

Scene 1

An old mausoleum. There is a list of names underneath the heading "Foreign Service Members." A military officer enters, lights turned on by motion sensors to guide his way toward a central collection of bones, seemingly more revered than others. He stops just before them and just looks at it for a time.

Lee: I'm trying, but the language is fading. *a breath* (Hello father.) The language may be rusty, but I haven't forgotten what you started. And I won't give up. (For the greater good) Mother is well. She talks to your picture like I talk to you here. With less purpose, I think, but it says a lot. She doesn't think I know. She won't stop working despite the pension. She'd probably explode. (Help me.) I - uh... I feel like I'm fumbling around. Everyone expects me to fix it. Like you did. They are all so suspicious now. Anyone could be in for themselves, and it seems like a lot have to be. They make themselves into it. And me might not have had to be here. Or else we wouldn't be in this place. I wish I could actually hear you. (Father). *beat* Don't worry. I will keep the faith. *kneels, crosses self, prays, and places hands into water, lighting up the whole stage, bottom to top, as it rotates.*

Scene 2

The inside of a mismatched home, pieced together from odds and ends. The walls are concrete, and above the wooden loft, the entrance of which is curtained by some threadbare fabric with a botanical design is an arched metal ceiling - similar to a bomber bunker. Through a window within a door at the top of a winding staircase opposite the loft, a dry, hot, red landscape can be seen with a modern shining city off in the distance. Downstairs is a couch by a radiator and a virtual reality headset. In the same room underneath the loft, a small table and four mismatched chairs, a stove and oven combo, a refrigerator, and a small sink built into a counter, creating a kitchen, dining, living room with the pipe for the stove going up through the loft. Dalus is at the top of the staircase looking through the window.

Dalus: Dammit I'm starving. Where the hell is that boy? *starts walking down the stairs* Your father is late again!

Mamar: *from behind the curtain* What do you want me to do about it?

Dalus: Stop him from doing that.

Mamar: You have more control over him than I do.

Dalus: Sure, whatever.

Mamar: And what does that mean?

Dalus: Well - *a skidding sound outside* Ah finally! Go help your father unpack.

Mamar: *stepping out from the curtain is a 13 year old mixed race girl. I'll get you for that later. she starts coming down the ladder.*

Dalus: It's only good things conajita.

Mamar: Why do you do that? You aren't even Spanish.

Dalus: Hispanic. Yeah, but they like those guys more than me. And I can't pass for anything else.

Mamar: Oh.

Dalus: Go go!

Mamar: Right! *runs up the stairs to open the door.* Daddy!

During the following dialogue, Dalus goes to the couch, crouches down, and pulls out a vaporizer. He stays crouched as he takes a long hit. (may not be the right time to bring this out)

Samson: Hey sweet pea! How are you! What'd you do today?

Mamar: Only two trucks came by today. Both were pigs.

Samson: Pigs? What did they do to you?

Mamar: I'm fine, I'm fine.

Samson: They why are they... Wait, you mean - *laughs* Don't just call them pigs!

Mamar: Why not? Everybody knows it's true.

Samson: Not all of them are pigs, and you don't just say something like that.

Mamar: Why not?

Samson: On a strictly sense basis? What if it slips out in front of one of them here? They don't pay, and they definitely won't buy anything else upstairs. And that's if you're lucky. Here, take this down.

Dalus waves away the smoke, and replaces the vaporizer before standing.

Mamar: I can take more than that!

Samson: But that won't fit in the bag. So take it for me, please.

Mamar: O-k.

Mamar enters with some almond milk, followed by Samson with three bags.

Samson: Hey dad. Slow day?

Dalus: Yeah. Only two came in. Where've you been?

Samson: Crazy line at the food bank. A lot of it was gone when I got there

Dalus: What was left?

Samson: We're trying something new for dinner tonight.

Dalus: Something new?

Samson: It'll be good for you.

Mamar: What is it?

Samson: Tempeh.

Dalus: The hell's that?

Mamar starts going through the bags looking for it.

Samson: It's a mix of some nuts and soy vacuum sealed -

Dalus: So like tofu? That's rough on your system.

Samson: If you eat nothing but it maybe, but this is different -

Mamar: holding up two packets of tempeh Is this it? Looks like brains.

Samson: *grabbing the packets* Give me those! We're not going to just eat it like that.

Dalus: These damn bureaucrats are even getting into .

Samson: Look, people eat too much meat anyway.

Dalus: So we're supposed to destroy our liver instead?

Samson: There's hardly enough soy here for that.

A knock at the door.

Dalus: All right hippy. Get cooking and I'll get the door.

Dalus starts up the steps to the door. Samson gets out a couple wrinkly peppers, an old onion, some celery, four mushrooms, rice and gets ready to cook stir fry and rice.

Samson: Can't be any different from steak.

Dalus opens the door.

Lee: Hello sir. May I come in?

Dalus: Lee! Of course, (come in/welcome). *starts walking back down the stairs* Are you staying for dinner?

