

Finding Elpis 4: The Ballad of Fallen Stars

by

Banafsheh Esmailzadeh

604-992-4595
banaesma@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME

OZZY and PIROUZ appear to receive us at the entrance of the Palace, both of them visibly bigger and older than before, like they're in their early 20s, the former moreso than the latter despite his younger age.

Stars are gently showering down all around them, but neither of them pay it any mind.

OZZY
(to you, the viewer)
Oh great, you're here! We've been
waiting for you. Come on, come on!
The preshow's about to begin!

He kicks Pirouz towards the inner courtyard and we follow them to the stage where ERIK RHODES, IESU, JAGUAR, and PHI are, all looking the same as before.

They look agitated as STARMAN descends from above, showering everyone more noticeably in stars, though Phi puts her visor on so she's fine while everyone else flinches. He starts strumming the opening riff to David Bowie's "The Man Who Sold the World".

STARMAN
"We passed upon the stair, we spoke
in was and when. Although I wasn't
there, he said I was his friend.
Which came as some surprise, I
spoke into his eyes, 'I thought you
died alone a long, long time ago.'"

He continues the song, LOR SALVIATOR looking in the crowd with pride. His beeper rings and he frowns as if remembering.

EXT. HEAVEN - TIRIYA'S ALTAR (FLASHBACK)

LOR SALVIATOR stands before TIRIYA and RAZIEL, stars showering around them as well, but again, none of them pay it any mind.

TIRIYA
Oh no, not me. I never lost
control.

LOR SALVIATOR
And nonetheless there's nothing you
can do about him?

TIRIYA
Not a blessed thing, I'm afraid. He
made his choice all on his own, and
I'm not about to disrespect that.

LOR SALVIATOR

I'm afraid that's going to be a problem.

TIRIYA

Nonsense, you have Philonoe with you. You are more than prepared to handle such a triviality. I trust you are taking good care of her?

LOR SALVIATOR

Indeed, Lord Tiriya, and your vocal training has indeed come in handy, though she is not yet comfortable taking a leading role.

RAZIEL

Permission to speak, sire.

TIRIYA

Go on, Raziel.

RAZIEL

They are making their way as we speak. You will have to get back to work.

TIRIYA

Wonderful! I'm looking forward to seeing your show. Off with you, now.

With an uneasy expression, Lor Salviator bows and leaves them.

RAZIEL

It's all going according to plan, sire. Leave the rest to me.

Tiriya then flies out of the scene, leaving Raziel alone to turn his attention directly to the audience.

RAZIEL

As for you, my child... It's time you learned to stop and smell the roses, wouldn't you agree?

He leans forward and with a single finger gently shushes you, the viewer.

RAZIEL

Stealing thunder is a sin, you know. Look how you suffer as a result.

He again gently shushes you.

RAZIEL

Oh, you want me to say the words?
Very well. Be not afraid, my child.
Everything will be all right.

He then gently lowers his hand as if closing your eyelids.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME - CONTINUOUS

Back in present time, THE BAND continues the song while LOR SALVIATOR puts away his beeper and notices ITO SHINO'S POD descending, complete with hyper J-pop beats.

It lands before BELLE ÉPOQUE'S ATAKEBUNE and MJÖLNIR'S KARVE, noticeably smaller and pinker compared to the former's French baroque influence and the latter's black and silver details.

Lor Salviator nods in deference as the pod opens and ITO SHINO comes out, a petite young woman in her early 20s dressed in pink and white sweet lolita fashion with pastel accents.

LOR SALVIATOR

Welcome, Miss Shino. It is an
honour to meet you at last, I hope
the journey wasn't too difficult.
Please, follow me.

He leads the way as Ito Shino takes in her surroundings and seems to hear The Band's music and the closer they get, the more STARMAN shines, though Ito Shino doesn't cover her eyes.

LOR SALVIATOR

Your dressing room, Miss.

He opens the door and bows again like a butler, though Ito Shino is staring mesmerised at ERIK RHODES playing the violin complete with his red rose aura. She squints at her pinky finger as if searching for The Red String of Fate.

The Band then wraps up the song, with OZZY and PIROUZ cheering in the audience as they put their instruments away.

ERIK RHODES

I hate to say it, but it really
shows that Nicky's not here. He
just HAD to get violently ill
before a big show.

IESU

It's not all a conspiracy to trip
you up, Erik.

ERIK RHODES

The show's tomorrow, man, and we're
nowhere near ready. I hear that
(MORE)

ERIK RHODES (cont'd)
 third act is coming today, too.
 That's three acts I need to beat.

PHI's eyes then dart towards something out of the scene, and her brows furrow as she turns to face it, as do Ozzy and Pirouz, who then noticeably shiver.

IESU
 What's up, Phi?

Phi squints as if to see better, and finally turns her attention back to the band.

PHI
 It's probably nothing. I need a break from this, though.

IESU
 You're right, let's take five.

They leave, and Erik Rhodes notices he's the only one on stage.

ERIK RHODES
 Typical. Gotta do everything myself.

He begins playing "Eurydice, Rose of Rhodes," losing himself in the music. Unbeknownst to him, he is being watched by three other people.

In one corner of the triangle is Mjölnir's female vocalist GUDRUN, a 35-year-old Amazonian viking beauty with flaming red hair. Beside her is the lead vocalist TORVALD, a 35-year-old viking powerhouse with luxuriant golden hair and epic beard. Both of them immediately bring to mind death metal, minus the corpse paint.

TORVALD
 (in Norwegian)
 Earthlings really are puny. One note of our music will send them flying.

GUDRUN
 (in Norwegian)
 I wouldn't mind capturing that one in a little cage and making him sing.

Torvald scoffs while Gudrun looks on mesmerised by Erik Rhodes.

Another corner of the triangle is Belle Époque's vocalist TEMPÊTE, a beautiful 36-year-old young man with an unmistakable visual-kei look, specifically that of a Baroque era French aristocrat.

Beside him is flautist BIJOU, a 36-year-old woman who looks almost exactly like Oscar François de Jarjayes from Rose of Versailles.

Tempête regards Torvald and Gudrun a ways away, while Bijou sullenly sees Erik Rhodes, not really looking at him but nonetheless hearing his notes.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

How unseemly that we are to fight
them for what's rightly ours.

When Bijou remains quiet, Tempête takes notice of where her attention actually is.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

That is a rather nice toy he has.
Mayhaps we can mold it into a
proper crown.

He chuckles at the thought, while Bijou looks on with slowly softening eyes.

Meanwhile, behind them are the remaining members of Mjölnir and Belle Époque, respectively guitarists THORSTEN and WATTEAU, bassists HARALD and DAUPHIN, and drummers RAGNAR and PIERROT. All are men in their mid-30s and standing together as if divided by their cliques, suspiciously eyeing each other.

Ozzy and Pirouz eye both bands and beam.

PIROUZ

Finally, actual warriors come to
Pandora! They almost had me
breaking a sweat.

OZZY

Me too. That had to be what I was
feeling.

Both of them exchange a look, their lips pursed like little x's as they silently will the other not to say any more than that.

Finally, in the third corner of the triangle is HESPERA, 35, cloaked entirely in shadow like a black rose, though her face and hair are in chiaroscuro. She disappears from sight shortly after a lingering look at Erik Rhodes finishing up his song.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Night has now fallen, and the air is still and balmy as stars continue to fall everywhere like snow. STARMAN meditates, levitating as he does so, just like a stereotypical yoga master complete with lotus position.

He opens his eyes, still levitating when JAGUAR comes into view, eclipsing him and his light.

Jaguar glares, while Starman remains placid, and either way you can feel something like thunder brewing between them.

STARMAN

Is something wrong? Did you want to practice together before the rehearsal?

JAGUAR

I seriously can't believe you.

STARMAN

I'm sorry to hear that.

Jaguar suppresses the urge to yank him down to the ground, sighing heavily.

JAGUAR

This show is some seriously bad timing. How the hell are you still useless, even at the top of your game?

Jaguar's bangle's eyes glow, and he hisses it back to normal. Starman gazes at the bangle, and time seems to stand still.

JAGUAR

What? You remember something?

Starman gazes more at the bangle, and both of their concentrations are broken when thunder rolls in the sky.

STARMAN

I don't think I've eaten anything all day.

Jaguar groans.

JAGUAR

Well, that's a start, at least.

He grabs Starman by the collar and yanks him along, his stride broken by PHI landing about a foot away from him like a meteor, panting.

PHI

The old man actually barred me from Heaven. For once he's serious.

Lightning flashes this time, followed by rolling thunder, right on cue.

JAGUAR

So much for the divine intervention plan.

Lightning flashes again, this time striking Phi. Rather than being hurt or anything like that, she laughs.

Starman and Jaguar both exchange looks as she's struck by lightning again and again, launching into hysterical laughter.

PHI

Old... Man! Quit it! That's... Not funny!

As Starman and Jaguar both make a break for it, Phi keeps getting struck by lightning and laughing. When she's left alone, she looks up at the sky with its ashy clouds, the lightning not striking her anymore.

PHI

Heh. Okay, old man, you proved your point.

She leaps up with just her legs and enters the palace.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - DINING HALL

The dining hall is made of grey-blue stones, warmly punctuated with red and gold tapestries. A single long table sits in the middle of the hall with a simple bench on either side. The table is laden with JAPANESE SNACKS.

LENI, XIMENA, and even JAGUAR are marvelling at the familiar snacks and doing their best not to gush at ITO SHINO holding a box of more of them, which OZZY and PIROUZ take.

XIMENA

I can't believe she's here. Who would've expected it.

LENI

I know, right? God... Pinch me.

Ximena obliges, and Leni winces but nonetheless is too happy to be miffed. Jaguar himself goes towards her.

JAGUAR

Hi. Jaguar. Big fan.

He extends his hand, and Ito Shino grins and shakes it. Leni and Ximena also join him, Ximena procuring an autograph pad.

LENI

I love your music so much, it's an honour to actually see you in real life.

XIMENA

May I have your autograph?

Ito Shino enthusiastically signs the autograph pad. Meanwhile Ozzy and Pirouz organise the snacks on the table,

inspecting individual items like they're not sure if they're safe.

ITO SHINO

Shino bring presents. From Shino's home.

LENI

We know these. Thanks so much.

Sure enough, half the table has been decimated by Ozzy alone, who's just about to eat a bag of wasabi chips. As soon as he eats a handful of them, he's crying tears of regret.

LENI

Ozzy! Those are for everyone. And she came all the way from Earth with them.

OZZY

Sorry...

Ito Shino, rather than being bothered, dials something on her watch and grins.

ITO SHINO

No worry. More coming.

JAGUAR

Wow, go Japan.

LENI

Earth's really changed since we've been away, eh.

XIMENA

I'll say.

Right then, THE BAND comes in, all but Starman reacting to the familiar goods by rushing over to see if they are real. Ito Shino naturally notices Erik Rhodes, who picks out a can of shikwasa-flavoured Rocket Punch.

Leni, meanwhile, looks at Starman, who simply looks over the snacks like they're neat little trinkets rather than gifts from home. She looks away the moment he catches her eye.

Starman holds a little bag of konpeito candies, and for a moment his brow furrows, like he's digging the deepest mental trenches for why they look so familiar. But ultimately he puts the bag back.

PHI

Biggsy?

STARMAN

I was just thinking how nice these look. Maybe I should try to colour my own stars like this.

JAGUAR

Pretty sure that's the last thing anyone needs. You being even more distracting.

STARMAN

Is that right.

He thinks about this like it's philosophical, which exasperates everyone even more. Iesu opens a bag of senbei crackers and unwraps one, taking a bite.

IESU

Phi, you gotta try this one.

Phi obliges, and indeed it's like a revolution happens in her mouth.

ITO SHINO

Shino happy you happy. Let's have good show and be friends, ne?

She makes a heart with her hands as she grins. The mood is sweet and sunny until from either end of the dining hall both BELLE ÉPOQUE and MJÖLNIR march in, and all the Earthlings are dead centre and caught in their mutually hot glares, one akin to fire and the other lightning.

TEMPÊTE

(with aristocratic French accent)

What a pleasure to meet you again.

TORVALD

Too bad, was just starting to miss ye.

Meanwhile, however furtively, all members save Tempête, Bijou, Torvald and Gudrun advance towards the table of snacks, inspecting them like they're strange things that just look like food.

Nonetheless the leaders and their female counterparts both advance to the table, and the bandmates of Elpis aren't sure who looks more visually appealing.

Ito Shino, meanwhile, is stricken by Bijou and Gudrun, shrinking just a little bit at their beauty but nonetheless pasting a big smile on her face.

ITO SHINO

Hello. Shino happy to meet you.
Let's have good show.

Tempête looks at her, bemused, while Torvald laughs heartily. Elpis the band all step forward as if to protect their little sister.

IESU

Yeah, let's have a good show.

ERIK RHODES

And by that, we mean you're going down.

For a moment it looks like both Torvald and Tempête are suppressing laughter, but they both drop it when they realise they're having the same reaction.

TORVALD

We'll see, little men.

TEMPÊTE

(still like a French aristocrat)

How inelegant. But do show us.

Ito Shino finds her voice and offers both of them a snack.

ITO SHINO

Please take.

While Tempête still looks like he'd never deign touch anything of hers, Torvald takes it and even ruffles her hair.

TORVALD

Maybe you're bigger than you look, little lady.

Ito Shino still holds out the snack for Tempête, and yelps just a little bit when Bijou takes it. It's not just her heart that skips a beat, either; all the Earthlings look at her like she's a fairytale prince.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

Come, all of you. Let's not spend too much more time with them.

He turns on his heel and the rest of Belle Époque follows him without any acknowledgement of anyone else, not even a thank-you gesture for Ito Shino. Clearly she heard him speak Japanese but is too stunned to react otherwise.

Gudrun, meanwhile, ruffles Ito Shino's hair herself.

GUDRUN

Don't worry about them, little lady. They're destined to lose.

She then eyes Erik Rhodes, whose heart skips a beat.

GUDRUN

And we are destined to dance on
their failure.

She looks him up and down before turning away with the rest of Mjölnir. For a while everyone is speechless until Phi stamps her foot in annoyance, thankfully for once not hard enough to trigger a phonk beat.

PHI

Dammit, Biggsy!

STARMAN

What did I do?

PHI

Where's your pride as a man? You
let them disrespect everyone!

IESU

Phi...

PHI

If Elpis goes down because of
you... I will personally make sure
you go to Hell.

XIMENA

Yikes.

JAGUAR

No kidding...

For a moment Starman looks almost like himself, appropriately scared of Phi's threat. Ito Shino looks around at everyone and laughs nervously.

ITO SHINO

I go. Leave you alone. Nice meeting
you.

Ozzy and Pirouz, though very much curious, hurriedly usher her out of the room. Phi maintains her glare at Starman, and Leni clearly wonders if she should speak up, but Jaguar's hand on her shoulder discourages her.

STARMAN

I'm sorry, Phi, everyone.

They wait for him to say more, but he doesn't. Erik Rhodes pinches his nose.

ERIK RHODES

Dammit... I can't believe I'm gonna
say this. But Nicky was right after
all.

He sighs, shaking his head.

ERIK RHODES

Look, it's been, what, a couple months since you've been back? I get that being in Heaven permanently altered your brain chemistry, but I had hope you'd come back to your senses since then, slowly but surely.

Iesu shifts in his spot, and even Phi's expression softens. Leni's eyes glisten, like she's watching Erik Rhodes say the words she herself couldn't.

ERIK RHODES

But now I gotta face the facts. Even though you're here, you're not really here. Maybe you will be one day, but we can't wait for that day. So I'm gonna have to make a decision, and I think all of you will agree.

His eyes dart to everyone in the band before finishing on Starman.

ERIK RHODES

I'm letting you go, Tom.

Leni gasps softly, and even Ximena does, too, holding Leni's arm. Starman, meanwhile, once again looks almost like he's snapping out of it, but nonetheless returns to his new default.

STARMAN

I understand. In fact I was thinking, maybe I was always meant to break away, go solo.

Rather than being sad, even in that undercover way, he seems to shine brighter, like he arrived at a deep, brilliant truth.

STARMAN

Thank you very much for your efforts in ingratiating me. I will never forget your kindness. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to go play.

For good measure, he doesn't walk but rather levitates away, complete with his stars, like all this did was release a heavy weight off of his soul, with everyone else now bearing it instead.

IESU

Is it just me, or did he take that a little too well?

Ximena looks especially torn at the display, even shedding tears.

XIMENA

I can't believe this. That's the guy I stalked since the very beginning? The one I literally crossed the whole universe to see?

LENI

Ximena...

XIMENA

What the hell? Is this is why they say "never meet your heroes"? Because they pull this kind of shit?

She wipes her eyes, shaking her head.

XIMENA

I'm sorry, just... I need to be alone right now.

LENI

Ximena!

Ximena runs off with Leni in tow. Phi cracks her knuckles.

PHI

Is this why the old man trained me to sing alongside him? Was this his plan all along?

IESU

Well, you know, the Lord...

PHI

Works in mysterious ways? Immanuel, don't excuse everything he does just because he's a god.

IESU

I know, Phi, but what else can we do? Maybe this was going to happen no matter what. I mean, he became a literal star and everything.

ERIK RHODES

Yeah, Phi. I respect your efforts, but now it's officially just us. And we gotta work even harder. Since Nicky can't help with your solfege right now, I'll do it.

JAGUAR

I'll help, too. Lucky we got all these snacks.

Iesu offers a half-chuckle as he squeezes Phi's shoulder.

ERIK RHODES

Come on, then. Let's go practice.
Take all the stuff you need.

They do, Erik Rhodes seeking out anything that looks like coffee or coffee-flavoured.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAWN

ERIK RHODES, visibly exhausted from practicing all night, stumbles along on his walk to nonetheless naturally stay awake. Being him he still looks beautiful even with bags under his eyes.

He pauses when he hears the gentle notes of a flute playing Edvard Grieg's "Peer Gynt - Morning Mood" a little ways away, and he can't help his curiosity as it leads to the source. He traces it to a balcony where a nightgown laden BIJOU plays.

Her long hair is down and wavy, and though she still looks like a bifauxnen, now there's no doubt whatsoever that she's a woman. She plays with her eyes closed, as if being cradled by the same music she's playing in a kind of sweetheart hold.

She pays absolutely no attention to Erik Rhodes gazing at her, half-asleep and half-tuned in, the very moment when everything hits you that much harder. He can't bring himself to move away until she decides she's done playing and heads back inside.

Once she's gone, the sun's rays seems to finish the job waking him up. Nonetheless he seems to think about their last "meeting," wondering if indeed that was the same Bijou, before heading to the outdoor stage.

