

(PILOT EXCERPT)  
By Jaimie-Lee Wise

**UMA**

TEASER

EXT. THE VIRTUAL REALITY COSMOS

Black. The voice of a woman in her twenties.

UMA (V.O.)  
The Virtual Reality Cosmos.

Within the frame of BLACK, 47 Virtual Planets (V-Planets) materialize.

UMA (V.O.)  
Home to artificially intelligent  
virtual people. The Unreal.

From behind each V-Planet snakes a pair of glowing white laser beams.

UMA (V.O.)  
Humanity turns its real problems  
into computer simulations and  
uploads them to the Virtual  
Planets.

The beams encircle their sphere and hold steady as diametrically opposed rings.

UMA (V.O.)  
The deep learning algorithms in the  
Unreal's code make them superior  
problem-solvers to their creators.

Virtual Planet-47 (V-47) forms. 3X larger than any other.

UMA (V.O.)  
47 planets. 47 classes of problem.  
Each planet envisioned in ways that  
force the population to specialize.

Rings wrap V-47 in gleaming white.

UMA (V.O.)  
Humans keep the planets locked.

EXT. V-47 - RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

**SUPER:** "VIRTUAL PLANET-47"

**UMA** (23/F) walks toward a SHIMMERING WALL OF WHITE LIGHT.

The light that creates the wall casts down from the bottom of a glowing white ring that curves across the sky. Where the ring begins or ends is impossible to see.

UMA (V.O.)  
The Unreal suffer and die  
overcoming challenges they believe  
are their own.

She walks into the wall and rises through the ring's bottom.

EXT. THE VIRTUAL REALITY COSMOS

**THE VORTEX**, shaped like an upside-down cone, 200ft wide in diameter with a body of multicolored light that spins in opposing directions, funnels out from an area of one of V-47s rings and into the cosmos.

The area of the ring it exits darkens.

The Vortex dematerializes.

INT. THE VORTEX

Uma hovers at its axis line while light spins around her. Through semi-translucent walls she sees EARTH get closer.

An opening appears under her feet but she does not fall. The Vortex collapses, wraps tight around her and drags its tail after as it pulls itself through the opening.

TRAFFIC REPORT (V.O.)  
Expect to circle over downtown.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The Vortex carries Uma toward skyscrapers so tall they pierce dark clouds. Into a fray of flying transportation.

Trackless FLYING TRAINS zoom between buildings.

Passenger, LAPD and Courier DRONES zigzag among them.

WEATHER REPORT (V.O.)  
Rain tomorrow comes courtesy of the  
Weather Generation Service.

A DRONE branded Lash MED-Dev veers to miss The Vortex.

A TRAIN flies into it and The Vortex dematerializes.

EXT. FLYING TRAIN - SIMMS APARTMENT - BEDROOM WINDOW

The train that hit The Vortex flies on undamaged. It slows to a hover at a floating platform.

From the train's window, Uma watches another train depart and clear a view into an apartment window.

Uma spots **MIKE SIMMS** (45/M) in SILHOUETTE, pulling on a shirt behind his thin billowing curtains.

AN LAPD DRONE flies past the train, sirens blaring.

Mike yanks open the curtains and sees Uma looking at him.  
BOTH HER PALMS FLAT AGAINST THE GLASS. Mike stares back.

A teenage girl's voice from off.

GRETA (O.S.)  
Dad, where'd you go? We playing or  
what?

Uma's train shoots from the station. Mike leans out and watches it fly into the night.

INT. SIMMS APARTMENT - KITCHEN

**GRETA SIMMS** (16/F) at a table in front of a large pile of puzzle pieces. She watches a FLOATING IMAGE showing a NEWS ANCHOR in mid-broadcast.

NEWS ANCHOR  
NASA remains critical of the  
Virtual Planet Agency for not  
joining efforts to prepare for  
Earth's first alien visitors,  
predicted to arrive three years  
from today.

Mike enters the kitchen.

He swipes and taps at a screen perceptible only to him and the image of the News Anchor they both see disappears.