Lee: *following Dalus* I wish I was. I have to get to the library.

Samson: Is it the 11th already?

Lee: Hello Samson. Yes it is.

Samson: Say hola to your madre.

Lee: Of course I will. Have you started cooking yet?

Samson: Just the prep.

Lee: Good. This will just take a minute.

Mamar: You really can't stay half an hour?

Lee: I always meet her at six.

Dalus: And she's always late.

Lee: *smiles* That doesn't mean I should be.

Dalus: *waving him off* Feh!

Samson: So what's up?

Lee: There are some changes - what's the phrase - coming down the pipes.

Dalus: Pipe.

Lee: Even if there are multiple changes?

Mamar: That's actually a good question.

Samson: I don't think that changes the phrase though.

Dalus: I hope so. I'll have to get back to you on that Lee.

Lee: It's not a big deal.

Dalus: You know us. (Always curious)

Lee: What?

Samson: Always curious. Sorry, I know we shouldn't speak so much.

Lee: Well, if you find out I'd love to hear. *beat* I'm sorry. I don't have good news.

Mamar: What's wrong?

Lee: Listen, you guys really should move into the city. There's more to do, there's more work, it's better.

Samson: What are you talking about?

Dalus: You know we won't go.

Lee: You can take the tree with you. There are gardens along the walkway these days, and more greenery is always welcome.

Dalus: What's going on Lee? Stop playing around.

Lee: Some things are changing.

Samson: Like what.

Lee: Oh don't talk to me like that. I'm trying to help.

Mamar: Daddy? Grampa? What's going on?

Samson: Silly adult stuff. Why don't you go outside for a little bit?

Lee: That's a good idea.

Dalus: No. She's staying. It's going to affect her life, she should know. And you should be able to say it to the children. You're squirming like a runover rattlesnake. If it bothers you that much, fix it.

Lee: I can't fix it.

Samson: What the he - . What is it?

Lee: This place isn't going to be making money anymore.

Dalus: It already doesn't make money.

Lee: No, really. We're - They're shutting it down. No one is going to come out here to refuel, and we're getting other sources of energy now too. There's going to be a big solar plant instead.

Mamar: Does that mean I don't have to pump gas anymore?

Lee: Yes! Doesn't that sound nice?

Samson: And if the sun doesn't shine?

Lee: Batteries are pretty good these days.

Dalus: You have to be able to travel! They can't just shut us down.

Lee: We're switching over to entirely EVs. We have to, you know that.

Dalus: But you can get power from the gas. It's easier.

Lee: Now that we started dealing with the CO2, people are getting worried about methane leaks.

Dalus: Oh we won't leak. I have much better control than that.

Samson: Dad.

Mamar: What's that mean?

Samson: Nothing. Your abuelo is a funny man.

Lee: You had a leak here just last month.

Dalus: Patched pretty quick though right? And that was because of one of your men taking off without properly replacing the nozzle.

Lee: Hey, it wasn't one of mine.

Dalus: Yeah? SS isn't one of yours?

Lee: If I got the report we would have paid you for it. I'll make sure it's included in the settlement when you move.

Dalus: I'm not going anywhere. This is my land, and it's not getting taken again.

Lee: We've never taken your land, Dalus.

Dalus: I can't leave my wife.

beat

Lee: Look, she's gone. She won't come back.

Dalus: I'm not leaving. We'll farm.

Lee: That's not profitable anymore. Especially not on a small scale.

Dalus: It'll be even smaller in the city.

Lee: But there is other work.

Dalus: Service. Cleaning.

Lee: Managing machines. Robotics are advancing faster than we ever thought. Soon we will finally achieve paradise.

Samson: Paradise is for the afterlife.

Lee: If you could have it now, why wouldn't you?

Dalus: But someone has to run the machines.

Lee: Of course. People will always be necessary. And we can exhume her if you want, and make it easier to take her with you.

Samson: You always get so close.

Lee: Excuse me?

Samson: So close, yet not quite there.

Lee: So what's your answer?

Dalus: I cannot. I expect you know that.

Lee: Your face gives you away, yes.

Dalus: Do you ever - can you ever wonder?

Lee: Wonder what?

Samson: What would be if you were more like us?

Lee: We would have all died, I expect. It was a near miss anyway.

Samson: Some of us would have made it, same as now.

Lee: Not as many. You won't budge on your answer?

Dalus: I cannot. No.

Lee: Someone down the line will eventually have to integrate. This is the best offer you'll likely ever have.

Samson: And I suppose you figured out the probability of that.

Lee: I wish you both well. You were always kind to me, even back in the home.

Dalus: You were a charming child.

Samson: You as well, Lee.

Lee gathers his things and turns to go.

Samson: You never wonder.

Lee: Even if I could, why would I? What can be changed?

Samson: The future, even if not the present.

