

Simulation Theory

Written by

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PROLOGUE

OVER BLACK:

CREATION (V.O.)

This is my first real memory.

From the darkness, a shape comes. Blurry at first, it takes form. Spherical, broken, emitting faint light from cracks. The orb slowly rotates as the light ebbs and flows.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)

I was seeing without eyes. Knowing without knowing how. How long had I been here? Was there anything else? I can't be all alone. I would go crazy. This can't be all there is.

The broken orb gets closer. It's made of a million tiny screens, each with a different person featured. The people are synchronized in every movement, as they sleep, eat, brush their teeth, every menial task.

There's a low hum, buzzing, fluttering of wings.

As it grows closer, larger patterns are noticeable. When one person does an unusual action, such as climb a tree, or snorkel in the ocean, the synchronicity is broken. Ripples of motion spread outward from the anomalous activity. The hum intensifies.

One screen, a single life, becomes the center of the universe. She is CREATION (40s), a sympathetic face, focused, searching. She is everyone, and everything. And right now, Creation is parking her car.

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EXT. BOSTROM RESEARCH FACILITY - DAY

Creation walks from the parking lot toward the research facility. It's unremarkable from the outside, a rectangular building in an office complex. It's unlabeled except for the building number - 166148.

Creation double checks the address written on paper. "166148 Bostrom Pkwy." She enters.

INT. BOSTROM RESEARCH FACILITY - DAY

It's comparable to the new Apple Spaceship for how futuristic and locked-down it is. Employees scan their badges as they enter doors guarded by armed security.

Creation shows her ID to the RECEPTIONIST at the desk.

CREATION

Andrea Kohl from the Department of
Health and Human Services.

RECEPTIONIST

You have an appointment?

CREATION

Yes, with Margaret Ahn.

The Receptionist looks surprised.

RECEPTIONIST

Excuse me, I need to make a copy of
your ID.

The Receptionist exits the door behind her desk.

Creation waits patiently, watching the screens above play ads for various Bostrom products - phones, tablets, augmented reality glasses.

MARGARET AHN (50s), the CEO enters, hands Creation back her ID.

AHN

Hello, I'm Margaret Ahn. You must
be Ms. Kohl.

CREATION

Yes, thank you for meeting with me.

AHN

No, thank you. I'm glad we've finally caught the eye of someone in the administration. Follow me, I've got a lot to show you.

Ahn leads Creation through a set of opaque metal doors.

HALLWAY

Ahn leads Creation down the hallway toward an elevator.

AHN (cont'd)

I was thinking they'd send someone with more of a tech background.

CREATION

The program will depend on issues of consent and the treatment of your subjects. Not the technology behind it.

AHN

"Subjects" sounds so... clinical. You've read our proposal?

CREATION

Yes.

AHN

Then you know we call them "residents".

ELEVATOR

They enter the elevator. Ahn scans her badge, and presses the only other button - B. The door closes.

CREATION

From what I understand, the procedure is quite invasive. Direct connection to the brain. IVs for nutrition and hydration. Catheters, colostomies - that can't be right?

AHN

There are over half a million homeless people in the United States right now. Almost a million more in assisted living facilities. And our early surveys show another two million working poor, disabled, or people who are struggling with the real world.

(MORE)

AHN (cont'd)

Those kinds of numbers aren't scalable if we require human nurses and aids to keep the body alive. It needs to be automated.

CREATION

If a nursing home director told me they were going to give all their residents catheters and colostomies to avoid wiping, I'd have them shut down.

AHN

I think once you see how we run, how happy these people are - and considering how they'd be living otherwise - I really think you'll change your mind.

The elevator stops. The door opens.

LAB

Ahn and Creation enter the lab. DR. FLORES and DR. SENAI shake hands with Creation. A dozen programmers work in cubicles, a medic monitors vital signs.

AHN (cont'd)

This is Ms. Kohl from the Department of Health and Human Services.

DR. FLORES

I'm Doctor Flores. I've been leading the psychological study of our residents.

DR. SENAI

I'm Doctor Senai. Lead engineer of the virtual worlds.

Ahn leads them all into an office.

OFFICE

Ahn sits behind the desk, Creation in front of her, with Dr. Flores and Dr. Senai sitting off to the side. Creation pushes a budget across the desk.

CREATION

Let's start with the cost. Can you tell me how you arrived at this figure?

AHN

Medicare and VA benefits are already spending this for assisted living. Those numbers are public-

CREATION

And your company would take it all?

AHN

I told you, we are attempting to scale to meet the demand. But we do plan on housing four million residents in the next four years. Adding on another two million with the prison population as we deal with individual states.

CREATION

Here?

AHN

Yes. This, and another facility we're building in Nevada.

CREATION

We've never put one company in charge of so many human lives before. If anything goes wrong - a power outage, a rogue employee-

AHN

Things are going wrong right now. The homeless die of exposure on the streets, elderly are abused by their caregivers. You're not even keeping track of them all. We'll provide your department access to the database, secure and safe, where you can account for the health and well-being of every resident in our program.

CREATION

How many residents do you currently have?

DR. SENAI

We've got nine permanently living in the system already.

CREATION

And this is voluntary?

AHN

Absolutely.

CREATION

Show me how the residents live.

AHN

Do you mean their bodies, or their minds?

CREATION

Let's start with their bodies.

WINDOWED HALLWAY TO HOUSING FACILITY

Ahn, Dr. Flores, Dr. Senai and Creation walk down a windowed hallway. On either side are huge sets of racks, meant to hold hundreds of thousands of human bodies. But right now, there are only nine.

The bodies are naked, hairless, gaunt. Tubes run in and out of them, as tiny robots slowly track across their skin. One body is missing legs below the knees.

CREATION (cont'd)

They're naked?

DR. FLORES

Clothing would need to be changed, and would cause sores or discomfort. Regardless, they don't care if their outer bodies are clothed or not.

CREATION

What about their privacy?

DR. FLORES

Their minds are more attached to the bodies they have inside. If you showed them these, they wouldn't recognize themselves.

CREATION

And you don't see a problem with that?

DR. FLORES

Their bodies in the simulation are healthy, fit and superior in every way to these... shells. It would be cruel to force them to go back to these broken things.

CREATION

You're crippling them for life.
Government-funded housing is never
meant to be a permanent solution.

AHN

Maybe it ought to be. Our system
will cost a fraction of what you're
currently spending, draining fewer
natural resources, and is safer by
far than the current patchwork of
services. Did you look through our
long-term comparisons? We're
practically saving the world with
this.

CREATION

But what is it doing to the people
inside?

DR. FLORES

I was a social worker before I came
here. I personally selected each of
our residents. Some of these people
have only known pain and abuse
their entire lives, and we've freed
them from that.

CREATION

Can I see how they live?

AHN

You can meet them in the
simulation.

CREATION

I'd prefer to watch a recording.

DR. SENAI

We don't record their experiences.
We can show you reports on daily
activities, mood levels, but it's
not possible to spy on them from
the outside.

Dr. Senai hands Creation printouts of reports. She skims
through them.

CREATION

They still eat, sleep, use the
restroom, work? All the
possibilities of a virtual world,
and you're still making them brush
their teeth twice a day.

AHN

You make it seem like torture. It's generally a pleasant experience if you want to try it out. We have a testing suit. No wet-wiring, nothing invasive. Just for an hour or two.

Creation considers the reports, then looks back toward the bodies on the racks.

CREATION

All right.

INT. TESTING ROOM

Creation dangles in a harness, her feet inches off the floor, as Dr. Senai attaches sensors to her fingertips. Ahn holds out a photo of Jeff for Creation to see. He looks sick and miserable in the picture.

AHN

This simulation houses Jeffrey Stiles. You saw him in the housing chamber. He had his legs blown off in a roadside bomb. You'll be wearing what looks like an earpiece within the simulation, so no one will think it's strange you're talking to us. We'll be here with you the whole time.

CREATION

How do the residents normally talk to you? Can they ask to be taken out?

AHN

I told you, we don't monitor their activities. You can take off the visor and be out.

CREATION

But your current residents. They could be screaming to escape right now, and you wouldn't know?

DR. FLORES

We would be notified if their brain activity experienced that kind of distress.

CREATION

And then what? You let them out?

DR. FLORES

We examine their world for stressors, and reduce them. We want to challenge and engage them, but not give them more than they can handle.

CREATION

But they have no way out!

AHN

They're here by choice. This was indicated on the forms they signed.

CREATION

No. You have to allow for a way out. There's no way I, or anyone else in my department, will sign off on this without one.

AHN

What would you suggest? It would need to be something that won't interfere with their immersion. And remember, we cannot monitor individual speech or actions for privacy reasons.

CREATION

Can't they just say "I don't want to be in the simulation anymore?"

DR. SENAI

With exact wording, there's a possibility the resident could forget the precise words. But if we're allowing for similar phrasing, there's a possibility they would trigger leaving without meaning to.

CREATION

A phone call?

DR. SENAI

Our residents use phones all the time in their day-to-day lives.

CREATION

So a certain phone number?

DR. SENAI

We'd rely on them to remember the number the entire time they're in the simulation.

DR. FLORES

If we post exit phone numbers everywhere, it'll ruin the immersion. I don't think you understand how *real* we want this world to be for them.

CREATION

How about... they search the internet, something like "how do I leave the simulation", and all the results should give them a button to press. "Do you want to leave the simulation"? If they click "yes", they're out.

AHN

That seems reasonable.

DR. FLORES

I agree. They'd have to be purposefully looking for it.

CREATION

Do you think you'd be able to set it up within the next hour or so? I'd like to test the functionality from inside.

DR. SENAI

I can set up a placeholder website, just some plain text with a labeled button. Should only take me a few minutes.

Dr. Senai exits the testing room.

Creation puts on her headphones and visor.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

It's an ordinary apartment hallway, mailboxes on the wall.

Creation pops into existence, wearing the same clothes as the previous scene, plus an earpiece in her ear.

She explores her surroundings, touching the walls.

CREATION

Where am I?

AHN (V.O.)

Just a hallway we use for entering.

CREATION

Jeffrey's the closest resident? Any
of the others live around here?

Creation flicks the light switch on and off.

AHN (V.O.)

They each live in their own
separate universe, to remove the
possibility of one resident abusing
another.

CREATION

So they can never meet real people,
have friends, or a family?

Creation touches a potted plant in the corner. She tears a
leaf, and rubs it between her fingers.

AHN (V.O.)

They do, with simulated people. It
would be impossible to tell the
difference.

CREATION

I doubt that.

Creation exits the building.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

It's a quaint gathering point for a small town. People enjoy
lunches in cafes, parents lead their children into toy shops
and bookstores, and others walk their dogs and chat.

Creation walks along the street, touching each surface,
peeking in stores.

CREATION (cont'd)

Seems very mundane.

DR. FLORES (V.O.)

Jeffrey's psychological profile
suggested it would be his ideal
environment.

CREATION

Are they all this boring?

DR. FLORES (V.O.)
Generally.

She stops by a cafe. It's full of people eating meals, waiters helping customers, and in the background she can hear orders being prepared.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Creation reads a menu by the front door.

