,  
someone has had this same problem.  
So I can give you the right  
solution. As long as I can tell  
which problem it is you have.

RACHEL

I guess that helps.

PETRA

Nothing in this universe is new, my  
dear.

RACHEL

Don't you ever feel insignificant,  
or not unique?

PETRA

Yes. And it's a wonderful feeling.  
The world has been built to  
accommodate me, and all of my  
friends and family. We live in a  
world where humanity works like a  
finely tuned machine, and we each  
play our part to send the human  
race faster and faster towards it's

(MORE)

PETRA (cont'd)  
destination. Happiness is almost  
completely assured.

RACHEL  
Almost?

PETRA  
Ninety-nine percent chance. It's  
that one percent that makes it fun.  
Now, let's try and improve your  
chances.

RACHEL  
Alright. I can live with that.

FADE TO BLACK