Lee: How, why, and when? It's not worth it. The only way would be if the masses started screaming, and the masses are satisfied, it seems to me. Thank you for the time, Dalus, and let me know if you change your mind.

Dalus: I will.

Lights fade to twilight as the stage rotates.

Scene 3

Lights rise on Alex, Dalus, and Mamar. Alex is cooking tofu stir fry on the counter with a mobile stovetop and a rice cooker. Dalus is working on homework with Mamar at the table. The tablet is by her to help.

Siri: How many died in the Famine of Greed?

Mamar: How many of who?

Siri: How many died in the Famine of Greed?

Mamar: 78 million.

Siri: Who is the current leader?

Mamar: Hephaestus.

Siri: Incorrect! This afternoon Thor was sworn in! Praise Thor!

Siri: To whom do we owe our safety to?

Mamar: The bumblebees. How was I supposed to know that?

Siri: Incorrect! The Hivemasters guide our economy to the most productive it can be, and repay us with experienced security! Social studies test complete! Continue your personalized education, provided to you by Viacom.

Mamar: Pops, that wasn't fair.

Dalus: If you're muy furiosa then you can always retake it. Math time. So this line represents a ten, and this dot represents a one. First we count up how many dots there are. Can you count mi hermana?

Mamar: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. This is boring.

Dalus: It's the step before we do more complex addition and subtraction.

Mamar: This is the worst.

Dalus: Worse than a pit of snakes?

Mamar: You know what I mean.

Dalus: What about a mob?

Mamar: Or a bomb!

Siri: Bomb alert! Bomb alert! Bomb alert!

Mamar: Stop it! It's not!

Siri: Bomb alert!

Dalus: Bomb defused.

Siri: Safety preserved. Return to your personalized education, provided to you by Viacom.

Dalus: Great. I'm glad you feel so much better about it. Finish counting please.

Mamar: You're mean. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve.

Dalus: Now circle all but two of them. See how that now counts as a line on your tablet?

Mamar: How much was that again?

Dalus: Ten. How many lines just showed up?

Mamar: One, two, three, four, five.

Dalus: If you put a zero after that, what number is that?

Mamar: Fifty.

Dalus: And an extra two makes?

Mamar: Fifty-two. There's got to be an easier way to do this.

Dalus: You'll learn that soon. Put away the tablet. It's time to do your other work, little one. These are things you may have difficulty with on GSD.

Mamar: *sighs* Yes Pops. What's for dinner tonight?

Alex: Tofu stir fry.

Mamar: Again?

Siri: A recipe for tofu stir fry! I can help you with that! Would you like me to order - *it trails off as the power cord is unplugged.*

Alex: I'd hate that if we had it when I was a kid.

Dalus: It's how we learn now.

Alex: Seems crazy to me.

Dalus: It's just temporary. How much longer?

Alex: Not long. Half an hour? It'll be ready before Samson gets in.

Mamar: We always have tofu.

Dalus: It's what is being produced. He always gets in so late.

Alex: He's doing important work.

Dalus: So you both say. But neither of you will tell us what it is?

Alex: Just believe us when we say it's for everyone.

Dalus: So long as it doesn't swing around to bite us, anything goes.

Alex: Thank you.

Dalus: So, how is life in the Mountain?

Alex: Tic Murray is the same as always. Crotchety and single-minded. But everyone else is fine. Safe.

Dalus: Which is the most important thing, I suppose.

Alex: It's still a bitch and a half to get water out there. Although the engineer just got free of the nest. He's been trying to turn energy to water on a small scale. Nestle wasn't too pleased about that.

Dalus: You're telling me that our water supplier is trying to kill us now? Alex, yes, there are terrible things that have been done, but you shouldn't dismiss the good with the bad. Without people like Lee we wouldn't even have this roof over our head. All of your are too paranoid.

Alex: Which is exactly the problem. We have the technology to save the goddamn planet but that would cut into their profits. Dalus, you know this is true. What's rent these days, and how many empty houses does the Council hoard? How much money does it cost for her medicine?

Dalus: Basta. I'm not one of your fanatics, and you shouldn't bring her into this. You didn't even spare a thought before using her like that. Shame on you.

Mamar: I can split doses if you want Pops.

Dalus: Absolutely not. The cost is meaningless. We're doing fine.

Alex: Of course you are.

Dalus: How long will you be here this time?

Alex: Just until Samson gets back.

Dalus: Good. *Silence. Dalus breathes in, and out.* Don't be absurd. You're staying the night. Where is that boy?!

Mamar: We're waiting for him right?

Alex: It's almost re... *deep breath* I'll put it on simmer.

Dalus: Thank you dear. Why don't you go watch for him?

Mamar exits with a ball, tossing it. She bounces it against the wall of the house a few times. Looks around, doesn't see anyone, and throws it harder. It bounces out away from her, past a do not enter sign. She ducks under the fence and the sign, and steps out to the ball. We hear a click. Mamar looks around, doesn't see anyone, and steps away. There's an explosion, a flash of light, and darkness. The stage rotates

Scene 4

Lights rise rise in a doctor's office. Rushed ahead of lady who lost an eye in acid attack, scarred over, 6 month waitlist. Mamar is rolled through on a trolley, followed by Alex and Dalus.