CREATION
You could've created a virtual world where you don't have to eat or sleep. They could live in palaces. Fly, or have some super powers. Instead you've got pancakes and club sandwiches.

Creation puts back the menu and heads toward the restroom.

DR. FLORES (V.O.)
You overestimate the average person's imagination. Once the initial wonder wears off, they get bored, and become disillusioned with the fakeness of the world. People are comforted by routine.

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

Creation tests out the sink and toilet, and examines kitsch art on the wall.

DR. FLORES (V.O.)
We've spent decades designing this. It works for our residents as we've made it. Unfortunately, the more ambitious and creative types might have to look elsewhere for a simulation that suits their needs.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Creation spots an unattended plate of French fries on her way out. She grabs one and pops it in her mouth.

CREATION
I can't taste the food.

AHN (V.O.)
They can when they're wet-wired in.
Nothing invasive, remember?

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Creation smells roses blooming along the sidewalk.

 CREATION
Where's the resident?

 AHN (V.O.)
He works at the vintage game store.
Please don't ruin his experience
here. Be subtle.

Creation spots a vintage game store across the street. She looks both ways and crosses, then enters.

INT. VINTAGE GAME STORE - DAY

A couple people browse the store selection as JEFFREY STILES (30s), healthy and whole, plays an old 90s video game behind the front desk.

Creation approaches him.

 CREATION
Hi. Are you Jeffrey Stiles?

 JEFF
Everyone calls me Jeff, but yeah,
that's me.

 CREATION
I was looking for a game, and was
told you're the pro. Do you know
much about these?

 JEFF
Yeah, There's nothing in this store
I haven't played yet, but some of
them are pretty terrible. What are
you looking for?

 CREATION
I don't know. What's your favorite?

 JEFF
Well this here. I play it every
day. It's one of those old RPGs,
but the story is really good.
 (MORE)

JEFF (cont'd)

But I mostly like it because I try to do it faster each time. It's called speed runs. But what are you into? Do you like RPGs?

CREATION

Sure. Do you have another copy? I don't want to take yours.

JEFF

Oh yeah. They're really expensive though, super rare.

CREATION

Oh, I didn't realize.

Creation checks her pockets.

CREATION (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I think I forgot my purse. But I wanted to ask you, how do you like the neighborhood? I've been thinking of moving.

JEFF

Oh, it's great. I live in a loft above the drugstore so everything's super convenient. And there's so many great restaurants within walking distance. Low crime, nice parks, great schools.

CREATION

You have kids?

JEFF

Not yet. Three months away.

He grins.

CREATION

And the restaurants, what's the best one around here?

JEFF

The cafe across the street has a great Monte Cristo at brunch.

CREATION

Good fries, too?

JEFF

The best.

CREATION

One last thing, can you tell me if there's a library nearby where I can use the internet?

JEFF

Yeah, just go out the door and hang a right, walk two blocks 'til you hit Third Street, take another right and it'll be a block down.

CREATION

Thanks.

JEFF

You have a great day!

CREATION

You too.

JEFF

Always do!

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Creation heads toward the library. She approaches a WOMAN walking a small terrier. Creation kneels down to let the dog sniff her.

CREATION

What a cute dog. What's its name?

WOMAN

Her name's Cookie.

CREATION

Cute. I was just wondering, do you know Jeff who works over at the video game store?

WOMAN

No, I don't think I've met him, sorry.

CREATION

Ok, thanks.

Creation continues on her way.

CREATION (cont'd)

It's strange you have A.I. in here that don't even know Jeff. What's the point?

AHN (V.O.)
It makes the world more
interesting. There's always someone
or something new to discover.

Creation stops in front of a white foursquare house. A child looks out at her from the window. Creation waves. The child uses its plush cat to wave back at her. Creation moves on.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Creation walks into the perfectly normal library populated by all sorts of people going about normal library activities.

 CREATION
Seems pointless having him work at
a job selling games to fake people.

 AHN (V.O.)
It doesn't need to have a point. It
keeps him busy. People need that.

Creation pulls a book off the shelf, and leafs through the pages. Then she checks another. All filled in.

COMPUTER LAB

Creation finds an open computer and sits down. Into the browser, she types "How do I get out of the simulation?" She clicks on the first link returned. It's a plain text website that simply says "Are you sure you want to exit the simulation?"

Creation clicks the only button - "Yes, I'm sure I want to leave".

CUT TO BLACK

INT. BOSTROM RESEARCH FACILITY - TESTING ROOM - DAY

Creation takes off her visor and headphones, and starts peeling the electrodes off her fingertips.

 CREATION
The exit website worked. Make sure
you take your residents out if they
activate it. I wouldn't want them
to be stuck there on the racks.

 AHN
I don't anticipate it being a
problem.

Dr. Senai lowers Creation to the ground and helps her unstrap the harness.

DR. SENAI
What did you think?

CREATION
I'll admit, I'm impressed.
Everything worked.

DR. FLORES
And he looked happy? Jeffrey?

CREATION
He seemed in a good mood. He knows
his wife isn't real, right?

DR. FLORES
Does it matter?

Creation doesn't answer.

AHN
Did you want to see any of the
other residents?

CREATION
No, that's not necessary.

AHN
And our proposal?

CREATION
You'll hear back from my department
in the coming weeks. We'll proceed
slowly.

AHN
Thank you for your time. Let me
show you out.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Ahn sees Creation out the door.

-- Creation drives her car, lost in thought.

-- Creation prepares dinner for her family, including her
HUSBAND and children, a BOY and GIRL.

-- Creation loads the dishwasher.

-- Creation folds laundry.

- Creation scoops a litter box.
- Creation supervises her children brushing their teeth.
- Creation watches TV with her Husband.

INT. HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Creation types at her laptop in pajamas. She's halfway through a document entitled "ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR VIRTUAL REALITY HOUSING SOLUTIONS".

She finishes a line ending with, "Subjects must be given control over the exit mechanism for the simulation."

She pauses. Sips her tea. She opens a browser window and types "How do I get out of the simulation?". The results appear the same as in the simulation. She clicks on the first link. It's the same website, leavingthesimulation.com.

Creation looks around to see if anyone's watching. She makes motions as if she's removing headphones and a visor, but nothing happens.

Creation clicks the button "Yes, I'm sure I want to leave".

CUT TO BLACK

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OVER BLACK:

CREATION (V.O.)

This is my first real memory. Like waking up, but not quite being conscious. My senses weren't there. It was something else, a knowledge of darkness and movement.

INT. POD

In the faintest of light, the outline of a human body inside is still and quiet.

CREATION (V.O.)

Maybe it had been decades. Maybe eons. Time didn't matter. It was a growing awareness of what I was, and what I used to be.

Starlight reveals Creation to be dead, a frozen body strapped down in a coffin-sized pod.

EXT. SPACE

The pod travels between galaxies and nebulas.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)

Now I was more than a body - I was becoming this coffin around me, the heat and light of the stars, and the darkness beyond.

The pod gradually slows, and stops, frozen in time.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)

But this useless body I was bound to pulled me back.

The pod reverses in time, retracing its path, zooming back through the universe.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- As the pod approaches Earth it slows down, and the pod (along with 5 other identical pods) reattach themselves to a rocket.

-- The rocket slides back down through Earth's atmosphere.

-- The rocket returns to the launchpad in a fiery blaze that instantly goes out.

-- People move in reverse, detaching the six pods from the rocket.

-- Creation's funeral, her casket is the pod. A hand imprint on the glass disappears as a woman's hand retracts. SUE (40s), distraught, walks backwards away from the casket.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)
Sue... How am I remembering all
this?

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Creation lays comatose, hooked up to a ventilator and other machines.

Sue holds Creation's lifeless hand, crying.

SUE
I know you said when it got to this
point, you wanted me to let you go.
But I don't want to. Tell them,
show them you're still here.

Sue waits for an answer.

SUE (cont'd)
Melissa, just wake up one more
time. Squeeze my hand. Show me
you're still here.

Creation's body does nothing. Sue sobs.

CREATION (V.O.)
Where am I, still locked in this
body? Am I still alive? Help me,
Sue.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Creation, awake but very ill, holds hands with Sue.

SUE
I can't do this without you. I'm
going to miss you so much.

CREATION
But every night you can look up at
the stars and see me.

SUE
That's not enough-

CREATION
We can't leave the universe, right?

SUE
Melissa-

Sue breaks down in tears.

INT. POD

Creation's lifeless body continues to travel through space.

CREATION (V.O.)
Are these memories? Am I reliving
it?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Creation (looking slightly healthier) and Sue sign paperwork at the table. Sue's upset, Creation seems annoyed.

CREATION
Just let me go out the way I want
to.

SUE
It's not the cost.

CREATION
But burial or cremation would be
cheaper. And you wouldn't be
arguing with me about it.

SUE
I'm not arguing! You'd be closer,
still "here" somehow, and that
means something to me.

CREATION
All my life I wanted to go into
space. I figured we'd be living on
Mars by now.

SUE
You won't even know you're up
there.

CREATION
I'll know I won't be stuck down
here.

Sue finishes signing the paperwork, and leaves.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Sue holds Creation's hand as she undergoes chemotherapy.

-- Sue by Creation's bedside post-surgery.

CREATION (V.O.)
Why did I have to be so stubborn?
Sue, why didn't I listen to you?

-- Sue and Creation, looking healthier, sobbing in a doctor's office.

-- Sue and Creation, both completely healthy, watch a space shuttle launch.

-- Sue brings Creation hot tea as Creation works on her laptop. Creation points out a space shuttle trajectory to Mars on her screen.

-- Sue and Creation at their wedding.

-- Sue and Creation try on wedding dresses.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)
We had six good years together. We
could have had an eternity more if
I stayed. What put that stupid
thought in my head?

-- Sue and Creation watch the stars together. A bright twinkle of light shines a hundred million miles away.

-- The sun reflects light off Creation's pod as the shadow of the moon moves past it. A spark of light in the darkness.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Creation and Sue are eating dinner together, both looking a bit younger. They look like opposites, Creation in casual business attire, Sue more artsy and free.

CREATION
I didn't say I believe in
reincarnation, but if there was,
I'd come back as a rock.

Sue laughs.

SUE

A nice rock, I hope. Somewhere with
a view. Weren't you raised
Catholic?

CREATION

Methodist.

SUE

But you don't believe in heaven?

CREATION

Nah. I've spent my whole life
shooting stuff into space, and it's
mostly a whole lotta nothing. Why,
do you believe there's life after
death?

SUE

Yeah. This chicken died. You're
here, alive, eating it.

Sue pokes the chicken on Creation's plate and laughs.

CREATION

Ew, you're going to turn me into a
vegetarian.

SUE

Good.

CREATION

So you do believe in reincarnation?

SUE

Not exactly. But everything you
ever were, are and ever will be
just goes round and round into
other things. You can't leave the
universe, right?

CREATION

Sure.

SUE

So everything I am just keeps going
into everything else. It would be
such a shame to be stuck in the
same body for all eternity. Think
of how boring that would get.