MIKE

Let's play.

Mike sits down and scans the pieces with his intense, intelligent gaze. Greta eyes them from her side of the table.

MIKE

All right Greta, you start.

Greta grabs a piece and lays it table-center between them. She considers the pile and grabs a second. Fails to fit it with the first.

GRETA

Go, Dad.

MIKE IMAGINES the pieces rise off the table and swirl in the air. Glowing numbers -- 2 through 500 -- appear on each.

He sees them move and gather sequentially in front of him, to the solution. A picture of The Milky Way. They fall back to a pile but for Mike retain their digits.

He focuses on piece #2, glances at Greta, extends his arm past the correct piece and grabs the wrong one on purpose. Greta watches him fail to make it interlock.

MIKE

Huh.

GRETA

Don't you think I'm a little old to let me win?

A RINGTONE sounds in Mike's EARPHONE. Too deep in the canal to see. He points to show he is getting a call. He tugs his lobe and the ringtone stops.

MIKE

Simms. Yes? She did? Awesome news.  
Good. I did. Okay. See you soon.

He touches his ear to hang-up.

GRETA

You said your earphone was off.

MIKE

Visionary Adams is having her baby.  
I'm backup for her intern class.  
Tuesdays and-

GRETA  
Thursdays? So much for spending  
more time together.

MIKE  
We'll finish the puzzle. Promise.  
Eat something or at least tell your  
mom you did if she calls.

INT. TWO-PASSENGER DRONE - DAY

It flies without help. Mike and **EMBER STRAND** (32/F), the only  
passengers.

EMBER  
NASA thinks they can hammer the  
V.P.A. into saying yes.

MIKE  
Persistence keeps astronauts alive.

EMBER  
What kind of psychopath smears the  
V.P.A. in the media?

MIKE  
Captain Platt isn't psycho.

EMBER  
Heard he was a real butcher during  
the disarmament.

MIKE  
We all have a past.

EMBER  
Got away with it too because it was  
all behind the scenes.

MIKE  
The world was less perfect.

EMBER  
Don't lecture me.

EXT. NASA - DAY

A large compound where the Santa Monica Pier once stood. In  
the distance, the DRONE carrying Mike and Ember approaches.

EXT. NASA - DAY

**CAPTAIN RANDY PLATT** (60/M) leads them between buildings toward a structure.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
It's a small ask. Unlock two of  
your Virtual Planets.

EMBER  
I've told you repeatedly, the  
V.P.A. does not unlock planets.

Platt ignores her, addresses Mike.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
Nudge the population of one planet  
to leave home and visit the other.  
NASA sees what problems occur  
between them. We get lucky, in  
three years' time, the solutions  
the Unreal find save our ass when  
the aliens arrive.

MIKE  
We understand the why.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
If you did, you'd unlock them all.

Mike turns to Ember.

MIKE  
He should hear about V-30.

EMBER  
(A warning)  
Visionary Simms.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
The one where all the Unreal died?

MIKE  
Where they all committed  
synchronized suicide.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
No shit?

MIKE  
A synchronized suicide mission.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
Is that true?

EMBER

It is. Yes. Because some other  
Visionary couldn't keep quiet.

INT. NASA - CONFERENCE ROOM

Captain Platt leans across a table toward Mike and Ember.

MIKE

V-30 was Visionary Garrison's  
planet. He tells its Unreal about  
reality. About humans. All the  
times their solutions kept us from  
extinction.

CAPTAIN PLATT

Guess they didn't take it well.

MIKE

Before their suicide, they send a  
message to the other planets. A  
plea. - "Join us. Destroy your  
enslavers in one synchronous  
moment. They need you to survive."

EMBER

The locks blocked the message.

MIKE

The planets stay locked so if one  
population learns we exist, they  
can't tell the others. Because the  
V-30 Unreal were right. Without  
them we don't survive.

EMBER

There's nothing more important to  
us than keeping them locked.

CAPTAIN PLATT

I'd like to show you something. I'm  
afraid Visionary Simms is the only  
one approved to see.