Once he's there, he sees PHI, JAGUAR, and IESU, all of them about as rested as he is. Jaguar does some warm-up exercises as Phi stretches her legs, Iesu praying.

PHI

I'm sorry it took so long.

ERIK RHODES

Don't sweat it. This is pretty normal.

JAGUAR

Still, we gotta headline. Honestly feels like a bit of an insult.

Iesu yawns as he tunes his bass guitar. Phi looks up to the sky, furrowing her brows as if to spite Tiriya looking down, smiling at the havoc he's inadvertently wrought. She takes a deep breath.

PHI

I will support you. Don't worry.

The guys only dimly understand what she said, and they fully jolt awake when she begins dancing the shuffle dancing, partly to help them wake up and to stomp out any remaining hangups and misgivings she might have. Her phonk beats are surprisingly restrained, not enough to shake things up.

PHI

Come. It'll help.

The guys exchange looks, Erik Rhodes clearly not sure if he wants to lay Rhode's Golden Violin anywhere near them, even in its case. He holds onto it even when Phi jumps down to the ground and motions for them to join her.

PHI

This one's easy. Step on this foot first.

She then proceeds to dance a walking shuffle dance, her phon beats even more restrained. The guys try to imitate her, but clearly they're too tired to do it properly. Jaguar has a better handle of it than the others, but there's no denying they're all feeling the adrenaline boost.

PHI

Erik, you can put your violin down.
Nothing's gonna happen to it.

Erik Rhodes seems to clue in how she managed to dial back her phonk beats and smiles softly as he puts it on the stage and joins them again for another attempt.

With the second attempt, they seem to get the hang of it, visibly more energised. While in the sky in his cloud of golden stars, STARMAN watches them with a wan smile, once again like he's on the precipice of remembering something.

Ultimately, he decides to play the opening riff of "Big Z" on his star-guitar.

EXT. HEAVEN - TIRIYA'S ALTAR

All the while RAZIEL watches him play, and then he turns his attention back on us, the audience.

RAZIEL

Look how hard your friends work, my child. The fruits of one's own labours are always sweeter than the forbidden version, don't you think?

He smiles softly as once again he shushes you.

RAZIEL

Hush now, my child, you are not being reprimanded. I simply know no better way than to make you see. It's no shame in having a different path to understanding from your peers.

He then procures a bag of konpeito, taking one out and offering it to us.

RAZIEL

You're lucky, you know. You get the best seat for the show. It's only right that you have access to ambrosia, too.

He then takes the initiative and actually feeds the piece to us.

RAZIEL

You wanted to be electrified, did you not? You need the fortification to withstand it, then. Otherwise, you'll be struck.

He then decides that we need another.

RAZIEL

There's no need to be modest, my child. For the path before you, you need to be stronger. It's not enough to simply mark footsteps. You must be worthy. And we wish to see you become such.

He gives us another, and our eyes get heavy despite the sugar boost from the konpeito.

RAZIEL

Don't forget that rest is an important part of the process. You cannot become great if you don't accept work that can only be done in the dark.

He gives us yet another as blacking out looks more and more imminent, smiling as he does so.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME

THE BAND is preparing to play when GUDRUN approaches them, in her corpse paint and outfit, holding her hurdy-gurdy at her side, momentarily catching them by surprise.

IESU

Can we help you?

GUDRUN

You didn't sleep much last night,
did you?

JAGUAR

What's that matter to you?

GUDRUN

We discussed it and wanted to do
you a favour. Seeing as you're the
band to beat, we decided to trade
slots with you and headline.

ERIK RHODES

Thanks, but we got this.

GUDRUN

I insist. Wouldn't want you to fall
asleep during your big moment.

Phi looks about ready to lunge at her when Iesu holds her
back. The whole of MJÖLNIR take to the stage, towering over
Elpis. Their sheer presence pushes the band out of their way
as they set up.

TORVALD

Why don't you take this moment to
go have yourself a beer or two? We
still have some stew as well. Will
put some hair on your chests, make
men out of you.

JAGUAR

That won't be necessary, but
thanks.

Gudrun gets on the stage herself, setting up a seat for
herself as Ragnar sets down his entire drum set. By now
Elpis is standing before the stage, arrested as this band
sets up.

Meanwhile, STARMAN descends, looking much too peaceful for
their liking.

STARMAN

You're not beginning?

ERIK RHODES

What, are you next?

STARMAN

You only needed ask if you wanted
me to take your place.

PHI

Well it's too late now, isn't it,
Biggsy?

STARMAN

Think of it this way; an arrow
flies further the more it's pulled
back.

ERIK RHODES

Man, get lost, would you? If you're
just gonna talk in riddles every
time you open your mouth.

IESU

Erik...

But Starman isn't at all offended; once again it's like he
expected this, even that he planned it. Still smiling warmly
at them, Starman levitates upward, leaving behind a slowly
fading trail of stars.

ERIK RHODES

(to Jaguar)

Bet you feel real vindicated now,
don't ya?

JAGUAR

Hardly. In any case, let's find a
good spot. Scope these guys out
first.

Iesu spots LENI and XIMENA coming towards them.

LENI

You guys, you're not up first?

IESU

Nah, they volunteered.

LENI

Oh. And Tommy... What'd he say?

JAGUAR

Bunch of annoying crap. It's like
he's a whole different person now.

PHI

I'm sorry, everyone. If I knew this
would happen, I wouldn't have taken
him to see the old man.

JAGUAR

Yeah, but if it weren't for you, he
probably wouldn't have come back at
all, so don't beat yourself up.

By now crowds have gathered around them, so much so that
they can't find any other spots. They shrug and remain where
they are, though Jaguar holds Leni close so she doesn't
touch anyone they don't know.

EXT. HELL - RIVER PHLEGETHON

Title card: River Phlegethon

Meanwhile, in hell, the River Phlegethon burns like one big serpent with branching limbs. The fire makes a terrible noise like all the screams of the damned as it rages.

Though it is hard to see with the juxtaposed darkness and light, HESPERA'S hand thunders down a hammer not unlike a corrupted Mjöltnir onto a molten blade within the River. The clangs ring heavy, echoing throughout all of Hell.

BACK TO:

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME

MJÖLNIR's banner hangs proudly above them as Ragnar starts beating his drums complete with little Mjöltnir-shaped paradiddles and Thorsten shreds on his Dáinsleif-shaped guitar and Harald accompanies on his Hofuð-shaped bass guitar.

Their sound hits everyone just like if Thor himself was hammering the ground, and that's before Torvald lets out a particularly brutal death growl for their song "Mimir's Lament."

TORVALD

(in Norwegian death
growl)

"Past, present, melted into the
future, one eye sees all the other
sees nothing. Pieces of a man
spread far and wide, a feast for
the crows."

All of Elpis looks like the music physically hurts them in addition to being terrifying, meanwhile Jaguar and Phi totally dig it. Jaguar headbangs as the audience cheers, particularly at Thorsten's epic guitar riff.

GUDRUN

(in Norwegian, operatic)

"He saw eternity in the clear
waters, forever out of his reach."

Whether they want to or not, Elpis is caught in the wave of the crowd dancing and headbanging to the music, clearly not even hearing anything anymore, just at the mercy of the crowd.

The next song they play, "Lightning Seas," has Thorsten literally electrifying his guitar's strings, the notes almost too fast to keep up. Harald's bass punctuates the riffs as Ragnar beats the hell out of the drums.

After the opening riff cools off a little, Gudrun plays the hurdy-gurdy and Torvald sings normally.

TORVALD
 (in Norwegian)
 "Home's shadow reaches only so far,
 I've been hunting the skies since I
 was born..."

The bridge picks up tempo with mostly Gudrun overshadowing Thorsten.

TORVALD
 (in Norwegian)
 "Ashes of our memories rain
 down..."

GUDRUN
 (in Norwegian)
 "Ashes of our memories rain
 down...."

Like a pounding heart, Harald's bass and Thorsten's guitar hit a crescendo, punctuated by Ragnar's drums.

TORVALD
 (in Norwegian, together
 with Gudrun)
 "Where home once stood, endless
 rain falls!"

Gudrun plays the hurdy-gurdy with gusto as the audience cheers.

TORVALD
 (in Norwegian)
 "I sail the lightning sea, in
 search of you. I'll brave any storm
 you send my way."

GUDRUN
 (in Norwegian)
 "I'll send you typhoons with every
 kiss."

TORVALD
 (in Norwegian)
 "No Leviathan will hold me back."

Gudrun finds Erik Rhodes in the crowd and shoots him a quick smile, that he manages to be completely oblivious to.

Their third song, "Revenge of the Dragons," is back to their aggressive setup, this time with the crowd stomping along with their headbanging. Torvald rests his voice with the "story" of the dragons being played between Thorsten and Gudrun's instruments.

Meanwhile, in the sky, STARMAN watches the show seated in a lotus position. He spots Leni in the crowd and for a moment clues in on her significance, and it seems like he's going to remember her, and by extension, himself.

He manipulates his golden stars into the contour outline of her face, then extending her hair lines with gently cascading stars. For a moment, again, it looks like he's about to make that mental connection.

Ultimately, though, he smiles sadly as the stars forming her face cascade downwards as Mjöltnir begins their next song, "Charge, Sleipnir!" Harald's bass hits just as hard as the titular steed's gallop.

TORVALD
(in Norwegian, death
growl)
"Victory is in our hands, Sleipnir!
Charge! Charge! Onwards!"

Thorsten's guitar matches Torvald's roar in sheer ferocity, and Ragnar's drums intoxicate the crowd like they're going off to war, too.

GUDRUN
(in Norwegian)
"Carry the valkyries' blessings
forth, the hour of Ragnarök draws
near."

The song carries on, pure energy in the form of music.

When the set ends, the crowd goes wild for Mjöltnir and they even part like the Red Sea when Torvald and Gudrun both step down and make their way to Elpis.

TORVALD
How'd you like that?

ERIK RHODES
What?

Torvald laughs heartily and snacks him on the back, nearly knocking him over.

JAGUAR
You're great!

TORVALD
Why don't you join us for a drink?
Come on.

Before they can refuse, they're just about pushed forward by Mjöltnir towards the dining hall.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - DINING HALL

It turns out that MJÖLNIR is just as rowdy indoors as out. They clank big steins, even horns, full of mead and down them like water.

Only JAGUAR and PHI can kind of keep up, the rest of ELPIS (and XIMENA and LENI) barely even making a dent in theirs.

TORVALD

What are you, children? Drink!

LENI

I think I've had enough.

GUDRUN

It's because you're too skinny.
When's the last time you went
hunting?

LENI

Never?

GUDRUN

There's your problem. You need to
eat real food.

(to Erik Rhodes)

You, too! One gust of wind and
you're off to Valhalla!

ERIK RHODES

Pshaw, you know how many people
would kill for this body? I was a
part-time model in high school.

XIMENA

Oh yeah, I have all those photos.
Laminated and everything.

Leni snorts laughing, even moreso when Erik Rhodes doesn't
appear to have heard that admission.

JAGUAR

(to Torvald)

So how do you do that death growl?

He tries it, and Torvald laughs.

TORVALD

What are you, a house cat? Do it
right.

He does it so scarily well that both OZZY and PIROUZ fall
from their hiding place in the ceiling, naturally landing on
their feet. They scurry away, only to come across BELLE
ÉPOQUE entering the dining hall, and Erik Rhodes notices
Bijou in her Baroque officer's outfit.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

You seek to undermine us, Mjölnir?

GUDRUN

"Undermine"?

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

The audience is, how do you say,
hard of hearing after that
debauchery you call a set.

JAGUAR

Speak for yourself, you're at a
concert. Things get loud.

In the background, Pierrot, Watteau, and Dauphin eye Ragnar,
Thorsten, and Harald seated in their own table, as if
silently waiting to be invited over for beer. The latters
don't oblige, clearly unsure if they ought to watch their
leaders bicker instead.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

Are the masses so uncouth that
volume is the only way to reach
them? Perish the thought.

TORVALD

If you're so certain, how come
you're here and not there like the
little lady?

As if on cue, from outside the sound of hyper J-pop
permeates in, and Leni, Ximena and Jaguar rush to the window
to both watch and listen.

On the stage ITO SHINO wears a much more showy ensemble
complete with a pastel wig, dancing on stage just like how
you'd expect an idol to, to her song "Ai no Kis(s)eki."

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Let's go to Love Kiss Station, you
and me, miracle, love kiss!"

LENI

Aww man. I can't believe we
actually met her.

XIMENA

(singing along)

"Miracle love kiss, ice cream
mountain, taste of joy..."

Meanwhile Tempête cringes at the lyrics like he can feel his
braincells committing seppuku en masse.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

It's only right we save all of you.
You don't need to thank us. Hmph!

When he leaves, he even holds his nose high in the air. Bijou wordlessly follows after him, and Watteau, Dauphin, and Pierrot reluctantly come along as well. Jaguar can't help laughing.

JAGUAR

I refuse to believe that guy is serious. That's just too good.

Erik Rhodes is completely oblivious to the Earthlings all shooting him a look as if remembering he exists, and in turn they're surprised that he's looking dreamily on at where Bijou was.

Gudrun takes it upon herself to sit beside him and sidle forward, snapping him out of his reverie.

GUDRUN

You like the wispy types?

ERIK RHODES

I ain't too picky.

LENI

That's news to me.

XIMENA

I knew that.

JAGUAR

Course you did.

GUDRUN

For your own sake, forget about that one. She'll freeze your heart and shatter it to dust. You'll never find it again.

Rather than find that description just a bit melodramatic, Erik Rhodes takes it in and lets it give him ideas, even find it terribly romantic, like she described exactly what he's been after his whole life.

Before long he's up and dashing after Bijou.

GUDRUN

Tsk. He's done for.

IESU

Don't sweat him. He's always been like that.

He sees Phi getting ready to drink another stein full of mead, even shivering a little bit.

IESU

Might wanna slow down a little bit there, Phi.

PHI

I need it. I still have the jitters. Even though I said I would support you.

IESU

You'll be fine, Phi. It's only scary because it's your first time.

He gently stops her from downing more of the mead than she probably should, even though she's not even a little bit drunk. He steals a look in Leni's direction, too.

IESU

And don't worry about Starman, either. Don't send him to Hell or anything like that.

Phi absorbs his words, and then sighs as she pushes away her stein.

PHI

Okay, I won't.

Iesu smiles warmly and hugs her with one arm, and she relents and lets herself be held.

EXT. HEAVEN - TIRIYA'S ALTAR

The darkness of sleep lifts, like we're waking up. RAZIEL once again watches the concert but soon clues in that he has company again. With a smile he turns his attention back to us.

RAZIEL

It's all exciting, is it not, my child? Tired as you are, it's impossible to deny the energy of a good concert. Maybe that's why you decided to steal thunder, no? Tsk, tsk, tsk.

Despite the tongue-clicking, he doesn't look all that disappointed.

RAZIEL

This actually reminds me of a good story. Of that time I dealt with the snake problem in Heaven. I think you'll appreciate this one. The snake problem we had wasn't just that they were many, oh no. There was one but it had eight heads, and eight tails. Each with an elemental gift.

He chuckles.

RAZIEL

It wasn't enough to just strike one head, and besides they were too nimble to stay still, all they wanted was to devour Heaven. So I had to steal some thunder of my own.

He appears to pull the SPEAR OF GUNGNIR from behind his back.

RAZIEL

Ah, I can see you're wondering why I'd need this. It was the simplest solution. I may have all the time I need, but even I don't have infinite patience. I couldn't allow Heaven to become its domain. So I threw it, caught all eight of its heads, and all eight of its tails.

He chuckles again.

RAZIEL

Oh, my child, do not be naive. It's the natural order. That which does not belong, will simply not be permitted. Failure to do so is the furthest from kindness.

He smiles gently as we the audience shiver ever-so-slightly.

RAZIEL

I see you wish to know why I'm telling you this. Why, indeed. Nonetheless, since you're awake, why don't you watch the show with me? It won't do to remain asleep all the way through. You certainly have the energy now.

He smiles still, though his eyes are maybe still a little too sharp for that to be all there is to his speech. For good measure, he chuckles one more time when again the veil of sleep seems to drape over us again.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME

ERIK RHODES tries in vain to get through the CROWD OF FANS, even moreso when they're his fans, all clamouring for his attention.

From his point of view, the hat that BIJOU wears steadily drowns in the sea of faces.

He sighs and puts on his best smile as he greets the fans.

ERIK RHODES

Hey, thanks for coming out. You having fun? Good stuff, hope you like what we have planned. All right, you take care now.

He looks again and sure enough, she's gone. He resigns himself to paying the adoring fans attention.

ITO SHINO is still performing, this time it's her song "Juuichigatsu no Niji," not the super energetic feel of "Ai no Kis(s)eki" but rather a mellow ballad. She seems to zero in on Erik Rhodes even with a crowd this thick.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Mr Cloud, why do you cry all the time? Why are you so grey? Is it because you miss Miss Sun?"

Her adoring fans wave banners bearing her face, lighting up fan wands and just vibing to the song, all while Erik Rhodes tends to the ones paying him attention. Finally, he excuses himself and decides to watch the show since he's already there.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Let's bake a cake of rainbows together..."

Erik Rhodes naturally looks around for Bijou, for all the good it'll do. He gives up not long after, and then jumps when he sees STARMAN standing beside him, effortlessly signing autographs and taking selfies with fans.

STARMAN

Ah. We meet again.

ERIK RHODES

Gotta tell you, man. I do not dig this new persona of yours.

STARMAN

Persona?

ERIK RHODES

Yeah, I get you're amnesiac and all that, but the bit's way old. Maybe Phi's right to call the old man out every chance she gets.

No sooner than he says this, though, does he flinch ever-so-slightly when he looks up, like Tiriya will strike him with lightning.

STARMAN

So like... You really don't
remember anything at all? Like how
you and I, and Nicky, created
Elpis?

He sighs when Starman doesn't even shake his head; the
concept is that foreign to the latter.

ERIK RHODES

Look, I said what I said before.
I'm not gonna act like I didn't.
But...

No matter how much he knows he has to say it, he just can't.
Starman still smiles placidly.

STARMAN

You'd do well to shed your
attachments, too.

ERIK RHODES

The hell are you talking about?

STARMAN

Attachments are chains, but in your
case, they're traps. Let them go,
and you'll sail to new heights.
It's my sincere wish that you do.

ERIK RHODES

Man, get outta here.

Again, rather than looking any degree of hurt, Starman
simply smiles as he levitates, like once again he
successfully shed an attachment he didn't know he had. Erik
Rhodes, meanwhile, does his best to either hide his face or
feign a smile for everyone around him.