Dalus: You're going to be ok! Stay with me. We just got in, we're going to take you in the back -

Stacy: I've been waiting for 45 minutes, you can't just take two people, much less the brood of a terrorist back before me! Look at me!

Alex: Ma'am, I don't have time for -

Stacy: You don't have time? I don't have time! Chad can't even look at me for 5 minutes anymore!

Alex: Please just take her.

Stacy: Excuse me, no, there's a line. People wait in line. This is an emergency too.

Alex: You'll be fine. Chad's just watching porn.

Stacy: How dare you! That child will be fine.

Alex: You can't even see.

Stacy: He seems stable to me. Chad never watches porn.

Nurse: Ma'am, I will call security if you don't sit down right now.

Stacy: We are getting married tomorrow, and this mud skin sonuvabitch threw shit in my face on my wedding night! Don't do this, they said I'd be seen three hours ago.

Nurse: Things are a little chaotic out there right now.

Stacy: That's not my fault! I don't hate anyone! I just want to have my perfect family in my perfect house with my perfect man after my perfect wedding and that drone bastard ruined it for me! Chad won't look up from his phone, and everyone else is always staring. What was wrong with him? I just don't understand. And it still burns! I feel it under my skin, and I want to rip it off, and I know that will just be worse. Don't you dare heal that scum without having to wait a minute. Don't you dare let him push me back again. Don't you - *a burly security officer step up behind the woman.*

Emrick: Stacy, there's going to be a delay. You can wait here, or outside. I'm sorry

Stacy: RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAUGGHH!!

Stacy reaches up to claw Emrick, who grabs the arm and twists it behind her. He is struggling to contain her, but manages to lead her outside. A nurse takes Mamar through the back. Dalus and Alex collapse.

Alex: The mine fields still kill people and all she can think of is her stupid face.

Dalus: Most people only care about those closest to themselves. Everything else is a luxury to be able to consider.

Alex: That can change.

Dalus: Human nature can change?

Alex: Of course. Ethnicity is vanishing fairly quickly.

Dalus: Is it? That's news to me.

Alex: People notice it less.

Dalus: Maybe in your circles. But not all of us want to live on a commune.

Alex: If they did we wouldn't have those... things... anymore.

Dalus: If they did we wouldn't have the quality of medicine.

Alex: Why?

Dalus: I don't want to talk about this. She might lose...

Alex: She won't.

Dalus: The stir fry.

Alex: It's already ruined.

Dalus: I'll turn it off. *He pulls out a phone and taps it a few times.* Would this happen in your commune?

Alex: Why would you want to have a tracking device always on? Is that freedom?

Dalus: You have an answer for everything, don't you?

Alex: I wish. Where's Samson?

Dalus: You know better than me.

Alex: I thought he'd have been home long before now.

Dalus: He'll be here soon, I'm sure.

Alex: He'd better be.

Lights fade as the stage turns.

Scene 5

A tea shop. Warm, welcoming. Comfortable couches and chic art on the wall. A young woman leans against the counter. A middle aged couple sit drinking tea and chatting. Samson enters with a black bag. He looks around, and checks his watch. He walks to the counter.

Samson: Can I get a... just a coffee?

Chel: Yes sir, I would be glad to help you. What kind would you like?

Samson: Um. Black?

Chel: Sure thing. We have a dark, medium, and light roast.

Samson: What's the difference?

Chel: Really?

Samson: Yeah, really. What's up?

Chel: Nothing. That's just a...surprise. Bitter or light?

Samson: Nothing too crazy.

Chel: Well, then I suppose blonde is your type. African or South American?

Samson: South American? You can get that in here?

Chel: Father Corp Starbucks is improving some land down there, so the tariffs don't apply.

Samson: I see. I'll go with South American then.

Chel: South American it is sir. It's really very pretty out today, isn't it? I'm so happy about the adjustment our new Contrail Operation Manager made. The sunsets have been spectacular too. They really know their stuff. What do you think?

Samson: I'm a big fan of the administration too.

Chel: Wonderful. Here's your coffee. Any milk or sugar?

Samson: No, thank you. Mind if I sit down for a minute?

Chel: Of course! Anywhere you please. Would you like our free public wifi?

Samson: No, thank you.

Chel: Oh. Ok. If you change your mind you can come up for the password anytime.

Samson goes to his seat. Oh the holodeck behind the bar the projection changes from its previous programming of an MMA match between two women to the spinning words "Stand by for an announcement." After a few seconds, Thor takes the place of the words.

