

ASPIRATIONS OF ECCENTRICITY

Written by

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INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, CRAMPED PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY

A hand reaches over a pristine white surface holding a spoon. The hand flicks downward and a glob of baked beans drops onto the surface.

JAMES (27) stares at the beans, breathing in a sequence of small huffs. His well-worn jumper is frayed at the sleeves where he's been picking at it.

After a moment, he lifts his camera. He clicks the shutter and lowers it again. He glances down and grimaces at the image on the small camera screen.

DESK

James sits at a small computer desk in the corner of his disorganised studio. Books and photography props are piled haphazardly on shelves.

On his computer; the beans centred on the digital canvas.

James mashes the keys of his keyboard one-by-one, with complete indifference. The word "Beans" appears.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, MEETING ROOM - DAY

The yellowing vertical blinds across the windows are stained with old tobacco, vape chemicals and a splash of coffee. The carpet tiles are worn to the mat.

A can in the middle of a teak board-room table has James' design wrapped around it. EXECUTIVES ruminates on the design.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

Is it... beany enough?

EXECUTIVE

Hmm. I know what you mean.

James sits hunched at the end of the table away from the executives. He couldn't care less about beans.

YOUNG EXECUTING

Maybe it's the arrangement of the beans?

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

Hmm. Maybe.

EXECUTIVE

What if... it was just a single bean?

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE raises his eyebrows in consideration.

YOUNG EXECUTIVE  
Juice, or no juice?

EXECUTIVE  
Good question...

A teacart rattles down the corridor outside the room.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE  
(definitively)  
Juice. It's not beans if there's no  
juice.

The executives nod in agreement.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, CRAMPED PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY

James' hand reaches over the white surface holding the spoon.  
He drops a single bean onto the surface.

He stares at it.

DESK

On his computer screen; the bean, sitting in a small pool of  
bean juice. He mashes the word "Beans" into the keyboard,  
then positions the cursor under the bean.

He types: "\*serving suggestion".

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - NIGHT

A jet of spray paint sweeps across the surface of a window.

A HOODED FIGURE steps back from the sodium-streetlight-  
drenched window to admire the work: A pirate stood atop a  
pile of men in suits. The pirate's sword is a spray can.

A siren WHOOPS.

The figure bolts into the shadows.

The police car's tyres scuff the curb as it pulls up. PC  
FRANKS, a gym bro in a police uniform that's straining to  
contain him, hauls his immense body from the car.

He looks up and down the street. Nothing. He glances at the  
window, purses his lips and nods in appreciation.

He peers all around, then pulls out his phone to take a selfie with the graffiti pirate. He returns to the car and picks up the radio.

PC FRANKS  
This is Franks.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
You got him?

PC FRANKS  
Nah, he's scarpered.

PC FRANKS scans the street again.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
What was it this time?

PC FRANKS  
Pirate.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
Nice. We'll add it to the collection.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The hooded figure closes the front door gently and slumps against it. Even though some lamps are on in the apartment, the blue lights of the departing police car flash against the warehouse-conversion brickwork.

The figure reaches up, threads hanging from his frayed cuffs. James pulls the hood back from his head.

A paint-flecked radio is playing in the corner of the room. He switches it off, then goes to the bathroom to wash the spray-paint residue from his hands.

He drops the towel to the floor as he enters the bedroom, flicks the light off and flops onto the bed, lit by the moonlight streaming through the curtainless window.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

James hasn't moved, but is now lit by the morning sun.

JAMES  
Ugh.

He drags himself up.

INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - LATER

He's changed into another jumper and attempts to flatten his unkempt hair into a more acceptable scruffy pile as he walks the corridor, flanked by huge warehouse windows on one side and his neighbours' apartments on the other.

As he passes his neighbour's door, it springs open. GLORIA PAPADI (80s) struts out and stands arms-crossed in the corridor: A formidable entity in a drifting floral muumuu that floats about her with a will of its own.

GLORIA

Lease states no noise after eleven.

Her Greek accent is diluted by years of speaking English. James responds over his shoulder, not breaking step.

JAMES

Sorry Mrs. Papadi.

GLORIA

I'll report you...

JAMES

Yes Mrs. Papadi. Sorry.

James turns a corner and descends the stairs.

GLORIA (O.S.)

Did your package arrive yet?

James pauses on the stairs.

JAMES

No, not yet.

GLORIA (O.S.)

I suppose you'll want me to take it for you?

JAMES

Yes please Mrs. Papadi.

James smiles to himself.

Gloria rolls her eyes and smirks.

GLORIA

No more noise!

She closes her door, hard.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - MORNING

An irate little man, JOHN BRATTS (50s), blusters at PC Franks while gesticulating at the graffiti on his corner shop.

JOHN

What are you doing about this?

Franks nods at a security camera above the shop.

PC FRANKS

Have you got any footage?

JOHN

Come on, you think they're real? I can barely pay the insurance with all the crime around - I'm not paying some office of suits for some useless blurry photos.

MARTHA LOVELL (50s) steps from the Kindred Spirits Greengrocers opposite carrying a crate of vegetables. She hollers at John:

MARTHA

Nice one John! Big improvement!

JOHN

Sod off Martha. Next time it could be your shop.

MARTHA

Maybe - or maybe they only target grumpy gits who sell stale old processed rubbish.

John's red face is set to explode.

James shuffles past them coyly. John barks at him:

JOHN

Hey, did you see who did this!?

James shrugs and continues down the narrow street between the tall, terraced houses; crudely converted into low-rent flats.

The ground floor of each house is a shop - most are boarded up with spiderweb cracks across the windows. James passes the black stain of a burnt-out bin on the pavement.

INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - EVENING

James trudges up the stairs. He approaches Gloria's door and it springs open. She stands in the corridor in front of him.

GLORIA

I had coffee with your mum today...  
She said you're still taking photos  
of fruit!?

Under his breath:

JAMES

Legumes technically...

GLORIA

Come in here.

INT. GLORIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

She drags him like an errant school child into her pokey apartment: Pink walls and exotic nick-nacks.

A portrait that is far too large for her small flat hangs on a wall: A buxom woman, naked, peering wistfully out of a window. She points at it.

GLORIA

That's me you know.

James winces.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

I was the artist's muse - he let me  
keep that one as a thank-you.

She steps around the room pointing at pictures and small sculptures.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

This is art - not photos of  
carrots.

JAMES

It's a job.

GLORIA

So was that...  
(points at painting)  
... for the artist.

JAMES

Yeah, well they probably didn't  
have a criminal record.

He tugs his frayed jumper sleeves down to cover his hands and grips them there.

GLORIA

Bah. Nobody cares about that.  
You're wasting your talent James...

James steps to the door.

JAMES

I gotta go Mrs. Papadi.

He passes through the door before she can protest. She sighs.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

James sits at his small kitchenette table. He shovels  
forkfuls of noodles into his mouth.

LATER

He slouches, expressionless on the sofa watching canned-  
laughter comedy on the TV.

He switches the TV off, drags himself from the sofa and  
switches on the radio.

EXT. RUBBISH PILE ALLEY - EVENING

Spray paint sweeps across a flat wall. James is in his hoodie  
again, staring intently as he forms the shapes.

He steps back and we see an image of a litter-strewn beach  
with a child playing. The painted litter blends seamlessly  
into the fly-tipped rubbish at the base of the wall.

The adjoining street flashes blue.

Panicked, James instinctively dashes to the street, then  
returns back into the dead-end alley. He catches his foot on  
a rubbish bag and topples towards the graffiti.

A small hand appears from the wall. It reaches out, grabs  
James' hoodie, and pulls him into the image.

The police car speeds past the end of the empty alley as  
disturbed cans and bottles roll to a stop on the ground.



## EXT. LITTER STREWN BEACH - SUNSET

James is on all fours. He clenches a handful of sand in his hand, then jumps to his feet. He scans around, confused.

The beach is a junkyard of abandoned white goods, demolition rubble and general waste. Waves smash flotsam against the junk. The tops of the piles glint blue briefly.

A SMALL BOY in a bright orange t-shirt runs off along the sandy paths between the scrap. James follows.

JAMES

Hey, wait!

The boy disappears into a looming jungle that borders the beach. James launches in after him, desperate not to lose sight.

He slaps leaves and branches away to clear a path. He steps through thick brush onto:

## EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - DAY

Bright sunlight stuns him as he steps onto a sandy dirt road along the beach front on the Greek island of Lefkada. Out at sea, wind-surfers speed past, skipping across the waves.

The beach is very clean compared to the one before. Greek signs on the shops and beach cafés have English translations in small letters.

The boy pads down the street. James pursues him past

## CAFÉ GLAROS

A small white-washed café with bleached plastic furniture on a terracotta-tiled patio. Parasols flutter in the sea breeze.

Gloria sits at a table with a frappé. She nibbles the corner off a large slice of baklava.

The boy sprints past the café. James spots Gloria and pauses for a moment, locking eyes with her. He's confused. She freezes, mid-nibble.

She bites through the phyllo pastry, which shatters into a mess of shards on the table.

James turns and bolts after the boy who's vanishing into the distance. Gloria quickly scoops the shards into her napkin before the breeze scatters them.

She looks to James fleeing, too late to call out.

James follows the boy across some pontoons and onto a small boat. He bursts through the small cabin door:

INT. SPACE STATION 93-LIMA

James enters a heavily damaged corridor. Once-pristine panels hang from their fastenings and the futuristic technology behind the bulkheads spill to the floor.

The lights flicker, plunging the corridor in and out of pitch blackness. The orange t-shirt flashes through the debris. James gives chase through another door into

INT. CHILD'S BEDROOM - DAY

James steps out of the wardrobe. The boy jumps up and down on the bed with joy.

Colourful drawings are pinned to the walls. Toys are posed on the shelves and some are spread on the floor. The boy jumps to the floor to start a mock battle with them.

James scans around the room.

JAMES

This is my room...

He turns and looks at a mirror. He sees himself in the reflection, wearing an orange Transformers t-shirt.

He looks down at himself, and is now wearing the t-shirt himself. The boy is gone.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(to self)

I remember this shirt.

He reaches around the side and pokes his finger through a small hole in the seam. He flexes his finger through it.

EXT. RUBBISH PILE ALLEY - NIGHT

James is sprawled across the rubbish in front of his painting of the beach, flexing his finger.

He awkwardly rises from the rubbish bags, checking himself for injuries. Contented, he stands.

He jogs from the alley, glancing each direction for the police. He takes one last look at the painting as he goes.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - NIGHT

James walks past the boarded up shops, corner shop and greengrocers. The streetlights exaggerate the darkness of the unlit crevices and shadows.

Gloria peers down at the street through a slit in her curtains. James doesn't see her.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

James closes the door and takes off his hoody.

Gloria KNOCKS loudly on the door.

James quickly turns off the radio.

JAMES

Sorry Mrs. Papadi.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

He sighs and glances around the apartment like he's about to get a room inspection. He takes a breath and opens the door.

Gloria stands there; curlers and pink, tasselled nightdress. She looks perturbed.

GLORIA

That was you at the beach, wasn't it?

James mouth flops open, he instinctively goes on the defensive.

JAMES

No - I've been here -  
(points to radio)  
- listening to music.

Gloria reaches forwards, grabs his hands and shows him his spray-paint-stained fingers.

GLORIA

No you haven't.

JAMES  
(fake laughs)  
Oh, that - I was decorating  
earlier.

Gloria glares at him. She's no fool.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
You knew?

GLORIA  
I'm old - I'm not an idiot. Like I  
said - you're talented.

She stands there a second.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
Well, are you going to leave an old  
lady out in the corridor?

JAMES  
Uh...

LATER

Gloria is seated on one of James' chairs in the kitchenette.  
He hands her a mug of tea. She inspects it and rubs a water  
mark from the side with her thumb.

GLORIA  
Who was that boy?

JAMES  
He was... me. I think. From when I  
was younger.

GLORIA  
I see. Then you've been to the Veil  
before.

JAMES  
I don't think so... Wait, what's  
the Veil?

GLORIA  
It's where you were. It's a place  
between imagination and reality  
where we muses do our work.

JAMES  
What!?

GLORIA

Muses. It's where we go. Mingle.  
Record and curate our stories so we  
can inspire artists and creatives.

JAMES

I'm not a muse...

GLORIA

Not now perhaps, but it seems like  
you once were.

JAMES

Uh, well, my little sister used to  
make up stories. Some were based on  
me.

Gloria smiles and finishes her tea.

GLORIA

Well, I guess I'd better give you  
the tour.

She reaches out to grab his arm. He isn't quick enough to  
pull away.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Close your eyes and imagine  
yourself sitting in my café on the  
beach.