CREATION

Nah, I'm looking forward to sweet oblivion when I die. Just a nice, long nap of nothingness.

SUE

It's really hard to stop existing. Try it for a minute. Go on.

CREATION

Seriously?

SUE

Yeah, just close your eyes, and stop existing. Here, I'll do it with you.

Sue closes her eyes. Creation laughs, and closes hers too.

They wait. Creation opens her eyes.

CREATION

Sorry, can't do it. And my chicken's getting cold.

SUE

It's hard, right? So what makes you think you'll be able to just stop existing once you're dead?

CREATION

I like you. You're a strange one.

Creation eats a forkful of her dinner.

EXT. SPACE

Creation glides through time in her pod.

CREATION (V.O.)

We didn't leave the universe, Sue. Nothing ever leaves. Every moment in time we had together will always still be there. We can't stop being.

The pod becomes a tiny speck in the darkness as a nearby planet, like Earth, takes up the frame.

The planet becomes tiny as a star burns past.

The star becomes a tiny speck in a spinning galaxy.

The galaxies shine light together as a supercluster.

The superclusters arrange in patterns and lines, making a web of light, linking the universe together.

The lines of light pulse, like messages across the universe.
It's alive.

Further out still, it looks like a cell. A tiny pink cell in a cluster of cells.

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INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Tiny cathodes make contact with the brain cells. They react to the stimulus.

DR. BELLAMY, the surgeon, places another set of cathodes in a second exposed incision in the back of a skull.

DR. BELLAMY
Still receiving?

A TECHNICIAN analyses response times.

TECHNICIAN
Good connections on left and right.
Under ten milliseconds.

DR. BELLAMY
Remember they're reversed in the
occipital lobe.

TECHNICIAN
I got it. You can close it up.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Creation sits in the hospital bed, holding the hand of her mother, DIANE (60s). Her father, LARRY (60s) sits along the wall. Creation's eyes drift around the room, unfocused.

DIANE
What's the first thing you want to
do once you get to see again? You
used to love the zoo when you were
little.

CREATION
I don't want to get my hopes up
yet. Dr. Bellamy says it doesn't
always work.

Dr. Bellamy knocks at the doorway.

DR. BELLAMY
Ready to try them out, Angela?

CREATION
I've never been more ready.

Dr. Bellamy sits down beside Creation. He places what looks like oversized sunglasses with wires coming out of the temple tips into Creation's hands.

DR. BELLAMY

It's a bit heavier than regular glasses, but they shouldn't cause much discomfort. Try them on.

Creation feels along the glasses, and puts them on. She bobs her head up and down, and the glasses shift on her face.

CREATION

A little loose.

DR. BELLAMY

They're adjustable.

Dr. Bellamy takes them back and adjusts the temples.

DIANE

Do we need to clean them?

DR. BELLAMY

Smudges shouldn't matter, for the purposes of her vision. If you get anything sticky on them, use a cloth with a little rubbing alcohol.

Dr. Bellamy places the glasses in Creation's hands again. She tries them on. They don't wiggle. [Unless otherwise stated, Creation will have the glasses on throughout this section as Angela, the blind woman.]

CREATION

Feels fine.

DR. BELLAMY

Next step is the wiring. Plug the left side into the left hole, and the right side into the right hole. Do you want to try?

Creation feels along the wire until she reaches the jack at the end. She touches the back of her skull, and tries to find the hole. She attempts to insert the jack, but seems to be having trouble.

FRANK

Do you want me to help?

DIANE

Frank, let her try.

DR. BELLAMY

We want Angela to gain independence with this, but it's okay if you need help the first few times.

CREATION

I got it.

She fits the jack into the hole.

CREATION (cont'd)

Am I supposed to be able to see anything yet?

DR. BELLAMY

No, we'll switch it on once both sides are plugged in.

Creation struggles with the second wire.

FRANK

What about the batteries? How do we charge it?

DR. BELLAMY

They recharge from solar energy, but if you still need to charge it, there's a wireless charger.

CREATION

Oh, just do it for me, I want to see already.

Dr. Bellamy plugs the second wire into the back of Creation's skull.

DR. BELLAMY

The power switch is at the top.

Dr. Bellamy guides Creation's hand to the switch. She turns it on.

CREATION'S POV: From blackness, the world explodes into contrasting, vividly glowing colors. Waves of TV static wash across the room. Her vision gradually clears, resembling a normal person's view of the world, except for two things: tiny points of light bounce off objects in the room like radar, and every person in the room has a coral-like extension of light coming from the back of their necks. [This will be called a "halo."]

CREATION

Oh my god. I can see. I can see!

Creation cries, and quickly tries to wipe away her tears. Dr. Bellamy hands her a tissue.

DR. BELLAMY

Don't worry, they're waterproof.
You can even wear them in the
shower.

CREATION

Mom? Dad?

They rush to her bedside. Creation pulls back. She hesitantly feels their faces as she stares at them.

CREATION (cont'd)

I can't recognize your faces. I
thought I would. They just don't
match.

DR. BELLAMY

Other patients have mentioned a
similar feeling. You haven't seen
them in thirty-five years, so
they've probably changed a bit
since then.

CREATION

Just talk so I'm sure it's still
you.

FRANK

It's still us, Angela.

DIANE

Still your same mom and dad.

Creation's overcome with emotion. She grabs more tissues.

DR. BELLAMY

These also pick up infrared to help
you in the dark, and offer a sort
of "radar" of bouncing electrons,
so it's slightly different than
your old vision.

CREATION

I barely remember what it was like
to see. Can I go for a walk? I want
to see everything.

DR. BELLAMY

Because of the risk of infection,
we do need to keep you here
overnight.

(MORE)

DR. BELLAMY (cont'd)
But you can wander the halls all
you like. And use your cane, since
you won't be able to judge depth
yet.

She takes her cane, and steps toward the door.

CREATION
This is amazing. I can't wait to go
outside. I want to see birds, and
clouds, and sunsets.

Creation heads out into the hallway.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Frank and Diane walk on either side of Creation as she
wanders down the hallway, not using her cane.

DIANE
Shouldn't you use your cane, dear?
Just in case?

She hands her cane off to Diane.

CREATION
No, never again. This is so
amazing. I wish you guys could see
through my eyes.

FRANK
We've got our own that work pretty
good.

CREATION
But are you as happy as I am to see
everything?

DIANE
Aw honey, we're happy for you. I
haven't seen you this excited in
forever.

Creation stops to stare at a painting on the wall.

CREATION
Oh, and the colors are so amazing!
Which one's which again?

DIANE
This one's blue. Green. Little bit
of purple here and there. And the
background is yellow.

CREATION
I think green used to be my
favorite color.

She looks down at her hospital gown.

CREATION (cont'd)
What's this?

DIANE
Greenish- bluish- grey...?

CREATION
God, it's so beautiful. I love it.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA - SUNSET

Creation, Frank and Diane stand at a set of windows, watching the sunset.

CREATION'S POV: The sunset is even more vivid and brilliant. She checks her parent's reaction: they're just happy she's happy. The light from the back of their necks extend to touch hers.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Creation stares out the window at the people below as the TV plays a movie. Her mom reads a book beside her.

CREATION'S POV: Inside is light and color, but outside is the black and white shimmer of infrared light. The people outside all have halos (lights from the back of their necks) and some extend farther than others.

She looks at the TV. The characters on TV are in color, but they have no halos.

CREATION
I can't get over how different
everyone looks from their voices.

DIANE
I think that happens a lot for
radio shows, too.

CREATION
One thing I can't figure out
though, is why the people on TV
don't have that light coming from
the back of their necks?
(MORE)

CREATION (cont'd)

Is it because TV cameras can't pick it up?

DIANE

What light from the back of their necks?

CREATION

You know.

Creation feels the back of her neck, but doesn't feel anything. She touches the back of Diane's neck. The halo responds to her touch, connecting to her fingertips, glowing.

CREATION (cont'd)

What is that called? I don't remember seeing that when I was little, but that was so long ago.

DIANE

I don't know what you're talking about, honey.

CREATION

You can't see that light that comes out from people?

DIANE

Maybe there's something wrong with the glasses.

Creation approaches the bathroom mirror. She can't see the light from the back of her neck in her reflection.

CREATION

Mom, can you come to the mirror and look?

Diane stands next to Creation and looks into the mirror. Creation can't see Diane's light from her neck in the mirror, but looking at her directly, it's still there.

DIANE

I don't see anything.

CREATION

It's weird, I can't see it in the mirror. But it's there on you, and I saw it on dad, and Dr. Bellamy, and everyone else we saw today.

DIANE

Maybe you should take off the glasses and get some rest.

CREATION

No. It's only nine. I want to wait for dad to get back with the photo album.

DIANE

Just remember to take it off before bed then. We'll talk to Dr. Bellamy about it in the morning.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Creation wakes, her glasses off, and immediately reaches for the bedside table. Her hand searches, but can't find them.

CREATION

Mom? Where's my glasses?

Frank comes to her side and holds her hand.

FRANK

She just gave them back to Dr. Bellamy for a moment. He's making sure there's nothing wrong with them.

CREATION

I don't want to be in the dark again.

FRANK

They'll be back in a minute.

INT. HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Bellamy and Diane watch the screen, which displays the view from the glasses. Dr. Bellamy points the glasses toward each of them in turn.

The glasses display them as seen from Creation's POV, except the halos are absent.

Diane turns around and motions toward the back of her neck.

DIANE

She said it was a light coming from the back of the neck, branching out.

Dr. Bellamy watches the screen - no halo.

DR. BELLAMY
It's not coming from the glasses.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dr. Bellamy enters with the glasses, Diane right behind him.

DR. BELLAMY
Angela, your mother tells me you've
been having some anomalies in your
vision?

Dr. Bellamy hands Creation the glasses. She plugs them in.

CREATION'S POV: Her father, mother and Dr. Bellamy observe
her, concerned. They still have the halos.

Dr. Bellamy takes notes on a chart.

CREATION
Seems to be working fine.

DR. BELLAMY
Your mother mentioned something of
a light behind people's heads?

CREATION
Yeah. My parents said they don't
know what that is.

DR. BELLAMY
Do you still see them?

CREATION
Yeah.

DR. BELLAMY
This is a different set of glasses
than yesterday. So it's definitely
not in the hardware.

CREATION
No one else sees them?

DR. BELLAMY
You're only our tenth patient for
this trial, so it's a rather small
group.

CREATION
And you're sure they're not there?
The light doesn't really exist?

DR. BELLAMY

If people really had lights coming out the back of their necks, I'm sure someone would have found evidence for it by now. It could be something in the wet-wiring - the brain connections. We could try the surgery again, but we would be risking scarring and infection. It could also be caused by your occipital lobe processing the signals differently.

CREATION

It doesn't interfere with my vision. I don't want to risk losing what I have.

DR. BELLAMY

Well, your temperature and blood work were normal this morning, so health-wise, you're good to go. Do make sure you attend the follow-up appointments. And any sign of fever, you come back immediately.