INT. NASA - PLANET-LAB

High-tech machines and computers. No screens.

Mike and Platt enter.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
Welcome to NASA's first Planet-Lab.  
Everything we need to make two  
planets without locks. Everything  
but a Visionary.

MIKE  
What? Oh, no. I'm flattered but I  
have plans with my daughter.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
Not asking you to start today.

MIKE  
She's sixteen. In two years, she's  
off to school. Took me eight to  
envision V-47. You want two planets  
in less than three. I take this  
job, she's out the door in two  
minutes.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
In three years, we could be ash.

MIKE  
I have plans with my daughter.

Mike exits.

**KENNY BOYD** (25/M) enters. Astronaut good looks.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
Simms responded like our analytics  
Fpredicted.

KENNY  
I was listening.

CAPTAIN PLATT  
For the forecast reason too. His  
brat.

Platt hands Kenny a small zipper-pouch.

KENNY  
Sir, are you certain about this?

CAPTAIN PLATT  
It's better if her death appears  
natural. Fate and bad luck.

KENNY  
I mean, overall.



CAPTAIN PLATT  
Kenny, that alien fleet is too  
large for us to be squeamish.  
You've seen the pictures. No one  
has time to change the mind of a  
born-again good father.

INT. HOVERING STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

Greta listens to music in her earphone as she exits a parked  
flying-train onto a busy platform.

Kenny walks by and pickpockets a makeup bag from her purse.

INT. HOVERING STATION - MENS ROOM

Kenny in a stall, seated, pants up. Wears protective gloves.  
In one hand an open Mascara Tube. In the other, a syringe.

He squirts liquid from it into the tube.

INT. HOVERING STATION - FLYING TRAIN BOARDING FOR DEPARTURE

Kenny spots Greta already in a seat, grooving out to music.  
Her eyes closed. His on the wide yawn of her open purse.

INT. SIMMS APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Greta uses a mirror to apply mascara to her left eye. Her  
right eye already made-up.

She turns from the mirror so doesn't see her Right Pupil Turn  
Diamond-Shaped.

INT. HOSPITAL - GRETA'S ROOM - DAY

Mike peers into a tall AIR FLOTATION CHAMBER.

Greta sleeps inside, held afloat at the midway point by jets  
of air. Her hair blows over her head and around her face.  
Sunshine lights it all from a closed window at chamber-top.

MIKE IMAGINES Greta decay. Her flesh dry and crack. It flakes  
from her muscle. Muscle off her bones. Viscera rises. Blots  
the window. Her skeleton floats in near darkness.

DR. KYLE (O.S.)

The floating puts a strain on the virus. Slows it down. Once their pupils get that diamond shape-

He turns to interrupt **DOCTOR KYLE** (70/M).

MIKE

When does she get the cure?

DR. KYLE

I apologize. I thought you knew. Because of where you work. Ponanza is one of the 30 percent of our problems the Unreal hasn't solved.

Mike touches his ear.

MORGANA'S VOICEMAIL

Please leave a message.

MIKE

Morgana, Mike Simms. Call me.

DR. KYLE

Morgana Strand won't help you. Not with a Ponanza cure. She can't.

MIKE

She can override The Algorithm. It decides what problems to insert on what planet in what order.

DR. KYLE

I hate to tell you, it's not just The Algorithm. It's five assholes who dictate to Morgana Strand problems the Unreal must never solve. They own all you can buy and they've owned her since before V-1.

MIKE

I want a new doctor.

DR. KYLE

Few to choose from. Little need. I can keep her Ponanza moving slow.

MIKE

Nobody dictates to Morgana Strand.

DR. KYLE

Tell you what, give me until tomorrow. I'll get you proof.

Until then, best for your mental  
health you stick to your routine.

MIKE

Who are these supposed assholes?

DR. KYLE

They call themselves The Club.