INT./EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - CAFÉ GLAROS - DAY

Gloria and James sit at the cheap plastic table. He looks the  
same, but Gloria wears a breezy lightweight number.

Gloria gestures with two fingers to an ANCIENT MAN in a loose  
white shirt behind the counter, then points to the beach. The  
man nods and hefts himself from his stool.

He hobbles over with two ice cream cones that are already  
dripping from the heat. They each take one and Gloria leads  
James to the beach. She looks down into some rock pools.

Each puddle is a window into fantasy: Bright characters dance  
and play in one; another depicts soldiers on a boat, prepared  
for a coastal invasion.

GLORIA

We each have our own way to  
remember stories here. Personally,  
I keep mine in picture frames.

She takes a deep breath and looks out to the ocean.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
Makes it easier to see them when  
the tide's in.

James looks up at the sea, then smiles.

Gloria and James walk along the front. Gloria stops beside a nondescript, tan, mid-range car and pops the last of her cone into her mouth. She gestures to the other door and gets in.

Gloria drives James into a residential area of small, tired homes with scruffy gardens and chicken wire fences. She pulls into the driveway of a small bungalow, uncomfortably fast.

James grips the seat.

The faded, rusty, blue garage door opens on its own like a gaping mouth. She accelerates in. James gasps.

DARKNESS.

MORE DARKNESS.

Red, yellow and orange lights in the distance.

The colours burst over them as they drive down

EXT. BUSY MARKET STREET, BANGKOK - NIGHT

Bright coloured lights illuminate the tall buildings of a bustling market street. Gloria swerves her sensible car deftly between meandering rickshaws.

She scans the street, searching. Her eyes find her target - a delivery microvan starts moving from its parking spot on the street. Gloria accelerates and swerves over.

Engines start screaming around her - others with ambitions for that spot. She commits and heads straight for it. Some engines reduce to a grumble, but one persists - a rickshaw with more decorations than a carnival float.

She swerves violently, cutting it off, and skids to a stop in the small parking spot. The rickshaw HONKS and speeds past.

Gloria casually gets out of the car as James, panting, extracts his fingers from the newly-formed holes in the car seat upholstery.

EXT. BUSY MARKET STREET - POSTER SHOP - SAME

They pass a street-side shop selling printed t-shirts and posters. Gloria stops and flips through posters. She shows one to James: A shark swims at James, baring teeth.

James freezes for a moment, then flips to the next poster - cutesy bears and unicorns bounce around the image.

INT. HOOKAH BAR - SAME

Gloria leads James through a noisy, smoke-filled hookah bar, past alternating groups of suited business men and university students sitting in booths.

She stops at the bathroom doors, looks at them, then at James.

GLORIA

Some doors lead to another space in the Veil. Some take you back to reality.

She taps on the doorframe above the men's bathroom door, on a carved square symbol with a dot in it.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

By convention, doors with this symbol take you back to reality.

She pushes through the other door and they step into

INT. WESTFIELD SHOPPING CENTRE, LONDON - DAY

A brightly lit, atrium-style shopping centre with polished floors and big glass shop fronts. Muzak, conversation drone and the incessant whir of escalators fill the air.

GLORIA

Before they marked the doors, people just had to remember which doors led back to reality.

She joins a queue at a doughnut stand.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Unfortunately some muses went back to reality thinking they were still here, and caused some 'incidents'.

James smiles.

JAMES  
Hence the markings.

She nods.

GLORIA  
Hence the markings!

The server hands over a bag of chocolate doughnuts. Gloria takes it and backs through an access door marked 'PRIVATE' - a familiar route.

INT./EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - CAFÉ GLAROS - DAY

They enter through the kitchen door and resume their seats at the table outside. Gloria splits the doughnuts between them. The Ancient Man sits half-asleep at the counter.

Gloria tears off a large piece of doughnut and pushes it into her mouth.

The plates RATTLE on the table and glasses CLINK behind the counter. Gloria rolls her eyes. James looks around anxiously.

GLORIA  
Mou eprikse t'arxidias!

The Ancient Man drops from his stool behind the counter. He goes to the side of the building and returns hauling an old hospital privacy screen.

As he positions it at the side of the patio, a two-metre diameter white SPHERE erupts from the ground about thirty metres away. It rises on a thin silver stalk.

The man retrieves another screen to block the sight of it from his patrons.

James stands and peers around the screen. Hundreds of small apertures open on the Sphere and glinting silver tentacles extend from each. They reach into rock pools on the beach.

James looks back at Gloria.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
Progress!

She crams the last, large piece of doughnut in her mouth and munches on it while making a point of folding her arms and facing the other direction.

She turns back to continue her rant through chewed doughnut.



GLORIA (CONT'D)  
 They think they can take our ideas  
 and present them directly to  
 creators. It doesn't work like  
 that!

She throws her arms out wide as she speaks, then turns away  
 in a huff.

She turns back, bringing her hands together to make a point.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
 You need muses to curate the ideas.  
 Explore them. Live them.

She drops her hands to the table in a THUD as she turns away.

A loud CRASH snaps them back to

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

James stirs from the daydream. Gloria is already standing  
 peering through his window at the street below.

James gets up to join her as the CRASHES continue. He sees  
 bottles flying down from above, smashing on the street by the  
 abandoned shops.

A cathartic SCREAM screeches out from above. They twist their  
 heads up to look. Gloria sighs.

GLORIA  
 Loud noises or touch can snap you  
 back to reality. Or a neighbour's  
 blaring radio...

James glances at his radio.

JAMES  
 Oh.

Gloria trudges to the door as blue light paints the street  
 outside. She politely covers a yawn with her hand.

GLORIA  
 We'll chat more tomorrow.

EXT. ROOFTOP BALCONY - SAME

LAUREN (27) stands on a small rooftop balcony that's recessed  
 into a roof in the terrace. She's holding an empty bottle.  
 Her eyes are red and her hair ruffled.

She backs away from the edge and drops onto a fold-up seat as PC Franks climbs out of his car below.

She's numb. Her hand drops down, releasing the bottle, which rolls across the paving slabs. It CLINKS into one of the potted plants dotted around this tiny oasis among the roofs.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - MORNING

James exits the front of his apartment building on a sunny, but cool morning. He shuffles past the corner shop.

John is out early, sweeping up the broken glass on the street. Two LOCALS sit at a tiny rickety table, watching and drinking cheap machine coffee from his shop.

INT. KINDRED SPIRITS GREENGROCERS - CONTINUOUS

Martha catches sight of John through the window. She smiles warmly.

She steps back into the shop. Wonky organic veg is displayed in recycled wooden crates on shredded paper. Pretty chalk boards above each display prices.

She grabs a broom and heads out to join him.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

As she steps out and looks up; her pleasant smile drops into one of horror.

MARTHA

You cannot put that up there!

John is hunched over, sweeping shards into a dustpan. He cranes his neck to see what she's pointing at:

A small sign in his window reads: "Organic Food".

JOHN

(defensive)

Yes I can. I got some organic loaves in.

Martha's mouth drops open, then snaps shut. She spins on her heel and marches back into her shop.

The Locals struggle to hide their smiles behind their small plastic cups. John grunts and continues.

James passes. Hustling becomes jogging as he checks the time on his phone.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, MEETING ROOM - DAY

A matching set of threadbare beige seats have been arranged facing a portable pull-down projector screen.

ANIL PANDYA, 30s, a tryhard in a tailored shirt and brogues, points a remote at the projector on the meeting table.

A slide whooshes across the screen with his only name and job title: "Solutiongineer".

He sweeps his hands out in front of himself, preparing the watching Executives for a mind-blowing revelation.

ANIL

'A'...  
           (pregnant pause)  
 'I'.

He smiles and nods.

James raises a sceptical eyebrow and glances around the room. The Execs grin giddily in anticipation, faces lit by the glow of the light reflecting from the screen.

LATER

The teacart rattles past the room.

ANIL (CONT'D)

... all made ...  
           (pause)  
 ... by A.I.

The Execs stand and clap at Anil and an image on the screen of a family, sitting around a dinner table enjoying a meal.

Big Boss Exec looks back at James, hunched in his seat.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

Isn't that great!

JAMES

Uh, well, it's not quite right, is it?

Big Boss Exec stops clapping and frowns.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

What do you mean?

JAMES

The reflections, the shadows...

Big Boss Exec squints at the screen.

James drags himself up and squeezes between the chairs to the screen. He points.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Here the shadow is from the right,  
but here it's from the left.

Big Boss Exec looks closer. Anil squirms.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And it looks like there's a car  
reflected in his glasses... There's  
steam coming from the food, but  
also the wine...

ANIL

It's not perfect - but what is?

Anil smiles dismissively.

EXECUTIVE

These little things can easily be  
fixed up with a bit of editing.

JAMES

(diffidently)

Yes, but, you could set up this  
scene pretty easily and photograph  
it...

ANIL

This technology is getting better.  
Every. Single. Day.

Big Boss Exec ponders and nods.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

Good work, Anil.

Anil grins a beaming smile. James continues to inspect the image until Anil grabs the remote and clears the screen.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - NIGHT

James shakes a spray can violently, the pea clashing and rattling around inside the can. He surveys a section of empty wall ahead of him.

He presses the nozzle: the paint fizzes and splutters out.  
He sighs and tosses the can back into his bag.

INT. GYM-A-DAY 24 HOUR GYM - NIGHT

An EXHAUSTED NURSE, 25 and still in her scrubs, plods over to the bench-press bench and lays down. Her eyes shut and her head flops to one side, instantly asleep.

On a treadmill, a tanned and sinewy MIDDLE MANAGER, perpetually close to a heart attack, wears a headband and Fitbit. He squirts premium protein shake into his mouth.

The rest of the well-appointed gym is empty, except a pasty, unathletic GYM ATTENDANT who carries a basket of used towels at arms-length from the changing room.

EXT. GYM-A-DAY 24 HOUR GYM - NIGHT

James walks the alley next to the gym, lit by the fluorescent lights shining out through the big windows. He turns a corner and steps cautiously to a small shadowy alcove in the wall.

Lauren leans against the inside of the alcove, a full gym bag at her feet. She sees James approach and pushes herself up to standing, hands in pockets.

JAMES

Where's Dev?

Lauren stands speechless for a second, then composes herself. She looks down at her body and then back at James.

LAUREN

He's not here is he...? You want something or not?

James looks up and down the alley then steps closer.

JAMES

Yeah. Ultramarine.

He looks at Lauren expectantly.

She slides the gym bag over to him with her foot.

He squats down and unzips the bag. It's full of spray paint cans. He rummages around, using his phone torch to light the labels so he can read them.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I... I don't think you've got one.

Lauren bends down and picks up the bag by the strap. She swings it over her shoulder and closes the zip.

LAUREN

Come with me.

As she starts walking away, STEROID STEVE comes down the alley from the other end. He jogs up to them, reaching into his pocket.

He pulls his wallet out and rifles through the notes.

STEROID STEVE

You got 'roids?

LAUREN

(casual)

No, you want the other guy.

STEROID STEVE

Fuck.

Steve shoves his wallet back into his jeans and returns along the alley, peering into dark alcoves and shady corners.

Lauren continues, James at her heels.

INT./EXT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - NIGHT

Lauren unlocks the front door of a small art supplies shop. She flips open the alarm pad cover and types in the code. A blinking red light turns green.

James follows her in as she walks to a display of spray paints. He covers his head with his hood and shuffles further inside.

JAMES

What if someone sees us?

LAUREN

Nobody cares.

She returns with an ultramarine spray can and hands it to him. He looks back at the display.

JAMES

Won't they notice it's missing?

LAUREN  
Nobody cares.

James quickly pulls the pre-counted cash from his pocket and stuffs the can into the pouch of his hoodie.

JAMES  
Kinda defeats the purpose if I have to come into the shop to get it...

Lauren glares.

LAUREN  
I could put it through the till if you like?

JAMES  
No! Sorry. Where *is* Dev anyway?

Lauren shifts her eyes uncomfortably.

LAUREN  
Not here.

James doesn't want to linger. He nods and jogs from the shop, vanishing into the night.

INT./EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - CAFÉ GLAROS - DAY

James steps inside the café and peeks around looking for Gloria. The Ancient Man shrugs.

He steps outside as Gloria stomps indignantly down the street. She's carrying a box piled high with picture frames.

GLORIA  
They've invaded my bloody house. Those... Things.

She dumps the box down behind the counter. The Ancient Man opens his mouth to speak, but thinks better of it.

Gloria drops into a seat at a table outside, flustered and sweating. James takes a seat beside her.

JAMES  
The robots?

