

**LOVE, VIRTUALLY**

Original Screenplay

by Marc Serhan

Rough/First Draft

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**INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM / CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

The room is sleek and modern, with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a panoramic view of the city skyline. EMMA HOLLAND, late 20s, anxious yet determined, stands in front of a large presentation screen displaying a design project.

MILES BENNETT, 50s, seasoned and imposing, watches with a stern face framed by silver-rimmed glasses.

Around the table, colleagues sit in silence, some glancing nervously between Emma and Miles.

MILES

Bold. I'll give you that. But it might be a bit too avant-garde for this client. They're not exactly known for taking risks and are looking for something more mainstream.

Some of the colleagues glance at her, sensing tension.

EMMA

That's exactly why they need this. They're stuck in the past, Miles. This design could push them—push us—into the future.

MILES

Emma, I admire your passion. But we're not just selling dreams here. We're selling a brand. And right now, this feels like a gamble.

EMMA

Every great project started as a gamble. If we don't take risks, we're just... repeating the same old thing. Is that what we want?

A beat. The room is silent. Colleagues exchange glances—some sympathetic, others skeptical.

MILES

*(standing, his tone firm)*

Revise it. Bring me something that balances your vision with what the client can actually handle. And have it ready by next week.

He strides out, leaving Emma standing there. She looks at her design, pursing her lips, a mix of frustration and determination in her eyes.

**INT. COZY CAFE - EVENING**

The café exudes charm with its rustic wooden furniture, exposed brick walls, and soft ambient lighting. At the far end, HARLEY STANTON, late 20s, classic guitar in hand, lost in the music.

Emma enters and goes to the OLYA, 30s, the bartender.

EMMA

Hey, Olya. Could I have a sandwich to go?

OLYA

Hi, there. Working late again?

EMMA

Deadline to meet.

OLYA

Usual?

EMMA

Yes, please.

Olya ambles away to fill the order. Emma turns to Harley, feverishly strumming his guitar.

Their eyes meet for a short spell. Harley smiles and dives back in his performance.

The patrons, though sparse, seem appreciative, hanging on his every strum. The song ends. A brief moment of silence before a polite applause spreads through the café.

HARLEY

*(to the patrons)*

Thanks for listening.

Emma applauds. Olya returns with her wrapped sandwich.

**INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

The apartment is a compact yet stylish space, reflecting a creative personality. The walls are covered with framed architectural sketches and blueprints. A drafting table sits in one corner, cluttered with papers and design tools. A comfortable sofa faces a low table, and a small kitchen area is visible in the background.

Emma, visibly tired, walks in and heads straight to her desk. She drops her bag, hangs her coat on the back of her desk chair, powers on the computer, launches an application.

The vibrant welcome screen of Vortexia, a virtual reality world, greets her: "Welcome back, LunaSky." She logs in and sits at the computer.

As the digital landscape starts rendering, she retrieves her wrapped sandwich from her bag.

ON THE SCREEN, her avatar, LUNASKY (LUNA) —modeled to her real-life appearance—stands by a 3D model of the design she presented earlier. She deletes it, rezzes a new one.

Emma unwraps her sandwich and takes a bite, waiting for the new model to render on her screen.

**INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM / CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

Emma stands before Miles and her colleagues, a new set of designs displayed behind her. She's visibly excited but nervous, her hands clasped tightly. All eyes are on her.

EMMA

These aren't just buildings—they're experiences. They challenge us to rethink our relationship with the environment, how we live in these spaces.

Miles, arms crossed, studies the designs. His expression is unreadable. The room is silent, waiting for his reaction.

MILES

Emma, your creativity is not in question. But architecture needs to balance vision with practicality. This might still be a bit too out there for them.

A murmur of agreement rises among some colleagues, while others seem intrigued by Emma's ideas.

EMMA

If we only build what's expected, how do we grow? How do we inspire?

MILES

*(firm but not unkind)*

Inspiration doesn't pay the bills. And if we push too hard, we risk losing the client altogether. Innovation for the sake of innovation can come off as... self-indulgent.

Emma looks at her designs, then back at Miles, her determination unwavering.

EMMA

I know it's a gamble. But I believe in this. And I think they will too.