Ito Shino begins a new song, "Kocchi mite."

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Your eyes look everywhere but my
way, why is that? I want you all to
myself, don't you know how much I
love you?"

She zeroes in on Erik Rhodes in the crowd, however
impossible that looks, even pointing him out with a "come
hither" motion that she seamlessly incorporates into her
stage dance.

ITO SHINO

"Look at me, come to me, don't be
with anyone else..."

At that moment, naturally, Erik Rhodes spots Bijou standing
on the side of the stage alongside the rest of BELLE ÉPOQUE,

Tempête stepping up, prompting Ito Shino to stop dancing.

Though their dialogue isn't audible, Ito Shino nods and bows to the adoring crowd before sauntering off the stage.

Belle Époque readies themselves as the crowd gets bigger, boxing Erik Rhodes in. He tries to get closer and some of them allow him.

Before long, Belle Époque begins their song "Le Musée des Souvenirs" with Watteau on his guitar that looks almost like a harp, Dauphin on stand-up bass, and Pierrot on taiko drums.

Sure enough, Bijou begins playing her silver flute, and she's all Erik Rhodes can see.

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"I kept your laughter safe in a box, your looks immortalised in a portrait. The touch of your hand away into the wind..."

The audience, rather than cheering, is rapt as they watch them perform, their presence is that awe-inspiring. Erik Rhodes, even if he's just watching Bijou, feels the music flowing through him several times over.

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"Your lips by my ear tell me a story I've heard a billion times, for the first time. The scent of your perfume clings in my memories..."

Bijou's flute especially punctuates the lyrics, so much so that even Erik Rhodes feels a tear forming in his eye; he understands those words perfectly, even as he touches the spot on his forehead that Eurydice kissed.

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"My museum of memories remains open, but the one visitor it opens for never arrives. I have only the company of ghosts."

Watteau and Dauphin gently accompany on their instruments while Pierrot taps along on his drums, and Tempête holds himself as he sings, like he's doing his best not to let his heart spill out before the audience.

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"My blood is the ink I record my visits with, my heart where it's
(MORE)

TEMPÊTE (cont'd)
 all written. I write it with your
 fingers, seal the memories with
 your kisses."

For just a moment, Bijou opens her eyes and seems to make eye contact with Erik Rhodes, his heart skipping a beat. He's completely oblivious to the fans around him flinching like they all felt an awful presence at that exact second.

Nonetheless they crowd around him to savour the music some more as it ends.

He's the only one who cheers, but he stops when he sees it for himself. Belle Époque begins a new song, "Marianne."

TEMPÊTE
 (in French)
 "Rivers of the purest gold frame
 your face, your eyes the windows of
 my dreams. What truths will you
 make me say when we share this
 wine?"

As the music continues, Erik Rhodes closes his eyes, remembering Eurydice, even feeling her ghostly embrace.

TEMPÊTE
 (in French)
 "I want to give you all of me and
 more, but my body is a finite loop;
 if only you could break me so I can
 love you that much more..."

Erik Rhodes understands the lyrics all too well, and meanwhile Bijou softly plays the flute in a way that makes your heart shiver.

TEMPÊTE
 (in French)
 "All the words I can't say, they
 circle my neck like an invisible
 pair of hands. I wish they were
 yours, so my voice can finally come
 through."

Erik Rhodes's trance is broken when he seems to feel a familiar person beside him; Ito Shino, who rather than looking any kind of miffed at being kicked offstage by them, nonetheless stands rapt.

She stands maybe a little too close to Erik Rhodes, but he doesn't fight it; there's simply too many others around them.

She steals a sidelong glance at him, his own gaze locked on Bijou. She looks at her, too, and seems to make a quiet decision.

Meanwhile Belle Époque begins their third song, "Le Voleur de la Nuit," Bijou's flute sharper this time.

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"The Thief of the Night leaves a trail of wails behind, one house richer all the while. He comes across a lonely room where a maiden sleeps, nothing to her name..."

Ito Shino now leaves, the crowd parting like the Red Sea for her. All the while Erik Rhodes continues to watch them play.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Mjölnir having left, LENI, XIMENA, JAGUAR, PHI, and IESU are left watching the concert away from the crowd.

JAGUAR

I hate to say it, but they can really play.

XIMENA

You guys can still knock it out of the park. You're the galaxy's finest!

IESU

Thanks, Ximena.

Shortly after, LOR SALVIATOR enters the room, OZZY and PIROUZ behind him carrying large instrument cases.

LOR SALVIATOR

Greetings Miss Philipa, gentlemen. Is Mr Rhodes not with you?

IESU

He's watching the show out there.

LOR SALVIATOR

I see. Regardless, I've brought you your new instruments. Had them tailor made for you by the finest craftsmen on Vangelis.

Respectively, Ozzy and Pirouz give Iesu and Jaguar their new bass and guitar. Iesu's new bass is made of beautiful malachite with golden strings, while Jaguar's is made of onyx with a garnet pick guard and pure white strings.

Jaguar gives his a test strum using his longer nails, and the crisp sound awes everyone. Iesu plucks the first few notes of "Pegasus," the reverb hitting just as nice.

LOR SALVIATOR

As for you, Miss Philipa, I have these.

He procures a particularly nice-looking shoebox and gives it to Phi. She opens them to reveal brilliant teal boots with white soles and wing details, in a midnight blue silk pillow, no less.

PHI
(in Russian)
Uncle, thank you!

She tackles him in a hug, and naturally he smiles and hugs her back.

LOR SALVIATOR
You're most welcome, my dear. My wife has also sent new uniforms for everyone, and apologies for not being able to make the show.

Ozzy and Pirouz give everyone boxes bearing the uniforms, even to Leni and Ximena.

LOR SALVIATOR
Is Sir Orpheus still unwell, come to think of it?

IESU
Yeah. We got our work cut out for us.

LOR SALVIATOR
I see... She's also sent a uniform for Sir Starman, should fortune change.

Leni shifts, which naturally Jaguar notices.

JAGUAR
Thanks, Lor. We'll make sure he gets it if things change.

As if on cue, however, STARMAN enters the room, leaving behind a fading trail of stars as he walks.

LOR SALVIATOR
Ah, Sir Starman! We were just speaking of you. Lovely to have you join us.

LENI
We all got uniforms and stuff. But uh, guess you don't need a new guitar or anything, eh?

He laughs uneasily, even sadly. But of course Starman simply looks kindly on.

STARMAN
I actually came to see you.

LENI

Me?

It's impossible for her to downplay the timid hope bubbling up inside.

STARMAN

Can we talk?

Leni shoots a quick look at both Ximena and Jaguar for support, and she gulps as she nods.

LENI

Yeah, of course. Excuse me, everyone.

She rushes off to meet with Starman, leading him just outside the dining hall, her heart thumping hard in her chest. When they find a suitably private corner, she steels herself as best she can.

LENI

So what's up?

STARMAN

I have to be honest with you. Since we've both been here, I've been thinking a lot.

LENI

About?

STARMAN

Everyone remembers someone with my face. I myself can't help feeling the shadow of that person in the back of my mind.

LENI

Tommy... That's great. It means you're starting to remember yourself.

Her smile comes from the depths of her heart.

STARMAN

I wonder, though. If I am remembering and not just feigning to.

LENI

What do you mean?

STARMAN

When you call me "Tommy," I can tell you remember someone different than the rest of them do.

LENI

I mean, that's actually kinda true.
Everyone knows someone differently
from everyone else. And you...
Well, you've changed a lot.

She searches for the words, as if partially to admit it to herself moreso than to reaffirm him.

LENI

You became a star, Tommy. You're
pretty much a different person no
matter what... Aren't you?

He takes these words in, like they make mental connections like constellations in his mind. You can even see it in his face as it happens.

STARMAN

I never thought of it that way. I
suppose who I am now is is
incongruent to who I was used to
be.

Leni nods ever-so-slightly, like as much as it hurts, it's the plain and simple truth, and all she can do is accept it.

STARMAN

And yet who I used to be still
calls out to me.

Leni's breath catches, the glimmer of hope back in her eye.

STARMAN

Somehow, looking at you...

Their eyes meet, and Leni's face flashes scarlet. The words are on the tip of his tongue, but they hang in the air nonetheless, and Leni smiles softly.

LENI

Don't sweat it. Things like this
always resist when you push them.

STARMAN

I see... So that's how it is.

He nods, and pats Leni on the shoulder.

STARMAN

Tell the others I wish them well on
their set. I'll be watching.

Before she can respond, he leaves her. Leni goes back to the dining hall in something of a stupor, Ximena scurrying back to her spot to avoid suspicion.

JAGUAR

What'd he want?

LENI

I don't wanna jinx it, but I think
he's not entirely gone after all.

IESU

Thank God.

Phi rolls her eyes just a little bit, but nonetheless grins.

LENI

He said he'll be watching your
show.

She then clues in.

LENI

Aw, dammit! I didn't give him his
uniform!

Jaguar smiles crookedly.

JAGUAR

Serves him right. If he wants it,
he'd better earn it.

Leni can't help cracking a smile of her own. Then, ERIK
RHODES enters the dining hall in something of a daze, like
he had all his emotions reinvigorated.

ERIK RHODES

Phi.

PHI

Da.

ERIK RHODES

I'm counting on you.
(to Iesu and Jaguar)
You two as well.

XIMENA

Leni and I'll cheer you on. And,
uh, Starman said he will, too.

ERIK RHODES

He did?

LENI

Yeah, he did.

Erik Rhodes processes this, a thousand different emotions
coursing through his face before ending with a fire in his
eyes.

ERIK RHODES

He damn well better do at least
that much. Otherwise, Phi, you have
my okay to yeet him straight to
(MORE)

ERIK RHODES (cont'd)
Hell. I'll be damned if we lose our
title to any of these others, with
or without him.

Iesu sighs in exasperation as Phi nods, a fire burning in her eyes now.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - NIGHT

By now THE BAND looks more awake, rocking their new uniforms. They're wearing star-studded shirts and pants, though Phi has on a pair of shorts.

The crowds all around them are so thick that the stage acts as a kind of spotlight because no one else is on it, just around.

ERIK RHODES
Alright. Let's do this.

He readies Rhode's Golden Violin and Jaguar plays the opening notes of the now phonk-version of "Flipside" as Iesu accompanies on bass, and Phi lets herself feel the music before taking the mic.

PHI
"I look in the mirror and see a
stranger, not even my name is mine
anymore. But whispers in the sky
call out to me..."

Privately the band winces at the lyrics but nonetheless keep playing as the audience just about drowns them out anyway. STARMAN literally looks down on them from where he's levitating, like he's watching any old band play.

PHI
"Rise, rise, meet yourself on the
other side..."

She catches his eye, and as the music swells, she decides to stage dance with each phonk beat punctuating the verse, making the crowd go even wilder. Just like that, any performance anxiety she had no longer has a chance.

When the song ends, the roar of the crowd is deafening, but the energy of the band is electric. They exchange looks and grin as they start the phonk version of "Century," and Phi doesn't sing this time but rather peppers the song with phonk beats.

Erik Rhodes does his absolute best to not fall over or God forbid, drop the violin. The more they get into the song and with the cheers of the audience, Phi's phonk beats get more and more aggressive.

Finally, shooting a final look at Starman, Phi decides enough is enough and uses a phonk beat as a launchpad to

leap up to where Starman is and cuts a forward flip kick hooking him along as she hurtles down with him.

Everyone present scrambles to jump out of the impact zone before Phi phonk drops all of them straight to Hell, but to their surprise, Starman's stars cushion their descent while he still levitates, forming his star-guitar.

His guitar strum coincides perfectly with his feet landing flat on the floor.

To Erik Rhodes, Iesu, and Jaguar's initial surprise, he plays the guitar portion of the song just like he'd always known it.

Naturally the crowd goes wild, especially as the crispness of the star-guitar lands with literal stars showering them all like particle magic.

PHI

"I marked the years gone by like
rings on a tree, counting down the
minutes until you find me..."

Starman effortlessly plays along, even his beads of sweat shining like little wet stars. His fingers glide up and down the neck of his star-guitar, his stars shining bright like pieces of the sun.

From different parts of the crowd, MJÖLNIR nods along, BELLE ÉPOQUE stands stoic, and ITO SHINO gazes in awe, the stars reflected in her eyes.

The women of the bands all are following Erik Rhodes sawing at Rhode's Golden Violin, the glint almost as brilliant as Starman himself.

When they're done that song, the crowd erupts in applause, and though Erik Rhodes is glistening with sweat, he readies his bow and starts "Eurydice, Rose of Rhodes."

The audience falls silent as he plays, his eyes closed as the love he feels translates into his violin.

From the crowd, Ito Shino holds her heart and then covers her mouth like she's been hit by cupid's arrow. Gudrun raises an eyebrow, nodding along.

Though he can't possibly see her due to the darkness and how expansive the crowd is, Erik Rhodes opens his eyes searching for Bijou, whose face is naught but a porcelain mask holding her emotions in.

He then really leans into the music, so much so that his red rose aura fully blooms. Even LENI and XIMENA in the crowd gasp and tear up. His playing gets almost desperate as it reaches the crescendo, everyone paying attention holding their breath like they hope the song reaches its recipient.

When he finishes, his heart can easily be mistaken for Iesu playing the bass out of turn, or Phi hitting a badly timed phonk beat. Nonetheless the split second of silence following it is soon replaced by deafening applause.

He sighs like he offered more than just his heart to everyone on a platter, laughing weakly at the extended applause as he bows theatrically. Ximena throws him a towel and he wipes his forehead and neck with it.

ERIK RHODES

Jag. Do yours.

Jaguar clears his throat with a quick glance at Starman, and finds Leni in the crowd. Both of them share the same bated breath at the hypotenuse of their triangle as Jaguar begins the opening notes to Lenore.

Clearly everyone in Elpis barring Phi can feel the tension as he does so, half-expecting Starman to remember the song, but he doesn't. Jaguar continues and a feeling of warmth spreads throughout the crowd.

Ximena hugs Leni from the side as the latter wipes her eyes.

Starman, meanwhile, nods along, like he's hearing the song for the first time. For just a moment it looks like it's fitting an old footprint in his mind, even like he's realising what it means that Jaguar's playing it openly, but that glimmer is gone as soon as it came.

When the song ends, the crowd goes wild as Jaguar bows. They call for an encore, and Iesu looks at the rest of the band as if wondering if he ought to play "Pegasus."

ERIK RHODES

This next one, goes out to the ones
who can't be here with us right
now. As you all know, Nicky's sick
and Doomer's being a family man.

He grins as the audience cheers.

ERIK RHODES

Now, I know y'all enjoyed the guest
acts, they're pretty good, right?

The audience cheers, and he smirks.

ERIK RHODES

Well, this is only the start of the
show. Day one. What's say we remind
you who the real winners are? Last
song of the night, here's
"Champion!"

He nods to Phi who stomps out the drum beat in a phonk remix of "Champion," accompanied by Iesu's bass beats. The crowd cheers as Jaguar comes in on guitar, Starman levitating as

if blessing them as Erik Rhodes joins in on the violin.

PHI

"Your dreams lie in pieces, nothing more than dust, you think you're done, you won't make it through the night. But what if I told you, if you can't get through the thorns, you'll never see the light?"

She stomps out heavy phonk beats as the crowd cheers, even Mjölnir and Ito Shino joining in. Bijou and the rest of Belle Époque simply keep spectating, even nodding along in some parts like they're seeing the method in the madness.

Phi shoots a look at Starman, his arms out to manipulate the cascade of stars like angel wings, his body like a cross.

PHI

"The battles you've won aren't over yet, you're a champion, don't ever forget. Your name will be spelled out in constellations. I tell you, your name will be spelled out in constellations."

For good measure, Starman's stars cover the air above the crowd and maybe you really can see them spell your name. Naturally as the stars gently shower the crowd, they cheer.

The band all exchange looks and grins as they finish the song to maddening applause, all the while Starman levitates upwards out of sight.

ERIK RHODES

Thank you! See you tomorrow, you absolute champions!

The audience somehow gets even louder as they exit the stage.

EXT. HEAVEN - TIRIYA'S ALTAR

Now, in Heaven, TIRIYA's smile literally beams, and RAZIEL's own smile is more subdued, polite.

TIRIYA

Such a good job Philonoe's done! Raziél, you have prepared the gifts?

RAZIEL

Of course, sire.

TIRIYA

Then, before they go to sleep, have it delivered to them, won't you? Alongside Ito Shino's shipment.

(MORE)

TIRIYA (cont'd)
Don't want those chocolates to
melt.

RAZIEL
Very good, sire.

He bows, and with a wave of his hand several STACKS OF GIFTS levitate. The sound of a roaring engine gradually gets nearer, barely covered by the sounds of "Un Bel di, Vedremo" from Madama Butterfly, as sung by Maria Callas.

Sure enough, both belong to the GAGARIN CAR, still brilliantly red as if freshly painted. When it comes to a stop, its bonnet pulls back into convertible mode as Raziel puts the gifts in. The result is that The Car can just barely hold them all in and yet somehow, it does.

RAZIEL
Off with you, now.

He slaps the back bumper just like you would [probably not do to] a horse, and after changing its tune to "Nessun Dorma" from Turandot as sung by Pavarotti, its engine roars to life and it throttles away just like a race car that happens to fly.

TIRIYA
Also, Raziel, I nearly forgot to mention. Good work on paving the way for our esteemed guests.

RAZIEL
'Twas no trouble, sire. In fact, I barely had to do anything. They have a bright enough beacon to lead the way even in the very trenches.

TIRIYA
Wonderful, wonderful. I do love when everything goes according to plan. Even fate agrees with us now.

Raziel simply smiles and nods.

TIRIYA
Do be a dear and get me some more ambrosia, would you, Raziel?

RAZIEL
Of course, sire.

He bows and sets to work.

EXT. HELL - RIVER STYX

We appear to be on a small boat sailing along a ghostly river in otherwise near-total darkness. You can feel the ice in the air, the very touch of death omnipresent. Nonetheless

HESPERA, with just enough of a chiaroscuro that you can see her silhouette but none of her features, rows.

When she does, the oar hitting the water elicits wails of pain that just as quickly fade away.

A frozen sun hangs in the sky, its light long since trapped.

When a clearing is reached, she turns to face us. Though her face is entirely invisible, you can nonetheless still see the face she's making, like this boat ride is romantic.

HESPERA

You want it all. Still, you want it all.

She gets closer, once again her face still invisible. You can hear her breath, even smell her musk.

HESPERA

I'll give you something more.