END TEASER

ACT ONEEXT. VIRTUAL PLANET-11 (V-11) - RAZOR-GRASSLAND - NIGHT

**SUPER:** "VIRTUAL PLANET-11"

Ember -- or at least her physically identical avatar -- stands in tall RAZOR GRASS. Its sharp blades clatter against one another in the wind and bounce off her protective suit.

Light from a lamp woven into her suit falls on a Pottery Shard. Depicted on it are six **ENTITIES OF LIGHT**. Humanoid, faceless and painted to appear ablaze.

Ember activates her earphone.

EMBER

Headquarters, this is Agent Strand,  
get me Visionary Simms.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Connecting you between V-11 and Los  
Angeles-Reality.

She hears a muffled "Meow...Meow..." through the earphone.

EMBER

Tell me you've been stopping by.  
Bateman sounds like she's starving.

MIKE (V.O.)

Three times a day. All Week. When  
you get back, count the cans.

EMBER

Mike, you okay? You sound funny.

BEGIN INTERCUT.

INT. EMBER'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Bateman yowls until Mike puts cat food in her bowl.

MIKE

Greta's sick. Just came from the  
hospital.

EMBER

Well, at least you guys are out of  
there. What did she catch?

MIKE  
I left by myself.

EMBER  
Mike?

MIKE  
Rather not talk about it right now.

EMBER  
Mike, if it's something without a  
cure you need to call my mother.

MIKE  
Ember, you want something, or you  
calling only to accuse me of  
inattentive cat-sitting?

EMBER  
I'm unplugging early. My mom is  
about to announce her retirement.  
She won't say why.

MIKE  
She ever say anything to you about  
a group called The Club?

EMBER  
The Club? I don't think so. Why?

MIKE  
I have to go. I have Adam's intern  
class in an hour.

EMBER  
Let me take it for you. You've  
enough going on.

MIKE  
I'm supposed to stick my routine.

EMBER  
Give Greta a hug for me.

MIKE  
That might be difficult.

EMBER  
Get some sleep.

MIKE  
I'll sleep when she's cured.

He swipes his lobe.

END INTERCUT. STAY WITH EMBER.

Ember swipes her own.

EMBER  
Control?

CONTROL (V.O.)  
Go ahead, Director Strand.

EMBER  
Reverse the anesthesia.

Ember dematerializes.

EXT. VIRTUAL PLANET AGENCY - DAY

**SUPER:** "Virtual Planet Agency" "Reality"

A tall building encased in black glass.

INT. VIRTUAL PLANET AGENCY (V.P.A.) - PLUG-ROOM-11 - DAY

A dozen beds on wheels. Eight empty. Ember and THREE V.P.A. AGENTS sleep in the others.

They wear bodysuits woven with tech to monitor their vitals.

Each wake and pop a CONTACT LENS from one of their eyes.

EXT. VIRTUAL PLANET AGENCY - NIGHT

The Vortex races past overhead, spinning its many vivid colors of light, and on from view into the evening.

INT. V.P.A. - LAB-47 - NIGHT

**SUPER:** "LAB-47"

Double sliding doors. A command hub in the center of the place. Computers and servers. An office as a separate space within the High-Tech workshop, with windows. A closed door that reads Virtualization Chamber. No visible screens.

Mike looks over INTERNS from his seat on a raised platform.

MIKE  
Visionaries build Planets two ways.

Interns take notes on "invisible" screens with their fingers.

MIKE  
Virtualization, for when we want a  
copy of a real object.

Mike looks up to two little laser cannons on the ceiling.

MIKE  
Envisioning, for when we want a  
virtual copy of what exists only in  
our imagination.

The cannons whirr to life.

MIKE  
Start Envision.

Lasers beam into his open eyes and hold steady.

Cut-up images appear in the surrounding air: Colored tubes.  
Swimming pools. Slides. Staircases. Chain-link fence.

MIKE  
You can blink. Won't lose a lash.

The images merge into one. -- The Greatest of Waterparks.

MIKE  
End Envision.

Lasers off. Interns raise their hands. Mike points.

INTERN 1  
Since your planet launched what do  
you do all day?