The room falls silent, the tension palpable. Miles gives her a long look, then nods and stands, signaling the end of the presentation.

MILES

*(retreating)*

We'll take it to the client. Let's hope your vision aligns with their expectation.

Emma watches him go, followed by the rest of her colleagues.

#### **INT. STANTONS' RESIDENCE - DAY**

The Stantons' dining room is spacious and modern. Abstract art pieces on the walls add a touch of sophistication. Harley, looking out of place with his casual attire in the orderly décor, sits across from his parents, ERIC and PAULA, in the midst of a strained lunch conversation.

ERIC

Now, don't get us wrong... we just worry about your future. Of course we're proud of your dedication to your music... but it's time for you to drop all this nonsense.

Paula, loving yet concerned, nods in agreement.

PAULA

*(gently)*

Music is a beautiful hobby, Harley. But you need a stable career? You have your law degree. Isn't it worth reconsidering?

Harley fidgets with his fork, his frustration growing.

HARLEY

Music isn't just a pastime for me. It's my passion, just like law is yours. I thought you'd understand that.

Eric's expression hardens.

ERIC

Understanding doesn't pay the bills, son. Real life demands real solutions, not dreams. It's time you started thinking realistically.

Harley stands up, the conversation reaching its boiling point.

HARLEY

*(heatedly)*

What, now? Drop everything because it's not the 'safe' choice? I can't do that. I won't.

Paula looks between her husband and son, her heart heavy.

PAULA

We want you to be happy, Harley. But happiness also means being able to look after yourself. Of course, we will always support you...

Harley interrupts, his resolve clear.

HARLEY

I'll find my own way to happiness. On my terms. Even if it means struggling a bit longer.

Eric watches his son, deeply worried.

ERIC

Remember, the world doesn't owe you a living for following your dreams.

Harley looks at his parents, a silent promise to himself that he will prove them wrong.

#### **INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - EVENING**

Emma enters, looking exhausted but determined. She goes straight to her computer, drops her bag, hangs her coat on the back of her desk chair, awakens the computer, launches 'Vortexia', and heads to the kitchen.

#### **KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Emma grabs the wrapped-up sandwich leftover from the fridge as well as a pack of sliced bread, peanut butter and jelly, and heads back to her desk.

**EMMA'S DESK - CONTINUOUS**

The splash screen of "Vortexia" displays its greeting message: "Welcome back, LunaSky."

Emma returns, dinner in hand, and sits down. She takes a bite of her sandwich and logs in.

INTERCUT WITH:

**EXT. LUNASKY'S SIM (VORTEXIA) - CONTINUOUS**

The virtual world of Vortexia comes to life, imaginative and boundless. Luna stands in the vast open space next to her 3D creation.

Emma navigates Luna through the construction, inspecting the digital incarnation of an ambitious architectural project.

The design is bold and futuristic, a digital testament to her vision and creativity.

Emma takes notes on her notepad.

**INT. DEE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

DIANA (DEE) VASQUEZ, late 20s, is a double-amputee and practically 'lives' in a wheelchair. Her apartment is colorful and cozy, a reflection of her vibrant personality: posters of iconic bands, keyboard in one corner. Cushions and throw blankets on a sofa add a sense of warmth and comfort.

Dee wheels herself to open the door to Harley, who stands proudly holding up a bag of sandwiches.

DEE

Wow, I can smell the avocado-turkey! My favorite!

HARLEY

Aaaaand...

*(pulls out a bag of chips)*

Tortilla chips! I know how you get when you're hungry and underfed.

They share a laugh, comfortable in their friendship. Harley sets the chips and a sandwich on the low table.

DEE

*(waving it off)*

Not now, Harley. I always get that flutter in my stomach before a show. I'll keep it for later?

HARLEY

What show?

She points to her computer screen sitting on a makeshift desk by her window.

A luxurious VIRTUAL CASINO, with a parterre full of elegantly dressed AVATARS playing casino games.

DEE (V.O.)

A new casino, 'Barrows'. It's  
Opening Night. I'll be singing in  
like twenty minutes.

HARLEY

Those virtual gigs are eating you  
alive, Dee. Feels like you're  
singing your heart out for nothing.