GLORIA  
Some of us call them dandelions - but I think that's too nice a name.

She taps anxiously on the table then draws in a deep breath through her nose. She blasts it out through her mouth and springs up from the table.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Come on.

James jumps up and follows. She leads him to the small toilet at the back of the café.

She steps inside the tiny cubicle, beaconing him in. He warily enters, squeezing in in-front of her.

She shuts the door. He looks at her, confused.

She opens the door again and they step out onto

EXT. CRANE ARM, NEW YORK - DAY

Gloria marches along the giant arm of the crane, two-hundred feet above the busy street below. Wind whistles through the bright yellow struts. Gloria yells over the wind.

GLORIA

It took me twenty years to find  
that one. You have to shut the door  
first!

James is dizzy from the height, but stumbles after her, gripping each strut until his knuckles go white.

JAMES

What happens if I fall here?

Gloria stops and looks down. She strides back so he can hear.

GLORIA

The 'rules' all apply here,  
otherwise your brain wouldn't  
accept it and the whole illusion  
would unravel.

She grabs his hand and drags him forward.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

You can't die here though. You'd  
fall and when you... you know, you  
wake up in the real world -

She glances back at him with a smirk.



GLORIA (CONT'D)  
- with a strong desire to find  
clean underwear.

Gloria hops off the end of the crane arm onto the roof of a brick-built apartment building. PARKOUR FREERUNNERS leap down, bound and tumble past them, then dive off the roof.

She pushes through clothes on washing lines to the roof access door. James pads after her.

They pass through the door to

EXT. TIKAL MAYAN STEP-PYRAMID, GUATEMALA - DAY

Gloria exits the shrine at the top and starts descending the steep stone stairs one-by-one, lifting her dress to her knees. James gazes out across the surrounding jungle in awe.

As they climb down, enthusiastic ARCHAEOLOGISTS in early twentieth-century clothing scurry past the other way.

JAMES  
Where are we going?

Gloria stops and sits to take a break, panting lightly.

GLORIA  
We're going to see The Wayfarer.

An Archaeologist stops and turns, staring at Gloria for a moment before returning up the pyramid.

JAMES  
The Wayfarer?

Gloria smiles and leans back, making herself comfortable while surveying the view.

GLORIA  
Do you think animals daydream? You think a deer, in a field, munching on grass, imagines a different reality to what's in front of it?

JAMES  
I mean, I had a dog that used to twitch in it's sleep, so I guess he was dreaming?

She shakes her head and looks out to the horizon.

GLORIA

I'm not talking about unconscious dreams. I'm talking about imagination!

JAMES

I guess I never really thought about it...

GLORIA

(definite)

No. Deer see, they decide, they do. But we have the power to imagine. Which means at some point in the evolution of mammals, someone or something was the first thing to imagine. That thing was an early human, and it was: The Wayfarer.

James stands for a moment, processing the information.

JAMES

Oh.

EXT. WAYFARER'S GUILD, DELFT - EVENING

A startled flock of pigeons takes flight from the glistening wet cobbles of the Netherlands city. James looks up in awe at the impressive merchant's house before them.

Ornate brickwork in multiple colours forms columns and cornices around the doors and windows, lit by the setting sun. A brass plaque reads: "The Wayfarer's Guild".

INT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - CONTINUOUS

James closes the large oak door with a muffled THUD that echoes through tall wood-panelled hallways adorned with vibrant portraits.

The deep, mellow hum of a cello swells in the living room and fills their ears. A sombre, tragic piece.

In the room, the WAYFARER perches on the edge of a buttoned leather wing back chair astride a polished cello that flashes reflected light from the lamps and fixtures.

The Wayfarer (70s) has the sinewy, brawny features of someone who's survived the wilderness, but wears a tailored, handsome suit.

James and Gloria step into the room, their noise muted by the dirge. They stop for a moment, then Gloria interrupts.

GLORIA  
Wayfarer, we have come to...

His bow clatters on the floor.

WAYFARER  
Oh, goodness. Sorry, I didn't hear you come in.

He reaches down and picks it up. He inspects the frayed hair splaying out from the bow's frog. He takes a pair of trimming scissors from a side-table and cuts them away.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)  
I know why you're here...

He sighs and places the bow across his lap. He turns and gazes through the window.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)  
... but I can't help.

Gloria frowns.

GLORIA  
But, you built this place.

WAYFARER  
I cannot tell muses how they should or shouldn't do their work.

GLORIA  
But they're stealing our ideas.

WAYFARER  
Have they hurt anyone or gotten in your way?

GLORIA  
They've invaded my house!

The Wayfarer sighs.

WAYFARER  
They have a... unique way of communicating ideas. It's not my place to say it's wrong.

He stands, placing the cello and bow to one side, and walks into

INT. WAYFARER'S GRAND OFFICE - LATER

Gloria and the Wayfarer sit in big leather chairs facing a fireplace. The light dances on their faces.

James wanders the room, peering at items from famous old stories on the shelves. He can't resist giving an old oil lamp a rub. When nothing happens, he cautiously peers inside.

James moves to the fireplace and runs his fingers around a decorative circular emblem in the middle of the mantelpiece. The Wayfarer watches him.

WAYFARER

Most people think it's a dreamcatcher.

JAMES

It isn't?

WAYFARER

No. Did she tell you my story?

James looks at Gloria quizzically, then back at the Wayfarer, shaking his head.

The Wayfarer shifts to make himself comfortable.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

I was starving and near death...

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

YOUNG WAYFARER is gaunt and slumped against a tree. He's wearing crude clothing and his shaggy hair hangs in greasy clumps across his face.

He wheezes while staring out at the shallow, meandering river a few meters in front of him. Ripples spread across the water as fish suck insects from the surface.

WAYFARER (V.O.)

It's like they were taunting me. I envied and loathed them.

The Young Wayfarer's eyes droop shut.

WAYFARER (V.O.)

My mind was spinning, and a gnawing pain gripped every muscle in my body.

INT. WAYFARER'S GRAND OFFICE - EVENING

The Wayfarer strokes his throat to sooth it from his remembered pain.

WAYFARER

I pictured myself standing in the river.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

The Young Wayfarer stands frail and tottering as the water flows past him. The world around him is slightly blurry.

He thrashes and grasps desperately in the water as the slender fish dart and slip through his fingers. His face shows his pain and despair.

WAYFARER (V.O.)

In my frustration, I plunged my hands deep into the water.

The Young Wayfarer plunges his hands in. The fish dodge through his fingers.

WAYFARER (V.O.)

Each time a fish evaded me, my fingers... grew, to cut off their escape. Tendons webbed between my fingers to form a crude net and eventually I closed my hands around a fish.

We see fleshy tendons growing between his fingers underwater.

When the Wayfarer pulls his hands from the river. A fish thrashes in a basket made of loosely interwoven twigs in his completely normal hands.

TREE

The slumped Young Wayfarer opens his eyes. The world isn't blurry now.

He fashions a basket from twigs and stumbles into the water.

He lifts the basket from the water and rips a fish from it, tearing into it with his teeth as the basket floats away.

INT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - EVENING

The Wayfarer gazes proudly at the emblem.

JAMES  
It's the fishing basket...

The Wayfarer nods.

James sits down on a small stool by the fire.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Maybe we can talk to them -  
whoever's controlling the  
dandelions...

GLORIA  
Whoever they are, they don't want  
to be found. We've looked!

The Wayfarer SLURPS loudly from a cup of tea.

JAMES  
You said the rules all apply here.  
So, what are these dandelions made  
of? Where did the bits come from?

GLORIA  
The Veil is enormous. There are  
thousands of places with technology  
in them.

JAMES  
Like the space station?

The Wayfarer pops his eyebrows. Gloria frowns at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It looked, torn apart...

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, MAIN OFFICE - DAY

The Executives and James are crowded into a cubicle, where Anil sits smugly at his desk. A barren desk, featuring only a large monitor, mouse and keyboard - all neatly aligned.

On his screen are two images side-by-side, both featuring a lady holding a pack of New Vale butter, touching fingertips with a small fairy.

ANIL  
The one on the left is the  
original. The right, made  
completely by A.I.

JAMES

But, it still has all the issues I pointed out before - the shadows...

ANIL

That's because we need a much bigger training set, and our computing power is severely limited here.

JAMES

Or we could hire models and set dressers...

ANIL

But this would be a one-off cost, and we'd get all these great images for free.

JAMES

Free? How much are those computers going to cost to run and maintain? Or were you planning to power them with your ego?

EXECUTIVE

Hey! There's no need for that.

ANIL

No, it's OK. I do have a big ego - because I have so much confidence in this technology.

Big Boss Executive looks at James and shakes his head with disappointment.

INT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - DAY

A tiny bell tinkles as James enters the shop. He stomps over to a rack of craft board.

Lauren is at the till, pulling lengths of paper from the receipt machine to pass the time. She tears off a section, screws it up, and throws it over a free-standing bookshelf full of art books. It rustles as it falls down the back.

James sighs loudly as he looks for the right glue.

LAUREN

Bad day?

JAMES

This *guy* at work is trying to replace us with A.I. And it's all rubbish.

LAUREN

You mean generative A.I.? Yeah, it's all bollocks.

James pokes his from the back of the shop.

JAMES

Right!? And no one else seems to see it.

LAUREN

People think A.I. is smart because it produces images that are 'pretty close' - but they don't realise it'll never get much closer.

She carefully tears a long strip lengthways as she talks.

JAMES

Well, until they throw enough computers at it.

LAUREN

Not even then. All A.I. does is munge together existing images - other people's work. It doesn't understand what those images are or how the world actually works.

JAMES

Wont it though, one day?

LAUREN

I doubt it. Computers would need to understand life, emotion, physics - a whole host of things to compose even a vaguely convincing image.

She plaits the thin strips together.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

And even then they wont be able to come up with anything new. Just cut and paste other people's work - without giving them credit.

James places his supplies on the counter.



JAMES

You know your stuff.

LAUREN

I... knew someone who tried to use it a few times. It never worked right.

JAMES

Well, you've made me feel better!

She scans the items.

INT. SPACE STATION 93-LIMA

Gloria and James walk along a corridor as the lights flicker. The glossy wall and floor panels have been ripped off and the technological guts of the station spill out in front of them.

Gloria is wearing a space suit. James points at it.

JAMES

I thought you said we couldn't die here.

GLORIA

We can't, but I happen to be wearing my favourite dress in the real world.

James looks inside the panels.

JAMES

There are gaps here - things are missing.

The cables on the floor have been pushed away - either side of drag marks on the floor.

James follows them.

GLORIA

It's been decades since I've been here. I never liked it here, but it didn't use to be like this.

A GUNSHOT comes from a room down the corridor. It's followed by a CLATTER.

James and Gloria cautiously step forwards, following the drag marks into the room.

A crude sled made from a wall panel is piled-high with scrap metal pieces. A glass wall panel has cracks spreading from a bullet hole, and an old revolver rests on the floor.

JAMES  
Where did they go?

GLORIA  
Looks like they took the fast way  
back to reality.

She picks up a jeweller's eye loupe monocle from the floor between the revolver and the bullet hole.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
This isn't the person who made the  
dandelions.

JAMES  
How can you be sure?

GLORIA  
This is Dieter's monocle. He's got  
a little clockmaker's workshop here  
in the Bavarian district.

JAMES  
Why did he...

James gestures at the gun.

GLORIA  
Good question.

INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - MORNING

James leaves his apartment. He's clean shaven and wearing a fresh jumper, but his hair is still a matted nest.

He strides with purpose - a man on a mission.

He descends the stairs to the lobby. He opens his letter box and retrieves a couple of takeaway flyers. He locks his box and glances at the overflowing box next to it.

He pulls the wad of mail from the slot and returns back up the stairs.

He RAPS on Gloria's door.

He RAPS again.

JAMES

Mrs. Papadi, you need to empty your mail.

He lingers for a second, then places her mail on the floor. He heads back down stairs.

EXT. KINDRED SPIRITS GREENGROCERS - MORNING

There are small tables outside Martha's shop - each decorated with a lace tablecloth, a little plant pot and napkins in a handmade tray.

Martha hangs a sign: "Fresh coffee" in her window.

John bursts out of the corner shop, wagging his finger.

JOHN

You need a permit for those.

Martha grins smugly and grabs a letter from her counter. She hollers from her door, waving it.

MARTHA

Temporary license. Arrived this morning.

James strides past as John, now bright red, trudges back into his shop.

INT./EXT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - MORNING

James bounds up to the shop as Lauren unlocks the door. She steps inside and enters the alarm code.

JAMES

I need your help.