The boat still moves forward in the ghostly river, now punctuated by a shivering sigh that cuts straight to your bones.

Hespera sings the intro of "Kanashimi no Belladonna" by Mayumi Tachibana, complete with the suggestive sighs and trembles.

HESPERA

"Belladonna. Ah, belladonna.
Belladonna, ah, belladonna. Ah,
belladonna... Ah... Belladonna,
ah...!"

By now she's so close it's entirely too late to resist her.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - SPARE ROOM 3

A pure white handkerchief is now embroidered with BIJOU'S kiss, held together by her slender fingers.

Those same slender fingers now hold another pure white cloth to her face.

She does all this before a mirror in her designated room, her flute waiting for her to pick it up for another midnight serenade to nobody in particular.

She looks at herself in the mirror, her blue eyes feigning at giving nothing away even in this moment.

She's once again in her nightgown, the straps barely even on her porcelain-white shoulders, her hair in a single abandoned braid.

Finally, she picks up her flute and begins playing Satie's "Gymnopédie No. 1." She clearly plays to calm herself, as

her true emotions keep wanting to bubble up until finally she stops.

With a quick glance at her own reflection, she doesn't actually play a new song but rather tentatively discerns the finger placements for "Eurydice, Rose of Rhodes."

Her concentration is broken by the sounds of the GAGARIN CAR hurtling closer to the courtyard, still playing "Nessun Dorma" on its speakers, but this time it's bass-boosted thanks to the subwoofer in the trunk.

She can't help looking outside to see what all the fuss is about. The moment The Car arrives, it keeps playing the song until LOR SALVIATOR comes out to greet it.

LOR SALVIATOR
Well hello again, old friend, how
are you?

The Car responds with an enthusiastic acceleration.

LOR SALVIATOR
I'll be but half a moment.

He excuses himself to go back to the palace interior, but PHI comes out first.

LOR SALVIATOR
Ah, Miss Philipa. Excellent timing.
Gifts from Lord Tiriya.

PHI
From the old man?

She scurries over and gasps at the sight of all the gifts, and even the extras. They spill out the moment all of its doors open on their own.

Lor Salviator returns with the rest of THE BAND.

JAGUAR
What's all this?

ERIK RHODES
Gifts from Heaven. Literally.

Iesu clasps his hands and nods, wordlessly thanking Tiriya as Phi inspects what is what. Lor Salviator helps stack the boxes more nearly on the ground.

Phi can't help giggling, even though she's clearly embarrassed by all these sudden riches. Iesu grins crookedly, seeing right through her. She playfully pushes him away with a parcel.

PHI
This one's yours.

IESU

Aw, He really didn't have to.

He opens it up and it's a pendant of METATRON'S CUBE.

IESU

It's beautiful.

ERIK RHODES

I'll say.

He is of course referring to his own gift, a hand mirror, as he checks out his reflection. Jaguar rolls his eyes at the absolutely terrible joke, especially as Erik Rhodes slicks his hair back.

LOR SALVIATOR

Sir Jaguar, this one is for you.

He gives him a parcel, and opening it reveals that it's a new guitar strap.

JAGUAR

Heh. I was thinking I needed a new one. Thanks, man.

LOR SALVIATOR

Most of these are for you, Miss Philipa. I'll take the one for Sir Orpheus up to him.

ERIK RHODES

He's just Nicky now, Lor. Even gave me the title himself.

LOR SALVIATOR

Pray pardon, old habits do die rather hard, don't they? Then shall I call you Sir Orpheus from now on?

Erik Rhodes seriously considers this for a moment.

ERIK RHODES

Nah. That's just corny. In fact... You don't even really have to call me Mr Rhodes anymore. Just Erik is fine.

LOR SALVIATOR

I'm afraid I cannot do that, Mr Rhodes. I simply hold you in too high regard to speak so casually to you, even if you request it.

Erik Rhodes can't help snorting in laughter, which even horrifies him for just a second to be caught being so inelegant. He clears his throat.

ERIK RHODES
All right, totally fair.

Meanwhile Phi blushes something impressive looking inside some of the parcels, partly out of flattery and partly out of sheer embarrassment, particularly when she takes out a vintage court dress not unlike one a Russian noblewoman would have worn.

JAGUAR
Woah. Leni would pay good money to see you wear that.

PHI
(in Russian)
Not in either of your lives.

IESU
I bet it would look really nice on you, Phi.

Naturally this makes her blush even more, even tap her index fingertips together. Meanwhile Erik Rhodes notices the entirely untouched packages in the trunk of The Car.

PHI
He gave me a whole wardrobe. Hats and shoes and everything.

ERIK RHODES
Ooh! He sent more Japanese snacks! I call dibs on the collagen rose candy!

JAGUAR
There anything savoury in there? Like some barbecue chips or something?

ERIK RHODES
I dunno, I can't read any of this. Look for yourself.

Bijou turns her attention away from them and plays the opening notes of Belle Époque's song "Les Bijoux," only this time quiet enough to not leave the room.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - DINING HALL

The next morning, the boys of THE BAND all stare at PHI in one of her new noblewoman's outfits, and she happens to have perfect makeup and hair to go with it. XIMENA beams, LENI gushing.

Several plates of food sit untouched before them all.

XIMENA
Do I have a future in fashion, or what?

PHI
(in Russian)
Kill me.

When she sees how Iesu is looking at her like God himself took his breath away, however, she hates it a little less.

ERIK RHODES
I gotta say, you made her look like an actual woman. That couldn't have been easy.

To say that Phi goes from zero to 100 real fast is the understatement of the millennium. If looks could kill, Erik Rhodes would be several kinds of dead, nevermind that she literally has him by the throat.

PHI
(in Russian)
What'd you just say, you little--?!

It's hard to tell what she would have done were it not for Iesu making her let go, though for good measure he smacks Erik Rhodes upside the head.

LENI
Honestly, Erik. You've been around guys too long. Even if the same is true for Phi.

ERIK RHODES
Aw, relax. She knows I'm just messing around.

LENI
Still, what the heck.

PHI
He's right, Leni. If I did it on my own, I'd just look like a clown.

Leni scoffs, completely at a loss, and Ximena can't help laughing at that little fail.

STARMAN then enters the room on foot, stopping when he sees Phi.

PHI
What? Are you also just realising I'm a woman, too?

Starman looks her over, and Phi's brows nearly eclipse her whole face while her mouth fights back with a feigned laugh, just like the "bad poker face" meme, and she practically goes Super Saiyan the longer he does it.

Iesu sighs as he claps a hand on her shoulder, breaking the tension.

IESU

Phi, you can't kick him to Heaven.

PHI

Oh, come on. The old man made a star out of him, now I can make him a shooting star.

IESU

Even if you did, his memories aren't gonna come back.

Starman doesn't meet Leni's eyes as she gazes at him, the words washing over her. She feigns a smile.

LENI

Well, no matter what, Tommy, come have breakfast with us. Even if you don't remember, you shouldn't eat by yourself.

Before he or anyone can protest, Leni makes him sit, humming as she puts together a plate for him. The corner of Jaguar's mouth tugs, but that's all the mind he pays it.

STARMAN

You're all such kind people.

ERIK RHODES

We're your friends, man. Besides, you're one of us, despite everything.

STARMAN

One of you...

He pauses, once again like he's on the edge of remembering, and all it takes is the most inconsequential detail to make literally everything make sense.

As before, however, that spark burns out much too fast, and he's back to "normal" as Leni puts his plate before him.

LENI

C'mon, eat up. It's gonna get real crazy today.

STARMAN

Thank you.

She maintains her smile as he does, in fact, eat, though if you look closely you can see the tinges of sadness. She sits down next to Jaguar, leaning on him as he holds her.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME

Sure enough, once again in the courtyard, it's like the entire galaxy has come to watch the show. OZZY and PIROUZ are already worn out.

OZZY

Is it just me, or are there even
more attendants now?

PIROUZ

We need a bigger planet.

Nonetheless they still smile and show the new guests the
way.

OZZY

Hey, Pirouz, remember yesterday?

PIROUZ

Not now, Ozzy.

Ozzy nods, steeling himself as MJÖLNIR approaches them in
new outfits, their collective march naturally pushing other
guests away, though of course they still chatter at being in
the presence of celebrities.

OZZY

We saved a special spot for you.
Right up front.

GUDRUN

Thank you, darlings.

She gives each of them a silver piece, and Ozzy tries to
bite one as they pass. When they get to their spots, they
see BELLE ÉPOQUE are seated right next to them. Nonetheless
they take their seats, their three other members exchanging
uneasy glances at being separated by their leaders.

TEMPÊTE

(with aristocratic French
accent)

Good of you to join us.

TORVALD

You got your work cut out for you.

TEMPÊTE

Hmph.

Meanwhile Gudrun regards Bijou, searching her profile for
any chinks in the mask, and of course there are none. She
simply sits like a lady and waits for the show to start.

ITO SHINO soon joins them.

TORVALD

Ah, little lady! Are you nervous?

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

A little bit.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

And yet you think you're on our level.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

I'm sorry?

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

If you had the good sense to come here on your own and fancy yourself a competent adversary, you'd know better than to be "nervous," child.

For a moment Ito Shino is lost for words, her nervousness even being broken by the sting of his words, but soon she finds herself being dwarfed by Bijou who takes her hand.

At that moment, Ito Shino clearly doesn't know what to feel first. Her heart thumps almost as hard as a bass beat, and you can feel how hot her face is becoming with how red it is.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

Ano... Bijin-san?

She flashes pure scarlet now at the malapropism, but Bijou doesn't seem at all affected. She simply holds her hands and seems to inspect them and her face quietly, and if you look closely there's not a single bit of coldness in it.

What seals it, though, is when Bijou touches Ito Shino's face, the difference between her white, slim fingers and Ito Shino's reddening, gently curved face quite pronounced.

When her lips move to speak, Ito Shino can't hear a single word. She passes out, and Bijou simply looks a little confused but nonetheless picks her up like she would a child and sits down.

GUDRUN

(to Torvald, in
Norwegian)

At least she's not nervous anymore.

Torvald chuckles and little by little the crowd simmers down as LOR SALVIATOR takes to the stage.

LOR SALVIATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much once again for coming out to day two of our special show. As you've seen, Elpis's lineup has changed. But without further ado, here is Sir Starman.

The audience applauds and STARMAN descends once again like a gently falling star, star-guitar already in hand, playing the first notes of David Bowie's "Changes."

STARMAN

"Still don't know what I was waiting for, and my time was running wild a million dead-end streets. And everytime I thought I'd got it made, it seemed the taste was not so sweet..."

He pauses, once again like he's experiencing déjà vu, but he carries on.

STARMAN

"So I turned myself to face me, but I've never caught a glimpse of how the others must see the fake. I'm much too fast to take that test. Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes, turn and face the strain, ch-ch-changes..."

The audience cheers except for the front row rival bands, and Ito Shino rouses awake and realises she was asleep in Bijou's arms, and is about to apologise when she sees they're in the middle of the show.

Nonetheless Bijou smiles softly at her, and she sits beside her, still scarlet, like she went way further than she had any right to go.

Starman's next song is his very own "Big Z," but as he plays he seems to once again be on the precipice of remembering. His strums slow down, and for a moment Lor Salvator in particular looks like he ought to intervene.

But then Starman looks like he meant to do that, and his star-guitar sprouts another neck and while he plays on that new one, the sounds on the previous one seem to loop. Naturally everyone cheers at this and he himself grins.

With each strum and chord change, though it's daytime, a beam of stars shoot from his guitar and explode like fireworks. They get even more impressive as he levitates and the trajectory lets him shoot whole constellations in the sky.

All the while THE BAND sets up on the stage. When Starman descends once again onto the stage, the crowd goes wild, and Starman excuses himself as Lor Salvator takes to the stage once again.

LOR SALVIATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, Starman! Now, without further ado, please put your hands together for Elpis!

Phi, in her uniform alongside the boys, nods as the crowd cheers. She looks up at what she can see of the sky as if to silently ask Tiriya if he's watching. When she nods, Iesu begins the opening notes for their new song, "Eclipse," Jaguar joining soon after.

Phi doesn't sing for it, but rather punctuates the song with phonk beats via hardstyle dancing, resulting in maybe a fraction of the aggression that comes so naturally to Mjöltnir.

While getting in the zone, for just a brief moment she gasps and seems to freeze as she picks up on a familiar presence.

But before anyone can notice this pause, she fakes out a stronger phonk beat resulting in a louder cheer from the crowd, some even attempting her move like they would Ito Shino's.

Erik Rhodes then comes in on the violin, giving a brief respite from the aggressive beats. Ito Shino's attention is fully caught, and even Bijou visibly tunes in. Gudrun nods even as Rhode's Golden Violin really might be the sun in his hands.

The last "verse" has Phi dropping even harder phonk beats as she dances, the crowd enjoying the miniature earthquakes each one brings. When they're done they're all soaked with sweat but it's all worth it; even Belle Époque clap for them.

Erik Rhodes's eyes even meet with Bijou's, and to his surprise, she doesn't look away. He clears his throat.

ERIK RHODES

Now, this next one, is a new one of mine. It's called... Well, it actually doesn't have a name. In any case, hope you enjoy.

The crowd applauds as he readies his bow and steadies his violin. He glides his bow across the strings to play what will ultimately be known as "Memento."

Just like with "Eurydice, Rose of Rhodes," his red rose aura fully blooms, and when he closes his eyes and lets the music embrace him, Bijou is the only one in the crowd. Each note plays with romance just like Belle Époque's lyrics.

Though he himself imagines only Bijou in the audience, Gudrun and Ito Shino similarly imagine the reverse with him.

When he finishes playing, he's stunned by the applause he gets, especially after the reverent silence. He sees Bijou clapping for him, eyes fully locked on him, and he's clearly in his own world as the applause continues.

LATER

During Ito Shino's show after, where she sings "Ai no Shashin," Erik Rhodes has Ozzy act as his bodyguard to ensure no one gets in the way of his search for Bijou. It takes a little while, but they do find her at the front of the crowd watching Ito Shino.

ITO SHINO
(in Japanese)
"Our pictures together used to just
be sepia, now they're
rainbow-coloured..."

He clears his throat when he gets directly beside her. Bijou doesn't turn around, and he scratches the back of his head. At a loss for what to do next, he watches the show. Ito Shino lights up when she spots him in the crowd.

ITO SHINO
(in Japanese)
"I know now it wasn't just your
picture, it's love's picture I
took. Let's make scrapbooks
together..."

BIJOU
She sings well.

ERIK RHODES
Huh?

He freezes for just a second when Bijou turns to look at him, blue eyes on blue. Even though the music is loud, her level voice is all he can hear.

BIJOU
The girl. Beloved. That's what her
name means.

ERIK RHODES
Oh. You like her, huh.

Ito Shino keeps dancing onstage.

ERIK RHODES
I didn't catch your name. I'm Erik.

BIJOU
Erik?

Bijou furrows her brow, almost like his name offends her. She even covers her mouth with her fingertips as she dashes off.

ERIK RHODES
Wait!

He dashes after her, but the crowd seems to fold him back inside so he watches Ito Shino with the rest of them. Meanwhile Bijou keeps dashing until she's back with the rest of Belle Époque in a gazebo-like structure where the other members are having tea.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

You tolerated her noise longer than I would. Now sit down, your tea's cold.

When Bijou doesn't sit, he frowns.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

Are you ill? You're rather flush.

BIJOU

(in Japanese)

Arashi... His name... Is Erik.

It takes Tempête a little bit to parse that, and when it clicks, he laughs a typical noblewoman's laugh, complete with a fan.

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

Ohhh-hohohoho! How brilliant!

(in Japanese - keigo)

Fate really does work in strange ways, doesn't it? It's such a beautiful thing. Will make crushing him and his "band" even sweeter.

He's the only one laughing; Bijou looking away makes him stop.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

What? Are you losing your resolve just because you know his name?

When Bijou doesn't answer, Tempête slams the table with both hands as he leaps to his feet, a whole crown of popped veins on his head.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese,
yakuza-esque)

FUZAKENNA, OMAE! You represent Amar-Terrasse alongside us. You're here because you said you shared our vision. If you throw it all away for a mere human, of all things...

Pierrot, Watteau, and Dauphin hurriedly clean up the mess Tempête made.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo)

I simply won't forgive you.

Bijou's shoulders only tremble slightly; her face remains stoic as Tempête marches away. Her other bandmates are also lost for words, so she leaves them as well, back towards Ito Shino's concert.

When she returns, Ito Shino is now singing "Otome-gokoro."

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Bad boys who make me cry, I hope
you cry yourself to sleep every
night..."

Bijou searches for Erik Rhodes in the crowd, but can't find him anywhere.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Don't you know it's a sin to play
with a maiden's heart? Baka!"

Bijou chuckles at the last word and resigns herself where she is to watch the show as Ito Shino dances.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Once upon a time, I wanted to walk
under umbrellas with you. I wrote
our names in the sand and made a
wish. Maybe God-papa saw something
I didn't, because it never came
true."

The music swells and Ito Shino looks at Erik Rhodes, now even deeper in the crowd so Bijou finding him is impossible anyway.

Meanwhile Bijou herself finally leaves as the song ends to tumultuous applause and even roses being thrown onto the stage.

ITO SHINO

Thank you, everyone! Shino love all
of you!

She blows kisses and bows, especially making sure to send a kiss in Erik Rhodes's direction. At that same moment, GUDRUN grabs his attention by touching his shoulder.

GUDRUN

You have five minutes?

ERIK RHODES

Yeah, okay.

They exit, the crowd parting the way for them.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - DINING HALL

ERIK RHODES and GUDRUN sit together at one end of the long table, sharing some Pocky.

ERIK RHODES
I guess you were right.

GUDRUN
About?

ERIK RHODES
Her. I didn't even catch her name.

Gudrun hums as she nods.

GUDRUN
I won't say I told you so.

Nonetheless Erik Rhodes looks over the stick of Pocky he's holding, clearly reminded of Bijou's flute.

ERIK RHODES
All I did was introduce myself.
I've never had someone act like my
own name offended them.

He feigns a laugh, but anyone can see how just like the thorns of a rose, the words sting.

GUDRUN
At least she left you with your
heart, so take comfort in that.

ERIK RHODES
I suppose. But what's your deal?
You're with your other singer,
right? I forgot his name.

GUDRUN
Torvald?

She cracks up.

GUDRUN
I don't know what the practice is
where you're from, but on
Jötunheim, we don't marry our
siblings.

Erik Rhodes feigns a laugh but it's clear he's thankful Gudrun isn't offended enough to make use of her muscles and the table.

GUDRUN
You haven't been to Jötunheim, have
you?