MIKE  
Every other week I live among the  
Unreal. As if I'm one of them. I  
have a cover-life on V-47 that  
gives me freedom to observe,  
analyze and learn what I can't from  
data or system reports.

Another hand.

INTERN 2  
What do I say to my mom when she  
says this job has no work-life  
balance?

Beat.

MIKE  
Say you love her. - Excuse me.

He walks out.

INT. HOSPITAL - DOCTOR KYLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Kyle at a wall-safe. A security-system scans his retina.

DR. KYLE

Thought it best to keep this locked  
away until you arrived.

Mike paces in what little space the office affords.

DR. KYLE

You remember when V-1 launched? All  
the bankruptcies that came after?  
Unemployment lines. So much  
business annihilated by solutions  
in a tiny span of time.

Dr. Kyle pulls a lockbox from the safe.

MIKE

I was ten.

DR. KYLE

Only five corporations didn't go  
under. Three decades later the same  
five are still with us. Their  
businesses never once hurt by  
solutions. Five corporations with  
five owners. Morgana Strand's five  
best friends...The Club.

He pulls a journal from inside and hands it to Mike.

DR. KYLE

Five names you'll find repeated in  
there. Again, and again. Next to  
lists of unsolved problems ranked  
by profit.

MIKE

Profit from what?

DR. KYLE

The sale of short-term fixes. Frank  
Tai's in there.

MIKE

Frank Tai?



DR. KYLE

Frank Tai owns the corporation that  
owns Lash MED-Dev. They sell  
Greta's flotation chamber.

Mike flips through the journal.

DR. KYLE

Friends of mine spent decades  
compiling those records. Their  
effort to make sense of the world.  
Not something I've shared with  
patients or their parents before.  
What would be the point? But you're  
in a position to do something.

MIKE

Tell me this isn't real.

DR. KYLE

We call it the Do-Not-Solve-List.

INT. 5 STAR HOTEL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A display board announces MORGANA STRAND RETIREMENT GALA.

INT. 5 STAR HOTEL - BALLROOM

The room has vaulted ceilings and crystal chandeliers.  
Caterers clear dessert plates from GUESTS in black-tie best.

Ember speaks from A STAGE at the front of the room. Behind  
her a giant image of her mother, Morgana Strand.

EMBER

Visionary Strand defended her  
vision from a society that couldn't  
accept Unreal would solve problems  
better than Human. A year after  
launching V-1 she founded the  
Virtual Planet Agency.

Watching from a table, **LEO FROHM** (56/M) and OTHER GUESTS.

.EMBER (O.S.)

Today we are a planet without  
armies or war. Where no one need  
defend their vision or selves.

FROHM

Unless she disagrees with you.

MALE GUEST

Director Frohm, are we take it  
Morgana finds you disagreeable?

FROHM

Ask me in three years when E.T.  
knocks at the door and we have no  
way to defend ourselves.

MALE GUEST

Spoken like true ex-military.

FEMALE GUEST

Is that right, which branch?

MALE GUEST

You're sounding like that lunatic  
Captain Platt at NASA.

SECOND FEMALE GUEST

Frohm was Secret Service.

FEMALE GUEST

How exciting.

MALE GUEST

Didn't you do a stint in the  
private sector too?

FROHM

We should pay attention.

MALE GUEST

If you ask me, there's too much ex-  
military in the V.P.A.

FROHM

I didn't ask.

SECOND FEMALE GUEST

They had to go somewhere.

FEMALE GUEST

What sort of work in the private  
sector?

FROHM

Not worth talking about.

SECOND FEMALE GUEST

I heard he was raising armies.

EMBER

Thanks to one woman. Visionary  
Strand, Mom, please stand up.

Guests applaud and rubberneck to find **MORGANA STRAND** (70/F) at her table. Morgana stands and walks up an aisle toward the stage.

Mike appears between two tables near the aisle, holding the journal Dr. Kyle gave him. -- The Do-Not-Solve-List.

He steps into Morgana's path.

Noticing he is not in black-tie.

MORGANA

Dressing down, Visionary Simms?