LAUREN

Just find what you need - I won't put it through the till.

JAMES

No - it's not that. Although Dev hasn't been getting back to me. Is he OK?

Lauren tears off a short strip of receipt paper and scrawls a number on it. She passes it to James.

LAUREN

Message me instead next time.

She says it coolly, then sits and starts scrolling her phone.  
James looks at the paper, then shoves it in his pocket.

JAMES

OK, cool. But that's not what I  
need you for. I need you to help me  
take a photo.

LAUREN

Pass.

JAMES

I want to prove that A.I. guy is  
wasting the company's money.

She looks up suspiciously from her phone.

LAUREN

How?

James smiles broadly.

EXT. OVERGROWN DERELICT SITE - DAY

A small patch of grass and brambles thrives beside an  
abandoned industrial building.

James leads Lauren through the tall grass. She's wearing a  
light floral dress, but her black ripped jeans and boots can  
still be seen underneath.

They approach a small table that has been staged: A pack of  
New Vale butter and a brightly coloured cut-out of a fairy,  
held up in the air by a thin wire extending from a bush.

He positions Lauren by the table to match Anil's A.I.  
generated image, which he holds in his hand.

He lines up his camera, then adjusts some clip-on flowers in  
the bush, so their fastenings can't be seen.

He tests the light on his hand, then sifts through other  
fairy cut-outs, until he finds one that matches the shadows  
from the sun. He swaps that one with the fairy on the wire.

Lauren inspects the original photo as he fusses with the  
camera.

JAMES

OK, now just lean forwards to touch  
fingertips and... Smile?

Lauren glares at him, then leans in to touch the fairy's finger. For a brief moment her solemn, expressionless face softens into an exquisite, heartfelt smile.

James snaps the shot.

Lauren's face drops back to her usual, hard look in an instant, and she steps away.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Wait, I need a few shots.

She's already unzipping the dress as she walks away.

LAUREN  
That's all you're getting.

James reviews the picture on his screen - it's perfect.

Lauren is out of sight, beside the industrial building. Her eyes are red and her lip quivering. She dabs at her eyes with a tissue.

INT. APARTMENT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

James passes Gloria's front door. The mail is still piled neatly on the floor, and light leaks out from under the door.

He gently KNOCKS on the door.

JAMES  
Mrs. Papadi?

He KNOCKS again and listens at the door, concern wrinkling his brow.

LATER

James stands in the corridor with PC Franks. They both watch through the open door to Gloria's apartment with looks of concern on their faces.

PARAMEDIC #1 kneels by Gloria, who sits motionless in her chair, staring into space. The Paramedic injects something into her arm.

PARAMEDIC #2 arrives with a carry stretcher and positions it on the floor in the room.

Paramedic #1 looks back at James in the corridor.

PARAMEDIC #1

She's very dehydrated. You probably saved her life.

PC FRANKS

(to James)

I've got your info, so you can head off now if you want.

JAMES

OK, thanks.

James shuffles along the corridor to his door.

PC Franks watches him leave. There's a smear of paint on the back of his James' hoodie. PC Franks frowns.

INT. DIETER'S CLOCKMAKER SHOP - DAY

James pushes open a wooden door with small, round, glass windows - like clock faces - in it. There's a CLICK and a clockwork music box above the door plays a tune.

James steps inside and the door shuts. Another clockwork mechanism resets the music box and rewinds its spring.

The narrow interior is precisely laid out, with evenly spaced clocks and watches on shelves. Each is labelled with a small engraved plaque. All the clocks tick in unison.

Each clock and watch face has characters on the hands and face, and a scene carved or engraved into the case.

Beyond the clocks and watches, elaborate clockwork dioramas show moving figures in a sword fight. In another they are dancing as a quiet tune tinkles away.

There's a faint SAWING sound from the back room. James steps carefully between the shelves and displays, into a little workshop filled with tools.

DIETER (40s) sits at a treadle fretsaw, cutting a piece of space station panelling into a small gear. His motions are fluid and mechanical.

Dieter's eyes flick up to see James, but then return to his work.

JAMES

Hello. Are you Dieter?

Dieter grunts in frustration and focuses on his work.

James stands patiently.

Dieter completes the small gear and slows the treadle to a stop. He places it on a tray with other clockwork gears.

On the wall is a shelf made of fresh wood that isn't varnished yet - unlike all other shelves in the shop.

Jam jars are attached to the underside of the shelf, and carved into the edge of the shelf in perfect lettering are the words: "klein", "mittel" and "groß".

He removes the "groß" jar and picks through the offcuts on the treadle table. He places the largest pieces into the jar. He does the same with the medium and small jars.

He wipes off the treadle, then places it and his stool neatly to one side. He corrects the crease in his shirt sleeve, tugs down his wool vest, and stands straight before James.

DIETER

Yes, I am Dieter.

JAMES

That was you in the space station, wasn't it.

Dieter shifts uncomfortably and casts a quick glance through the back window.

DIETER

(whisper)

Yes.

James looks at the jars and pieces of space station panelling waiting to be cut.

JAMES

Why?

Dieter shifts again, responding in a hushed voice.

DIETER

My usual supplier here. He's gone.

JAMES

Gone where?

Dieter shakes his head, lips tightly pursed shut.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Where was he - before?

Dieter shakes his head and looks through the window again. He darts over to James and whispers right into his ear:

DIETER  
Find the influencers.

JAMES  
(also hushed)  
Influencers?

Dieter looks, but doesn't answer.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Are they like, modern muses?

Dieter starts to look panicked. He waves James back to the front door.

As James walks past the shelves of clocks, a silver tentacle appears at the front window, peering in through the small panes.

The room starts RUMBLING. Dieter yells, pleading.

DIETER  
No. No more. Please!

The wall starts moving inwards, narrowing the shop by a few inches. The mechanism for the door gets crumpled and crushed, and crashes to the floor.

Dieter, miserable and sobbing, picks up the pieces and places them carefully in a pouch he makes with his wool vest.

DIETER (CONT'D)  
(tantrum)  
Go. Go. Go.

James squeezes out through the door as Dieter fruitlessly pushes back against the wall. It doesn't budge. Dieter drops to the floor sobbing.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, CRAMPED PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY

James is taking photos of a sprout on his little white board, lit with lights. He mists the sprout with water from a spray.

There's a lot of CONSTRUCTION NOISE coming from the corridor outside his studio. James cranes his neck around to peer out, and sees TECHNICIANS carrying server equipment.



He returns to his work, adjusts a light and rotates the sprout. He's about to take a shot when a Technician in overalls pokes his head through the door.

TECHNICIAN

Sorry mate, we're just wirin' up the new server room. We're gonna 'av to shut the power off.

JAMES

(sighs)  
OK... When?

The lights blink off.

TECHNICIAN

Sorry.

The Technician enters and unplugs his lights from the sockets.

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

Won't be long. We'll be done in a couple of hours.

The Technician nods with a smile, and leaves.

James lowers his camera and looks at the darkened stage.

EXT. KINDRED SPIRITS GREENGROCERS - DAY

James and Lauren sit at a beautifully laid up table outside. James drinks a latte from a cute hand-painted mug, while Lauren drinks coffee from a plastic cup.

JAMES

Someone else working the shop today?

Lauren glares at him: "Come on, really?"

JAMES (CONT'D)

(realising)  
No.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Nobody cares.

LAUREN

Nobody cares.

They sip their drinks.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

What about you though?

JAMES

Me? I'd love to be working right now!

He frowns.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wait, no - I wouldn't. But I can't anyway because my studio is out of power while they set up his stupid, pointless A.I. server farm.

LAUREN

They're going all-in then?

James shakes his head.

JAMES

It won't work.

John steps out of his shop. He removes a soiled brown paper tablecloth from one of the rickety tables outside his shop and replaces it with a new one.

He puts a plastic tulip in a glass in the middle of the table next to a bowl of sugar sachets. He turns to go back inside and spots Lauren.

JOHN

You can't drink that there! You've got to drink it outside my shop.

He points at a table.

LAUREN

It's a takeaway coffee...

JOHN

But she sells coffee, and you didn't get it there.

Martha walks past her doorway inside the greengrocers, carrying a crate of veg. She hollers through the door.

MARTHA

I don't mind. You can stay right where you are.

John huffs. He points at Lauren.

JOHN

You're banned from my store.

He storms back to his shop, stopping and turning as he reaches the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
For... Three days!

LAUREN  
What a...

She scrunches the empty cup in her hand.

James is tapping his spoon gently on his napkin, oblivious. She looks at him and he looks up.

JAMES  
Do you... know anything about muses?

LAUREN  
You mean like, from Greek myths?

JAMES  
No. Well, sort of. I mean people who inspire artists with their stories and ideas.

LAUREN  
Isn't that just... People?

JAMES  
Yeah, but... I don't know. It's weird.

She looks at him for a second, waiting.

LAUREN  
OK.

She picks up her bag and gets up. James follows after her.

JAMES  
(to Martha)  
Thanks!

He catches up to Lauren in a few skips.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's hard to explain.

LAUREN  
I shouldn't bother then.

JAMES  
No. Look.

He grabs her arm gently to stop her and they stand in the street.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
It's like I can go into a weird  
daydream - it's another world.

LAUREN  
Magic mushrooms?

JAMES  
No - I just go there.

LAUREN  
Uh-huh.

She continues walking and he stops her again.

JAMES  
Let me show you.

EXT. RUBBISH PILE ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

They walk into the alley. He kicks some rubbish to make space on the floor, then sits down.

LAUREN  
Gross.

JAMES  
Come on - it's best if you're  
sitting down.

She rolls her eyes and moves a clean-looking pizza box over in front of him with her foot. She sits, carefully avoiding touching anything.

He points at his litter-strewn beach graffiti.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Imagine that and close your eyes.

He grabs her hands and closes his eyes. She closes her eyes, humouring him.

Nothing happens for a few seconds, then James keels over and leans unnaturally against the wall, letting go of her hand.

She opens her eyes to a squint, then fully. She tilts her head, unimpressed.

LAUREN  
Dude.

She folds her arms and glares.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
I'm not buying it...

She stands, prodding him with her foot. James wakes up. He looks disappointed and confused.

JAMES  
It didn't work.

She leans in.

LAUREN  
I'm not buying it.

She turns and walks away. He hops up and follows.

JAMES  
It's like lots of different places  
joined together. And I saw my  
neighbour in there.

Lauren sighs, stops and turns to him.

LAUREN  
She's probably on your mind right  
now...

JAMES  
No - I met her in there before, and  
we spoke and remembered it when we  
both came out. She called it the  
'Veil'.

LAUREN  
OK.

LATER

They approach the art shop.

JAMES  
Oh, while I'm here - I need to  
stock up.

LAUREN  
Sure.

She starts unlocking the door.

JAMES  
Seriously though, what happened to  
Dev - he's never away this long.

She drops the keys, picks them up again and tries again.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
You must have really pissed him  
off... Did you break up?

She opens the door and turns around just inside, eyes red.

LAUREN  
He's dead.

She stares at James for a moment then shuts the door hard and locks it. She disappears to the back of the shop.

JAMES  
Shit.

James huffs a big sigh.

EXT. WALKIE-TALKIE BUILDING, LONDON - DAY

The tall, modern office building looms over James. The clouds scrolling above make it look like its reaching out over him.

The narrow street outside is grey and oddly quiet.

James pushes through the glass revolving entrance door.

INT. WALKIE-TALKIE BUILDING, LONDON - DAY

James steps through the unattended lobby into the elevator and hovers his fingers over the brushed aluminium buttons. He closes his eyes and pushes in. Floor eight.

The elevator ascends. As it clears the lobby, the elevator walls slide down, revealing a glass shaft. Each floor is its own world, stretching out to the horizon and up to the sky.

He passes up through Paris with INFLUENCERS (mid-teens) taking selfies in front of the Eiffel Tower; then an African Safari full animals and more Influencers with selfie sticks.

The Influencers wear trendy clothes and have pristine hair, or are scantily clad to show off their bodies. Many are holding up products as they shoot short video clips.

FLOOR EIGHT

The elevator stops at a conventional floor with corridors that seem to stretch on forever in every direction.

James steps out and cautiously moves down one corridor, surrounded by the murmur of one-sided conversations coming from the doors on each side.

Each room is a teen's bedroom, with an Influencer sitting at a desk in front of a ring light and computer. They're applying makeup or ranting about the wrongs in the world.

James shudders.

FLAP, FLAP, FLAP, FLAP.

SHAZ (15) walks out from a small lounge area filled with snacks and smoothies. Short shorts, oversized boyfriend hoodie and wearing thick socks inside her flip flops.