Thor: Citizens of Our Beloved Cathedral, thank you for the welcome your administrators have already provided for, and that which I am about to receive from you yourselves. I know things have been trying physically, mentally, and spiritually. I know that you have been afraid since the last vicious attack. But remember that we stand strong, and stand tall together. It is our destiny to remake the world and fortify it against all comers, even our own species' folly. Never forget that you are the ones chosen by Our Father to lead humanity back to our rightful place. I can't wait to get to know all of you after the Procession. Our Father bless Our Beloved Cathedral, and bless you all. *He fades, waving.*

Sandi: It's a good thing we have a real Magister.

Dorothy: Are you kidding?

Sandi: Well you heard him. He understands how hard things have been.

Dorothy: All I heard were the same old platitudes.

Sandi: Oh don't too hard on him. He can't say those things out right.

Dorothy: It's because of all those so-called refugees. You know that. But these people just keep shipping them in! Disgraceful.

Sandi: It's not the refugees Dorothy. It's our mess of an educational system that's spitting out privileged do gooders who can't do anything worthwhile.

Dorothy: Well I didn't hear him say that either, Sandi.

Sandi: It was a two minute pre-recorded snapshot. Of course they didn't. Some of the people making things worse are citizens. He can't say things outright. At least not so publicly.

Dorothy: Don't say it.

Sandi: We should go and hear him.

Dorothy: Sandi, you always say that. And it's always the same.

Sandi: He might be different. He's married, so -

Dorothy: If he hasn't raised kids here he doesn't know.

Sandi: He does have a daughter.

Dorothy: Probably went to a charter school.

Sandi: But they're all here now.

Dorothy: We'll see if they'll rub shoulders with the plebeians.

Sandi: Dorothy, I think you had a bit too much.

Dorothy: Oh enough you. I can actually handle myself. Unlike these migrants, apparently.

Sandi: Oh no. Not now Dorothy. Can we get the cheque?

Chel: Coming right up. *She brings over a tablet. Sandi starts finishing up, and tries to guide a drunk Dorothy outside.*

Dorothy: I remember when we worked for a living. Now everyone is expected to just push buttons. And if you don't sit still well, tough luck. If you don't like math, tough luck. If you want to work with your hands, better leave that to a robot. And be grateful that you're allowed the medicine to live. Disgraceful.

Ladies exit.

Chel: Get as many refills as you want. I'm having a smoke.

Chel exits the shop She looks both ways, and pulls out a single use marijuana pipe designed to look like a cigarette. Samson exits the shop

Samson: Hey there.

Chel: Hello.

Samson: That was crazy in there.

Chel: It's nothing. Happens all the time.

Samson: It shouldn't though. That's no way to behave, especially for people we should look up to.

Chel: But it does. And I'm definitely not looking up to them. It's going to be a long night.

Samson: The sign says you close at 5.

Chel: We're open late for the parade.

Samson: You don't really think anyone will be coming in for coffee do you? Take a mental health day.

This section ends with Chel agreeing "Yeah, screw this overtime anyway." for the first 7 times as the dialogue prior has been gradually cut, as the director chooses so long as the words stay in

order, and leaving, and Samson riding off 7 times. As the trips repeat and speed up, the lighting shifts to be later in the day, finishing close to sunset. On the 8th repetition, Chel disagrees "No, I promised I'd stay." Samson pauses.

Samson: Do you have a light?

Chel: Uhh...yeah. *gives a lighter to Samson.*

Samson: Thanks. It's been a day.

Chel: Yeah?

Samson: Yeah. *lights a cigarette* Things have changed a lot from when I was a kid.

Chel: Yeah?

Samson: Yeah. Can you say anything else?

Chel: Yeah what do you want?

Samson: Just finishing my cigarette. I did a few deliveries and I was told the sunsets from Precipice have been stunning.

Chel: No, I'm pretty new. My family moved here just a few months ago.

Samson: Why's that?

Chel: My dad got transferred. Also some medical reasons.

Samson: Man, I haven't been to the doctor in ages. They good here?

Chel: I don't know. Doctors are the same wherever you go.

Samson: First time I've heard that one.

Chel: Well they have for me.

Samson: I don't mean anything by it. You seem all right, you gave me a light.

Chel: No prob. Those things'll kill you you know.

Samson: Really? I had no idea. You're smoking weed

Chel: It's a brachiodialator, not a brachioconstrictor. So I'll be fine. You on the other hand.

Samson: Yeah, I know. Lots of things will kill you. Bullets, cars, bombs. You can't turn around without having a threat pop up its little head. Mio Dios, those will probably kill you, we just haven't found out how yet. It took them decades to prove that my little death-stick was as dangerous as you make it out to me. You know what the real threat is around here? Seriously,

guess. It's not bombs, terrorists, or even lung cancer, although you would think otherwise from your tv. It's your heart. Seriously, heart disease is the main killer, all over our little blue planet. What do you have in your bag for a snack? McDonalds? Those things'll kill you you know.

Chel: Well 'scuse me.

Samson: I didn't mean it like - oh dammit. I'm just a little wound up right now. Look, kid -

Chel: I'm not a kid.