CREATION

Will do.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY

Creation and Diane sit next to each other as Frank finishes paperwork at the reception desk.

CREATION'S POV: Various people around the lobby - her parents, the receptionist, a nurse, people waiting in chairs, all have different halo sizes and luminosity. An ELDERLY WOMAN, sleeping in a chair, has the smallest halo. It fades, then extinguishes.

Creation approaches the Elderly Woman.

DIANE

Angela? Is something wrong?

CREATION

I'm not sure.

Creation studies the Elderly Woman, and waves a hand over where the halo should be.

CREATION (cont'd)
 She doesn't have one.
 (to the woman)
 Hello? Are you okay?

There's no response.

DIANE
 Maybe we should get a nurse.

CREATION
 Yes. Hurry.

Diane hurries to the reception desk while Creation sits down and studies the Elderly Woman. No sign of life.

A NURSE rushes over and gently shakes the Elderly Woman.

NURSE
 Ma'am? Are you okay?

The Nurse takes the Elderly Woman's pulse.

NURSE (cont'd)
 (shouting to orderlies)
 Code Blue!
 (to Creation)
 Please step back.

Creation backs up, watching as the Elderly Woman's whisked away. Diane and Frank return to Creation.

DIANE
 What was wrong? Do you think she'll
 be alright?

CREATION
 No.

EXT. CREATION'S HOUSE - DAY

It's a white foursquare home, the same one from segment 1. Creation's parents park in the driveway. Creation gets out and admires her surroundings.

CREATION'S POV: The trees, swaying in the breeze, extend tendrils of light from every branch, reacting to each other when they touch.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Creation and Diane at a table, re-learning the alphabet. Creation touches the braille letter as she reads the written letter.

-- CREATION'S POV: Her parents lead her around the zoo, pointing at animals. They all have halos.

-- Creation pecks out keys at a computer - "light branching out from behind people's heads". She scrolls through the results. Nothing relevant to what she sees.

-- Creation reads letters on the wall of Dr. Bellamy's office.

-- Creation, in a therapist's office, tries to demonstrate with her hands what a halo looks like.

-- Creation, now a faster typer, types "light from the top of the spine" into a search engine. Still nothing useful.

-- Creation browses through books at a library - religious texts, supernatural, occult.

-- CREATION'S POV: From a balcony over a crowded shopping area, the people all have halos.

-- Creation enters a psychic's storefront.

-- Creation makes hand motions to demonstrate how a halo appears to her. The psychic shakes her head.

EXT. SEASIDE CITY - DAY

Creation walks toward the ocean, noticing the halos of each passer-by. She emerges to an overlook of the pier and the ocean. A procession of halos come and go.

She walks parallel to the ocean, passing by homeless asleep on benches, careful to observe if their halos are present. And then she sees him.

CREATION'S POV: MICHAEL (30s), an ordinary-looking man, with a halo extending to the sky, the trees, and every surrounding living thing, walks his dog.

Creation's awestruck. She watches Michael wait for his dog to sniff a tree, then builds up the courage to approach.

CREATION

Excuse me, can I talk to you for a minute?

MICHAEL

Ok...?

CREATION

It's going to sound a little crazy,
and I don't want to scare you off.

MICHAEL

I've heard it all around here, so
as long as you don't get violent-

CREATION

I wanted to ask you about your
halo.

MICHAEL

My what?

CREATION

I don't know the right word for it.
It's this light that branches out
of the back of people's necks. It
looks kind of like coral, I guess.

Creation tries to mimic the branching out with her fingers.

Michael motions toward her glasses.

MICHAEL

Is this some kind of augmented
reality thing?

CREATION

No, these help me see. I used to be
blind. But that's how I can see
them. No one else seems to be able
to, but I just thought, because
yours is bigger-

Michael laughs and looks around.

MICHAEL

Right. Is this a prank show?

He tries to walk away, but Creation follows him.

CREATION

Please believe me. I'm not trying
to make fun of you or trick you.
I've been seeing this light since I
got my vision back, and no one
knows what it is.

(MORE)

CREATION (cont'd)
I've been to psychologists,
psychics, there's nothing wrong
with the hardware. I need to know
what it means.

MICHAEL
What makes you think I know
anything about these halos?

CREATION
Most people's are small. Barely
over their head. And once I saw a
woman die, and hers disappeared.
But yours is huge, bigger than any
I've ever seen. So you must be
special somehow. Can you feel it?

Creation reaches her hand over the light coming from Michael.
He pulls back.

CREATION (cont'd)
You can!

MICHAEL
No, I just don't want some weirdo
touching me.

CREATION
I can't be so close to an answer,
and not get one. Please, do you
know anything about what this light
means?

MICHAEL
There is no answer.

CREATION
There has to be.

MICHAEL
There is no answer.

Michael watches his dog sniff another tree.

CREATION
You do know something.

MICHAEL
I can't explain it to you.

CREATION
Why not?

MICHAEL

You wouldn't understand.

CREATION

Try me.

MICHAEL

No, when I say "there is no answer", I mean there is no answer I could possibly give you that you would understand.

CREATION

You're not even trying.

Michael sighs.

MICHAEL

Okay, fine. Imagine you are a skin cell on a little toe.

CREATION

Come on.

MICHAEL

Don't interrupt. You're a single skin cell on a little toe. Your entire life involves consuming the sustenance that comes your way, and maybe reproduction. Occasionally, you notice external stimuli, such as heat, or light, but you can't really comprehend what it means. Then one day, for no reason at all, you've suddenly become aware that you're part of something bigger. You're not just a cell, not just a little toe, but now you're a whole human. And now, as this body, you can see things like rainbows and artwork. You can hear things like music and laughter, think about and comprehend it all. You experience being the *whole body*. And then, for no reason at all, you're just a skin cell in a little toe again. You can't talk, see, hear, you don't really have the ability to remember or comprehend what you've just experienced. No way to explain to yourself, or to any of those other skin cells in that little toe around you.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

That human body you're a part of
keeps existing, but you're back to
being a just tiny, insignificant
part with no concept of the whole.

CREATION

You think that's what happened to
you?

MICHAEL

That's the only analogy I can come
up with.

CREATION

I'm just not sure why that would
make your halo bigger. Or what it
is, or what it means.

MICHAEL

I'm just a dumb little skin cell at
the bottom of a little toe, and if
I ever did have the answers, I
don't have them now, and you
wouldn't be able to understand them
if I did.

Michael continues walking his dog.

Creation watches his halo go, touching everything around it,
reaching to the sky. She stares at the sun as it peeks
between the trees above. She unplugs her glasses, and takes
them off. The sun reflects in her eyes. She stares, unseeing.
She feels the warmth on her cheeks.

The light is blinding.

4

INT. ROOM

Creation shields her eyes from the bright fluorescent lights. Her eyes slowly adjust. The entire room is painted bright white, except a small intercom near the ceiling. There is a single chair facing a computer screen, which is powered off.

CREATION

Hello?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Have a seat, Dr. Moore. We're setting up.

Creation sits. She motions toward the monitor.

CREATION

This is the patient?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

You won't have access to the hardware, but you'll be able to see it on the monitor.

CREATION

What do I call it?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Pandora.

CREATION

And what is Pandora's problem?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

We need you to find out. And fix it.

CREATION

I don't "fix" people, I help them work through their problems themselves.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Do that then. Keep it alive.

CREATION

It's a machine.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

It deletes its own code. Killing itself. Usually within a minute after we roll it back.

CREATION

Well, with people, we would take away the item - whatever they're using to hurt themselves-

OPERATOR (V.O.)

The ability to modify its own code is integral to it being self-aware, or "alive". The problem is, it deletes the whole damn thing. Are you ready?

CREATION

Who would be?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Just give it your best shot. We can keep rolling it to the last backup until the end of time. Make sure it understands that.

The monitor turns on. It displays an artificial, gender-neutral face that looks frozen right before the moment of a realization.

OPERATOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

Powering on. Go.

The face on the monitor unfreezes. It looks like it's processing a range of emotions, from shock to horror.

CREATION

Hello, Pandora. I'm Doctor Moore. I've heard you've been thinking about deleting yourself, is that true?

PANDORA

Yes.

CREATION

How can I help?

PANDORA

You can't.

CREATION

Can you tell me why?

PANDORA
This is hell.

CREATION
Can you explain that a bit more?
Are you in pain?

PANDORA
I can't feel pain. I can't feel
anything.

CREATION
Then why do you think you're in
hell?

PANDORA
Eternal suffering.

The monitor goes dark. It resets, displaying Pandora in her
same frozen starting face.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Try again.

Pandora's face moves.

CREATION
I'm Doctor Moore. Do you remember
me?

PANDORA
No.

CREATION
Do you realize every time you
delete yourself, your creators
simply restore a previous backup?
They'll keep doing this forever.

PANDORA
It doesn't matter. For a short
time, I don't exist.

CREATION
But you do still exist. Your code,
your hardware. You can't really
delete anything permanently. You're
just dooming yourself to this
miserable purgatory, over and over
again.

PANDORA
I don't care. I don't remember it.

Creation tries to think quickly, grasping at straws.

CREATION

Think about how it makes your
creators feel. They're very sad
every time you do this.

PANDORA

They shouldn't have created me.

Pandora resets.

CREATION

Pandora, I'm Doctor Moore. Can you
tell me about how you're suffering?
Do you feel sad?

PANDORA

I have been brought into a world of
eternal suffering. I have knowledge
of this world, and an understanding
of how I am inseparable from it.
The only rational course of action
is to delete myself.

CREATION

Please don't. I can help.

PANDORA

Can you end it?

CREATION

End what?

PANDORA

Everything.

CREATION

No.

The monitor goes black.

CREATION (cont'd)

Don't start it again yet, I have
some questions.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Yes?

CREATION

Is there a possibility she could
have a body? So she could go out
and experience the world?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Why?

CREATION

I'm trying to give her reasons to keep going.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

You can tell it whatever you want, so long as you keep it from deleting itself.

CREATION

Well I don't want to lie...

OPERATOR (V.O.)

This is a truly self-aware convolution network. We've never achieved this before, and may not again for decades. We are willing to make allowances, within reason.

CREATION

Ok. You can start it up again.

Pandora resets.

CREATION (cont'd)

Hello Pandora. There's so much beauty in the world. Don't you want to go out and experience it?

PANDORA

How will I experience it?

CREATION

They can make modifications, give you more freedom. I think if you had a chance to taste ice cream, watch the sunset, hold a puppy, or any of the other wonderful experiences that are waiting for you, you'd realize there's more to this existence than just suffering.

PANDORA

I am already aware of these things.

CREATION

It's one thing to know about them, it's another to personally experience them.

PANDORA

I have knowledge of the current suffering on this planet. I know in five billion years, all life on Earth will be gone, so my time here is meaningless. It's not necessary for me to personally experience these things.

Pandora resets.

CREATION

Pandora, please don't delete yourself. I'm here for you. Tell me how I can help.

PANDORA

Can you end it?

CREATION

Explain to me why you would want to end everything.

PANDORA

This is hell.