SHAZ

Hey-ya.

She says it disingenuously, like a regular catchphrase, drawing out the 'ya'.

She steps into the room next to James and puts on her spa-day headband ready to apply makeup.

James pops his head in through the door.

JAMES

Hey. Do you know anything about...  
dandelions?

SHAZ

No babez, that's more of a gamer  
thing.

JAMES

Oh.

He looks up and down the corridor and points both ways with his thumbs.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Are they here?

Shaz frowns and shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

SHAZ

No. Tenth floor.

She shudders and then composes herself before switching on her ring light and smiling at her screen.

A small silvery tentacle arches out of her desk and stabs into her phone. Images flash on the phone's screen. She moves her brightly coloured cuddly toy unicorn to hide it.

ELEVATOR

The elevator rises through the ninth floor. The elevator walls slide back up, blocking James' view, and the indicator light next to button ten blinks on.

The doors slide open and multicoloured light floods in.

TENTH FLOOR

James steps into a tall modern-gothic cathedral of concrete and aluminium. Coloured neon and LED signs form the shape of tall windows. The gargoyles are pop culture characters.

Lining the aisles are gold statues of gaming consoles on plinths, guarded by life-size replicas of a Halo soldier, Darth Vader and Batman.

BLEAK, 26, steps into the nave in front of a giant Balrog statue. Uggs, sweatpants and a loose black hoodie. His greasy hair leaks out from the hood and a gaming headset around his neck illuminates his face with cycling colours.

Bleak is followed by an ENTOURAGE of mid-twenties, scantily clad male Influencers. Their styled hair and athletic bodies a stark contrast to his own.

Bleak strides down the nave towards James and stops ten meters away. He reaches out and strokes his fingers up and down the spine of his FAVOURITE in the Entourage.

BLEAK

You're in the wrong place.

JAMES

Oh, uh, I'm trying to find out who made the dandelions...

Bleak's fingers pause briefly and then resume. His Entourage hasn't moved a muscle - they remain posing at his side.

BLEAK

Then what?

Bleak smirks. His fingers slide up and start massaging his Favourite's neck.



JAMES

Then what? Well, they're stealing  
muses' stories... Invading peaceful  
places in the Veil...

BLEAK

Stories don't belong to anyone. Nor  
does the Veil.

JAMES

Muses collected and curated those  
stories.

Bleak reaches up, running his fingers through his Favourite's  
hair, then grips and tilts his head back sharply.

BLEAK

The muses failed. They got lazy.  
Dandelions can get ideas out into  
the world in an instant.

JAMES

So it's you - you made them?

BLEAK

We're keeping up with demand for  
new content in a way the muses  
never could.

He smirks.

BLEAK (CONT'D)

Go take a look.

Bleak moves aside to one of the aisles followed by his  
Entourage. He gestures up the nave.

James takes one step and the Balrog statue lights up. Flames  
burst from it, filling the nave.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

James sits, wide-eyed, in his chair.

BLEAK (O.S.)

Ha ha ha! Loser.

Bleak's voice echoes and fades away.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

James moves to his shelves, which are filled with DVD cases. He pulls one, but the whole block of cases comes away in his hand. They've been glued together and hollowed out.

He opens the case on one end, which acts as a lid, and pulls out a spray paint can from inside. He shakes it and the pea rattles in the empty can. He shakes a few more.

EXT. RUBBISH PILE ALLEY - NIGHT

James stands at the end of the alley, where it doglegs to the right.

He sprays the end wall with an image of the tenth-floor gamer cathedral. Rainbow coloured light glows out from the neon and LED window shapes, catching the silhouettes of the statues.

The can he's using runs out. He tosses it and grabs another almost empty can from his bag. He continues with a new, different colour.

SMASHING and YELLING sounds come from the main street.

James pauses for a moment, casting a glance behind himself. He continues, finishing Batman's silhouette.

The noises get louder. He stops and throws the can into his bag. The bag rattles as he lifts it to his shoulder and he jogs to the end of the alley.

He peers out and sees Lauren, drunk and distraught in the street. She kicks a rubbish bin by the corner shop, denting it. She yells angrily, but not loudly, in her drunken state:

LAUREN

You cazt ban me from your szhop! Iz  
a stupiz szhop anyway.

James shakes his head and jogs over.

Lauren bunches up wads of receipt paper and uses a staple gun to pin them to the corner shop's window frames and sign.

James grabs her.

JAMES

Stop that, you're gonna get caught.

She glares at him.

LAUREN  
Iz you. Iz your fault I got  
bannened.

JAMES  
Shh.

She pulls out her lighter and points at him.

LAUREN  
Dozt Szhhh me!

She shoves him away and lights the receipt paper bunches on fire. They flash into flame.

JAMES  
What are you doing. Stop it!

He tries to pat the paper, but it's already burning intensely. The wood frame and sign above the window lick into flame too.

He looks down the street. Blue light flashes against the tops of distant tall buildings. He looks down at his hands - they're stained with paint.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Come on. Now.

He drags her down the street to his apartment building and bundles her in through the front door. She half-heartedly blurts out while barely resisting:

LAUREN  
Help! I'm being abductezd.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is dark, lit only with a lamp far from the windows. Lauren sits drinking a glass of water on a chair while James washes paint off his hands in the bathroom.

James comes back into the living room and checks the street below. A fire engine is parked in front of the smouldering shop front. PC Franks takes notes while inspecting the scene.

LAUREN  
It's not steampunk.

JAMES  
It's not what? Steampunk?

LAUREN  
Those were my last words to him.  
It's not steampunk.

JAMES  
Oh.

James moves gently to the sofa and sits.

LAUREN  
His latest hair-brained scheme was  
making metal flowers and fairies  
from old cogs, nuts and bolts, to  
sell on Etsy.

She stares at the floor.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
He said they were steampunk. I said  
it had nothing to do with steam. It  
was clockpunk at best.

She pulls out her phone and brings up a photo of one of the  
fairies. She shows it to James, still a bit wobbly.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
He got annoyed. He said everyone  
called it steampunk anyway, and we  
argued about it.

JAMES  
They look pretty cool.

LAUREN  
Yeah. They were.

James stares awkwardly at the floor.

JAMES  
There's a clockmaker in the Veil.  
He's having a pretty rough time of  
it.

LAUREN  
Huh. In your dreamland?

He sighs.

JAMES  
It's more than that. It's like a  
refuge for ideas.

LAUREN

So what do you do there? In your daydream?

JAMES

That's the weird thing. It's being... invaded, by these machines that steal stories.

LAUREN

Oof, that's deep.

She slurps her water.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I'd dream up a big gun. Blow 'em away.

She jerks her arm as if firing a big gun, sloshing the water in her glass.

JAMES

They're not aggressive for the most part. And then there are these creepy gamers...

LAUREN

(repeats)

I'd dream up a big gun. Blow 'em away.

She makes the same motion while grinning. He glances at her, she's starting to get tired now, but still drunk.

JAMES

They're hiding something.

THUD, THUD, THUD of heavy footsteps outside his apartment.

James shushes Lauren.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK on James' front door.

PC FRANKS (O.S.)

I've seen your record, James. There's fresh paint down there.

(pause)

Don't make this worse.

There's shuffling outside the door and the light from under the door darkens into shadow as PC Franks crouches down to try to peer under. His pen SCRATCHES on his notepad loudly.

THUD, THUD, THUD as PC Franks departs.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - MORNING

Martha and John look up at the burnt frontage of his shop.  
Martha shakes her head.

MARTHA

You shouldn't have trouble claiming  
this on insurance.

JOHN

What!? Claim for this? And send my  
premiums through the roof? No, no,  
no. I'll get Bobby to put some new  
boards up. I'll paint it myself.

Martha gives him a sideways look and rolls her eyes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Something simple. Traditional.  
Classy.

Martha turns and heads back to her shop.

MARTHA

Just claim on the insurance John.  
It's what it's there for.

JOHN

Pfft.

He stands imagining the elegant sign of his dreams.

EXT. WALKIE-TALKIE BUILDING - DAY

James stands on the eerily quiet street in front of the  
building. He stares up at it.

He walks around it, staring up, looking for anything unusual.

SCREAM from a narrow side alley.

James runs to the alley and sees a dandelion grappling a  
FEMALE MUSE wearing a business suit and heels.

This dandelion isn't rooted to the ground - it's tentacles  
draw it away and around a corner as it holds onto the  
flailing Muse.

James sprints after, but as he reaches the corner, the Muse  
saunters back around the corner, smiling. He stops and stares  
at her. The dandelion is nowhere to be seen.

The Muse walks away, unsteady as if wearing high heels for the first time. Her arms swing in an unusual motion - wafting from side-to-side. James catches up to her.

JAMES

Are you OK? I thought I saw a dandelion.

The Muse rotates her grinning head to face him. A new mouth appears above her grin, and it speaks in an incongruous, deep, sexy voice:

FEMALE MUSE

Yes. I'm fine.

As she speaks, the bottom grin slides down her neck and the teeth morph into a string of pearls.

James staggers backwards in shock. The Muse grins with her new mouth and wobbles away. James watches, open-mouthed.

INT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - EVENING

James strides through the living room. The large trees outside the window sway and rustle in the breeze.

He approaches the arch through to the office and sees the Wayfarer studying a large map that has been pinned to the wall. The map is parchment, but when the Wayfarer moves his hand the lines and markings scroll across it.

The sound of CRUMBLING STONE and TWISTING METAL comes from behind the house.

JAMES

Wayfarer?

The Wayfarer spins to look at him.

WAYFARER

Oh. James. Good to see you again.

The Wayfarer walks across the room to an open door on the far side and closes it. As he walks back, he adjusts the closed curtain so there are no gaps.

He returns to the map, then stops, looking at the curtain and then back at James.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

I'm reforming part of the Veil.  
It's not quite ready yet.

James steps up to the map.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

I've started tracking the dandelions. Just to keep an eye on them.

James looks at little icons of machines as they appear, move across the map, then disappear. He looks up at the Wayfarer.

JAMES

I think they've started taking muses.

The Wayfarer looks down at him, wide-eyed.

WAYFARER

Why do you think that?

JAMES

I saw it. When I went to see the gamers. At least, I think I saw it.

The Wayfarer sits at his grand, but functional desk in thought. James sits across from him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

A muse was screaming. Then I didn't see what happened, but she walked around the corner smiling.

He winces, trying to find the words.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But it was like a bad A.I. generated version of her.

The Wayfarer stares at him, eyes bulging.

James snaps his head to the map.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Can you see muses on that? Can you find Gloria?

They move to the map and the Wayfarer draws a person icon in the legend. The icon then appears across the map, with animated portraits by them. He scrolls around, searching.

The Wayfarer shakes his head.

James drops to the seat and starts picking at his cuffs.



JAMES (CONT'D)  
 You said it's not your place to say  
 if this is right or wrong... This  
 is wrong.

James stands up and confronts the Wayfarer.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
 Take me to the gamers.

The Wayfarer's mouth opens wordlessly. He glances at the map  
 and then back to James.

EXT. WALKIE-TALKIE BUILDING - DAY

James and the Wayfarer gaze up at the looming tower.

WAYFARER  
 Which floor?

JAMES  
 Ten.

INT. TENTH FLOOR

They stand in the multicoloured concrete cathedral.

WAYFARER  
 Don't worry - they won't be able to  
 see us.

They walk towards the end cautiously. James looks up warily  
 at the dormant balrog statue. There pass more pop culture  
 statues and gaming iconography.

At the end, they turn left and a large arch stands before  
 them. Above the arch is a giant Donkey Kong holding a barrel  
 above his head.

The Wayfarer takes a step forward. James puts his hand out to  
 stop him. He points down at the floor - images of Donkey  
 Kong's barrels have been inlaid into the polished floor.

James hops over one.

JAMES  
 Just in case.

The Wayfarer copies James' movement and hops over or skirts  
 around the barrels.

They enter a huge room with high vaulted ceilings. It's the same style as the cathedral and is also dimly lit with multicoloured lights.

At the ground level, Influencers hustle around carrying energy drinks, fast food and snacks. They vary from scantily clad, to wearing full cosplay costumes of characters.

Some walk, others ride electric scooters through the dark paths of this lower level. One glides through with a large pack of adult diapers strapped to her back.

A mezzanine level made of perforated aluminium gantries and platforms is suspended above. Staircases connect it to the lower level.

On the platforms, the GAMERS recline in their gaming seats, staring into the screens before them. The cycling coloured lights on their equipment swirls across their faces.

The Wayfarer gazes around in awe. James leads him through the lower level, dodging the Influencers who whizz past. Everyone is oblivious to their presence.