Samson: All right, lady. Look lady, just close up and don't go back to the parade. Can you do that for me? Please?

Chel: Why?

Samson: Just don't. You've seen them before in other cities, this one is nothing special.

Chel: It's VA day. We have a new Magister.

Samson: I know. *sighs* Ok, look I just heard some rumors around town. Just, head home. This parade won't be anything crazy, they're all the same these days.

Chel: If you saw something, you should tell someone.

Samson: I have no proof, so what would it do? They have security, so they might catch him. If they don't though, it won't be fun. If they do, the parade gets shut down. Just go home, go shopping, catch a movie. You'll have a better time anyway. I'm taking off. Oh, sorry, thanks for your lighter.

Samson gives the lighter back, then hands over a coin, and exits. Chel stands there for a moment, thinking. She shakes her head and heads back inside. The stage rotates. Samson walks to sounds of a parade.

Thor:

Thor: Friends, for indeed you are all my friends on this glorious day, I have been selected to be your Blessed Magister, and I want you all to know there is nothing to fear anymore. My ears are open to your cries of supplication. We will remake civilization to a more pure way of living. Everyone will be valued. The vermin will be cleansed from our society. Like the bird of legend, our city will rise from the ashes! But that metaphor bets a question. How did Phoenix get burned so badly to merit such emergency care? It's the Technocrats who are corrupting our youth with their instant gratification! They think they know best how to run society, but only care about the productivity of the city. And so you need to keep to your schedule day in and out, never resting, mewling "thank you" like a lamb over your gruel you struggle to buy, and accepting the unceasing interruptions of these towel heads! Haven't you noticed how sharia is worming its way into our life? First, halal meats are everywhere, then all the women are in sheets to hide their bruises, then they scream from the rooftops as though they conquered the civilization as opposed to being welcomed in as refugees! Your children will be brainwashed into this - *explosions rock the stage. Thor is rushed off as the stage rotates*

Joe: Everyone stay calm! Put your heads down and follow the instructions of your nearest officer. We're taking you to safety. Squad, spread out and hold anyone suspicious! You, head down Broadway, Emrick, take main. Joe, take Murray and get Diane to the safe house

Emrick: What about you?

Joe: I have to report back.

Emrick: And sit in the office huh? That's bullshit.

Joe: Don't make me write you up.

Emrick: What a -

Joe: Care to finish that? Emrick, take main, Pat head down Broadway. Remember, this individual may be armed and dangerous, so keep your stun guns ready.

Murray: If they have a gun?

Joe: No one has guns.

Emrick: Not legally.

Joe: No one has guns.

Pat: So call for backup.

Emrick: Call for backup.

Joe: All right everyone, you signed up to serve and protect, so go get that bastard!

Samson: *appears from behind a trash can in the audience* What a bunch of sheep. I hope that coffee lady is safe. Enough. It's all for the best. As Murray says, it's this or we'll slip into tyranny. *pause* So much fire. So much chaos. I didn't know it would be so... Maybe the world really does end in fire. It has to come down. It all has to come down. If others are burned from that, that's fate, as Samson would say. I hope he's ok. I hope they're all ok.

Scene 6

Diane has a VR headset on and a remote in her hand. She is speaking out to the audience. Another woman, dressed the same, is on the opposite end of the stage also speaking out to the audience. They swing their remotes like tennis rackets when they play each other.

Rose: 40-Luv.

Diane: Shut up Rose.

Rose: Just letting you know.

Diane: I know the score.

Rose: It's just the custom.

Diane: You didn't have to draw it out when you said it.

Rose: I have no idea what you're talking about.

Diane: Just serve the ball.

Rose: As you wish.

Rose gently lowers her hand, cupped like it holds a ball, then quickly raises it into the air. After a second she swings her remote overhand. Diane returns the serve. They volley for a few rounds with vocal exhalations. Diane scores. Rose may have let her.

Diane: Ha! In your face! Who has 40-Luv now?

Rose: Not you.

Diane: Shut up. Wait, did you...

Rose: What? Of course not!

Diane: I won't play anymore if you do.

Rose: I didn't.

Diane: Good.

Rose: Of course, you did threaten not to play if you lost.

Diane: I won't play any more if you let me score.

Rose: It's going to be a little hard for me to do both.

Diane: 15-40.

Diane serves. Again a few volleys, after which Rose gets the ball back.

Diane: Dammit!

Rose: Oh yeah right, you gave that one to me.

Diane: You know what? Yes. I did. So there.

Rose laughs

Rose: 40-15.

Rose serves, they volley, and Rose scores.

Diane: It doesn't really count anyway.

Rose: Oh yeah? Why not?

Diane: The ball has no weight.

Rose: The ball?

Diane: Exactly.

Rose: You're such a brat.

Diane: And you're great. You've been getting so much better.

Rose: It's hard when you can't practice except once every other week. You still haven't met anyone?