ERIK RHODES

No. Haven't even been back to Earth for a while now. But I do own my own planet.

GUDRUN

Really? Good for you. It'll make a fine dowry when you marry.

ERIK RHODES

Marry, huh...

He spaces out, his mind and heart clearly far away from the room, and Gudrun takes a bite out of her own stick of Pocky. He then turns his attention to Gudrun, seeing that they're out of Pocky sticks. He takes it as a sign and grins.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

Meanwhile, in outer space, STARMAN floats in the air on a bed of descending stars. Even here, golden stars gently fall in a canopy-like pattern.

Pandora is beneath him, and above him he sees a particularly bright star, and he "stands" to fly up there, becoming a shooting star. The closer he gets, the more apparent it is that it's not a star he's hurtling towards.

As he gets closer, the more monochrome his surroundings get; other stars and galaxies and other astronomic objects get less prevalent. He's travelling towards an edge of space, approaching absolute nothingness.

But nonetheless he's focusing on that single point, in his field of vision there's white rushing lines just like in an anime in lieu of hyperspace stars.

Finally he sees what that not-star is; the first step on The Stairway.

He gains speed, getting closer and closer, until he's pressed up against impenetrable glass. Peeling himself off, he rapps his fists on it to no avail, The Stairway so far away and yet so close.

All the while stars gently fall down even through the glass.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

The air is abuzz with attendants happily chattering and approaching their favourite musicians, but LENI and PHI stand outside, watching the sky as the familiar star shines in the distance, raining down smaller ones in that one spot.

PHI

I tried to tell him. The old man closed Heaven off.

LENI

I still can't believe he actually went there. Without dying.

PHI

Right, Immanuel was saying that Earthlings think you can only go to Heaven if you die.

LENI

Still. He's spending more time in the air than not. I guess if you can fly, why wouldn't you do it all the time?

Phi turns to face her.

PHI

Do you wanna?

LENI

Do I wanna what?

PHI

Fly. See him.

LENI

No, no. It's okay.

PHI

I could use the exercise.

LENI

No, really. It's fine.

Phi shrugs. They're soon joined by IESU and JAGUAR, a can of Boom!ChocoLatte in either of their hands.

IESU

He's still up there, huh?

JAGUAR

Just as well, I guess. He's still blinding to look at, even from here.

Leni and Phi accept their drinks. Little by little clouds form in the sky, accompanied by the familiar bleats of the cloud-sheep. LOR SALVIATOR clears his throat as he steps onto the stage.

LOR SALVIATOR

Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please. Pandora is about to experience heavy rainfall, so please make your way to your respective ships and domiciles until it passes. Thank you.

The attendants groan but nonetheless start making their ways to their respective ships, and Lor Salviator himself spots the group and strides over, looking up at the spot Starman is.

LOR SALVIATOR

I must say, it's rather bittersweet knowing that Sir Starman doesn't need me anymore. I forgot this feeling.

JAGUAR

Even he's gotta grow up sometime.

LOR SALVIATOR

True. In any case, the sheep have been quite patient with us thus far. It won't be so simple for him to come back down.

They make their way inside the palace via the dining hall. They all pause to sniff the air, and ITO SHINO comes to greet them wearing a gingham apron, her hair even tied back with a bandanna.

ITO SHINO

Good timing! I made dinner. Hope you like. My favourite.

LENI

Oh my gosh... Ito Shino cooked for us. No wonder you don't have to die to go to Heaven.

ITO SHINO

Sit, sit! I made too much. You too, Lor-san.

LOR SALVIATOR

Don't mind if I do, Miss Shino.

XIMENA, also clad in a gingham apron with her hair tied back in a bandanna, comes out with a heaping tray full of pickled vegetables.

XIMENA

Check this out! We match!

They take their seats as Ito Shino and Ximena fill their plates and the table.

ITO SHINO

Erik-san wa?

JAGUAR

He was with Gudrun, from Mjölfnir, last I saw him.

ITO SHINO

Ah. It's okay, please. Eat.
Napolitan only thing I know how to
make.

They dig in, everyone but Lor Salviator pausing after the first bite, their faces becoming just a bit blue. Lor Salviator, meanwhile, happily chows down.

LOR SALVIATOR

Miss Shino, might I say, the medley
of fish and brown sugar is
something I didn't know I needed
until now.

ITO SHINO

You like? Good! Please, eat all you
want.

LOR SALVIATOR

I just might, but do make sure the
others have some. They've been
working so hard, I don't want to
impose.

PHI

Thanks, but this is enough for me.

IESU

I'm sorry I didn't mention earlier,
but I am a vegetarian.

JAGUAR

But you eat fish...

Ito Shino then regards Leni and Jaguar, ready to give them both an extra dollop, and they both smile awkwardly as they tentatively eat the weird pasta.

It doesn't help that Ito Shino watches them like a hawk, completely oblivious to how Phi is even looking for Ozzy or Pirouz to give the pasta to.

Meanwhile, outside, lightning flashes and the rain falls hard all at once, spooking Ito Shino. When she's distracted, everyone passes their plates over to Lor Salviator.

IESU

Delicious, thanks so much.

ITO SHINO

Done already? But I have more.

IESU

No, no. There's people hungrier
than me out there. It wouldn't be
fair.

JAGUAR

Oh my God, Iesu.

ITO SHINO

Okay. I'll make more tomorrow.

PHI

No!

Everyone regards Phi, stunned. She clears her throat.

PHI

I'll cook tomorrow.

JAGUAR

Are you sure? You're not much
bett--ow!

LENI

I'll help. As thanks for this.

Lor Salviator dabs his mouth with a handkerchief, all five plates clean and stacked before him. Ximena takes them away.

LOR SALVIATOR

I'll have to send this recipe to my
chefs. I can definitely see myself
eating it every day.

Iesu covertly crosses his chest, and Phi snorts. At that moment ERIK RHODES comes in alongside GUDRUN, his hair askew, the sight shocking Ito Shino enough to drop the pot of pasta.

ITO SHINO

I'm so sorry! Your dinner...

Gudrun eyes the spilled pasta on the ground, some of it on Erik Rhodes's pant leg. Ito Shino hurriedly gets a towel to rub it off.

ITO SHINO

I'm so sorry!

The more she tries to scrub the stains off of his pant leg, the more Erik Rhodes blanches and leans down to stop her.

ERIK RHODES

Hey, it's fine. It's just clothes,
please stop.

ITO SHINO

But it's tomato sauce...

That admission hurts that little bit more, but Erik Rhodes swallows his pride as best he can.

ERIK RHODES

I'm due for a new favourite pair of pants anyway.

Ito Shino stands, face redder than the pasta, and she can't bring herself to look at him, nevermind that Gudrun regards her with an inscrutable expression. She tears up and collapses, soon cleaning the pasta up.

Leni gets up to help her, all the while Erik Rhodes dumbly looks around.

ERIK RHODES

Okay, here. Let me help, too, since I scared you. Gimme that.

He takes Ximena's apron and uses it to mop up the pasta, much to her horror.

GUDRUN

Sit with everyone, Erik-dear. Dinner together is a rather nice idea. The guys should be along at some point.

She walks off towards the kitchen, Ito Shino hurriedly taking Ximena's now-dirty apron and scurrying after Gudrun. Erik Rhodes takes his seat, Ximena sitting down too.

JAGUAR

So.

Everyone, even Lor Salviator, leans towards Erik Rhodes.

ERIK RHODES

So. What?

JAGUAR

Wanna explain yourself?

Erik's eyes dart in all different directions, until finally he sighs.

ERIK RHODES

Gudrun's nice, is all. We were hanging out.

XIMENA

And do you always look like that after you "hang out"?

As if remembering, Erik Rhodes haphazardly fixes his hair and collar.

ERIK RHODES

Hey, even I gotta cut back sometimes. I've also been performing, leave me alone.

XIMENA

What about that other girl? Bijou?

ERIK RHODES

That's her name? Thank you!

XIMENA

You didn't even know her name?

ERIK RHODES

I didn't even know she could talk,
much less her name! In any case...

He groans, falling forward like the weight of it all is crushing him. For good measure he twists his back so he's looking up, complete with his wrist on his forehead.

ERIK RHODES

Over before we began. Soon as I told her my name, she bolted.

JAGUAR

Sorry to hear that, man.

IESU

What do you mean, she bolted?

ERIK RHODES

I dunno, she just... noped out of there. All I said was that I'm Erik and she was like "Erik"? Like she couldn't believe it. Next thing I know, she runs away. What the hell!

LENI

I'm sorry, Erik.

PHI

She's no doubt looking for a real man. You never stood a chance.

LENI

Phi! Come on, not you too!

ERIK RHODES

Nah, Leni. I think she's right. Maybe I'm losin' it, because I'm so locked in. I ain't got time to play around.

IESU

Well, Erik, in all fairness, you've been running yourself pretty ragged, on account of Tom and Nicky being out of commission, nevermind Doomer. You don't need to lock in any more, else you'll get sick, too.

Erik Rhodes pauses, then turns to face Lor Salviator.

ERIK RHODES

Lor. I know it's too soon to tell for sure, but you can tell us our current ratings, right? We're still number one, right?

The air grows tense, as everyone both does and doesn't want to know, and Lor Salviator himself smiles uneasily.

IESU

It's fine. We're not gonna rest on our laurels. Don't tell us until it's over.

LOR SALVIATOR

Very good, Sir Iesu. Now, if you'll excuse me.

He leaves them, and Erik Rhodes sits up when Gudrun and Ito Shino return with a big pot of stew and cleaned bowls.

GUDRUN

You'll love this kraken stew. Will give you muscles.

IESU

I'm sorry, kraken?

Gudrun ladles the stew in each bowl, and sure enough, in each one is what looks like a juvenile squid in a bath of red. Everyone barring Phi stares blankly at their bowls, and before long the rest of MJÖLNIR arrives.

TORVALD

Excellent!

They take their seats and practically inhale the kraken stew, meanwhile everyone else barely even touches it.

TORVALD

Better eat that now. Kraken won't stay petrified long.

IESU

You mean... It's still alive?!

Now they all back away, except for Phi who takes a bite out of her own little kraken. Meanwhile the others' krakens start wiggling their tentacles.

JAGUAR

Thank you, but I can't eat something that's still alive.

ERIK RHODES

Me neither. I'll stay skinny.

TORVALD
Suit yourselves.

Mjölnir eats what they didn't eat without any fuss, though Phi's eyes widen the more she eats. Torvald snickers as Gudrun gives him a look for messing with them.

PHI
This is great, you guys are missing out.

TORVALD
Exactly! Skål!

PHI
(in Russian)
Let's go!

They clink their bowls and Gudrun gives both of them more.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

STARMAN still tries in vain to get past the glass barrier guarding The Stairway. He winces as he touches his shoulder.

He pauses when he hears a sound in the distance; a cavalry. He tentatively floats in their general direction, squinting.

Try as he might, however, he never sees it, and neither do we.

The SPACE WHALE moans as it swims by, completely bypassing the glass barrier like a ghost. Starman shakes his head and flies back down to Pandora, only to find it covered entirely with nimbus clouds.

He doesn't chance going through them anyway, so he shrugs. Then, once again as if remembering something, he becomes a shooting star, hurtling past other stars and planets, dodging the odd comet.

Though he doesn't understand where he's going, he's determined to reach the place he's chasing. It takes him a little while, but finally he stops before EARTH.

Yet again he pauses, holding his head like a locked memory is finally going to break free. The resulting emotion is too strong for him to take, so much so that all he can do is go back the way he came.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - SPARE ROOM 4 - CONTINUOUS

As it still pours rain outside, ITO SHINO nonetheless models for herself in the mirror a more normal outfit involving earth tones that show off her shape, so she looks more like a young professional.

Even her hair is brown and straight, her makeup minimal. She's almost entirely unrecognisable, like any other Earth

girl.

Nonetheless, she can't help checking her pinky finger for the invisible Red String. She gulps and leaves her room, simultaneously determined and scared to find what she's looking for.

She holds a can of shikwasa-flavoured Rocket Punch in her hand, her loafers making soft pitter-patters on the floor. She takes a deep breath as if to steel herself, and the moment she closes her eyes, she bumps into someone.

ITO SHINO

I'm so sorry!

She hurriedly bows, even her ears scarlet, but when she looks up, who else is it but BIJOU. Ito Shino shakes, not knowing what to expect, even though the latter doesn't betray a single negative emotion on her face.

BIJOU

(in Japanese)

Can't sleep?

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese))

Eh? No.

BIJOU

(in Japanese)

Just as well. Come with me, then.

I'll comfort you.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

Ehhhh??

Bijou marches forward past Ito Shino, who nonetheless follows after her. She looks over her shoulder like she's doing something extremely naughty, especially when she sees Bijou opening the door to her room.

BIJOU

(in Japanese)

Come in.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

Excuse me.

She enters the room, and stiffens when Bijou closes the door.

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

Um... Thanks for inviting me in.

BIJOU
(in Japanese)
In truth, I've been meaning to talk
to you.

ITO SHINO
(in Japanese)
You have?

Ito Shino gulps. Bijou smiles softly as she gestures for Ito Shino to sit beside her on the bed. When she does, Bijou touches her hair and her face.

BIJOU
(in Japanese)
You're in love.

ITO SHINO
(in Japanese)
That's not true.

BIJOU
(in Japanese)
You remind me of myself, once upon
a time. I did the same things
you're doing now. But you have to
know... Some heartbreaks you never
recover from.

She holds Ito Shino's hand, and ignores how hard the
latter's heart is pounding.

BIJOU
(in Japanese)
For your own good, it would be
better if you fell in love with
someone else.

Ito Shino struggles to get the words out; all the while she
can't take her eyes off of Bijou, even though she finally
musters enough courage to stand up.

ITO SHINO
(in Japanese)
I'm sorry, I can't! You're
beautiful, but I can't fall in love
with you instead! I only like
Erik-san!

To her shock, Bijou giggles. It would be a total lie if she
said her heart didn't skip a beat when she did. Nonetheless,
she reddens and dashes out of the room, leaving the door
open.

BIJOU
(in Japanese)
Poor girl.

Bijou sighs as she lays back in the bed. Outside, lightning strikes.

Meanwhile, Ito Shino runs down the hall and comes to an abrupt halt seeing GUDRUN supporting a drunk ERIK RHODES towards a room, and her first instinct is to hide.

ERIK RHODES

C'mon, I can stand on my own legs.

GUDRUN

You drank more than your weight,
you know. It's a wonder you're not
drowning.

Erik Rhodes laughs as he fumbles with the door, his legs giving out as he just slides against it. Gudrun hoists him back up and opens the door. After lugging him inside, she closes the door.

Naturally Ito Shino has to sneak closer and press her ear up against the wall, but she can't hear even muffled voices. The longer she listens in, the more her thoughts run wild until she regrets whatever she did or didn't hear.

She turns her back on the wall, wondering if she should, then why she should. Finally, as if nudged forward by a thunderclap outside, she runs back to her own room.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - SPARE ROOM 5

Lightning strikes again, quickly followed by thunder. ERIK RHODES is passed out in his bed, arms wide open. When lightning strikes again, outside his window is HESPERA's silhouette.

Yet again when lightning strikes, she's visible again, only this time she's inside his room. When it flickers just enough that you know it happened, she's just inches away from his bed.

He flinches when she sighs, just barely registering a chill.

When the door bursts open with IESU dashing forward, though, she's gone.

Erik Rhodes groans awake.

ERIK RHODES

Mmm... The hell's going on?

IESU

Sorry, Erik, I just had this really
bad feeling all of a sudden.

ERIK RHODES

Bad feeling?

As soon as he says this, he claps a hand over his mouth and rushes to open the window and heaves. He groans as he comes up and Iesu hands him a napkin.

IESU

This is what happens when you drink
on an empty stomach.

ERIK RHODES

You're tellin' me.

He rubs his mouth and chucks the napkin into the trash, and he looks less drunk now.

IESU

Anyway, I'm glad you're all right.
Talk to you later.

ERIK RHODES

Later.

Iesu nods as he leaves the room. Erik Rhodes winces as he appears to smell his own breath and goes to brush his teeth.

When lightning strikes again, Hespera is visible in the mirror but not to Erik Rhodes. Even if he does see her, he doesn't actually. He washes his face.

ERIK RHODES

The hell was even her problem,
acting like that over my name?

He tests his breath, and deeming it acceptable, trudges back to bed but is interrupted by a knock on his door. Groaning, he nonetheless goes to answer it, and it's ITO SHINO.

ERIK RHODES

Who're you?

Rather than answering through her trembles, she thrusts a bag of chocolates into his hands.

ITO SHINO

I made. From heart.

ERIK RHODES

Thanks?

She looks up at him, looking more doll-like than before with the way her eyes are glistening. Unbeknownst to either of them, they have an audience.

ITO SHINO

I know I'm not pretty like
Gudrun-san or Bijou-san. But
Erik-san... I...

She gulps. The words do not want to leave the tip of her tongue so she goes for plan B.

ITO SHINO
(in Japanese)
I like you!

She gasps, and naturally Erik Rhodes has no idea what she said. He squints, like the veil of drunkenness is beginning to lift.

ERIK RHODES
Wait. Who said you weren't pretty?

ITO SHINO
Eh?

ERIK RHODES
You're real pretty. When you're not wearin' all those costumes and wigs and stuff.

He looks her over again, and seems to come to some private conclusion. Ito Shino smiles, her hands flat against each other against her cheek.

ITO SHINO
You think I'm pretty?

ERIK RHODES
I literally just said that.

ITO SHINO
Then... Erik-san...

Before she can finish that sentence, though, he yawns something impressive, even nearly collapsing afterwards.

ERIK RHODES
Sorry, I'm just really tired. Let's talk more later, okay? Thanks for these.

ITO SHINO
Yes. Sorry, goodnight!

She hurriedly bows and darts off, and Erik Rhodes closes his door. Even though he'd just brushed his teeth, it's just as impossible for him to resist such adorable chocolates.

He's too sleepy to remember Ito Shino's cooking, or even to rationalise that they're just specially wrapped storebought ones. Nonetheless he opens the bag and pops one into his mouth.

He's pleasantly surprised that it doesn't make him gag or anything. Maybe it's the drunkenness, but he even seems to feel something in his heart as he eats more of them.

He stops halfway through the bag to go brush his teeth again.

EXT. HEAVEN - TIRIYA'S ALTAR

We once again stir awake, and neither Raziel nor Tiriya are present. Stars still gently fall everywhere, all is silent until interrupted by the familiar roar of the GAGARIN CAR pulling up.

The passenger door opens on its own, inviting us in. The horn honks twice on its own to tell us to hurry up and get in.