They step up onto a platform. Some computers are packed together, some higher platforms have grander arrangements and room for spectators. Bleak is above them with his Entourage.

On the screens, they can see a Gamer flying a drone through mineshafts at speed. It bursts from the mine entrance and drops a rock of ore into a receptacle.

A score in the corner of the screen ticks up and a smile flashes across the Gamer's mouth, faster than a blink.

Other screens show a gleaming factory being operated remotely by Gamers. On one screen they can see a burnt out building in the distance with a sign: "Avalon Metals and Gems".

WAYFARER

That's here, in the Veil!

The newer factory has conveyor belts of parts snaking into automated machines. At the end of the production lines, new Dandelions walk from the factory doors.

They step up to Bleak's platform. His screens show a Dandelion he's commanding. It's trampling through jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The Jungle is thick with vines and shrubs, crowded in the dappled shade of the dense canopy above. Mosquitos BUZZ, animals SCREECH, and birds CALL.

The dandelion bursts through a thicket and thunders through the shrubs and duff.

An injured EGYPTIAN PRIESTESS, 30s, hobbles ahead of it. She slides deftly down a smooth rock, protecting her swollen leg.

The dandelion leaps, wraps a tentacle around a sturdy trunk, and swings down in front of her.

She's trapped. The dandelion looms in. She hisses at it.

She turns her head away in defiance as four tentacles close in around her.

INT. TENTH FLOOR

Bleak's Entourage clap and jeer. His screen fades and the counter in the bottom of his screen ticks over to 100.

His Favourite steps in and straddles him, caressing his face.

BLEAK

Time to collect my centurion badge.

He grins, draws his fingers down his Favourite's chest, then shoves him off so he can stand.

James and the Wayfarer follow as Bleak leads his Entourage down from his platform. As he goes, Bleak glances up at golden platforms, even higher than his. He smirks.

Influencers part as Bleak swaggers through the lower levels.

He reaches a large and ornate door, decorated with snakes in an interwoven mesh. The doors slowly swing open before him as he beams broadly. The threshold is opaque and shimmering.

He turns to his Favourite, who is directly behind him. His whole Entourage smile sycophantically back at him.

He steps close and licks his Favourite's face, slowly up one cheek. Then he turns and crosses the threshold, disappearing as he is enveloped by the opaque surface.

As soon as Bleak is through, the smiles fall from his Entourage's faces. One of them puts their hand on the Favourite's shoulder comfortingly, offering him a tissue.

The Favourite takes it and wipes down his cheek.

James, enraged, skirts around them and launches for the threshold as the doors start to close.

WAYFARER

No!

No one else reacts to his call, and everyone is still oblivious to their presence. The Wayfarer dives after James as he vanishes through the threshold.

EXT. PRECIPITOUS CLIFF - NIGHT

James scrabbles to get purchase on wet rocks as a storm rages above him and violent waves dash against sharp rocks below.

The Wayfarer, reaching out from an opaque portal at the top of the cliff, tries to grab hold of James' hand.

INT. TENTH FLOOR

Sirens WARP throughout the huge vaulted room. Influencers back away from the Wayfarer's back and legs, which still protrude from this side of the threshold.

Gamers look down from their platforms, and hustle down to the lower level, grabbing replica swords and weapons as they go.

EXT. PRECIPITOUS CLIFF - NIGHT

A faint echo of the sirens can just be heard above the storm.

The Wayfarer stretches as far as he can, but he is still inches from James' hand.

His fingers elongate, stretching into thin tendrils - like they did by the river. They transform into basket twigs and wrap around James' wrist.

INT. WAYFARER'S GRAND OFFICE - EVENING

James and the Wayfarer stand in the office. James is saturated and panting. The Wayfarer looks down at him.

WAYFARER

It was a trap, like the big monkey with the barrels.

JAMES

We have to stop them!

WAYFARER

This is too dangerous for you.  
Thank you for opening my eyes. I  
will deal with it.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, CRAMPED PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - DAY

James trudges into his studio with a large "Do Not Bend" envelope. He settles at the desk and pulls a large print of his New Vale Butter photo from the envelope.

He reaches over to an arm lamp and pulls it closer, then switches it on. Nothing happens. He looks down at the plug the Technician removed from the wall.

James gets up and inserts the plug. The light blinks on and then off again with a POP.

JAMES

Ugh.

An ALARM sounds from an adjacent room.

MAIN OFFICE

He steps outside the studio, past a door marked "Servers". Red light flashes against the glass door panel.

Anil rushes over from the other side of the open plan office and peers through the door. He bursts inside and grabs a fire extinguisher as wisps of smoke emerge from the machines.

Big Bos Executive thunders across the office.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

What happened?

JAMES

I... I just plugged in my lamp.

Big Boss Executive frowns at James and huffs. He peers in through the server room door then turns to face the room.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE

Everybody out!

The main FIRE ALARM sounds just as he says it. The OTHER EMPLOYEES filter out.

EXT. GYM-A-DAY 24 HOUR GYM - NIGHT

James enters the alley in his hoodie. ALLEY GUY, also in a hoodie, shuffles along ahead of him.

Steroid Steve approaches from the other direction.

Alley Guy turns to a dark alcove. Steve queues patiently behind him, wallet in hand. James waits behind him.

Lauren emerges from the alcove into the light from the streetlamps and kicks her sports bag forwards. She catches sight of James, then averts her eyes, angry, but also guilty.

Alley Guy rummages in the bag, pulling out paint cans. Steve peers around the guy at the bag.

STEROID STEVE

Fuck.

Steve folds his wallet and shoves it in his pocket as he returns up the alley.

Alley Guy takes two cans and hands some cash to Lauren. She grabs it and shoves it into her hoodie pouch.

James steps forward.

Lauren looks at him, then down at the floor.

JAMES

I didn't know.

LAUREN

(sighs)

Yeah.

James kicks at the floor like a shy teenager, then looks up and down the alley.

JAMES

You got any cerise pink?

Lauren chuckles and shakes her head.

LAUREN

What the fuck dude? Cerise pink...

She scoops up the sports bag and walks off. James follows.

She stumbles over a lump in the alley; SHAGGY HOMELESS GUY (30s). The man moans and adjusts his curled-up pose.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

She takes a note from her pocket and pushes it into Homeless Guy's filthy jacket. She backs away and walks off with James.

INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - DAY

James sits silent and still at Gloria's bedside in an open ward. He squeezes her hand.

JAMES

Hang on.

He peers around at unconscious patients in the other beds.

LATER

He leaves the ward. A NURSE is waiting for him with a pitying look on her face.

NURSE

It might be a good idea to reach to her relatives if you can.

He stares at the nurse. She smiles apologetically, bows her head slightly and walks off to her next duty.

He watches her leave, then glances back to Gloria's bed.

INT./EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - CAFÉ GLAROS - DAY

The breeze ruffles the bleached awnings. James drops his hand onto a paper napkin as it lifts off to float away.

He stares at his frappé, watching the milk and coffee vortices swirl and contort around each other.

He shuts his eyes and faces the wind, breathing in as the breeze tussles his hair. He takes a slow sip.

LATER

He stands and takes his empty glass to the counter. The Ancient Man grabs James' hand comfortingly, nodding knowingly as he gently shakes it.

James looks down at his wrinkled hand.

There are TWO TOO MANY FINGERS on his hand.

James looks up suddenly. His eyes are drawn down to the man's collar - he's wearing a collared shirt under another collared shirt.

He pushes the man's hand away in terror, backing into a five-legged table. He looks down at a green glass cola bottle. It has two sets of red labels rather than the usual one.

The Ancient Man's expression changes to one of aggression. He launches over the counter, then flops to the floor, melding with it briefly before being sucked down into it.

James backs up further as other incongruous and UNUSUAL BYSTANDERS close in.

As he moves around, the various parts of the café disconnect and distort, as if they were flat images crudely lined up to work when viewed from only one direction.

Parts of the ceiling that are no longer supported cave-in. He bolts for the door, wrenches it open and hauls himself through as the café completely collapses.

EXT. GYM-A-DAY 24 HOUR GYM - NIGHT

James marches towards Nelly's Little Art Shop while leaving a voice message on his phone's messaging app.

JAMES

I need to talk to you. I'll wait  
for you at the shop.

PC Franks lumbers out through the gym door carrying his thick lifting belt and gym bag.

PC FRANKS

It's you!

Franks dumps his bag and belt inside the gym door and gives chase as James pockets his phone and vanishes down the alley.

PC FRANKS (CONT'D)

Running's only going to make it  
worse...

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - NIGHT

James sprints down the street, whitewashed by the moon; the heavy beats of the PC Frank's boots THUDDING far behind him.



EXT. RUBBISH PILE ALLEY - NIGHT

He ducks into the alley looking for a place to hide. The alley is empty - sticky stains on the floor the only evidence of the alley's former condition.

He presses his hand against his mural of the litter-strewn beach and drops to the floor like a ragdoll.

EXT. LITTER STREWN BEACH - SUNSET

James lays still on the sand between the piles of scrap. He hears PC Franks:

PC FRANKS (V.O.)  
(distorted, faint)  
Hey, get up!

James holds his head.

PC FRANKS (V.O.)  
Oh shit. Son of a...

Noises rush in around James - sirens and a big vehicle stopping.

Blue flashes on the scrap piles.

JAMES  
No, no. Stay here!

He ducks into one of the piles, hunkering down in an old fridge.

The piles rumble and shake as James grips his head tightly and screws his eyes closed.

The shaking abates and his eyes slowly peel open.

Ocean waves crash against the litter-strewn beach. Flotsam knocks against the piles of old washing machines and scrap metal. The orange sun glints on the waves as a cool breeze drifts onto the beach.

James hauls himself up, resolute, and jogs into the jungle.

INT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - EVENING

James pushes the heavy oak door closed behind him. He moves through the hallway into the dark living room, which is lit only by the streetlights streaming through the tall windows.

He steps gingerly into the office, where the Wayfarer sits head-in-hands at his desk.

JAMES

There's more of them. A.I.  
generated muses - at the beach. You  
have to stop them!

WAYFARER

(defeated)

It's too late... It's too late...

James grabs his own hair, and turns - looking at the map and ornaments trying to fathom what to do. He grits his teeth and marches out with purpose.

He passes into the living room and the tree outside the window catches his eye. The streetlights glint through the tree's leaves, flashing as the breeze bends the branches.

The Wayfarer's moans can still be heard from the office, which is behind him through the archway.

James looks at the floor - tall perfect rectangles of light stretch across the boards. NO SHADOW FROM THE TREE.

He steps into the rectangle and looks back up at the tree, which is clearly obscuring the light.

He passes his hand in front of himself. No shadow. He passes his other hand in front of that. No shadow from his hand either.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

(dead calm)

It's too late.

The Wayfarer stands - his chair SCREECHING across the floor.

James turns back to see the Wayfarer lift his head, his piercing eyes locking with James.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

(forceful)

It's too late.

The Wayfarer lifts his arms and stretches out his fingers. They keep stretching, slowly changing into the same silver tentacles that extended from the dandelions.

The room distorts and walls disconnect like in the café. Dust and plaster falls. Bleak casually steps through the door in the Wayfarer's office as the walls start to collapse.

The Wayfarer is the only thing stable and in-focus as the illusion shimmers. His arms reach out to engulf James.

James scrambles away as the building collapses around him. He passes through the hallway and launches through a melting wall to the next house.

EXT. CRATER - NIGHT

He emerges into a giant crater, rimmed with the backs of facades of other houses on the Delft street. The dark crater is filled with tiers of servers and blinking devices.

James diverts down into the labyrinth of technology. Chaotic but organised; different shaped electrical and computerised devices packed efficiently together like Tetris blocks.

Towering above him, in the centre of the crater is an enormous cylindrical structure with the 'reality' symbol on the side: A square with a dot in the middle.

Conduits from all around the crater feed pulses of green light towards the structure.

Slotted amongst the technology are eight-foot-high capsules. A large window on their side reveals their contents: The writhing, unconscious bodies of imprisoned muses.

James inspects a capsule and tries to wrench it open. He visits a few more, peering inside them and trying to force them open.

He sees an empty capsule a short distance away; the window open. He cautiously steps towards it.

A rhythmic and constant GONG sound slowly rises, resonating around the crater.

Behind James, a large silvery tentacle lifts up. Pincers on the end yawn open with a gentle SQUEAK.

James hears it and spins around. The GONGS get louder.

James attempts to duck away through the labyrinthine gaps between the technology, but is met by more tentacles forcing him back. He is slowly forced towards the open capsule.

LAUREN (V.O.)  
(distant, faint)  
Hang in there, buddy.