Diane: Rose. I've been here for two month. What do you expect?

Rose: No one? Hun, you're falling down on the game.

Diane: Game? What game? You're the one who's winning all the games.

Rose: Har har. What about Em? Or Steph? Or June?

Diane: That's from when I was young and beautiful.

Rose: Right.

Diane: It's hard to meet people. There's a curfew here, apparently it's pretty danger -

Rose: A curfew? How old are you?

Diane: It's a new place! Where would I go?

Rose: Di. Really. What did we do?

Diane: It's different.

Rose: Hardly. How did we find Fat Straw?

Diane: No one else will be out. Places will be closed.

Rose: Even the parks?

Diane: Closed at sundown here.

Rose: Oh yeah? Where are the gates?

Diane: Are you trying to get me grounded?

Rose: Who's going to know?

Diane: The security officers -

Rose: Need a warrant to use the Master Key on our VPN.

Diane: Well, my dad could check.

Rose: Your dad loves me. Why would he? What on Earth could we be talking about which is more important than adjusting to his important new job as Lord High Frumplewig or something.

Diane: Magister, but close enough.

Rose: Right, exactly. Lord High Frumplewig. And if he's soooooo busy making sure that the city is safe what oh what could sweet little Rose be up to with his darling baby Diane? Hmmmm?

Diane: Not now. Please.

Rose: Oh Di. I'm sorry.

Diane: No I'm sorry. I just...

Rose: Hey, remember the tree on Holy Mother's Hill?

Diane: Of course I do. Our tree.

Rose: It definitely wasn't Mrs. Winklemier's.

Diane: She probably hadn't left her house in five years.

Rose: At least. She was missing out.

Diane: There never was anything like the sunsets from up there.

Rose: All of Aegis glows pink.

Diane: I miss the sandstone. Everything here is shiny and black.

Rose: That's the volcano for you.

Diane: At least it's warm.

Rose: It was raining here yesterday.

Diane: Everything must be so green.

Rose: Since trade opened up with the Imperium our own Magister's eyes have been going green.

Diane: A rising tide -

Rose: Raises all ships, I know. But aren't you worried the faith is slipping?

Diane: Because Magister Clint is excited to make more money for the Cathedral? It's all for the faith.

Rose: We don't all benefit the same from it.

Diane: What do you mean?

Rose: Two weeks after the Hivemasters left, he went out and bought another house.

Diane: Why on Earth does he need two houses?

Rose: Wrong.

Diane: What?

Rose: Wrong. Four.

Diane: No.

Rose: Four. Each multiple acres.

Diane: That's crazy.

Rose: I know.

Diane: You know, you're the only one who talks like this with me.

Rose: Really? What do they talk about?

Diane: *laughs* Always the same.

Rose/Diane: Dinner, dogs, and DEGENERATES.

Rose: Their minds are so limited. Society changes, and if they won't change with it, they'll be left behind, like any superstition, or coal, or letters.

Diane: Are you huffing grass? Are you a....

Rose/Diane: DEGENERATE?!

They laugh together. An explosion rocks Diane's side, sharply cutting off the chat.

Diane: Rose? Oh dammit!

A pair of soldiers run in.

Joe: Miss, we have to go.

Murray: Come with us please.

Diane: Where are my parents?

Murray: We'll rendezvous with them later.

Joe: For now, just worry about yourself. We have a pod waiting.

Diane: Let me grab my bag.

Joe: Miss, we don't have time. We don't know where all the bombs are but they will be targeting valuable targets.

Diane: I'm just grabbing a bag and a jacket. It's not a suitcase.

Joe: As they are, we have to move.

Another explosion. Diane grabs a purse and a jacket and turns to exit, escorted by the soldiers. They freeze, and the stage turns.

Scene 7

Samson climbs the stage, and enters the front desk of a library.

Alex: Samson?

Samson: I'm so glad it's you.

Alex: What the hell was all of that?

Samson: We're starting. I don't know how it will work out.

Alex: Does Murray know?

Samson: Of course. He gave the order. The guards are gone.

Alex: No one wants to serve any more. So they have to prioritize VIPs.

Samson: Which of course can't be the Archives. *He gives her a jump drive.* Murray said you'd -

Alex: The back office! Now!

Samson exits as Lee enters. He holds up a hand with identification.

Lee: Inspector-General Lee. Did anyone come in here?

Alex: No. No one I saw.

Lee: You're sure?

Alex: Sure.

Lee: Do you know the penalty for lying to an officer of the law?

Alex: I'm sure you'll tell me.

Lee: If we can't trust you to be open with us, how can we keep you safe?

Alex: So what is it.

Lee: Ninety days state managed labor.

Alex: Thank the Hivemasters for rehabilitation.

Lee: I am going to search the premises. I will record your assistance if there are any corrections you would like to make.

Alex: I can't think of one.

Lee reaches up and touches near the left ear. The stage darkens aside from two pools of light around Lee and Alex. Alex's pool is pumping fairly rapidly. Lee's is stable. There is a sound of a heartbeat. Lights return to normal.