INT. GAGARIN CAR

Once inside, the door closes and locks on its own, the seatbelt extends and fastens on its own. The radio comes on, changing stations until it gets the desired song, Pavarotti's "La Donna è Mobile" from Rigoletto.

The engine revs up, and outside its windows Heaven passes us by. The Car's speed dial smoothly hits the red zone, and then even past that. Unlike before, though, the seats don't recline.

From the passenger window, though they're next to impossible to see unless you freeze frame, THE CAVALRY charge forth alongside The Car, like they're all in the same herd. They're so fast that they're effectively horse-shaped comets, their riders impossible to discern.

The Car changes the song to the good part of "Toreador" from Bizet's Carmen (beginning with "En garde, Toreador!"), and decides now is the perfect time to recline the seats and go even faster, the visuals, even reality itself, stretching thinner than taffy.

EXT. HELL - RIVER LETHE

Title card: River Lethe

Now, once again in Hell, we're in a cold part where even the air seems frozen, but much too dry to produce ice. The river has absolutely no shine to it, the water is still and grey.

A single droplet, perhaps a tear, falls into it and breaks the stillness, the ripples forming STARMAN'S face with slowly greater clarity, even with a little bit of colour like a proper reflection.

When the ripples stop, though, it's not solely because of physics; it's temperature. Ice spreads across Starman's image until it's obscured.

The Car's engine roars again, changing the song now to "The Flower Duet" from Lakmé.

INT. GAGARIN CAR

The seats return to their upright position, and now the windshield shows the glorious RAINBOW BRIDGE stretching

onwards into The Light. Though it looks like it's acting as the road, it's not; The Car is flying over it.

Souls of animals are herding towards The Light, though it's further away than it looks. Underneath the Rainbow Bridge is the Sanzu River, and the ferrymen rowing pay no attention to either The Bridge or The Car.

After a good bit of cruising, the source of The Light is revealed to be a sleeping form, that of PHOSPHOROS, in a gilded cage. Around him are dead stars and black roses, some forcibly divorced from their petals.

TWO SPEARS OF GUNGNIR deny access to The Cage.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAWN

The rain has finally stopped, and STARMAN is essentially the sun descending. He stops just short of his feet touching the ground, which is almost all water from the rain.

He looks down at his reflection, his light making it look ethereal. Stars keep gently falling from the sky and through the water, but there's no telling where they go after.

Yet again, for just a moment, he's on the edge of remembering everything.

IESU notices him from the distance as he herds the cloud-sheep back onto land. He's good and muddy from the work, at least from the waist down.

In the not-so-far distance, Belle Époque's WATTEAU, DAUPHIN, and PIERROT happen upon Mjölnir's THORSTEN, HARALD, and RAGNAR.

IESU

Yo! Tom!

Starman searches for his name, and levitates over to him, feet still not touching the ground.

IESU

Where've you been?

STARMAN

I needed to clear my head... I think. So I was just up there.

Iesu smiles and shakes his head.

IESU

Well, since you're here... Wanna help me with the sheep?

STARMAN

What can I do?

IESU

We should shear them. Their wool's
still heavy after the rain. C'mon.

Iesu kneels before a sheep and soothes it so he can begin
snipping it.

IESU

There's a good girl. We won't hurt
you.

(to Starman)

Hold the wool. Try not to let it
get wet.

Starman obliges as Iesu liberates the cloud-sheep from its
still-thick wool like he'd been doing it for ages. Belle
Époque and Mjölnir's other members chat each other up.

STARMAN

I didn't know you were a shepherd.

IESU

I'm not. I learned from Queen
Shams. But to be honest with you,
it almost feels like I was a
shepherd in a past life or
something.

STARMAN

A past life?

IESU

I mean, for lack of a better word.
It's hard to explain. But really,
it's not that hard. To shear sheep,
I mean.

He's already halfway done and he strokes the sheep in
praise.

IESU

You don't remember, but you and I
met in church, and sheep are really
important. When you think about it,
we're really not different. We're
just as lost, in need of a leader.

STARMAN

I never thought of it that way.

IESU

I think about it all the time. I
guess now I finally get it. It's
one of those things that only hits
you later.

He frees the last of the wool, letting Starman hold it as he
pets the now-sheared cloud-sheep and whistles for the next
one to come over.

STARMAN

What else do you think about all
the time?

Iesu strokes the next sheep to calm it, its wool
solidifying. He doesn't mind the static shock just before it
relaxes entirely. Mjölnir's other members link arms and
frolic.

IESU

Lots of stuff. Mainly how far we've
all come, how much further we still
have to go. And also Phi.

STARMAN

Phi?

IESU

Well, yeah. She said once that she
wanted to create a new Heaven with
me. I think about what that'll look
like.

He snips the wool, but it's not a big piece like the first
one. Starman takes it as Iesu resumes his work. Belle
Époque's other members tentatively also link arms and begin
frolicking.

STARMAN

Tell me about church.

IESU

Well... Back then you didn't take
it all that seriously. But both of
ours had a mixer that one time and
that's how we met. You said you
were in a band and asked me to join
since I was taking guitar lessons.

Starman searches his memories for that, but can only take
his word for it.

STARMAN

I'm sorry I can't remember.

Iesu shrugs and finishes the section. He now has a quarter
of the cloud-sheep left to shear as he gives the bigger
section to Starman.

STARMAN

But it's the weirdest thing. When I
was up there... I saw The Stairway.
I could remember it, not in my
mind, but in my bones.

IESU

Did you walk it?

STARMAN

No. I was barred.

IESU

Oh yeah. Phi said no one can go there right now.

STARMAN

Why not?

IESU

God's plans aren't for us to know, only follow.

Starman's brain buffers as he tries to understand what Iesu said, only to be handed the last bit of wool. There are still many, many other sheep who need shearing.

IESU

Too bad we don't at least have a cart for the wool. C'mon, give me some.

STARMAN

I'm fine. Let's keep going.

IESU

You sure?

He looks Starman over, and sees that despite everything, he's still levitating above the water, completely dry.

IESU

Y'know, I've always wondered. What's it like, being able to fly now? How do you even do it?

STARMAN

Flying is flying. As far as I know, I've always been able to do it. It's just as natural as walking.

IESU

Yeah, but... How do you do it? Do you think about the direction you wanna go, like when you turn your head, or what?

STARMAN

More or less. It's actually really hard to explain. Sorry I don't have the answer you want.

Iesu nods, like he didn't expect any kind of grand answer so this one will just have to do. He resumes shearing the sheep. Both of their concentrations break a bit when LENI joins them.

By now the other three members of both Mjölnir and Belle Époque are joining hands in a circle dance.

LENI

Hey guys. Can I help?

IESU

Sure, if you want.

She kneels before the sheep and holds it still, eyeing Starman, who also regards her.

LENI

Gosh, Tommy. You kinda look like an angel right now. Then again...

Maybe that's what stars are, eh?

IESU

Hm. That makes sense.

STARMAN

A star?

He inspects his hands while holding the wool, like they can affirm that.

IESU

You don't remember that, either?
Phi's Dad said he made a star out of you. A literal star. Even that it was always supposed to happen.

Starman freezes, once again hilariously close to making that mental connection, and this time the strain is so great that his nose gushes blood over the wool.

LENI

Tommy! You okay?

She searches her pockets for a napkin, but doesn't have one. She takes the wool from him.

IESU

Put your head back and pinch your nose for a minute.

Starman does one better; levitating in a zero gravity, near-supine position while holding the bridge of his nose. Stars still fall from high above, well above Heaven. Starman squints.

STARMAN

Hey, you guys... Do you see that?

LENI

See what?

Starman squints, like he's mentally correcting himself on what he sees. Then he flinches.

STARMAN
It's raining sand...

LENI
Sand?

STARMAN
You don't see it?

IESU
No.

STARMAN
But it's everywhere... Just like...

MEMORIES FLASH BEFORE HIS EYES IN A SANDY FILTER OF
AIMLESSLY TRUDGING THE BULSARA DESERT.

THE EVIL EYE IN THE SKY ACTS AS THE MOON.

SANDMAN TAKES OFF HIS CAPIROTE, BUT HIS FACE--THAT IS,
STARMAN'S FACE--IS STILL TOO FILTERED TO BE PROPERLY MADE
OUT.

THEN, A SPEECH BUBBLE IS TRACED OUT JUST LIKE IN A COMIC
BOOK ABOVE HIS HEAD, SANDMAN WRITING WITH HIS FINGER: "O,
THE DOOR THAT CLOSES TIGHTLY..."

Starman snaps out of it with a sharp shake of his head.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

When he comes to, he's not in the wet field with Iesu and
Leni. Instead, STARMAN is floating in outer space, a whole
constellation encircling around him. On closer inspection,
however, it's just sand.

Even when he inspects his hands and his legs where his stars
usually shimmer and fall, he sees they, too, are just
sparkly sand.

Naturally this makes him hyperventilate, like this sand is
all lies, like it means that he himself is made of lies.

He then hears Phi phonk beats getting closer and closer, and
finally PHI herself. He tries to speak, but even his voice
feels like a lie.

PHI
Biggsy.

He tries to call out to her, to save him, to help him, but
his voice entirely fails him, and Phi's face darkens as she
balls her fist and drops it on his chest like a hammer.

Within a deafening phonk beat not at all unlike a Bigger
Bang, he and everything else scatters all across the
universe in an explosion of sand.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAYTIME

STARMAN gasps as he sees PHI'S concerned face.

PHI

Biggsy! Biggsy! Snap out of it!

He then finds himself being shaken, his nose no longer bleeding. Phi lets him go as LENI looks on, horrified, and IESU even crosses his chest.

Starman sits up until he's brought to standing, his feet actually touching the ground.

STARMAN

Phi... Did I actually turn into a star?

PHI

Yeah. You made a deal with the old man. He said that was your true wish, whether you knew it or not.

STARMAN

Phi... One other thing. Do you not see the sand falling from the sky?

PHI

What sand? The Bulsara desert is lightyears away.

(to Iesu)

Did one of the sheep headbutt him or something?

IESU

No, but I guess helping shear them was a bad idea. Especially since he's been up there until now. My bad, man.

LENI

Tommy, let's go inside. You need to rest.

Starman nods, still a touch confused, but nonetheless follows Leni away from them. Part of the way there, he grabs hold of her wrist, stopping her.

LENI

What is it?

As he searches his face, fragments of other memories flash before his eyes, still in a sand filter.

AT ONE POINT, HE AND LENI WERE ON A DATE AT JOHNNY VALENTINE'S 1950S DINER AND SWEETSHOP SHARING A PLATE OF FRIES.

AT ANOTHER POINT, THEY WERE SCOPING OUT WHAT WOULD SOON BECOME THEIR APARTMENT.

AT YET ANOTHER, STANDING BEFORE HIM IS LENI AS ELPIS, HER HAIR LONGER THAN EVER BEFORE, TELLING HIM SOMETHING THAT HE CAN'T HEAR, AND THE SAND FILTER CRYSTALLISES AND CRACKS BEGIN TO FORM.

LENI

Tommy?

STARMAN

Sorry, it's nothing.

LENI

You sure? You looked like you were gonna relapse.

As soon as he says that, yet again he looks like he's gonna, and he doesn't let go of Leni's wrist. As if on cue, JAGUAR pounces forth, wrenching open his grip on Leni's wrist, in turn holding Starman's in a death grip.

JAGUAR

What the hell do you think you're doing?

LENI

Oscar.

JAGUAR

As if you didn't hurt her enough already.

LENI

Oscar.

He yanks Starman's arm forward, effectively pushing Leni away from the centre of the triangle. You can feel his blood boiling; even his bangle's eyes long to tear apart his prey.

For just a moment, again, it looks like Starman's about to make a profound mental connection, but instead of remembering, it's brand-new information.

Nonetheless, he's very much quaking in his boots with the way Jaguar glares at him, and it takes the touch of Leni's hands to make him let go.

LENI

Oscar, it's okay. He's not feeling well. He didn't hurt me.

WHEN SHE REGARDS HIM NONETHELESS, IT'S INTERCUT WITH THE SAND FILTER SHOWING ELPIS, AGAIN WITH THE CRACK MOTIF.

JAGUAR

I'll take it from here, Len.

Leni nods, and Jaguar carts Starman away inside the palace. She sighs.

LENI

All right, come out. I know you saw all that.

XIMENA comes out of her hiding place, stuffing her phone into her pocket.

LENI

And don't say it. Not now, at least.

XIMENA

I wasn't gonna.

Ximena then notices Leni's face is scarlet, and naturally she has to get real close.

XIMENA

Are you seriously trying to hide the truth from me, of all people?

LENI

I'm not hiding anything.

XIMENA

The hell, you're not. You're not even letting yourself in on it.

LENI

I don't know, okay? One minute he's literally acting like we're all beneath him, the next minute...

She pats her face several times to perish the thought. Naturally Ximena doesn't buy it.

LENI

You saw the way he looked at me.

XIMENA

Of course I did.

The words are all fighting to come out of Leni's mouth, but naturally she'd rather die than say them. Ximena then looks over at Iesu and Phi shearing the sheep.

XIMENA

Come on, let's go help them. Will take your mind off of everything until the show starts again.

Leni almost doesn't want to, but nonetheless she nods and follows her back to the cloud-sheep.

EXT. HEAVEN - TIRIYA'S ALTAR

Once again we're in Heaven, slowly waking up. RAZIEL notices, and he holds a bag of konpeito. Stars still gently fall down.

RAZIEL

My child. Stop this nonsense. You can't sleep reality away forever. Even if you are terrified of what's to come.

He gently shushes us.

RAZIEL

I know you miss your time in the sands. I'm sorry I cut it short, but you do understand that I couldn't have you spoiling the show. You have to learn to play your role responsibly.

He fishes out a couple pieces of konpeito.

RAZIEL

I truly would like to hear your thousand and one tales. But that can't happen until you wake up and face reality, my child. Don't let's start a habit of sinning your gift away.

He gives us one.

RAZIEL

Be not afraid. Here, have some courage. My word that everything will be all right.

He smiles like he's fully expecting us to continue resisting, and gives us another piece.

RAZIEL

My, you're incorrigible, aren't you? Well, my child, you can't hide from me. Try as you might.

He gives us yet another candy, and by now our definition of him is growing hazy, not dark like we're about to fall asleep again.

RAZIEL

There you are. See? It's not so scary. Go on and rejoin your friends. They need you. You and I, I'm certain we'll meet again. Amen.

He clasps his hands in prayer as we all become engulfed in light.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - SPARE ROOM 6 - CONTINUOUS

Sure enough, NICKY, 36 and looking much the same as before, jolts awake and sits bolt upright, awash with sweat. ERIK RHODES sits at his bedside, affronted by the suddenness.

ERIK RHODES

Welcome to the land of the living.

Nicky notices Erik Rhodes's violin case.

ERIK RHODES

Good timing, too. We gotta win this thing, and we've been fighting the other acts like hell. Starman being useless is one thing, but I'll be damned if we lose cuz of you.

NICKY

Erik... We should forfeit.

You can hear the record scratch in Erik Rhodes's reaction.

NICKY

I'm serious. Drop out. It's not worth it.

Erik Rhodes's beautiful face contorts into the most murderous expression imaginable.

ERIK RHODES

"It's not worth defending your crown as the galaxy's finest when you've been out of commission and let everybody down"? Are you actually serious?

NICKY

No, you don't get it! If you go up there--

He's muffled by an unseen hand, and he groans.

ERIK RHODES

What? I'll show everyone what I'm made of?

NICKY

No! You'll--

Once again he's muffled by an unseen hand. Erik Rhodes sighs deeply, for all the good it'll do to calm him down right now. He can still freeze an ocean in the dog days of summer.

ERIK RHODES

I gotta tell ya. I've put up with your bullshit my entire life. Mom and Dad always negatively comparing me to you, saying "oh, Erik, why can't you just do what Nicky does?" Like I haven't busted my ass to make them and everyone else shut up about you just one goddamn time.
(he scoffs)

But now? You get sick, completely out of nowhere; I bust my ass holding everything together, I'm even praying you get better sooner, nevermind playing with us. I just want you to see the show. And you tell me "drop out, it's not worth it?"

He scoffs again, shaking his head as he grabs at his heart. Even Nicky regrets opening his mouth, and he's still got an unseen hand firmly shutting him up.

ERIK RHODES

Of all the things you could've said.

Nicky grabs the unseen hand down as if to unmuzzle himself, a detail completely lost to his cousin.

NICKY

It's not that, Erik. I saw it. If you play tonight--

He's once again back to being muzzled. Erik Rhodes exhales through his nose as he grabs his violin case and storms out of the room. When he's gone, Nicky's unmuzzled, and he leaps out of the bed and chases after him.

When he gets out to the hallway, Erik Rhodes is already on the other end, so Nicky has to run for all he's worth after him.

NICKY

Erik, wait! I'm not done talking to you!

Erik Rhodes halts, livid all over again. Neither cousin notices that they're cultivating an audience behind closed doors.

ERIK RHODES

Oh, yeah? Fine. Explain. Why should we throw the show just because you think it's not worth it? Why else would you say that other than sabotage?

NICKY

I'm not sabotaging! I'm just saying it for your own good!

ERIK RHODES

What "own good"? Stop being all mysterious and spit it out, already!

Nicky pauses, clearly expecting to be invisibly muzzled again if he tries to be direct.

ERIK RHODES

As I thought. You don't wanna admit that I'm right. Well, you know what?

He exhales again, the air around them like raining pins and needles.

ERIK RHODES

You're out of the band. Forever.

NICKY

Erik!

ERIK RHODES

No, I'm serious. We're through. Ask Lor to take to you home or something. I can't believe I have to fire you twice.

NICKY

You can't fire me over this!

ERIK RHODES

I literally just did, dumbass!

NICKY

Well, I refuse! You're not playing this show, Erik! I forbid it!

Erik Rhodes's scoff turns into a laugh full of poison, especially dissonant with his face. Now Nicky snaps as he grabs the violin case.

ERIK RHODES

What the hell are you doing?

NICKY

Let go!

ERIK RHODES

No you!

They both try their damndest to keep the other from getting the violin case, unaware that they're undoing the claps in the scuffle.

Before long they're both straight up trying to stamp each other's feet, but the worst of it is when Nicky is forced to whack Erik Rhodes's hands.

He realises his mistake, and the shock of the action makes Erik Rhodes release his hold on the case, and it falls to the floor with the most horrible clang and bounces, and inside it is not Rhode's Golden Violin but his previous white one, snapped.