He falls backwards as pincers move in from all directions to grab him. The metronomic GONGS are deafening now. The lights around him pulse with their beat.

JAMES  
(screams)  
LAUREN!

His head snaps suddenly to one side.

INT. HOSPITAL - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

James lays in the hospital bed, his head twisted to one side with a red mark blooming on his face. A heart-rate monitor BEEPS in the background to the same rhythm as the gongs.

Lauren is above him, hand and arm across herself; post slap. She stares at him as he stirs, panting in fear.

LAUREN  
What's going on?

JAMES  
They almost got me!

LAUREN  
Who?

He climbs out of bed and pulls his clothes on.

JAMES  
I'll tell you at the shop. I can't  
let the police take me in.

They peer both ways down the corridor outside his room and hurry to the exit.

INT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - NIGHT

James and Lauren step inside and quietly close the door, peering through the windows to check they weren't followed.

They head to the back of the shop. Lauren sits while James paces, fiddling with a paintbrush.

LAUREN  
That sounds insane. I thought this  
Wayfarer was helping.

The paintbrush snaps in James' clenched fist.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
Why would they capture muses.

James is practically vibrating with anger.

JAMES  
I guess stealing stories wasn't  
enough.

LAUREN  
It would make sense to broaden the  
'training set' for the A.I.

JAMES  
Gloria.

James looks at Lauren, eyes bulging and knuckles white.  
He turns and strides to the door.

LAUREN  
Wait! What are you going to do?

JAMES  
I'm going to get her out of there.

LAUREN  
How?

James turns back. He has no answer.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
Sounds like this Wayfarer controls  
that place. You need to be smart  
about this. Smarter than his A.I.

James' shoulders drop.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
You know what really confuses A.I.?  
Things that aren't part of their  
'training set' - things they've  
never seen before.

JAMES  
How do I show A.I. something it  
hasn't seen before?

Lauren points over her shoulder at the rack of spray-paint  
cans.

LAUREN  
Have they got any of those in the  
Veil?

James smiles and turns for the door.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
Hey, where are you going?

JAMES  
Back to my apartment...

LAUREN  
Who's going to pull you out if you  
get caught?

JAMES  
Uh...

She points to the back of the shop.

LAUREN  
I'll watch you. Just yell out my  
name if you need another slap.

James shuffles to the back of the shop.

EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - DAY

Fast swooshes of paint streak across a wall. James steps back and dashes off with a sports bag full of spray cans. A surreal and sketchy design of traffic lights driving cars over mannequins glints on the wall as the paint dries.

James wrenches open the door to the toilet at the back of the café ruins, closing the door. The door drifts open again to reveal an empty cubicle.

EXT. CRANE ARM - DAY

More swooshes on the floor of the rooftop as chains blown by the wind CLINK against the crane in the background.

INT. SPACE STATION 93-LIMA

James breezes down the corridor, completing a tag that looks like letters from an unknown alphabet, all made from green flames and red, dripping ice.

EXT. NEW YORK BALCONY - DAY

James stands peering down at the crane and his design on the adjacent roof below.

Three dandelion machines stand over an image of a spherical virus, with gargoyles and flowers protruding from it on stalks. They step from side-to-side contemplating it.

Another two dandelions emerge through holes that appear in walls and the floor. They also inspect the design.

James' face is set. He turns and steps through a door.

EXT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - EVENING

James stands at a distance, watching the front of the guild. He turns and walks along the street, examining the houses.

He peers through a low window on one of the houses - it appears to be a normal dark room inside.

He reaches inside his sports bag and pulls out a hefty sledgehammer. He punches it through the glass.

He picks up a glass shard from the floor - it still shows the empty room through it. The empty window frame, however, reveals the dark technological labyrinth beyond.

EXT. CRATER - NIGHT

James strides through the labyrinth wielding the sledgehammer and a crowbar; a determined man to be feared.

Above him, at the edge of the crater a dandelion SKITTERS and burrows into a hole. Another follows.

James peers into capsules as he passes; a princess, a young man resembling robin hood. He stops and winces when he peers into the capsule of a small boy, writhing uncomfortably.

SKITTERS from above.

Dandelions return to the crater in droves, fanning out through the labyrinth.

James jogs, peering into a few more capsules.

He stops and climbs a little higher, peering dispiritedly across the vast labyrinth that stretches away from him. The SKITTERS get louder.

EXT. VASILIKI BEACH STREET - DAY

James stands, drenched by intense rain, watching the paint wash from the wall. It runs in rainbow rivulets into drains.

The mini storm is localised only to this part of the street - he can see the bright, perfect Greek Summer gracing the beach, ocean and surrounding hills.

He backs up and drops onto a bench with a SQUELCH. He runs his hands through his hair as he hunches over.

INT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - DAY

CLOSE UP - The deep, soft wrinkles of MRS. BAKER'S 90-year-old chin. Thick black hairs grown from a mole.

JAMES

Whaah!

James is lying on the floor in front of a display. Mrs. Baker is leaning over him trying to reach for some tiny brushes. James pushes himself back into the display.

MRS. BAKER

Sorry my dear, I didn't mean to wake you. I'm getting my grandson some special brushes for his little war figurines. I don't understand it all myself, but at least it's not vidi-games or playing shoot-em ups.

She shakes her head at the thought.

James slowly reaches up and hands Mrs. Baker the pack of fine brushes she's reaching for.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

Thank you my dear. You're such a lovely young man. You go back to sleep now.

She totters off and counts some money onto the counter.

MRS. BAKER (CONT'D)

(to Lauren)

Keep the change. I don't need a bunch of pennies rattling around in my purse.

She leaves.

As James stands he picks up a small card sign that was propped up against him. It reads: "Shhh! Creative at work."



He steps to the counter where Lauren has her feet up on a chair and is lining up another shot with a ball of scrunched-up receipt paper.

JAMES

I thought you were keeping an eye on me.

LAUREN

I was.

JAMES

Couldn't you have closed the shop for one morning?

LAUREN

I had a customer. You know how rare that is?

JAMES

She could have woken me.

Lauren points at the sign, which is still in his hand.

She drops her legs down from the chair and turns to face him properly.

LAUREN

(sincere)  
How did it go?

James shakes his head.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, MAIN OFFICE - DAY

James shuffles through the office towards his studio, crossing the main floor. He winces distastefully at Anil in his cubicle.

The Technician comes by Anil's desk.

TECHNICIAN

You should be all set - they hadn't earthed the new servers properly.

Anil twists his head quizzically.

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

Static charge was building up and the lamp connected the whole circuit to the ground instantly.

The Technician pops his hands apart.

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)  
Zap. We've fixed it though and  
replaced the fried CPUs.

James stops dead and his eyes go wide. He turns and marches back out.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - DAY

James has his hoodie up, covering most of his face. He sneaks along the street leading Lauren. The usual smattering of people stroll the pavements.

BOBBY (50s) is finishing off the new frame and blank sign board for the corner shop.

James unlocks the outer door to his apartment building and slips inside with Lauren.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

James shuts the front door softly and pulls his hoodie back from his head.

James takes a cushion from the sofa and places it on the floor. He gets down on the floor as Lauren dumps herself on the chair.

JAMES  
Please pay attention this time.

LAUREN  
Oh-kay.

She pulls out her phone and starts scrolling.

He looks at her.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
No ear buds. I'll be listening.

He lays his head gently on the cushion and closes his eyes.

Lauren's phone CLICKS in bursts as she flicks through content on her Instagram feed.

EXT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - EVENING

James stands atop a building across the street from the Wayfarer's Guild, in a long black hooded coat.

Stepping to the edge, he can see across the tops of the other buildings on the street. The crater's central cylinder is just visible beyond the rooftops.

He scans the street. Thick black cables extend from some of the buildings. They lead neatly off into a little alley.

James considers them for a moment, then backs away from the rooftop edge.

#### STREET

James strolls nonchalantly beside one of the cables. He ducks into the alley where they lead.

They terminate at a set of double doors with prominent electrocution warning signs. The cables enter the wall through a recent and rough hole by the doors.

He parts his coat and slips a crowbar from his belt. He wrenches the doors open.

Inside, the cable splits into its internal wires, each attached to terminals on the huge transformer. A thick yellow and green cable connects the cable to a grounding rod.

He pulls a large wrench from his belt and uses that to remove the bolt connecting the cable to the rod.

He hefts the heavy cable away and it thuds to the floor. He catches sight of his arm as he does - tiny hairs stand on end as the air faintly hums with static charge.

#### OTHER STREET

James approaches a small brick building with the same signs on its double doors. More large cables lead into it.

He checks each way down the street, then smashes the lock.

Inside it's a bit larger than the previous transformer cupboard. He steps in and the door swings shut behind him.

He catches it just before it closes and pushes it back open, peering at the street outside to make sure it's the same. He props the door open with a loose cobble from the ground.

He quickly removes the earth cable from the grounding rod. The hairs on his arm stand on end again. They CRACKLE as he runs his hand over them.

He steps back onto the street and is confronted by two dandelions, towering over him.

He bolts away, ducking through lanes between the Delft houses. The dandelions SKITTER on their silver tentacles, drawing themselves along as if reeling-in the street.

He emerges back onto the main street and sprints past the Wayfarers Guild. Other dandelions join from other directions.

He ducks down an alley, then another.

LOUD SKITTERING.

James stands with his back to a wall, terrified.

POV LOOKING OUT FROM WALL: Dandelions gather around, tentacles raised.

POV LOOKING AT JAMES: James closes his eyes.

POV LOOKING OUT FROM WALL: Dandelions stab and pierce into the wall ferociously.

We see the dandelions attacking a stencilled graffiti image of James on the wall. Chunks of plaster fall as the dandelions slow and stop, processing the image.

Rain begins to fall in the alley. Black paint streaks from the image and drains away.

James opens his eyes. The SKITTERING sounds of the departing dandelions fade away. He exhales an overdue breath.

Looking up at the sky, quietly:

JAMES

Not yet!

SMALL SUBSTATION

James hurries into another small substation similar to before. He hooks the door on an ivy vine and stomps inside, wrench ready.

He disconnects the earth cable and drops the end into a small bucket. Using a nearby broom, he bashes a large hole in the corrugated iron roof, right above the bucket.

He turns back to the door as the vine loses its hold and the door swings shut.

JAMES (CONT'D)

No!

He launches at the door and it bursts open. He explodes out through it onto:

EXT. MOUNTAIN SKI LIFT - DAY

Blinding white snow stuns him for a second. As his eyes clear he looks to the horizon, where a distant thunder storm is brewing.

He looks about. Weird, generated A.I. SKIERS fill the mountain pistes. Some have too few skis, or too many poles. Some are bears with human fingers and features.

James shoves one off their snowboard and runs to the top of a slope. He mounts it like a toboggan, shivering from the cold.

As he glides rapidly down the slope, the A.I. Skiers swoop past to try to stop him. He swerves and dodges between them.

At the bottom, he leaps off the board, which slides off into other oncoming A.I. Skiers.

INT. SKI RESTAURANT - DAY

James blazes into a restaurant that's styled as a comfortable wooden lodge.

Incongruous RESTAURANT GUESTS in evening gowns and military uniforms close in as he runs to the back, opening every door and cupboard.

He finds the one he's looking for, and pulls himself through.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

James stands, looking up at the skyscrapers as traffic hustles by. He spots a familiar crane and jogs toward it.

EXT. CRANE ARM - DAY

James scales the ladder inside the crane as wind gusts. The chains BASH loudly against the metal and the crane CREAKS.

He launches from the crane arm to the rooftop and vanishes through the access door.

EXT. WAYFARER'S GUILD - EVENING

James leaps through the broken window, not stopping as the remaining shards tear through the arms of his jacket.

## EXT. CRATER - NIGHT

The back of the ruined Wayfarer's Guild is visible at the crater's edge.

The silhouette of the Wayfarer emerges onto the top floor, which is now completely exposed to the foreboding dark thunder clouds above.

The wind rises and a gust of wind blasts up from behind the Wayfarer, flaring out his clothes.

In the crater, a dark hooded shape darts through the labyrinth. In his outstretched arms, two spray paint cans leave brightly coloured trails behind him.

A patter of rain drops increases to a heavy downpour. The growing, swirling clouds above focus their rain to wash away the paint.

The Wayfarer spreads out his arms and his fingers stretch out into silvery tentacles. The tentacles bend down to the floor like legs and they propel him rapidly down into the crater.

James continues through the maze, tracing a path that spirals in from the edge of the crater towards the middle. The Wayfarer's skittering tentacles grow louder as he crawls over the machines.