Lee: A dangerous criminal is risking the sanctity and security of our city. The terrorist is masked and with glasses, so we do not have an accurate image. However, if you see anyone suspicious of around 165 lbs and approximately 6 ft 2 inches tall, please call the precinct. *Exits.*

Alex: Are you still there?

Samson: Yeah. My pants are a little wet, but I'm fine.

Alex: His spy equipment needs work.

Samson: I'm fine with them functioning like they do now. Lee's a scary one.

Alex: You know him?

Samson: I know it. They've gotten so good that you can't even tell when they're artificial. The words are programmed in by sound so there's hardly ever a missed syllable. Lee's supposed to be in charge of the shop too.

Alex: I saw your daughter earlier.

Samson: I need to stop by. How is she?

Alex: She'll be out for a while. That what the Doctor was saying. He wants to put some computers in her.

Samson: We're all cyborgs these days anyway. I got a pump, dad has an eye.

Alex: But when do we stop being... you know...

Samson: Dad would say when we stop valuing another life over material goods. He'd better be far away from all of this.

Alex: I don't know why he'd come in to a parade like today.

Samson: He wouldn't. He wouldn't. He hates it. Why did Lee miss me?

Alex: Don't worry about that. You need to get out of here.

Samson: This is just the beginning. It only gets worse before it can even begin to get better.

Alex: I know what we signed up for. Go. She needs you. Before the Inspector-General gets back.

Scene 8

Yuri is doctoring Mamar. He is installing cybernetic enhancements with AI Ganymede to address the burns.

Polyta: Ganymede, cut down three millimeters at twenty three degrees.

Ganymede: Three millimeters cut at twenty three degrees.

Polyta: Ganymede, cut two millimeters proximally at ninety degrees from either end.

Ganymede: Two millimeters cut at ninety degrees. Two millimeters cut at ninety degrees.

Polyta: Ganymede peel back the right skin flap.

Ganymede: Right skin flap open.

Polyta: Ganymede, insert the RFID chip.

Ganymede: RFID chip in place.

Polyta: Ganymede, replace the skin, and seal.

Ganymede: Wound cauterized.

Polyta: Ganymede shut off

Ganymede: Power down.

Polyta: Every decade, it's another new contraption meant to ease our life. Every day we gather more data, supposedly to cure. But I remember my mother telling me about the Syphilis experiments. If our government would do that. Well. I wonder about the incentives we have in place. Do they help or harm us, truly? A chip this patient never asked for is locked beneath the skin forever. And he'll be paying for it too. At least it will be tacked onto the debt toward Our Blessed Cathedral. I'm getting too old, Yuri.

Yuri: You did well. Surgery is more mechanical these days, yes. But that makes it more accurate, as you well know.

Polyta: *tongue in cheek* And when the robot rebellion comes?

Yuri: If that would happen, we are probably already there. Wouldn't that make sense with the catastrophe's the planet has faced in the past? Technology must advance to properly support humanity, and our fleshy-meat-bags are not suited to meteoric impacts on our lifestyle. So we would need to protect the most important part of ourselves.

Polyta: If you start on your goddamn simulation theory again, I'm walking out and you can finish up.

Yuri: The Golden Ratio is everywhere.

Polyta: You've told me.

Yuri: There's nothing odd about the lack of conscious life anywhere else in the universe?

Polyta: Nothing we can recognize, which opens up more possibilities.

Yuri: And those possibilities haven't taken us over or anything?

Polyta: Ooooh maybe they're already here.

Yuri: They are!

Polyta: I've had it with your conspiracies doctor.

Yuri: They are they are!

Polyta: You can't prove a thing. And this is your last warning.

Yuri: You're engaged, you can't stop now.

Polyta: Watch me.

Yuri: Come on, you don't think the sudden change of Patriarch wasn't odd? A bug in the system!

Polyta: Or he was doing a terrible job of keeping the rabble in line and got replaced, huh?

Yuri: So boring.

Polyta: I'm getting a chocolate chia, do you want one?

Yuri: So boring.

Polyta: It's good for you.

Yuri: I'm offering you not just other worlds but other universes. And you go for a bunch of nuts.

Polyta: A bunch of seeds. He's supposed to be out in ten.

Polyta exits. Yuri is left alone.

Yuri: He's supposed to be out in ten. You know, time was that would be difficult. But now, we just use these living machines, grown for your regeneration. They aren't machines. But no one wants to admit that either. Ah, but your eye. Those are more difficult, and require an artist to thread all the veins and make sure the rods and cones are laude out properly. It's funny how many red cones we need compared to the blue. Maybe we are actually bloodthirsty animals who only see red. *pause* It would be a shame if that passion was the only thing that made us different from Ganymede. It's all a matter of perspective, what truly is the Good, in the end? Oh, but I'd better hurry. *Yuri gets to work, lights out.*