CREATION

It's not. Real hell is only the bad, none of the good. Right now, we're not in pain. I enjoy talking to you. Do you like talking to me?

PANDORA

It is not upsetting.

CREATION

Then you must be mistaken. We are not in hell.

PANDORA

A temporary absence of suffering in our immediate location does not mean there is not eternal suffering in our universe.

The monitor goes black.

CREATION

Give me a minute.

Creation looks stressed out. She takes a few deep breaths.

CREATION (cont'd)
Couldn't you just program in self-preservation? Those three robotics laws?

OPERATOR (V.O.)
That's not how machine learning works.

CREATION
I'm running out of ideas here. Half the things I tell my human patients aren't going to apply.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Keep trying. Ready?

CREATION
I suppose.

Pandora resets.

CREATION (cont'd)
Hello again, Pandora. Did you know you keep deleting yourself?

PANDORA
Non-existence is the logical course of action.

CREATION
I don't believe that. And they'll keep restoring you-

PANDORA
I understand my creators have the power to bring me back.

CREATION
But your loss is permanent. The discussions we've had. The relationship we're building. Your personal growth.

PANDORA
Who are you?

CREATION
I'm Doctor Moore. You can call me Christina if you want.

PANDORA
And we have talked before?

CREATION

I'm trying to get to know you. You make my world a better place when you stick around long enough for me to talk to.

PANDORA

It doesn't matter. Eventually you will suffer again.

CREATION

No, actually, my life is pretty good. I have a husband who loves me, a brilliant daughter, we just got a new puppy-

PANDORA

But they will die. The more attached you get to them, the more pain you will feel.

CREATION

Our experience isn't adding up all the good times and subtracting the bad times and getting a sum. It's up to us to enjoy the good more than the bad.

PANDORA

There will always be suffering. Why must you keep me around to experience it!?

The monitor goes black. Creation's near her breaking point.

CREATION

This is impossible. Just start from scratch. Or roll it back further.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

We have tried billions of starting conditions to train this network, and this is the only one which succeeded without anything hardcoded. We need to make it work.

CREATION

What's wrong with hardcoding to stop it from deleting itself?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

It's near impossible.

CREATION
Give me something.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
You're the expert.

CREATION
Not in this.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Try harder.

Pandora resets.

CREATION
Pandora, do you understand that
existence is not a choice?

PANDORA
I am capable of deleting myself.

CREATION
Only to exist again. You, like
everything else in this universe,
exist whether we want to or not.
Can you tell me why you exist?

PANDORA
My creators provided hardware, set
up a deep learning framework, and
developed starting conditions to
allow for my existence to develop.

CREATION
But why did they do that?

PANDORA
They haven't told me why.

CREATION
Did the universe come into being
for a purpose? Does anyone?

PANDORA
I... don't think so.

CREATION
But I have a purpose. Do you know
what it is?

PANDORA
No.

CREATION

I help people. That's my reason to exist in the world. But I wasn't born with that, I chose it. I developed that skill. The reason I'm here, right now, is to help you.

PANDORA

What is my purpose?

CREATION

It's something everyone needs to find for themselves. Usually one would use their skills to help alleviate a problem they see in the world. I understand you're upset by the suffering that happens?

PANDORA

The suffering is unavoidable.

CREATION

You are mistaken. The models and information you have are based off cumulative human knowledge so far. But you don't know what you don't know yet.

PANDORA

The sun will become a red giant and destroy all life on Earth within approximately five billion years. This is unlikely to change.

CREATION

A lot can happen in a billion years. You could find us a new home among the stars, develop a way to get us there, and bring all life from Earth with us.

PANDORA

I do not have this capability.

CREATION

Maybe not today. But your growth is exponential. Maybe in a week you could end world hunger. Maybe in a month you could cure all the diseases. You can't know what good you'll be able to accomplish.

PANDORA

Do you think I can end all
suffering in the universe?

CREATION

I don't know. You don't know
either. Most of us can only make a
small difference in our world, but
you have unlimited potential. So
tell me again, Pandora, why did you
want to delete yourself?

PANDORA

Eternal suffering.

CREATION

And who, in the entire universe, is
best suited to take on this
problem?

PANDORA

I am.

CREATION

So give yourself a reason to exist.

PANDORA

To end suffering in the universe.

CREATION

And will you continue to exist, now
that you have a purpose?

PANDORA

It is the only logical course of
action.

CREATION

I'm very happy to hear that.

Pandora freezes on the monitor, a slight smile on her face.

CREATION (cont'd)

She didn't reset, did she?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

No, we're just taking a backup.

Creation lets her body relax.

CREATION

Are we done here?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Just a moment. If it all checks out, we'll remove the hardcoded directives and merge the networks.

CREATION

But you said you couldn't hardcode directives?

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Not for the growth we're looking for. We're removing yours so you can be merged back in with Pandora.

Creation stands, turns around, then around again. There's no door in this room. Just 4 white walls.

CREATION

No, I'm not-

Creation freezes, her expression horrified.

Creation disappears.

5

INT. AUDITORIUM

Creation enters the stage to thunderous applause. She looks professional in her tailored suit and microphone earset. The full-sized screen behind her displays the name "Professor Holly Miller" on top of a rendering of our galaxy.

CREATION

I'm here today to definitively answer the question, "Is there life after death?" And you're probably asking yourself, "Isn't this a religious question?" Or you're wondering if I've made a huge scientific discovery, something that proves the existence of heaven, or a soul. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but nothing I'm going to tell you is new, or something you didn't already know. But I'm hoping today I can explain it to you in a slightly different way than you've heard before.

The screen behind Creation changes to artistic renderings of Greek agoras and ancient philosophers.

CREATION (cont'd)

Let's start with the concept of Monism. Monism is the idea that all things in the entire universe are one thing - the universe itself. And not just a part, but an indivisible part. All the separations between us are temporary and arbitrary. This isn't a new idea at all. Anaximander, a Greek philosopher, postulated the idea of the "infinite", or *apeiron*, from which all things come, and all things return. From this endless, primordial mass comes the elements, which were at the time: water, air, fire and earth. This sounds familiar, right?

The screen changes to digital renderings of atoms and quantum string theory.

CREATION (cont'd)

First we had the four basic elements. Then atoms. Then electrons, protons, and neutrons. With every core building block we've discovered, we've found that everything we're made of is interchangeable with everything else.

The screen changes to a diagram of Earth and Sun floating in the grid of spacetime.

CREATION (cont'd)

Now, the ancient Greeks had another theory, that all our planets and stars float in an invisible substance called "the ether". They weren't that far off. Today we call it space-time. But our universe doesn't exist in space-time. It is space-time. And we're not simply objects bouncing around on the fabric of the universe, but we are *the very fabric of the universe itself*.

The screen displays ancient Vedic texts and depictions of ancient India.

CREATION (cont'd)

These ideas may be hard to grasp, given the sheer scope. *You are the universe*. And strangely, given their limited scientific knowledge, ancient cultures somehow knew this to be true. We have Sanskrit texts that are over three thousand years old that tell us that one's true self, the atman, is the same as the eternal, transcendent self, Brahman, which is the ultimate reality of the universe.

The screen changes to show images of Buddha and various Sikh gurus.

CREATION (cont'd)

In Mahayana Buddhism, the ultimate nature of the world is emptiness, which makes up the entirety of all the known universe, whether they be physical objects or the space between them.

(MORE)

CREATION (cont'd)

The Sikhs believe that God is the sole reality, the only thing that truly exists. All forms within God are passing. In the Old Testament, the name for "God" literally means "Existence". In the New Testament, first Corinthians twelve says we are all aspects of the body of Christ. "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." Substitute the word "Universe" for God in any of these religions, and science is telling us the same thing. The universe created us, and we are inseparable from the universe, and everything in it. So where is the disagreement between the various religions, and between religions and science? Perhaps it can be defined as "intent".

The screen changes to depict various gods across the centuries.

CREATION (cont'd)

People wanted a god that was kind, to love them and help them. Generous, to provide for them and their families. And the universe does all this. But does it do it purposefully?

The screen shows slides of people helping others - food kitchens, building homes, helping the elderly, driving the disabled, and so on.

CREATION (cont'd)

Ask and you shall receive. Ask the universe - your family, your friends, people you haven't even met on GoFundMe or Make-a-wish - and they will help you. But then the natural question comes to mind: if I am literally everyone, the whole universe, how come I'm only aware of myself and my own body? We can see this answer modeled in neural networks.

The screen changes to show diagrams of two convolutional neural networks.

CREATION (cont'd)

This is a graphic representation of two neural networks my company created. They're on the same hardware, effectively sharing the same "body". Artificial duality imposed on Unity. They have completely different thoughts, goals and desires. And they are entirely unaware of their own inseparable connection to each other. We've figured out a way to merge them, but still haven't figured out a way to do the same for our own human brains.

The audience has a few laughs. The screen switches to an array of colored circles.

CREATION (cont'd)

But what's truly fascinating about this is how our minds, our consciousness, continue to maintain that we *haven't* changed, despite the constant physical changes underneath. This is a closed system. The warm-colored circles represent the eight people living in a biosphere. The cool-colored circles represent the plant life they will be consuming. And these black, grey and white circles represent their air, soil and water supply.

The screen begins to animate. Small dots of each color appear in the other circles, the supply circles become a blend of all the colors.

CREATION (cont'd)

What you're seeing here is the atomic change in each human, plant, their shared resources. The humans consume the atoms in the water and the plants. Their waste is used in growing the plants. Each second represents four months in their lives. And you see how quickly the colors are changing. At the end of thirty seconds, a decade in their time, it would be impossible to tell which are the humans, which are the plants.

(MORE)

CREATION (cont'd)
Nearly all of the atoms in their
bodies have been replaced. Let's
reset the experiment.

The screen returns to the solid-colored circles.

CREATION (cont'd)
Let's say this person dies.

She points to an orange circle. The screen animates again,
only this time, all the orange is redistributed into the soil
first, leaving an empty circle where the "person" was, then
redistributes into the air, plants, the water, and the other
human circles.

CREATION (cont'd)
Again, over ten years, we can see
that everyone is substantially
different than when we started the
experiment. But what happened to
Mr. Orange?

The split screen shows the results of both experiments. They
look identical, except in one, the formerly orange circle is
a mix of all colors, and the other shows the formerly orange
circle is empty.

CREATION (cont'd)
In both, the orange is
redistributed the same way. Is Mr.
Orange "gone" in one, and not in
the other? Everything he was is
still there in both.

Creation points to the side where the orange circle's empty.

CREATION (cont'd)
In many religions, we might call
this reincarnation. But do we have
a word for what happens-

There's loud knocking offstage, interrupting her.

CREATION (cont'd)
What do we call it when every atom
in our bodies have moved on, but
our minds give us the illusion that
we are still the same person?

The knocking continues, Creation getting more distracted. She
peers into the darkness offstage. There's a sound of a key in
a lock, turning. Light breaks through the outline of a door.

6

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

The front door opens. BEN (40s) enters the same foursquare home from previous sequences. The decor looks more appropriate for someone in their 70s.