Erik Rhodes falls to his knees like his own child got dropped. All the wind is knocked out of his lungs, and he holds the now broken violin in his hands. Nicky himself is entirely lost for words at what he did.

Erik Rhodes calmly, for him, collects the now broken violin into its case and stands up, his fist holding the case trembling. Nicky quietly accepts the multiple levels of his failure.

He fully expects to get hit across the face with the case as karma, but Erik Rhodes can't even bring himself to remark. Just looking at his cousin feels like being constricted by thorny rose stems, and he marches off.

Nicky facepalms alone in the hall.

INT. PANDORA PALACE - DINING HALL

THE BAND sits at the dining hall table, the air tense like they all bore witness to the fight, made even more uncomfortable with how Erik Rhodes views his broken violin in its case before him like a corpse in a coffin.

When NICKY enters the room and makes a beeline for him, he simply turns his head and refuses to acknowledge him.

NICKY

Erik, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that. But you gotta understand. You can't perform. You shouldn't.

JAGUAR

Would you mind filling us in as to why?

NICKY

Look, it's hard to explain. But you can't.

IESU

Not really a convincing argument, Nicky.

NICKY

I can't help it. But I insist. You can't play the show.

ERIK RHODES

Can someone get him out of here?
Phi, would you mind?

PHI

Why should I do it? He's my coach.

ERIK RHODES

Fine, whatever. I'll let him stay
on to coach you.

IESU

Oh, no.

ERIK RHODES

Oh, yes. If I can't fire him, I'll
demote him, and I don't wanna hear
any of you pipe up about it.

He then turns to face Jaguar.

ERIK RHODES

And you can't quit out of
solidarity this time, either. Not
until after the show.

He turns his attention back to his broken violin. Nicky
sighs.

NICKY

Dammit... How can I make you
understand...?

He then zeroes in on Phi. He tries to mention Heaven but
even that gets him invisibly muzzled. He can't even point
upwards; he reacts like his hand got slapped down.

JAGUAR

You really don't look well, Nick.

NICKY

I'm fine! I just can't find the
right words.

PHI

And I was going to have you train
me.

IESU

I'll help you with that, Phi.

JAGUAR

No matter what, you can't play
tonight. We're just gonna have to
do it without you, man.

Nicky's shoulders slump as he looks at everyone, but most of
all Erik Rhodes who won't even accidentally look at him. A
billion thoughts race through his mind, every single one of

them fruitless.

NICKY

Okay, fine. I can't convince you. I get it. But you're wrong about one thing, I can play. No, I will play.

He instantly regrets those words but nonetheless he can't unsay them, even when he screws his eyes shut.

NICKY

You don't even have to un-fire me, Erik. I'll help you. But please. Just accept that I'm sorry. I didn't mean to break your violin.

Though his profile is firmly fixed to not look his way, Erik Rhodes closes his eyes and doesn't speak to Nicky. Nicky gives the smallest semblance of a smile and nods.

NICKY

Thank you. C'mon, Phi.

IESU

Don't you wanna eat something first?

As soon as he says that, Nicky's stomach growls, especially when he sees the plates of meat before everyone, though Iesu naturally has a salad before him.

Though Nicky knows it'll be awkward as hell, he has no choice but to sit facing Erik Rhodes, who in turn has no choice but to put his violin case away. Nonetheless Nicky doesn't meet his eyes as he takes a plate and fills it with food.

He's about to dig in, however tentatively, when BIJOU enters the dining hall, making a beeline for Erik Rhodes. Once he catches sight of her, he stands.

ERIK RHODES

Hey.

Nicky looks over at her, and his eyes then dart to Erik Rhodes, like he can see the relationship's secrets.

ERIK RHODES

Can I help you with something?

BIJOU

May I talk to you?

ERIK RHODES

Yeah, of course.

He follows her to an isolated corner of the room, his posture unnaturally straight. He walks like a wind-up doll.

BIJOU
I wanted to apologise for how I
reacted last time.

His heart skips a beat. From the table, Nicky clearly fights the urge to get closer and listen in, even just keep watching them, but he knows better than to do any of that.

BIJOU
I realise I've no doubt offended
you.

ERIK RHODES
No, no, it's fine. Water under the
bridge.

Bijou shakes her head.

BIJOU
Not for me. I didn't mean to react
that way. It's just that your name
caught me entirely by surprise.

ERIK RHODES
Why?

BIJOU
Because my own name is Erika.

ERIK RHODES
It is?

All over again he believes in fate, and wonders if he really is seeing her blush, however faintly.

BIJOU
Where I'm from, it's no small thing
to share your name. Especially if
it's so similar to another's.

ERIK RHODES
Where're you from?

BIJOU
Have you heard of Amar-Terrasse?

Erik Rhodes shakes his head.

BIJOU
I'm from the region known as the
Memento Forest. Historically, only
your family and loved ones ever saw
your face. It was customary to wear
a mask, and my region was where
they were traditionally made. The
name means "eye mask capital."

ERIK RHODES

That's interesting. Where I'm from,
a memento is something to remember
someone or someplace by.

The air grows pregnant with masked emotions coming to the fore, and both of them know it. Bijou sees TEMPÊTE approaching in a huff.

BIJOU

Then may how I acted not be how you
remember me.

Erik Rhodes is about to respond when Bijou leans over to kiss him on the forehead, and he blushes redder than a field of roses as Bijou goes to meet Tempête.

TEMPÊTE

(in Japanese - keigo,
O.S.)

Can you believe it? Watteau,
Dauphin, and Pierrot are all saying
they can't perform today! After
cavorting with that vulgar group
behind our backs, no less! I ought
to have them all pilloried for
this!

Erik Rhodes touches the spot on his forehead that Bijou kissed, and hurriedly brings out the mirror that Tiriya gifted him. There's just the faintest mark of Bijou's lipstick, a gentle coral that you'd have to look closely to see.

Rather than wipe it off, he brings out a small comb and simply styles a fringe over his forehead as he returns to the table.

IESU

You look like you smelled a really
nice pie.

PHI

He's already discovered the seventh
heaven.

Nicky grimaces ever-so-slightly and Erik Rhodes takes his seat.

ERIK RHODES

Y'know, I actually think I have a
title for that new song now.
"Memento."

Nicky shakes his head, groaning. Naturally this catches his cousin's attention.

ERIK RHODES

Y'know what? I've wasted enough emotional energy today thanks to you, I ain't wasting anymore.

Bijou and Tempête approach their table. Tempête clears his throat.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French accent)

Though the juncture is belated, I thought it might do to bridge the gap between us, as it were.

JAGUAR

You can just say you wanna sit with us.

Erik Rhodes gestures for them to go ahead, and Bijou sits beside Tempête on the other side, the furthest away from him.

IESU

It's good to finally talk with you outside of the concerts. By the way, that's Nicky.

ERIK RHODES

Formerly known as Orpheus.

Nicky naturally has to let that slide.

NICKY

Pleased to meet you. You already know my cousin.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French accent)

Yes, he's quite adept at the violin. And what do you do?

NICKY

Keyboard.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French accent)

The pianoforte?

NICKY

Yeah, back home.

Tempête nods slowly. Bijou clears her throat, and Tempête shoots her a look before rolling his eyes.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

Right, you no doubt wish for me to
give you my name. I am called
Tempête.

IESU

Pleased to meet you.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent, to Nicky)

I look forward to seeing you
perform, "Orphée." Such a title
bears a heavy responsibility.

ERIK RHODES

I am aware.

Though the cousins don't look at each other, even Tempête
notices the tension brewing before them all over again. Next
thing you know, he's laughing like a noblewoman again,
behind his fan as he stands up, Bijou following suit.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent, to Nicky)

Oh-hohohoho! I must say, I had my
doubts, but your return has piqued
my interest. I simply must see if
tu es digne de ce nom.

(to Bijou, in Japanese -
keigo)

Bi- jou- san. You will help me
return the others to their good
senses.

With a quick look at Erik Rhodes, Bijou nonetheless nods
with a short bow to Tempête and follows him out of the
scene.

JAGUAR

Man, it's like Romeo and Juliet in
real life.

PHI

Which one's Romeo and which one's
Juliet, though?

Erik Rhodes finally looks right at Nicky, even pointing at
him the way Paulie Walnuts would.

ERIK RHODES

You better be top form today, or
else you're fired for real.

Nicky sighs, at this point clearly resigned to the fate he
kept fighting.

NICKY

Of course, Erik. You can count on me.

He extends his hand, and Erik Rhodes shakes it. No one smiles wider than Iesu at that moment.

EXT. HELL - PHOSPHOROS'S CAGE

THE TWO SPEARS OF GUNGNIR, PHOSPHOROS still guard against the cage where Phosphoros was, only now it's just got the dead rose petals and stars on its floor.

Just outside of the cage is a TABLE FOR TWO serving up a bouquet of dead, withered roses. One seat has shackles and harnesses attached to it, not unlike an electric chair.

All of this is only visible because of the gently falling stars that still reach even this far into Hell.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Begin dream sequence.

STARMAN is alone, shining brightly. Surrounded by chattering voices and the faint sounds of the bands' music.

Naturally he's confused, and then...

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

He looks up, questioningly pointing to himself.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise.

STARMAN

Okay...

He levitates, and then flies up. He penetrates the toposphere of Pandora, entering outer space.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

Starman picks up the pace, passing more stars and planets and satellites. As he rises higher and higher, he looks up and the single pixel slowly comes into view as the rest of the stars become nothing more than speed lines.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise.

STARMAN

I'm going as fast as I can!

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

It's time, my child. Time to rise.
And shine.

STARMAN

Dammit, wish I could do what Phi
does.

Nonetheless he stands at attention, still trying to go faster, however insignificantly. The pixel grows slowly larger.

He's once again reaching the part of space full of nothingness, but even his stars don't leave a trail, not that he notices.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel. Rise.

Starman halts, The Stairway still just a slightly large pixel in the endless black.

STARMAN

Wait... But I couldn't get through
before. What if it's not different
now?

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Be not afraid, my child. Rise. Come
into The Light.

Right on cue, a light shines on Starman like a spotlight, like the same light that took him and Elpis into Lor Salviator's spaceship. He continues his ascent.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel. You are awaited.

Starman strains, still trying his best to go faster. The Stairway seems impossibly far away, but he trusts the light to guide him. When he does, his stars return, and he goes that little bit faster.

The closer he gets, the more he hears the sounds of church bells.

THE SANDY FILTER RETURNS, AND A YOUNGER STARMAN IS AT HIS CHURCH, LEADING THE SONG.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

Starman gets faster, the church bells louder.

ONCE AGAIN THROUGH A SANDY FILTER, A YOUNGER STARMAN GETS BAPTISED.

Starman slowly becomes a shooting star as The Stairway gets closer. He squints, waiting for the inevitable glass barrier.

AND AGAIN THE SANDY FILTER RETURNS, WITH SANDMAN IN IT, HIS FACE STILL DIFFICULT TO MAKE OUT. HE'S ONCE AGAIN "SPEAKING" THROUGH THE SPEECH BUBBLE, ONE HALF STILL WRITTEN "O THE DOOR THAT CLOSSES TIGHTLY..."

STARMAN

"...is the door that can swing
wide"?

SANDMAN NODS THROUGH THE SANDY FILTER AS STARMAN BREAKS THROUGH IT.

He regains all his stars, allowing him to finally become faster than light.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

Starman gives himself one final push and he's finally flying over THE STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN. He passes by clouds, the church bells still ringing but gradually becoming background noise as a choir takes over. He can't make out what they're saying.

STARMAN

Why do those voices sound
familiar..?

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

Try as he might, he genuinely can't go much faster. Nonetheless he can see the the top, where The Pearly Gates stand. When he finally reaches it, they open, allowing him to finally stand on his own two feet, out of breath.

The choir is voiced by Phi, Gudrun, Torvald, Ito Shino, and Tempête, singing "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

STARMAN

What? I'm already here!

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Be not afraid, my child.

STARMAN

I'm not afraid! But I'm here! How
can I rise anymore?

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

Starman groans, and he remembers the stomp-stomp-clap
summoning steps. He does it over and over again until TIRIYA
finally descends, holding a plate.

TIRIYA

Ah, Biggsy! Long time no see!
You're just in time. Raziell fixed
up my favourite; red herrings!

STARMAN

Red herrings?

Tiriya offers him the plate, sure enough full of RED
HERRINGS. He refuses.

TIRIYA

Your loss.

Tiriya takes one and throws it into his mouth. The
background music changes to Ito Shino singing "Koneko-chan,
Asobou!"

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Let's play, kitty-kitty, I got a
shiny new ball for you..."

STARMAN

So why am I here now?

TIRIYA

I don't know.

STARMAN

But you know everything!

TIRIYA

Do I?

Starman frowns, pinching the bridge of his nose as Tiriya
keeps eating the red herrings.

STARMAN

Wait, I do know why I'm here. I had
a question.

TIRIYA

Ask away.

As soon as he hears this, naturally his brain finds it much easier to let go. A red herring even almost seems to swim away in midair until Tiriya catches it and sentences it to the same fate as the others.

The background music now changes to Ito Shino singing "Hiyoko no Uta."

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Pi-pi-pi, come here where it's warm, I'm a little drop of the sun..."

STARMAN

That's it! I was gonna ask about my memories.

TIRIYA

What would you like to know?

STARMAN

Where are they?

TIRIYA

Right where you left them, of course.

STARMAN

Where is that?

TIRIYA

This is why you should clean your room, you know. Otherwise you'll never find anything.

He eats more red herrings, totally blissed out as he does so. The song now changes to Ito Shino singing "Pink Sugar."

ITO SHINO

(in Japanese)

"Cookies are best with pink sugar, I will bake you my love in every bite..."

TIRIYA

Raziel!

RAZIEL

(O.S.)

Coming, sire!

TIRIYA

Are you sure you don't want any, Biggsy? They're full of nutrients.

(MORE)

TIRIYA (cont'd)

You can have this last one until
Raziel finishes up.

Starman's stomach growls, and so he accepts the red herring, though he winces as he takes it. His stomach growling a second time is what finally makes him eat it. The background music changes to Belle Époque playing "Folie à deux."

STARMAN

Wait, what the heck? It's just a
gummy.

TIRIYA

Hah! Got 'im!

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"I danced with your mirror
reflection, just like you danced
with mine. The illusion was over
when the music stopped..."

Even Starman finds himself laughing along, but the next thing he knows, the nutrients do actually kick in, and he literally has a bright idea in his head, as Tiriya shows when he pulls a lightbulb out from behind Starman's head.

TIRIYA

I can see the burning question now.
There's only one way to deal with
those.

STARMAN

Okay... Is it true that I became a
star?

TIRIYA

Oh, Biggsy. Is that it? Come on,
you know that's not the one. The
other burning question.

Starman's brows furrow as he tries to remember it, and finally he does. The background music now changes to Belle Époque performing "Les Bijoux."

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"I plunged deep underground for the
right words, I came back with
little star fragments for you, my
darling..."

STARMAN

Does becoming a star always mean I
can't remember anything?

TIRIYA

Have you heard of the expression,
"there are as many dreams in Tokyo
as there are stars in the sky"?

STARMAN

That sounds kinda familiar.

TIRIYA

Now have you heard "As above, so
below"?

STARMAN

Yeah..?

TIRIYA

Then, my dear boy, you know the
difference between letting go and
forgetting.

STARMAN

Aren't those the same thing?

TIRIYA

Goodness, no!

Tiriya laughs, pausing only to be delighted that RAZIEL has
come forth with another heaping plate of red herrings. He
exchanges the empty plate for them.

Raziel flies off after hitting the fast forward button on a
radio so the next song is Belle Époque's "Ondine."

TEMPÊTE

(in French)

"I want to trap you inside a
bottle, turn you into tears that I
dare not cry..."

TIRIYA

Biggsy, I merely expected you to
learn to let go of your
attachments, not forget everything
altogether.

STARMAN

But that one time, you said we had
to let go of everything we ever
thought we knew about anything!

TIRIYA

And I distinctly recall asking if
you had any questions afterwards.
That was your chance to make
absolutely sure before you decided
to take it literally. I tell you
Biggsy, I respect your enthusiasm,
but that was a rather risky move on
your part.

Starman's jaw is all the way down in Hell, and the next song that plays is Mjöltnir's "Village of the Elves."

GUDRUN

(in Norwegian)

"Under forest cover, a little
grandpa mushroom hides from the
rain..."

Tiriya throws another red herring into his mouth, nailing it at the first shot. Starman eats it, and this time he pauses like it finally dawned on him after a couple chews.

STARMAN

No way.

TIRIYA

Oh, yes way. All the way. You
really should think back on all you
were taught about free will. In
fact... Isn't it about time for you
to get going, Biggsy?

Starman's memories and thoughts reconnect with each other, and though it's subtle, he's beginning to sink through the cloud, and the last song that plays in the background is Mjöltnir's "Erik den Røde."

GUDRUN

(in Norwegian)

"In the blood red sunset, we said
goodbye, as you got smaller and
smaller into the horizon, across
unknown seas..."

TIRIYA

If you don't watch and support
Philonoe, I'll be immeasurably
disappointed in you. Not to mention
all your other friends. I hope you
know, I can't intervene if they
decide to punish you.

Starman starts sinking more rapidly, and he panics trying to grab hold of the cloud like it's solid.

STARMAN

Wait! The angel! Who's the angel?

TIRIYA

Raziel doesn't like spoilers, you
know. Don't be late to the show
now. Send my love to Philonoe.
Toodle-loo, ta-ta.

Starman makes a last-ditch effort to stop from falling through, and he naturally falls so much faster and more freely. He burns up, becoming a meteorite, screaming as he descends back down towards Pandora.

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - EVENING

STARMAN jolts awake, finding himself having been asleep on a bed of stars this whole time. When he looks down, "standing up," he sees that the crowd is so thick it's impossible to see any ground.

Stars are not gently falling down from on high this time.

He follows the direction they're all looking at, where the stage is. He spots LOR SALVIATOR, THE BAND setting up behind him, and advances.

LOR SALVIATOR

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.
Once again, please give a round of
applause for our previous guests,
Ito Shino, Belle Époque, and
Mjöltnir!

The crowd goes wild. Lor Salviator then spots Starman and waves him over. He descends, to the crowd going wild all over again.

LOR SALVIATOR

Wonderful. Ladies and gentlemen,
our last show for the evening.
After this, we eagerly look forward
to your votes for your favourite
group. Now then, without further
ado, here is Elpis!

He bows as he steps away, and Starman clears his throat as he asks Phi for the microphone. The crowd cheers much too loudly for them to start anyway. Starman waits for them to get it out of their system.