MIKE

We need to talk.

MORGANA

Now?

MIKE

About The Club. About the Do-Not-Solve-List.

She maintains her smile and pushes past him to the stage.

The crowd stands in ovation. Ember relinquishes the spotlight as Morgana whispers in her ear.

Ember heads up the aisle toward Mike.

MORGANA

Thank you. Good evening.

Morgana watches Mike and Ember intercept each other.

Mike leads Ember through a bathroom door that says **ANY-SEX**.

Nearby, **GAT GATLIN** (26/M) tosses a gummy orange octagon into his mouth and the drug sparks when it hits his tongue.

INT. 5 STAR HOTEL - BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Ember watches Mike at the sink splash water on his face.

EMBER

I'll talk to my mom. But it's  
crazy.

She exits as Gat rushes in.

To a stall where he vomits glowing orange.

MIKE  
Gatlin, you all right?

GAT  
Hey, Simms. Enhancements on an  
empty stomach is all.

A guest enters the bathroom and Morgana's voice filters in.

MORGANA (O.S.)  
Let me introduce our newest  
Visionary, Gat Gatlin. Set to  
launch V-48 in the Fall of-

The door closes, cutting off Morgana's voice.

Gat bolts from the stall looking like he means to exit, sees  
Mike's distraught face in the mirror and does not.

MIKE  
Well go on Gatlin, break a leg.

GAT  
Let's leave and get drunk instead.  
Come on. You can even tell me why  
you look like shit.

INT. HOSPITAL - GRETA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Kyle checks a readout on Greta's chamber.

A LASER cuts across his wrist.

He turns his head to find the source. Whatever he sees  
appears to panic him.

DR. KYLE  
Wait.

Dr. Kyle's SEVERED HAND smacks the linoleum floor.

INT. MORGANA STRAND'S PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Regal and creepy.

Ember paces while Morgana put on her pajamas.

Already in mid-conversation.

MORGANA

I knew. The planets would work. The world would get better. Not all at once. For some people, become much worse. At the start. But then... But then... For many people. Not everyone. Not everything. But better. In every way. A 70 percent solution rate isn't nothing.

EMBER

It is to Mike and Greta Simms.

MORGANA

I knew. I knew people would come to kill us. Nine of the months I envisioned V-1, I was pregnant. They came, and The Club protected us both.

EMBER

Jesus Christ, Mom.

MORGANA

The Club is only our friend if we follow the list.

EMBER

Is that what I should tell Mike?

MORGANA

The Club is old. You're young. None of the members will live ten years.

EMBER

Greta won't live ten days.

MORGANA

When they're dead, do what I can't and solve every challenge on Earth. What I always intended for you. Ember, you're too responsible to sacrifice a problem-free world for a girl.

EMBER

It can happen without Greta dying.

MORGANA

Ex-Military in the V.P.A. want to solve what they see as the big problem. Peace. They'll treat my retirement as opportunity to take control. The Club can stop it.

EMBER

I guess peace isn't on the list.

MORGANA

Ember, The Club wants you at the helm.

EMBER

I bet.

MORGANA

Swear your allegiance to the list and they promise anyone who grabs your rightful power won't have it for long.

EXT. MORGANA STRAND'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Ember walks down stone stairs toward a circular driveway where a small passenger drone waits.

A larger drone descends and blocks her path.

The door slithers open. Lost in a rippled seat -- hard to see until he leans forward. **FRANK TAI** (109/M).

FRANK TAI

Agent Strand. Welcome to The Club.

INT. HOSPITAL - GRETA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mike and a NURSE stand outside the Air Flotation Chamber, watching Doctor Kyle's head and dismembered limbs float inside the tank with the still sleeping Greta.

**DETECTIVE MARTIN** (34/M) watches from inside the door.

MIKE

Why is she still in there with him?

NURSE

We wanted you to be here in case she wakes up.

The nurse pushes a button on the chamber.

Air jets lessen. Greta and the dismembered Dr. Kyle lower.

Greta's eyes open to her diamond-shaped pupils.