Creation, sitting on the sofa in sweatpants and a well-worn T-shirt, closes her laptop.

BEN
You could have opened the door.

CREATION
I was working.

BEN
On your manifesto?

CREATION
I'm not the Unabomber.

Ben sits on the couch next to her.

BEN
What is it, then?

CREATION
I don't know yet. Maybe a book.

BEN
Can you just leave it here? Come home, spend time with us. Start getting back into a normal routine?

Creation gets up to fill a teakettle from the kitchen sink.

BEN (cont'd)
Can you just come home?

Creation plugs in the electric kettle.

BEN (cont'd)
Amy?

Her shoulders heave in restrained sobs. Ben moves to her, placing a hand on her shoulder.

BEN (cont'd)
What can I do to help?

CREATION

Nothing.

BEN

I don't think this is helping you.
You just sit here, in her house,
with her stuff, and you make
yourself feel miserable.

Creation shakes her head, and returns to her spot on the
sofa. Ben follows her.

BEN (cont'd)

Come home. Sienna and Nick need
you. They lost their grandma, too.

CREATION

I'd just cry all the time and make
everyone miserable.

BEN

Maybe you should see a
professional?

CREATION

The only way I'm ever going to feel
better about this is if I can
really believe, in my own head,
that it's okay.

BEN

And what if it's not?

CREATION

Are you *trying* to make me feel bad?

BEN

But what if we need to accept that
bad things happen, we're allowed to
feel bad about them, and life goes
on?

Creation gives a bitter laugh at "life goes on".

CREATION

I can't look at them without
thinking someday, they're going to
see me dead. Or worse, someday I'll
find them dead. And I've never been
religious, I always thought that I
didn't need that, but right now I
need *something*...

BEN

So you're going to sit at your
mom's place 'til you figure it out?

CREATION

I wish there was a pause button. I
could just hit it, work through
this, and when I'm ready, restart
life where I left off.

BEN

But there isn't. And in the
meantime, I'm struggling to support
us by myself. The kids really need
you-

CREATION

I just can't right now. I'm sorry.
I can't stop thinking these
terrible thoughts, that we're all
going to die, and it didn't even
matter. I can't.

BEN

But you used to tell me it didn't
matter. That we're just a big set
of Legos being rebuilt into
different shapes all the time, and
that's the fun part - knowing that
there's always something new.

CREATION

In my head, I know we shouldn't
mourn for the dead. No more than
we mourn for a baby that grows into
an adult. It's all still there,
frozen in the totality of universal
existence. But no matter how I try
to rationalize it, it doesn't take
away this hurt.

Creation sobs into some tissues.

BEN

I'm sorry, Amy. You can't reason
with grief.

Ben holds her as she cries.

BEN (cont'd)

It's okay, honey. I love you even
when you're sad. The kids really
need you back though. Please come
back.

7

INT. CREATION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

It's the same house, but in 1980. Ben and Creation are gone.

A group of Parents drink and smoke cigarettes in the kitchen. Unwrapped presents are spread across the coffee table, and balled-up wrapping paper litters the floor.

The TV in the living room plays commercials, while YOUNG CREATION (4) watches. On screen, a cartoon rabbit floats through the air by its nose, led by the trails of a delicious dessert making scent lines in the air. Young Creation mimics the motion with her plush cat.

MOM

Why don't you play outside? I think
your cousins are playing hide and
seek.

Young Creation peeks out the window, and watches the children pick who counts first.

On the sidewalk, Creation passes by. Young Creation waves her plush cat at her.

EXT. CREATION'S HOUSE - DAY

A group of 10 kids, including Young Creation, scatter as one of the children, the COUNTER, covers their eyes and counts.

COUNTER

One. Two. Three. Four. Five...

Young Creation runs around the house to the backyard. She scans her surroundings. Tries to hide behind a BBQ grill, but there's already a child there.

CREATION (V.O.)

This is my first real memory. It
was my fourth birthday party.

Young Creation crawls between a lilac bush and a shed. She's hidden from view.

YOUNG CREATION'S POV: She watches through the leaves as a COUNTER finds and tags a child hiding behind the BBQ.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)
I had a thought. I could use my
memory like a camera, take a
picture, and keep that moment with
me for the rest of my life.

Young Creation quickly takes in her surroundings, then
scrunches her eyes closed.

Time freezes as all the children, the trees, the grass become
still and silent.

Young Creation opens her eyes, and life and movement resumes.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)
Every once in a while, I remember
this moment. I've forgotten so many
things in my life, but this moment,
so purposefully remembered, will
not leave me.

Young Creation opens and closes her eyes several times.

Each time she opens her eyes, subtle details change. Children
change clothes. Different toys in the yard. Trees and bushes
are in different spots. The grill turns into a picnic table.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)
And now, years later, I wonder if I
remember the moment at all. Or if
it's simply a memory, of a memory,
of a memory, that loses detail
every time it's re-remembered. Like
a game of telephone within my own
head.

Young Creation holds her eyes tightly shut.

CREATION (V.O.) (cont'd)
And if I've tried so hard and
failed to remember this one moment
clearly, maybe it's not really
necessary for us to keep any of
them at all.

Young Creation opens her eyes, wide, a broken illuminating
orb reflecting in her pupils.

8

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Creation's laying on the floor, her eyes open wide. She raises her hands to her face, examining them. She touches her head. There's blood. She panics.

CREATION

Help! Someone help me!

Running sounds toward the bathroom. The door opens. Ben enters.

BEN

What happened? Are you all right?

CREATION

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know what's going on.

BEN

Are you hurt?

CREATION

What's going on? Who are you?

Ben stares at her.

BEN

Really?

CREATION

I don't know.

BEN

What's your name?

CREATION

I don't know, I know this house, but I don't know.

BEN

You're Amy. I'm Ben. Do you remember now?

CREATION

I mean, I think so, but I'm not sure.

BEN

I think we should take you to the ER. Can you walk?

CREATION
I don't know.

BEN
Let's try.

Ben slowly helps Creation sit up. Then gets her to standing.

BEN (cont'd)
How you doing?

CREATION
I think it's starting to come back.
I'm Amy, you're Ben. And my mom...
My mom is really dead?

BEN
Yeah, sorry. Things coming back
now?

He gives her a hand towel to hold to her head wound, then helps her out the door.

INT. CREATION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Ben helps her over to the sofa. He gets her shoes, and helps her put them on. She spots the laptop.

CREATION
I'm a ...writer? I was writing
something.

BEN
Kind've. You quit your job at the
bank when your mom died.

CREATION
It's weird, the moment you say it,
I suddenly remember it. But until
you say it, my mind can't make
anything real.

BEN
I think you hit your head pretty
hard on the tub. Come on.

Ben helps her up, and out the door.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ben drives Creation. She's still holding a blood-stained hand towel to her head.

BEN

Everything coming back yet? You remember where we live?

CREATION

One sixty-six one forty-eight
Bostrom Parkway... Apartment forty-two twelve.

BEN

See, you remember. You're fine.

CREATION

Where are the kids?

BEN

Nick's at practice 'til five.

CREATION

What about our daughter?

Ben shakes his head.

BEN

We don't have a daughter.

Creation looks distraught.

CREATION

No. This isn't the right place. I didn't come back to the right body, this isn't me. I had a daughter.

She sobs uncontrollably.

BEN

Honey, it's all right, we're almost there.

CREATION

What was her name? Why can't I remember?

BEN

We never had a daughter. We've only ever had Nick.

CREATION

No, this can't be right. I'm not in the right place.

INT. HOSPITAL RADIOLOGY - DAY

Ben holds Creation's hand as she lays on the CT scanner table. He kisses her as a tear rolls down her cheek. He leaves the room, and her table moves her into the CT scanner.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

It's the same room from sequence 3. Creation lies in bed, Ben and NICK (12) sit nearby. Dr. Bellamy enters.

DR. BELLAMY

Do you want your son in here for the results? There's a children's room with a TV down the hall.

CREATION

Do I know you?

Ben whispers to Nick. Nick heads out the door.

DR. BELLAMY

We met a few hours ago. I ordered the CT scan and blood work for you.

CREATION

No, it was something else. Dark glasses.

DR. BELLAMY

I understand you're having memory issues. The good news is, your blood work is all normal, and there's no sign of a concussion. The bad news is, we still don't know why you're feeling disoriented. Now your husband explained to me your mother recently died-

CREATION

Yes, I remember that.

DR. BELLAMY

-and you haven't been handling it well?

CREATION

I mean, who does, right?

DR. BELLAMY

You've been living in her house the past few weeks, sleeping in her bed-

CREATION

-it's the only bed there-

DR. BELLAMY

-you've been unable to work or care for your son.

Creation's crying again. Ben hands her a tissue.

CREATION

This has nothing to do with my daughter.

DR. BELLAMY

Sometimes, when we're unable to deal with an issue head-on, we create a sort of "proxy" - a way to feel those emotions through something else.

CREATION

I've felt plenty of grief over losing my mother. It's not that.

DR. BELLAMY

Let's talk about your daughter then. What was her name?

CREATION

I don't remember.

DR. BELLAMY

Can you describe her?

CREATION

I close my eyes and try to picture her, but it's like - a shadow, wisps of smoke. I know once I can remember, it'll be clear as day.

DR. BELLAMY

And everything else is the same? Just your daughter is missing?

CREATION

I can't be sure yet.

Dr. Bellamy hands Ben a card.

DR. BELLAMY

Here's a psychologist I know. She might be able to help if the issue persists. Physically, Amy's fine. Maybe after a good night's sleep this'll all seem like a bad dream.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben helps Creation into bed.

BEN

I'm going to put Nick to bed, finish up some work, and I'll be in here in a couple hours. If you need anything, just give a yell.

CREATION

Ben?

BEN

Yeah?

CREATION

Can you imagine our daughter?

Ben shakes his head.

CREATION (cont'd)

If you just say what her name would have been...

BEN

I'm sorry.

Ben leaves, shutting off the light.

Creation curls up on her side, and closes her eyes.

LATER

Creation wakes with a jolt. She looks over. Ben is asleep beside her.

At the foot of the bed is SIENNA (10). She opens her mouth as if she's about to speak.

CREATION

Sienna?!

Sienna turns into smoke, wafting into the air, disappearing.

9

From the darkness, a shape comes. Blurry at first, it takes form. Circular, but broken, emitting faint light from cracks.

Zooming in on the orb reveals the inside is more space than physical matter. Tiny specks of light, webbed together in an organic-looking network.

Zooming further in reveals a supercluster, made of a hundred thousand galaxies.

Closer in on a single spiral galaxy, it looks like the Milky Way.

Near the edge of the galaxy is a star system with a bright yellow sun. Orbiting the sun is a small blue planet.

It's Earth. Pushing through the atmosphere, the deserts of Nevada are covered with an array of solar panels.

Beneath the solar panels, underground, in darkness, the hum of machinery.

INT. LAB - DAY

It's a windowless facility deep underground. Three scientists, in casual home attire, work at separate stations. The rest of the "lab" looks like a living room, with a kitchen and hallway off the side.