STARMAN

Thank you all so much. I guess I'm
the surprise for the night, heh. As
you all know, I wasn't feeling all
that great for a bit, and I know
Elpis has done their very best to
make up for it.

He grins as the audience cheers again. He spots LENI in the crowd.

STARMAN

Anyway, I won't talk too long. You
all ready for a good time?

The audience cheers.

STARMAN

I can't hear you!

They cheer louder. Starman creates his star-guitar to the nods and grins of the band.

That turns out to just be Starman's imagination, though, since of course he has no clue what the others are planning, so he's just spectating alongside everyone else.

The band is raring to go, minus Nicky who's expecting the worst thing possible and doing a terrible job hiding it.

ERIK RHODES

I'm gonna start with a song for
someone special. You've all heard
it before, but it finally has a
name. It's called "Memento."

He readies Rhode's Golden Violin, straightening his shoulders and clearing his throat. He closes his eyes and glides his bows across his strings, the notes so gentle and fragile even glass eyes would weep.

The audience is radio silent, desperate to not miss even the smallest detail. Erik Rhodes becomes more and more united with the music, baring his heart and soul for all to see, and it's enough to make anyone fall in love with him.

Nicky even cries in the background, purely by reflex turning his back. Nonetheless Erik Rhodes's rose aura is in full bloom, even radiating starry dew drops like he's seasoning the song with his tears, he's so in love.

His rose aura looks somehow even redder, probably because of that. It looks like Heaven itself is blessing him for this monumental achievement in music, crowning him Orpheus for all to see.

But at the crescendo of the song, in the crowd, ITO SHINO screams bloody murder, completely ruining the song and the effect it had on everyone.

But no one can be mad at her for long; behind Erik Rhodes is HESPERA, adorned with a crown of thorns and wearing a black wedding dress, wielding a FLAMING SWORD.

Erik Rhodes reacts exactly how you'd think, whiter than a ghost. Even Phi is frozen, memories of her brothers' deaths flashing before her eyes.

ERIK RHODES

What the fuck?!

HESPERA

My love...

Hespera glares at him, crying tears of blood. The audience scrambles to get away, screaming as she advances on a downed Erik Rhodes.

HESPERA

This time you won't deny me.

She poises her sword to strike him, and Erik Rhodes himself is crying in fright. He cowers, even ready to use Rhode's Golden Violin as a shield if it means living another day.

Jaguar grabs hold of her to wrench her away, his bangle's eyes glowing as he strains. She shoves him away.

Erik Rhodes and the others cower again hearing the BANG of a gunshot from the audience; it's BIJOU, and she's absolutely pissed that she didn't get a headshot. TEMPÊTE holds a now unconscious Ito Shino close to him as BELLE ÉPOQUE and MJÖLNIR rush to collect the band from the stage.

OZZY and PIROUZ want desperately to join the fight even though they know full well what they'd be in for, but all they can do is try not to get trampled by the horde guests like Mufasa and the wildebeests.

LOR SALVIATOR

Get back, everyone!

In a flash, before any of them can even process his command, he's dual-wielding two BIG IRONS and firing them in quick succession at Hespera as Bijou rushes over to personally rescue Erik Rhodes. His bullets don't seem to faze Hespera but they do decimate the stage and disappear into the night sky.

He's even more desperate now seeing both Bijou and Hespera just itching to respectively shoot and slash the other and be done with it.

Iesu, after pushing Phi to get off the stage, hurriedly looks back at them, and something inside him changes. He leans over to kiss Phi and tell her he loves her.

Bijou pulls the trigger on her gun, but she's already out of bullets. Hespera smirks.

HESPERA

You taunt me even now... Just as well. I'll tear you both down, just like you do my heart!

She once again gets ready to slash them, and at such close range it's entirely impossible for either of them to survive. Bijou even holds Erik Rhodes like she would a lover, honoured to die at his side.

HESPERA

You will accept my love... And all my hate!

Lor Salviator gets ready to unload more ammo onto Hespera until she finally slashes, a horrible fiery crescent stopping time as they all know it, even echoing in the radio silence.

Erik Rhodes, still crying like a baby, nonetheless clues in that he's doing so, and with a whimper opens his eyes and sees a familiar silhouette now collapsing before him, too shocked to even feel the blood splattering over his face.

For a moment all you can hear is his breath, as tentative as they come, like he wouldn't dare believe he's anything but dead right now.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Rise, my angel.

All at once, Starman can not only hear the cacophany but feel the glass barrier barring Heaven shattering into a zillion pieces as all his memories hit him like those same glass shards raining down.

Naturally he can't react even if he wanted to; it's every memory you both do and don't have coming back at once.

When everyone's focus returns, they see who stopped Hespera. It's Iesu, who even holds the flaming sword despite how it simultaneously cuts and burns him. Even Hespera is shocked at this turn of events.

Iesu chuckles weakly as he rapidly succumbs to his injuries, but no matter what he has to wrench the sword from Hespera's hands like a loving father chiding his child. When that's successful, he uses her as leverage to pull himself up and hug her, and it's the last thing he ever does.

Before everyone's eyes, Iesu's body begins to glow, giving off little malachite particles that if you look closely are shaped like Metatron's cube. Hespera shuts her eyes and weeps real tears as his warmth envelops her, and she even embraces him.

His malachite particles cover her, slowly changing her back into PHOSPHOROS who still holds him like a lover, even as you can actually see Iesu's soul leaving his body and gaining shape.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Your time has come at last...

The realisation of what just happens seems to finally set in on everyone present, and they breathe in short, quick bursts.

The sounds of CLIP-CLOPPING echo in the air as everyone comes back down to earth (or in this case, Pandora) as THE TEMPLAR CAVALRY arrive.

TIRIYA

(V.O.)

Malachi Metatron.

MALACHI METATRON, played by Iesu, has the same volto mask seen before covering his face, and wings sprout from his back as he spreads his arms like he's finally free.

He spreads his majestic wings and joins The Cavalry as they also take Phosphoros into custody, their horse's clip-clopping almost rhythmic, like the opening clock-ticking of The Tea Party's "Heaven Coming Down."

EXT. PANDORA PALACE - COURTYARD - DAWN

Sure enough, STARMAN is strumming the riff for "Heaven Coming Down" on his star-guitar, dressed in black like EVERYBODY ELSE.

Phi stands next to him, absolutely beside herself in one of Tiriya's gifted outfits, complete with a veil. Nobody meets anyone else's eyes; they're all facing IESU'S CASKET but not looking at it either.

Belle Époque are all wearing masks but nonetheless you can guess what their faces are like underneath. Mjölnir all comfort them, none wearing corpse paint. Ito Shino, meanwhile, holds her hands in prayer as she is draped by thousands of ORIGAMI CRANES, Ozzy and Pirouz as well.

STARMAN

"With nothing to do, you'd waste away obscured in exile. They've witnessed the times you've gone astray. And whose fault now, you're thinking. Ah, there's nothing to prove; a snapshot from the crowd to the shore, baby."

He plays the connecting riff, and Phi is just barely holding it together. He sees Leni crying into Jaguar's chest.

STARMAN

"And it feels now just like...

(together with Phi)

Heaven's coming down, oh.

(alone)

So strange are the ways they all have changed; still life, would stay the same. A break from the past could make it last, oh maybe just a little longer. Now there's nothing to prove..."

Erik Rhodes, holding it together pretty well despite everything, can't help hugging Nicky to smother his wails.

PHI

"A snapshot from the crowd to the shore, baby..."

(MORE)

PHI (cont'd)
 (together with Starman)
 And it feels now just like Heaven's
 coming down. Your soul shakes free
 as its conscience hits the
 ground..."

She breaks down, and even Starman is feeling it coming on
 but nonetheless keeps playing.

STARMAN
 "You surrender, love under will.
 Rest assured, baby, you're adored.
 Oh-oh-oh-ohhh, and it feels now,
 just like Heaven's coming down.
 Your soul shakes free as its
 conscience hits the ground. These
 signs, this fate, takes a path you
 didn't choose. Stay strong, keep
 faith, there's a change that's
 coming through..."

Phi gathers herself and continues.

PHI
 "Hold on, my love. Hold on, my
 love. Hold on, my love..."

STARMAN
 "Feels like Heaven's coming
 down..."

He slowly ends the riff without completing it, and they all
 try to get it back together. Erik Rhodes finally gets up,
 wielding Rhode's Golden Violin and begins playing a new
 song, his very own "Ballad of Fallen Stars."

Everyone sits in reverence, Starman comforting Phi as she
 still can't look at anybody, using the crook of his shoulder
 as a hiding spot. Starman then looks up briefly at the
 crystal-clear sky, and then at the cloud-sheep just a ways
 away grazing the still-sparse grass.

When he finishes, Erik Rhodes dabs his eyes with a
 handkerchief and lets Lor Salviator take over.

LOR SALVIATOR
 Ladies and gentlemen, that is to
 say, dear friends... I thank you
 all for joining us here today.
 Though Elpis is immeasurably
 affected by this loss, I'm sure Sir
 Iesu trusts that we will smile
 again. We have refreshments
 lovingly provided by the Misses
 Gudrun of Mjölnir and Bijou of
 Belle Époque.

Ozzy and Pirouz each carry a tray of RED HERRING ONIGIRI, naturally containing real red herring this time as everyone gets up from their seats to mingle and share condolences. Ximena also helps them with a plate of RED HERRING SUSHI.

LENI

I can't believe it. None of this feels real.

JAGUAR

It really doesn't.

LENI

If I knew...

He holds and steers her towards the rest of the band.

STARMAN

Phi, I know it's probably not the right time to say this, but you have to know. Tiriya...

He braces, fully expecting her to snap or otherwise react negatively, but instead she simply looks at him while rubbing her face.

STARMAN

He sends his love.

Phi sniffs.

PHI

Thank you, Biggsy.

He hugs her.

PHI

He'd always trust a god. Even the old man.

(scoffs)

I can't even argue with him about that anymore.

Starman rubs her shoulder.

PHI

Biggsy.

STARMAN

Yeah?

PHI

I'm sorry I said I'll make sure you go to Hell.

STARMAN

When did you say that?

She breaks off to face him, searching his face for signs that he's either joking or serious, that his memory is lapsing again. The rest of Elpis, Ximena and Leni included, gathers around them, Erik Rhodes's beautiful blue eyes red and puffy.

NICKY

So... I gotta address something awkward. The body. Where are we gonna bury him? Here? Or..?

They all regard Erik Rhodes, who snaps out of his daze.

ERIK RHODES

I don't know. I don't want him alone on Eurydice.

The thought makes him hurriedly dab his eyes with his handkerchief.

ERIK RHODES

I don't think we can bury him on Sirius, either.

JAGUAR

Here would make sense.

LENI

But what about his family back home? They can't just come out here to pay respects.

STARMAN

Then there's just one place.

They all clue in, except for Phi, who hits her fist in her open palm, having made a decision.

PHI

I'll get him.

LENI

What d'you mean?

PHI

That group he left with... I'll find them. Bring him back.

JAGUAR

Phi...

PHI

I can't let this be it. We had so many plans together for the future. Who am I going to do them with?

A fire slowly starts burning in her eyes.

PHI

The old man planned this. And
Immanuel trusted him. He didn't put
up a single fight no matter what...

To everyone else's alarm, Erik Rhodes also looks like he
emerged from the pit of despair.

ERIK RHODES

Phi's right. If it weren't for him,
Erika and I would be dead. I didn't
even get a chance to say goodbye.

Nicky, though still feeling the loss of their friend,
nonetheless knows exactly where this little bit of theatre
is going, and he sighs as he shakes his head.

NICKY

This is the part where he'd shake
his head at yet another
Orpheus-gate...

Erik Rhodes smirks.

ERIK RHODES

See? You are good for something.

Though Nicky shoves him a bit, he can't help the lightening
mood enveloping him alongside the others. He realises it
even more when he and the others hear the familiar incoming
roar of the GAGARIN CAR'S engine.

STARMAN

Whose car is this?

PHI

My brothers', but it's mine now. If
anything can find him, it's this.

The Car vrooms and even flashes its high beams a couple
times as if to concur.

XIMENA

But we can't all go on it... We're
gonna have to split up. You'd
better keep in regular contact,
I'll work with Lor and Nyx to make
a good bug that doesn't lose signal
no matter where you are.

JAGUAR

Stalker habits die hard, don't
they...

XIMENA

Oh, I'll keep a close eye on you,
don't worry about that.

JAGUAR
...what d'you mean?

XIMENA
Well, obviously you're not gonna go with them, right? The trip's gotta be too hard on Leni, and Phi's gonna be holding those two in check. You're coming with us.

LENI
"Us"?

Jaguar is clearly about to say "who died and made you the boss?" but swallows it before he does.

XIMENA
(to Leni and Starman)
You got a whole bunch of dust bunnies and lurkers at the apartment, nevermind all the cleaning you're gonna have to do anyway.

LENI
I... Guess that's true...

XIMENA
It's settled then. We're good to go. Team Earth and Team...

ERIK RHODES
Orpheus?

NICKY
Rhodes?

XIMENA
Okay, Team Earth and Team Orpheus.

Seemingly at the mention of that, Lor Salviator comes over with Ito Shino in tow. Erik Rhodes sticks his tongue at Nicky, who rolls his eyes.

LOR SALVIATOR
Thank you for relaying the plan, Miss Ximena. Naturally I'm happy to oblige taking Team Earth back to Earth. Miss Shino will also come with us. Do give me a call if you need anything, Miss Philipa.

PHI
I will, dyadya.

LOR SALVIATOR
When you're all ready, we'll ship off. Please take your time and ensure you have everything.

ITO SHINO
Team Chikyuu! Go!

XIMENA
Team Chikyuu, go! We're already
winning.

Bijou approaches Erik Rhodes alongside Gudrun, both bearing what look like LUNCH BOXES, more good than he can eat in one sitting. Bijou isn't wearing her mask, and hers is wrapped in a, elegant furoshiki.

GUDRUN
We overheard... You're going on a
voyage.

ERIK RHODES
Yeah. Dunno when we'll be back.

GUDRUN
Living up to your name.

ERIK RHODES
Mhm.

GUDRUN
Erik the Red.

She nods in the direction of the Gagarin Car and gives him her lunchbox.

GUDRUN
Kraken stew. Will keep you strong
for the journey.

ERIK RHODES
...Thanks.

GUDRUN
Take care... Erik den Røde.

She winks as she leaves to talk to the rest of the band, leaving him and Bijou alone.

BIJOU
I made these extra red herring
onigiri and maki just for you. I
knew those two youths would make
short work of the plates.

She hands him the furoshiki-covered box, which he takes.

ERIK RHODES
I'm sorry I can't stick around.

Bijou shakes her head.

ERIK RHODES

I dunno when I'll be back, but I
wanna see Memento Forest.

BIJOU

That's all you want to see?

He flashes scarlet, chuckling through his nose. Bijou herself grins, and it's enough to shoot you straight through the heart.

ERIK RHODES

Maybe there's one other thing.
There's a girl there, maybe you
know an Erika? Can you tell her I
said hi?

BIJOU

I'll make sure she gets the
message. And I want you to send
someone a message, too.

She holds his free hand with both of hers.

BIJOU

Your friend... when you see him,
tell him I'm eternally grateful.
He'll never be taken in vain.

Erik Rhodes's heart skips a beat, but nonetheless he nods and holds what he can of both of her hands with his one.

ERIK RHODES

I will.

He brings her hands up and kisses them, his eyes full of things he wouldn't say out loud even alone, and they freeze in the moment while everyone else says their goodbyes.

Torvald hugs Ito Shino.

TORVALD

Best of luck, little lady.

ITO SHINO

Thank you, Torvald-san. Come visit
me in Shibuya.

(to Tempête)

You too, Arashi-sempai.

Tempête hides his scandalised expression behind his fan.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

Oh-hohohoho! "Arashi-sempai!" Very
well, let's see where you hail
from, lest I conquer it in your
stead.

He then spots Erik Rhodes and Bijou still refusing to let go of each other, and he strides over to them and clears his throat.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

I am remiss about your friend and
how we couldn't have a fair battle.
But I'll have you know... I will
not be letting go of Erika.

ERIK RHODES

Good. I wouldn't want you to.

Tempête looks him over and hands him his fan.

TEMPÊTE

(in aristocratic French
accent)

I expect you to return it to me.

Erik Rhodes clues in as he accepts the fan with a nod.
Tempête then looks at Bijou, who hides her face from him
even when he follows it.

TEMPÊTE

E-ri-ka-san.

Erik Rhodes motions with his face for her to go with him,
and she very reluctantly does. The last person he sees is
Ito Shino, who almost doesn't meet his eyes, nevermind that
he towers over her.

ERIK RHODES

This isn't good-bye, y'know.

She still pouts.

ERIK RHODES

I'll see you again.

Ball of her foot on the ground, she wiggles it like that
digging gesture. Erik Rhodes's expression softens.

ERIK RHODES

Look, I have a special mission for
you, if you prefer. I dunno how you
say it in Japanese.

This makes her look up.

ERIK RHODES

I'm not letting anyone else do it,
it can only be you.

ITO SHINO

Only Shino?

ERIK RHODES

Yeah. Since we're on hiatus
officially... You have to keep the
show going. Take care of those guys
for me, will ya?

He nods in the direction of Starman, Jaguar, Leni, and
Ximena. Ito Shino nods.

ITO SHINO

Okay. Shino make you proud,
Erik-san.

She sticks out her pinkie, and he takes it and they shake on
it.

ERIK RHODES

Take care.

He gives her a wave and goes in the direction of the band,
Ozzy and Pirouz in the middle of saying goodbye.

OZZY

Are you sure we can't come?

LENI

Sorry, guys. You gotta stay here
and take care of the new prince.

PIROUZ

Yeah, Ozzy. We also have to take
care of the sheep.

LOR SALVIATOR

You'll do well, sirs. And of course
you can always keep in contact.

OZZY

Okay...

Leni hugs both of them.

LENI

Take care, you guys.

Erik Rhodes then hugs everyone else.

ERIK RHODES

Say hi to Doomer for me.

STARMAN

Will do.

XIMENA

Stay safe out there.

ERIK RHODES

Will do. See ya, Lor. Take care of
Eurydice for me.

LOR SALVIATOR
Of course, Mr Rhodes. Take care.

Little by little, Team Orpheus climbs inside The Car. The engine revs up and they are off.

POST
CREDITS

INT. MAINFRAME

A wall of code scrolls on a marquee. It's soon overtaken by red text that assassinates it in the darkness, with a digital hiss and ominous-sounding whispers.

MALACHI METATRON glows white, a last bastion against the sinister code, HOLY LANCE in hand.

Title card: To Be Continued