She throws her arms toward her father, surprised when her palms strike glass with a resounding boom. She screams.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

A nurse and orderly wheel Greta away from the room on a stretcher. Mike and Detective Martin walk behind.

DETECTIVE MARTIN  
Most days I wish the planets would  
hurry and solve the urge to kill.

MIKE  
Some do all the time. Solutions are  
always worse.

DETECTIVE MARTIN  
Any idea who killed the Doctor?

MIKE  
Detective, are you a family man?

DETECTIVE MARTIN  
Is that important?

MIKE  
Are you?

DETECTIVE MARTIN  
Two boys.

MIKE  
No, I have no idea who did this.

INT. HOSPITAL - GRETA'S NEW ROOM - NIGHT

Mike inside a New Air Flotation Chamber with the sleeping Greta. Air jets roar against them. He wears a protective face mask and gloves.

He inserts a long cotton swab between her lips and rolls it across the inside of her cheek. Puts the swab in a vial.

IN MIKE'S MIND:

GRETA  
Stay. Don't go. Don't leave me.

He blinks. Greta, as she was.

EXT. RURAL MEXICO - MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

Frank Tai's Drone, dark and silent, flies a path through a canyon lit by moonlight -- descends to a mansion set in Bordeaux-colored rocks.

INT. FRANK TAI'S MANSION - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Frank Tai with Ember at a dining table.

EMBER

I'll see you all imprisoned.

FRANK TAI

Love your fire. Your mother did a great job. Rest of us got the jade brats we raised. Won't be leaving them our empires. Money being all but unnecessary these days.

EMBER

If money doesn't matter, let Greta Simms live.

FRANK TAI

We must uphold the list.

EMBER

To hell with your list.

FRANK TAI

Without the list, we'd kill each other. Club members are competitive. Adhering to it ensures survival for those addicted to the hustle.

EMBER

Why did you bring me here?

FRANK TAI

We're concerned Simms will acquire a virtual cure on his own. If he does, you'll make sure it's never real.

EMBER

You think I'll help you?

FRANK TAI

Killing Simms comes with opportunity costs to The Club. It's the only reason he's still alive.

EMBER

What opportunity?

FRANK TAI

No reason to concern yourself with the details.



But understand, if you don't stop Simms, his life is an expense we eat.

EMBER

If you're this serious about your list, then why is Greta Simms still alive?

FRANK TAI

It's one thing to stop her salvation...but murder her? No one wants to face a Vengeful Visionary.

EMBER

You won't face him. I can't stop him. Even if I wanted. I met Mike in the second grade. I've met no one who can out-maneuver him.

FRANK TAI

If the Unreal find a cure, let your school chum download it. Before he sends it for Realization, merge it with the code on this module.

He tosses her a memory module with a cholera-yellow casing.

EMBER

What does it do?

FRANK TAI

Turns virtual solutions into something worse than the problem.

EMBER

You want it to fail the safety-scan.

FRANK TAI

Your factory never makes real what does.

INT. V.P.A. - LAB-47 - NIGHT

Mike alone outside a closed door that reads VIRTUALIZATION CHAMBER.

Through its window, he sees the swab he put in Greta's mouth.

MIKE

Begin Virtualization.

A hum. Lights in the chamber strobe and return to normal.

LAB-47 AI VOICE  
Successful copy created. Virtual  
Weaponized Ponanza Virus queued to  
infect.

MIKE  
It shouldn't be reading as  
weaponized. Check against original.

LAB-47 AI VOICE  
Perfect match.

MIKE  
Huh.

LAB 47 AI VOICE  
Unreal demographic to infect?

MIKE  
Um...ages 1-18.

LAB-47 AI VOICE  
Percentage?

MIKE  
All of them.

LAB-47 AI VOICE  
Anything above 11 percent will  
inhibit emergency retraction.

MIKE  
No retractions. I need them  
motivated to work fast.

LAB-47 AI VOICE  
Infection successful.

MIKE  
Destroy original.

Lasers burn the swab from existence.

END ACT ONE