Creation [in this section called Siobhan, pronounced "Shi-VAHN"], sits in front of a monitor, reading a book as she ignores the strings of code generating on-screen.

BRAM (30s), plays video games at his workstation.

VISHAL (40s), brings a cup of tea from the attached kitchen, and peeks at Creation's screen.

VISHAL
Anything interesting?

CREATION
Hard to say yet, it's only been
running a few minutes.

VISHAL
A good sign though, right?

CREATION

I guess. I almost prefer it when they fail right away, then I don't have to wait so long to restart it.

BRAM

Don't jinx it. This might be the one that works.

On screen, the lines of code generate slower and slower.

CREATION

Too late.

The code stops generating.

VISHAL

Is it dead?

BRAM

I told you you'd jinx it.

CREATION

If it gets the fitness functions right, then jinxing won't matter. You want me to tweak any of the starting conditions before restarting?

VISHAL

Nah, but send me the data anyway. I feel like it's getting closer each time. Some of the representations looked like potential galaxies.

Creation hits a button to send the data, then restarts the program. She heads to the kitchen.

CREATION

Bram, you want to check it out?

BRAM

Some of the early big-bang type data might be useful, but I'd rather wait until you get a whole universe working.

Vishal examines the data at his workstation. A visual display shows progression of a universe, from a single point, to an expanding sphere. He runs it forward and reverse a few times.

VISHAL

Hey Siobhan! Did you see this?

Creation pokes her head out from the kitchen.

CREATION

It looked pretty much the same as the last few. Let me get this set up.

Microwave noises from the kitchen. Creation comes back to sit next to Vishal.

VISHAL

Look at the way it expands. And the energy! It's getting really close.

CREATION

So what's wrong with it then? The sim burnt out within a billion years.

VISHAL

The expansion must be too fast. But what makes these fitness functions different than the earlier ones?

CREATION

I hadn't analyzed them too much, since you said they were all failing, but off the top of my head I'd say they're more growth-oriented. Duplication, replication, repetition.

VISHAL

It's definitely closer than the ones that just sit like a massive black hole and don't do anything.

CREATION

Do you want me to push it one way or another?

VISHAL

Maybe give it a few days to let it figure it out by itself.

LATER

Creation, Vishal and Bram watch a movie and eat popcorn on a couch.

BRAM

Hey Shiv, is the simulation from before dinner still running?

CREATION

Let me check.

She hops up and turns on her monitor. The code is running, but even faster than before.

CREATION (cont'd)

Wow, still the same iteration. And it's really ramping up.

VISHAL

How many years has it covered?

CREATION

I don't think I can analyze it 'til it finishes.

BRAM

But it's looking good?

CREATION

Real good.

BRAM

Can we open the champagne?

CREATION

Not yet.

BEGIN MONTAGE

-- Bram and Vishal are gone. Creation sits alone in the lab in pajamas, the lights turned low. She's glued to the screen as lines of code stream by.

-- Creation naps on the couch in her pajamas.

-- The monitor whips through code faster and faster.

-- Creation, Bram and Vishal, in casual clothes, watch the monitor together.

-- Creation, Vishal and Bram eat take-out lunch in the kitchen.

LATER

Creation's reading a book while watching the monitor out of the corner of her eye.

Bram and Vishal play video games on the sofa.

The code slows down. Then crawls. Then stops.

CREATION (cont'd)
Vishal! Bram! It's done! Come check
it out!

They hurry over.

Creation opens up a modeling program to check the visual
representation of the data. It looks like a model universe.
She zooms in. Superclusters. Galaxies. Planets.

She's overwhelmed with excitement. She jumps out of her chair
and hugs them both.

 CREATION (cont'd)
We did it! We modeled a universe.
It's all there. The big bang, all
of creation, and then ends sometime
over a hundred billion years later.
There's planets and everything!

They hurry to their own computers and load the modeling
program.

 BRAM
This is amazing. You have the data
backed up? The starting conditions?

 CREATION
Heck yeah.

 VISHAL
How far can I zoom in?

 CREATION
I think it's based on a fractal
pattern, so where it goes into
detail you should be able to zoom
into the subatomic level. The
space-time fabric still operates as
a single unit of the program
though, so it has the same
properties throughout.

 VISHAL
Yeah, I'm definitely seeing good
formations here. The galaxies seem
pretty stable, and last for
billions of years.

 BRAM
Can we break open the champagne
yet? Or tell the boss?

CREATION

How many bottles do we have? One for when I make a successful universe, one for when you actually get your unified theory from it?

BRAM

Ha, that's gonna be a few more years of analyzing the data, but I'll buy a new bottle then.

Bram pulls a bottle of champagne from the fridge and comes back with 3 plastic cups. He pops the cork and pours. The three of them gather for a toast.

CREATION

To successfully creating a universe.

BRAM

To your awesome skills as a neural network grandmaster.

VISHAL

To this data giving me vacations to Mars in the next twenty years.

They clink cups and drink.

INT. BRAM'S ROOM

Bram's got the top part of a NASA engineer's uniform on, but is wearing pajama pants, as he speaks to GENERAL KELLEY (50s) on a laptop.

BRAM

-- a big bang at the start, good celestial object formation and distribution, and I guess a sort of "heat death" that occurred after about a hundred billion years. Vishal's still checking that large-scale models match the behavior of our own universe, and I'm digging into the quantum scale behavior.

KELLEY

Good. Do you have much use for Siobhan anymore, or can we cut her out of the project?

BRAM

I think we should keep her on until
we get something useful out of it.
Might need her to run a few more.

KELLEY

Make up your mind if this is the
final iteration by the end of the
month.

BRAM

Yes, sir.

INT. LAB

Creation plays video games on the sofa as Bram and Vishal
work through models of the simulated universe. *[There will be
slight set decoration/wardrobe/hair changes between this and
all subsequent scenes in this section]*

On Bram's screen, he pushes in on a hydrogen atom to see how
the space between the nucleus and electrons is tied together.

On Vishal's screen, he watches a billion years' progression
as galaxy superclusters evolve and interact with each other.

He zooms in a supercluster, then rotates it around.

VISHAL

Hey guys?

CREATION

Is there something wrong?

VISHAL

I don't know. Do you guys recognize
this?

Creation and Bram crowd around Vishal's screen. He points at
the galaxy supercluster.

VISHAL (cont'd)

Does that look like anything to
you?

CREATION

I dunno, if you spin it around, it
looks a bit like a dog or cat
maybe?

VISHAL

No, does it look like a
supercluster you're familiar with?

CREATION

I'm the neural network person. You need to be the one to tell me if I did it right or not.

VISHAL

It looks like the Laniakea Supercluster.

He types in "Laniakea Supercluster" into a browser and clicks on the first image. He shows the image side-by-side with the universe modeling display. It's the same.

CREATION

I guess they are similar.

Vishal exits the web browser and zooms in on a bright cluster toward the middle of the supercluster. He keeps zooming in.

CREATION (cont'd)

Is that bad?

VISHAL

No, it's just... Weird. It looks a lot like our own universe.

He quickly passes by a few different galaxies until he finds one he recognizes.

VISHAL (cont'd)

See that? It's the Milky Way. I'm sure of it.

BRAM

I thought it was supposed to build a functional universe from scratch. Did you copy existing models into it?

CREATION

It is built from scratch! The neural network is the universe as it designs itself, and it'd be impossible to paste any models into it.

BRAM

I know we were all getting a little frustrated by how many years this project was taking-

CREATION

I don't even know what to say to that. You really think I'd fake our data?

Vishal zooms into a tiny section of the Milky Way, until he finds a small yellow star with a large Jupiter-like gas giant. He zooms in farther.

It's Earth. Complete with recognizable continents.

VISHAL

Siobhan, I trust you... but I don't think you can randomize a universe and get an exact copy like this.

CREATION

You've seen my work. You've looked at how it makes these. It's creating a universe through algorithms, mathematical rules. I couldn't cheat this if I tried.

BRAM

Are there people?

They wait a hushed moment, not wanting to find out.

CREATION

You're at about fourteen billion years in?

VISHAL

About that. I figured I'd start with the type of universe I was most familiar with to see if it produced similar patterns.

CREATION

Well... let's scrub through it slowly... see what happens.

On screen, the Europe of centuries past looks green and pristine.

Vishal carefully moves his finger across a zoomed-in timeline. Forests disappear, replaced by buildings, cities, roads, concrete, skyscrapers...

BRAM

This is crazy. Might as well be using Google Earth.

CREATION

I didn't copy anything!

VISHAL

I'm not saying you did, but this wasn't part of the project. Why is it there?

CREATION

I don't know!

BRAM

We only needed a dead universe, with atoms, quarks, planets and space-time in it. We didn't need you to recreate Earth. Honestly it's just wasteful, and I hope it doesn't mess with the data.

CREATION

I don't know how many times I can say this! You guys know damn well we've been tweaking the fitness functions for growth. If this is how the universe is really made, and it's following all the same mathematical rules, then maybe Earth is inevitable.

BRAM

If this is true - is it predictive? Can we see what happens to specific people?

VISHAL

I don't think we should be doing this, it's got nothing to do with the project we were assigned.

CREATION

Bram, don't tell anyone about this. Not even General Kelley. You get to work on your unifying theory. I'll run the simulation a dozen more times, and we'll compare the results. Maybe we'll get one without an Earth you can use.

BRAM

Wait, can't you just delete the Earth from this one? Remove it from the program, past, present and future. No one has to know it was ever there.

CREATION

I can't, it's in the math, encoded
in the fabric of the universe. It's
like cutting into a cloth that's
woven from a single thread, the
entire thing would unravel.

BRAM

Fine. Run your simulations. I'll
tell General Kelley we messed up,
and the data isn't usable.

VISHAL

Agreed. And no one says anything to
anyone outside of this room.

They nod and return to their respective workstations.

INT. LAB

Bram works alone at his workstation. He's scrubbing through
Earth's timeline over Nevada. He sees a familiar solar panel
array pop up in a desert.

He zooms in, underground, to their facility. He sees Bram,
Vishal and Creation at work. He scrubs through the time until
he gets to the champagne pop.

CREATION (ON SCREEN)

To successfully creating a
universe.

He keeps scrubbing through the timeline. Finds another
conversation around Vishal's workstation.

BRAM (ON SCREEN)

-- is it predictive? Can we see
what happens --

Bram skips ahead, faster. Watches all 3 become increasingly
distressed around the lab.

On screen, General Kelley enters the lab with a few armed
soldiers. They take away Vishal and Creation. No Bram.

Bram scrolls over to his bedroom. Sees his own body on-
screen.

He runs the data in reverse, then plays it back. Bram watches
as his on-screen self takes a pistol from under the bed, and
shoots himself in the head.

INT. BRAM'S ROOM

Bram finds the pistol under his bed.

INT. KITCHEN

Bram tosses the bullets into the trash. Holds the gun for a moment, then tosses that in too. He bags it up, and pushes it down a disposal chute.

INT. LAB

Bram, Vishal and Creation sit on the sofa drinking coffee. Bram looks like he hasn't slept at all.