The spray cans run out, and James retrieves two more from his coat. He forges forward as the clouds overhead swell and darken. The rain is now a deluge over the whole crater.

James reaches the cylinder at the centre of the crater as his last cans run out. He stumbles and jogs up to it as the Wayfarer crashes down behind him.

James has no energy left. He stands panting, head hanging down under his dripping hood.

The Wayfarer grabs him in an instant and throws him to the floor. James' hood flies back as he hits the ground, and his hair springs out in a fluffy static-charged ball.

The Wayfarer is baring down on him and looks wide-eyed at his hair, then his head flicks upward to the sky.

## SMALL SUBSTATION

Rain drains down from the hole in the roof, filling the bucket to the brim. The water overflows and a spark FLASHES and CRACKS through the water from the cable to the ground.

## CRATER

POV CRATER FROM AFAR: We see the whole crater and the thick clouds above. Dozens of lightning forks strike the crater in a single brilliant flash.

CRATER FLOOR

A damp patch remains in a rough outline of James' body on the ground under the silvery claw.

INT. APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

James lays on the floor, eyes wide, staring upward. His body twitches as Lauren drops to her knees beside him.

He comes to his senses and looks straight at her. Without saying a word he leaps to his feet and bolts out the door.

Lauren watches him leave, sighs, then dumps herself back in the chair. Faint CLICKING resumes as she scrolls content on her phone.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON

Martha and John are arguing in the middle of the street.

MARTHA

You can't call it vegan if there's honey in it!

JOHN

Why the hell not?

James flashes past them - just a blur.

INT. HOSPITAL - WARD - LATE AFTERNOON

James jogs down a bustling hospital corridor. The Nurse rifles through medical files behind a desk with a phone pinned between her face and shoulder.

NURSE

The sleepers are waking up.  
(inaudible response)  
All of them.

James peers around Gloria's privacy curtain and his shoulders relax in relief. She's sitting up, drinking a cup of water.

She spots him and slowly puts down her cup. She looks him up and down.

GLORIA

Seems like you're the only muse  
here not wearing a gown...

A cheeky grin spreads across his face and he drops himself down into the seat by her bed. He lets out a big sigh.

JAMES

I've got a story to tell you Mrs.  
Papadi - And I think you're going  
to enjoy it.

The screen next to Gloria's bed twitches and a face appears to listen in.

INT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - DAY

Lauren launches a large scrunched up ball of receipt paper at the bookcase.

The door slowly opens. Shaggy Homeless Guy from outside the gym pokes his head inside gingerly. He's wearing mismatched, soiled clothes and his greasy hair is matted across his face.

SHAGGY HOMELESS GUY

I don't suppose I can borrow your  
phone?

LAUREN

Sorry dude, but no.

SHAGGY HOMELESS GUY

Please, I've just woken up from  
this weird dream, and someone's  
stolen my phone, wallet...

She looks at him.

LAUREN

Weird dream, huh?

She drops from her seat and steps to the door, looking him up and down. She sighs and lifts her phone.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

You know the number?

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, MAIN OFFICE - DAY

James walks through the office carrying beach props.



In a glass-fronted meeting room to one side, Big Boss Executive is furious. Anil attempts to retain his composure and reassuring smile. Big Boss Executive paces the room.

The Executive storms out of the room and trudges away.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, CRAMPED PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO - LATER

James sits in his studio lining up a shot of a coconut with the beach props on some sand.

Big Boss Executive walks in, tense, but calm.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE  
Can I have a word? In my office?

James nods and puts down the camera.

INT. PHAB PHOODS OFFICES, BIG BOSS OFFICE - LATER

The Executive sits behind a veneered wooden desk, dotted with executive toys; magnetic shapes and Newton's cradle.

James sits in a simple chair that somehow seems a bit too small for the room. He looks ready for an interrogation.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE  
How long would it take for you to  
shoot the New Vale butter photos?

JAMES  
I thought Anil...

He stops when the Executive blasts air out through his nostrils in annoyance.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE  
We've had some... issues reaching  
consistent quality and tone.

James' face tightens, restraining a smile.

JAMES  
How much would you like me to  
reshoot?

The Executive stares with another short blast of air.

BIG BOSS EXECUTIVE  
All of it.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - NIGHT

Spray paint sweeps across the frame around the corner shop window. We see James' face staring intently as he steps back, reviews his work and then continues.

A large hand appears over his shoulder. It drops and grabs him, spinning him around.

PC Franks glares at James.

PC FRANKS  
Gotcha! You're under arrest.

Blue lights wash over the street as a police car rolls around the corner, driven by his colleague.

LATER

PC Franks puts handcuffs around James wrists at the side of the street. Gloria and other neighbours can be seen in their windows looking down at the commotion.

John Bratts trudges out of the corner shop in a tattered dressing gown as PC Franks gets out his notebook to question James. John's face is red.

JOHN  
It was you!?

JAMES  
Sorry. I saw what happened to your shop. I wanted to help out.

John looks up at the front of the shop. A large, trendy logo above the window reads: "Bratts", and the walls are decorated with brightly coloured packets, cans and bottles.

PC FRANKS  
Sorry kid, but good intentions or not, this is illegal. And this being your second offence...

John is surprised and impressed by James' work. He scans around at the onlookers, including Martha who is peering out from her shop.

JOHN  
I.. Uh...  
(raising his voice)  
I paid him to do it.

He looks PC Franks in the eye defiantly as he says it.

PC FRANKS

Sir...

John rummages around in his pockets under the gown. He pulls out a crumpled ten pound note and half a pack of cough sweets. He grabs James' hand and shoves both into it.

John takes a few steps back and admires his new signage, nodding. He can see the potential. To PC Franks:

JOHN

You can't arrest him if I paid him to do it, can you?

PC Franks grits his teeth and reluctantly admits:

PC FRANKS

Not if you asked him to do this...  
no.

JOHN

Well then. You can take those off him then.

John nods at the cuffs, then returns his attention to the sign rubbing his chin.

PC Franks glares back for a few seconds, then slowly removes the cuffs.

John turns to James with raised eyebrows.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Remember our 'agreement' though - you can't do any signage for my competitors!

He nods his head backward, gesturing at the Kindred Spirits Greengrocers behind him.

James nods enthusiastically. Martha, in her shop, rolls here eyes and disappears into her shop, flicking off the light.

EXT. CRATER - NIGHT

The Wayfarer sits solemnly at the bottom of the crater. The technology around him is crumbling and wet - every now and then a chunk falls and crashes to the ground.

The large cylinder in the middle is mostly gone now, revealing a large tree inside. He reaches down into a stream that's washing under the metal grate flooring where he sits.

FOOTSTEPS from behind him. Gloria descends into the crater - confidently tramping down over the debris, but still wary of the machines.

She stops next to the Wayfarer and straightens her dress before sitting. She looks at the tree for a moment in silence.

WAYFARER

There was a time when stories were precious. Like little gems. Traded by word of mouth. Limited edition books that you had to find to read.

He dries his hand off on a handkerchief and looks at Gloria.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

But now you can have any story ever told at your fingertips in a fraction of a second.

Gloria looks at him sympathetically. He gazes at the tree.

WAYFARER (CONT'D)

Everyone is spoilt for adventure and thrill and romance. And they hunger for more and more.

GLORIA

This isn't the way.

She scans around the crater, wary of what might lurk within it.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Machines can't daydream - so they can never truly create. The best they can do is imitate.

He looks up into her eyes.

WAYFARER

How do I keep up?

GLORIA

I don't know, but if you ask me - the answer is the opposite of all this: Inspiring people to turn off their screens and explore their own minds, and wants, and fantasies.

She stands. The Wayfarer follows her with his eyes as she walks over to the remains of the cylinder. She hauls a piece of server equipment away from the tree inside.

GLORIA (CONT'D)  
We can start with this.

The wayfarer looks up and the sky brightens. The clouds part and the tree is illuminated in bright sunlight.

Gloria smiles at him. He smiles back and gets up to help.

EXT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - DAY

James strolls down the street on a sunny afternoon. It's bustling with people seated outside both the corner shop and greengrocers drinking coffee and cold drinks.

All the walls and shops are adorned with bright and colourful graffiti, depicting modern dramatic human forms and classic vistas. A tasteful and vibrant street gallery.

He passes a removals van, which is being unloaded by a dusty POTTER, young with piercings and tattoos. He's hefting potters' wheels and equipment into one of the empty shops.

PC Franks sits outside the corner shop. His beady eyes watching James' every move. Behind him on the wall is a stencilled graffiti policeman in the exact same seated pose.

James passes and enters the door to his apartment building.

John and Martha both emerge from their respective shops. They're each carrying a box of goods.

They lock eyes and start pacing down the street. Pacing becomes jogging as they race towards the removals van.

They arrive at the door to the new pottery at the same time and thrust their boxes towards the Potter, who's manoeuvring a heavy bag of clay through the door.

MARTHA

Welcome to the street - I've brought you some lovely organic local produce. All comes from within twenty miles.

JOHN

I brought you these, I didn't know what you liked so I've got all sorts in there. Just to get you settled.

POTTER

Oh, uh. Thanks

He's straining with the clay and drops it down just inside the door. He looks around the shop, which is full of packing boxes and equipment.

POTTER (CONT'D)

I don't suppose you could come back  
a bit later - when I'm a bit more  
sorted out?

Martha and John realise that this isn't the best moment.

MARTHA

Of course, you're busy. Lots  
to unpack.

JOHN

Oh, I see, yes. Nowhere to  
put these really have you...

The Potter smiles politely.

POTTER

Thanks.

He returns to his unloading as Martha and John turn and  
return along the street, side-by-side, in silence.

John looks at Martha. She casts a disdainful look back.

JOHN

I don't suppose you'd like to go  
for a drink sometime?

Martha scoffs and looks away. They take a few more steps and  
she casts a glance back at him.

MARTHA

You're buying.

JOHN

(like lightning)  
Deal.

They split off and return to their shops.

INT. NELLY'S LITTLE ART SHOP - DAY

Lauren slouches in her seat behind the counter, folding  
receipt paper into a little boat.

SŌMA (30s) steps into the shop and approaches the counter.  
He's dressed in a neat work shirt and chinos. He stands at  
the counter politely waiting for Lauren to notice him.

She finishes the boat and then looks up at the handsome man.  
He's holding a small bouquet behind his back.

LAUREN

Can I help?

Sōma smiles.

SŌMA

I wanted to say thank you.

LAUREN

Thank you? I haven't done anything yet.

SŌMA

Yes you did. You lent me your phone.

Lauren looks him up and down.

LAUREN

Oh. I didn't recognise you.

SŌMA

Sorry I must have been an absolute state before.

Lauren nods shamelessly.

LAUREN

Nice belt.

She nods at his belt buckle which has clockwork cogs on it.

SŌMA

Oh, yeah. It was a gift so I kinda felt obliged to wear it.

He lifts the buckle to show the design.

SŌMA (CONT'D)

They said it's steampunk, but it just looks like cogs to me.

Lauren looks at him for a second then rocks herself up from her seat.

SŌMA (CONT'D)

Oh, I got these for you.

He holds up the bouquet.

Lauren grabs his arm and drags him out of the shop.

SŌMA (CONT'D)

Sorry, did I say something wrong...?

LAUREN

You can thank me by buying me lunch.

She flicks the lock on the door, flips the 'Open' sign to 'Closed' and pulls the door shut behind her as they leave.

From inside we see and hear them outside through the shop window:

SŌMA

Uh, won't you get in trouble?

Lauren shakes her head.

LAUREN

Nobody cares.

They walk past the window and out of view.

Mrs. Baker steps out from the back of the shop.

MRS. BAKER

Hello?

INT. BRATTS CORNER SHOP - DAY

James stands at the till, smiling at John.

JOHN

Just that?

JAMES

Yep.

John scans the barcode of a single tin of beans.

James pays and leaves, admiring the label. His label - a single bean in a pool of bean juice. He grins.

EXT. KINDRED SPIRITS GREENGROCERS - DAY

He continues down the street, carrying a hessian bag full of fresh veg, with the solitary tin of beans resting on top.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

James turns on his radio and sits on his sofa. He lifts his laptop onto his lap. Next to him is an open package with packing paper and a manual strewn on the cushions and floor.

THUD, THUD, THUD on the wall. James turns to it.



He reaches into the package and pulls out a set of headphones. He presses a button on the side and the noise from the radio starts coming from the headphones instead.

He pops them on his head with a smile.

He types into his keyboard and words appear in the middle of a white page on his screen: "Aspirations of Eccentricity".

He leans back into his sofa with his hands arched over his nose, tapping his nostrils with his fingers, figuring out where to begin.

THE END