DEE

What else can I do?  
(points to her lap)  
Who would hire me?

HARLEY

You've been in this chair six months  
now. Remember? Eighty percent of  
success is showing up? Get out of  
the house for a start!

DEE

(bursting, adamant)  
Never!!!

A beat. Harley watches her recompose herself. Repacks his sandwich and gets up.

HARLEY

I should go... let you prepare.

DEE

Please come see the show. It means  
a lot knowing you'll be in the  
audience, even if it's virtual.

A smile and peace is restored.

DEE (CONT'D)

I'll send you the landmark.

HARLEY

Alright. I'll bring "Strummer".



DEE  
Don't be late!

HARLEY  
Come on, I'm only ten minutes away  
from here.

DEE  
See you in Vortexia, "Strummer".

#### **INT. HARLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

The apartment is modest and cluttered: guitars leaning against the walls, sheets of music strewn across the coffee table, mismatched furniture add a lived-in feel.

In one corner, bookshelves overflow with an eclectic mix of volumes on music and law.

Harley drops his sandwich bag on his desk and sits at his computer. He launches the "Vortexia" app.

The splash screen welcomes him: "Welcome back, Strummer". Harley logs in and leaves the frame. His avatar, STRUMMER, slowly materializes in an 18th-century troubadour attire.

COMPUTER  
Welcome back, Strummer. Someone  
sent you a landmark.

Harley returns with a beer and checks a message from Dee. He clicks the landmark and his avatar poofs away.

INTERCUT WITH:

#### **INT. BARROWS CASINO (VORTEXIA) - NIGHT**

The virtual jazz lounge, a futuristic digital masterpiece of lights, shapes and colors. Avatars of all kinds and designs fill the venue, their movements fluid and exaggerated.

On the stage, Dee's avatar, MELODY, pretty much life-like and framed by a follow spot, radiates star-quality as she performs.

Harley's avatar, Strummer, teleports into the lounge. He pauses, taking in the scene with wonder. He heads to the bar and finds a spot next to Luna who is watching the action in the casino.

STRUMMER  
(to Luna)  
This place is amazing.

LUNA

Thank you. I built it.

STRUMMER

No way!

LUNA

Yes way! What's incredible about it?

STRUMMER

I was just expressing admiration.  
This is so well done, futuristic.  
Almost surreal.

LUNA

Thanks again, I guess. What's  
surreal to me is seeing it come to  
life like this.

STRUMMER

I love it. I'm new to Vortexia,  
though, haven't seen much.

LUNA

There's plenty to explore. – But what  
with the costume? It's not every day  
you see a troubadour in a jazz lounge.

STRUMMER

I'm a musician. I had a gig here  
the other day in a French castle. I  
didn't think of changing outfit.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. DEE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Dee is at her computer, headphones on, singing Melody's song  
into the microphone while she performs on the virtual stage.

The song ends, and Dee pauses to catch her breath, the  
silence of her apartment enveloping her once more.

On her screen, a flood of positive reactions from the virtual  
audience, hearts and applause emojis fill the chat window.

DEE

*(into mike)*

Thank you. This song was for  
everyone who's ever felt alone in a  
crowded room, searching for a voice  
to guide them.

Luna and Strummer are still at the bar, chatting.

STRUMMER

Melody's a friend of mine, she  
asked me to be here. Come, I'll  
introduce you.

LUNA

*(with a hint of sarcasm)*

And then what? Get an autograph?

They laugh at the awkwardness.

STRUMMER

She's a great friend and a wonderful  
person. Well worth knowing.

LUNA

Some other time maybe.

A beat of silence between them.

STRUMMER

So you're a builder here?

LUNA

I'm a builder everywhere.

STRUMMER

You mean in Real Life as well?

LUNA

Yes, but so far in RL, they've only  
let me do design.

STRUMMER

Anything I can see and admire?

LUNA

Here? I'll send you landmarks. I  
have to get back to the real world  
now. Good night.

#### **INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Emma beams Luna away and back to her construction where she  
quasi immediately renders.

On her screen, a message pops up from Strummer, offering  
friendship: "Would you be my friend, Arch-genius?"

Emma hesitates and accepts. Now they can see each other when  
they are online.