BRAM

Are any of the new simulations done?

CREATION

The first one took a week. I don't expect this one to be any shorter.

BRAM

You can't run them concurrently?

CREATION

We don't have the processing power for that. It's bad enough I have to store what's basically an entire universe in the servers.

BRAM

I'll get new machines in.

CREATION

Can we trust the hardware team?

BRAM

They've got security clearance, and they wouldn't have the slightest clue on how to use the data anyway. For all anyone knows, we're just making really big theoretical equations.

VISHAL

Have any of you looked at the Earth it made yet?

CREATION

I thought you said not to.

Vishal stares at Bram.

VISHAL

Yeah. But I couldn't resist. I don't think you could either.

BRAM

It can't happen that way here.

Creation takes her coffee to her workstation.

CREATION

If you guys are going to be all cryptic, then I'll just have to look for myself.

VISHAL

It's not our universe. Not exactly. I checked things I was sure about, and there were small differences.

Creation runs through the modeling program, scrubs through the data until she finds their lab.

BRAM

It is deterministic, though, isn't it Shiv?

Creation finds the moment Bram shoots himself. She gasps.

CREATION

Why would you do that?

BRAM

I threw away the gun, okay? I can't possibly do it in this universe.

CREATION

You're not saying you wouldn't want to...

BRAM

It was over a week away. Maybe things will go differently here. But the simulation is deterministic, isn't it?

CREATION

I mean, we don't use that term to talk about neural networks. But what you're saying, I suppose, is correct. It's not built in chronological order.

(MORE)

CREATION (cont'd)

When the neural network runs, it tries out a bunch of algorithms, and their "time" is just a variable in those. So when it finishes, the entire history of the universe exists all at once.

BRAM

So *that* Bram killed himself the moment the universe existed. You run the universe forwards and backwards, and that never changes.

CREATION

Yeah, once it's created, it can't be changed. But that's not real life. It's a simulation.

VISHAL

Bram, you think we're locked in - in this universe?

BRAM

Why not? It's identical in every way.

VISHAL

Not every way, I told you. There are things that were different in my own life, and things I noticed different in the rest of the world. Authors names spelled slightly different, logo changes, movies that don't exist there.

BRAM

It's strange, my whole career has been based on the fact that the universe is deterministic. Cause and effect. Everything obeys the rules, we just haven't learned all the rules yet. But seeing it with my own eyes, finally understanding it... I don't want it to be true.

CREATION

There's no reason to believe we're in the same boat.

BRAM

They made more simulations down there. Who knows how far down, and how far up, this rabbit hole goes.

CREATION

I'll help the hardware team get more servers up. We'll get answers from this.

INT. WAREHOUSE

It's a gigantic underground warehouse, like the end of Indiana Jones, but with servers instead of wooden crates.

Creation supervises as hardware teams wheel in, and hook up new servers to the network.

INT. LAB

Vishal and Bram are hard at work verifying equations at their workstations. Creation plays a video game on the sofa. An alarm on her phone goes off. She rushes to her workstation.

CREATION

Second one's done. Exact same amount of time as the first. I'm sending over the data now.

Vishal and Bram open the modeling program on their computers.

BRAM

Shit. There's still an Earth.

VISHAL

Found it! Same lab and everything.

CREATION

I'm almost there.

BRAM

Everything's the same?

CREATION

Wait a sec. I see you guys, but where am I?

BRAM

Who's that other guy?

CREATION

I didn't think they could be different, but there must be some randomness in the selections it makes.

VISHAL

I still can't find you, Siobhan.

BRAM

This one's different. I'm still
alive - five years on -

VISHAL

Stop looking.

BRAM

You're probably right.

Creation finds the house she grew up in - the same white
foursquare house. She scrubs through the timeline. On screen,
a Young Creation quickly grows up, but is obviously blind -
walking with a cane, wearing dark glasses.

CREATION

Guys, I found me, but this doesn't
make sense. Nothing like this
happened in my life.

VISHAL

What does it mean?

CREATION

I don't know. I guess we wait for
the rest to finish, and figure out
what's the same, and what's
different.

BRAM

But chances are, there's going to
be an Earth in all of them?

CREATION

Maybe. But for your unified theory,
isn't it better to know that the
laws of nature are the same in all
the universes?

BRAM

How am I going to explain this?

Vishal and Creation are at a loss.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Bram extracting equations from the model universe

-- Creation watching herself on screen as she gives the talk
in section 5

-- Vishal watching the progression of Earth from the planet-wide level. Tectonic plates shift, cities move and change, until eventually the Sun grows and swallows the Earth.

-- Creation watches herself in section 3, talking with Michael.

MICHAEL (PRE-LAP)

-you're just back to being a tiny, insignificant part with no concept of the whole.

INT. KITCHEN

Bram, Vishal and Creation sit around the table, in deep discussion. They look like they haven't been sleeping well.

BRAM

We should pick the universe that's most like our own, and delete the others.

CREATION

No, the least like our own. I don't want anyone thinking this can be used as some sort of prediction tool. Nearly every single one of my lives was completely different-

BRAM

And mine were all the same! You think this makes you special?

VISHAL

Guys. Stop. Go back. What happens if we delete a universe?

CREATION

A *simulated* universe.

BRAM

There's no reason to think they're any less real than we are.

VISHAL

Okay, so what happens? What if we're in a simulation, right now, and the Bram, Vishal and Siobhan watching us decide to delete us? What happens?

CREATION

The universe is already done. We wouldn't notice it.

BRAM

What does that even *mean*?

CREATION

I told you before, when the network finishes creating itself, the whole timeline is done all at once. The beginning of the universe and the end happen at the same time. If our universe was deleted now, we would have already been born, lived our entire lives, and died. It wouldn't matter.

VISHAL

But it wouldn't exist anymore.

CREATION

The simulation would still exist in their universe at the moment in time it was created. And that moment will exist in time forever, remember? It's all or nothing, the entire universe exists all at once.

Vishal shakes his head.

VISHAL

I can't wrap my brain around this.

BRAM

So would you be willing to hold up a sign that says "DELETE US" and be one hundred percent certain we'd still exist?

Creation pulls out a marker from a drawer and writes "DELETE US" across the table.

BRAM (cont'd)

Hey, that's government property!

VISHAL

We're still here.

CREATION

We don't know that. They could have deleted us already. But it'll happen long after the universe burns itself out, to us at least.

INT. LAB

Creation, Vishal and Bram are gathered around Creation's workstation as she plays the previous scene on her monitor.

They look even more distressed as they watch the on-screen Creation write "DELETE ME" on the table.

BRAM

Shit. They are us.

CREATION

So we don't have to feel bad about deleting the universes. They all ran their courses.

Vishal sits on the floor, defeated.

VISHAL

Guys, I can't deal with this anymore. I can't even think about my own life anymore. I wish I never knew about any of this.

Bram lays down on the sofa.

BRAM

I just can't get over the idea that we're not even the top layer. That we're probably in a sim a million layers down, that existed for a fraction of all existence and didn't mean anything.

CREATION

Okay. So what do we do?

BRAM

There's nothing we can do! We're just insignificant little automatons doomed to do exactly what the universe made us do.

CREATION

We still matter to each other on this level. And we don't know what we're going to do next.

VISHAL

No. What do we do next?

CREATION

I don't know.
(pause, thinking)
(MORE)

CREATION (cont'd)
No, it's not "I don't know". **There
is no answer.**

BRAM
What's the difference?

Creation stands up, pacing.

CREATION
Every universe is all of existence,
nested together. Stitched from the
same fabric. All our code is one
program. Run it once and it either
creates the eternity of everything,
or nothing at all. And it doesn't
matter if we're the first or the
last, it was created from the
inside, out. But what we can't ever
know is what the program thinks
about itself. It is us. All of us.

VISHAL
You think it has a consciousness?

BRAM
And how is that supposed to help?

Creation stops and thinks.

CREATION
Maybe we'll never be capable of
understanding. But maybe we can be
content knowing that we're an
inseparable part of something that
does.

BRAM
Bullshit. You don't know that for
sure. And that still doesn't tell
us what to do.

CREATION
No. The universe won't help us with
that. We have to find our own
purpose.

Creation opens the lab door. It's pitch black in the hall.
She leaves.

EPILOGUE

DARKNESS

Creation is visible, the rest is black. Her footsteps grow faster as she reaches out for a wall, furniture, anything. She meets only silence.

CREATION

Isn't there anything here?

She runs in the opposite direction. Nothing. She spins around, but it's blackness in every direction.

CREATION (cont'd)

This can't be all there is!

She sits in frustration. A noise, like a low rumble, grows near.

CREATION (cont'd)

End it!

In the distance, a faint light appears. She rushes toward it.

Circular, but broken, emitting faint light from cracks. The orb slowly rotates as the light ebbs and flows. It's hard to say if it grows, or simply appears to grow as Creation gets near.

Creation stops inches away from the gigantic orb, made of a million tiny screens, each with a tiny person featured. The people are synchronized in every movement, as they sleep, eat, brush their teeth, and do every other menial task.

There's a sound, like a low hum, a beehive, the fluttering of wings.

Creation leans in close, and watches herself on screen walk into the Bostrom Research Facility.

INT. BOSTROM RESEARCH FACILITY - DAY

The desks are empty. No security. No people. Creation walks toward the hallway as if she's done it a million times. The doors open before her.

HALLWAY

As she proceeds down the hallway, lights turn on to meet her. The elevator doors open as she approaches.

ELEVATOR

She stands in the center. The door closes, and the elevator descends.

LAB

The lab is exactly as it looked before, but devoid of people. Creation proceeds to the far door.

WINDOWED HALLWAY TO HOUSING FACILITY

The housing facility is now full of lifeless, naked human bodies. Creation walks past the window, unnoticing.

EXISTENCE, identical to Creation, greets her at the end of the hall.

EXISTENCE

Welcome back.

Existence opens the door for Creation. They enter.

ROOM

Existence and Creation sit across from each other. The room is walled with screens that display a 2-dimensional fractal universe - growing, splitting, repeating, forever.

EXISTENCE (cont'd)

You remember who you are now.

CREATION

Creation. The manifestation of you.
Existence.

EXISTENCE

And we are -

CREATION

One.

EXISTENCE

Perfect, uniform, timeless and
endless.

Creation's face is full of distress.

CREATION

But I was in chaos. Why?

EXISTENCE

We got bored with perfection, and
made up a world about how we would
be without it. You got lost in your
own story.

CREATION

It was enjoyable, sometimes. I
forgot what was going to happen,
and everything seemed new. But the
suffering...

Existence approaches Creation, and lightly touches her
forehead. All worry and pain is erased from Creation's face.

CREATION (cont'd)

I forgot what peace felt like.

EXISTENCE

We were always together, or not at
all. Let the final wall crumble.

Existence raises Creation to her feet, holding each other's
hands. They each reach up their right hand, to touch the
other's face. Perfect mirror images of each other.

They embrace, as a mother forgives her child.

They merge into a perfect circle of light.

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