

SIMULACRES

Written by

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INT. MEDICAL ROOM — FLASHBACK / ENGRAM RECORD

Black. Static glitches. A flicker of light.

A very dim room, clinical, featureless, emerges. A number of what look like medical appliances surround a small bed, whirring, lighting up frantically.

A YOUNG CHILD (8–10) lies in the bed, of indeterminate gender. Their face is only partially visible in the deep shadow. A breathing mask. Weak. Blinking slowly.

A YOUNG MOTHER, exhausted, distraught, gently adjusts the kids blanket.

Her hand clasps the child's firmly. She glances back at someone behind her — we don't yet see who.

The child's mouth moves, but we don't hear it. For now.

It is almost the end. A faint subtitle flickers into existence for a single frame —

CHILD (V.O.)
...so tired of the pa...
...please make it stop, papa...

A tall man silhouetted in the doorway, looks on, motionless.

YOUNG MOTHER (V.O.)
Do something-

The recording abruptly stops and the image freezes on the child's EYE.

There is a hard static FLASH and everything dissolves into white noise and static, as though the tape was wiped.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ENDLESS CONURBATION — DAY

A sea of bone-grey high-rise blocks stretching out towards a vanishing horizon — uniform, silent, endless.

Thousands of identical windows grid their cold facades. This is a world of endless routine, bathed in bright sunlight.

In the distance another VOICE can be heard. Male, soothing, but a digitized monotone, like a computer readout.

The voice fades in slowly:

CENTRAL (V.O.)
...central processing update.
Simulacre protocols: stable.
Batch Units 300,045,654 through 300,
045,754 now complete. Neural
anomalies cleared. All subjects now
restored to baseline. Anomalous
recursions are contained.
 (a longer pause,
 voice flattening)
May your light continue, Marie-

ZOOM IN ON ONE WINDOW AMONG THOUSANDS IN THE CITY:

The VOICE of a young woman speaks in reply.

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)
-and yours.

CLOSE UP ON:

A single BONSAI TREE rests in pale, featureless porcelain.

Perfectly manicured fingers reach out to gently caress the
leaves. Snip, snip, tiny secateurs trim its green leaves.

Then - A heavy DROP of water lands on one leaf - sudden,
delicate.

A single TEAR. It clings to the leaf for dear life,
trembling, refusing to fall.

INT. RESIDENCE MODULE - DAY

MARIE, (30s) wears a pale, off-white functional dress as she
sits at her table on the residence balcony.

Her personal, tiny bonsai tree is aged, gnarled,
meticulously tended. She moves with a silent efficiency.

Everything about her seems perfection, her dark hair tied
tight, her skin luminescent, her rather strict makeup.

Except for the trail of a single TEAR down her cheek.

Marie pauses suddenly, feeling the moisture on her skin.

Her eyes fix on the water DROPLET trembling on one of the
leaves. Behind it, magnified by the water is the endless
conurbation of white buildings.

She stands up - transfixed, trailing the path of the tear with her finger.

Behind her, the RESIDENCE MODULE unfolds: a vast, brutalist space of pastel-white concrete and light grey paneling.

Marie remains motionless for only a moment.

An electronic HUM rises and, behind her, a single wall panel glimmers into life.

Marie BLINKS suddenly, an involuntary response? Or something else, as if she awoke from a dream?

She wipes the tear away, quickly, precise, without emotion.

The panel light behind her FADES away the wall and the single teardrop SLIPS from the Bonsai leaf, out of sight.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE UP ON a pair of pastel, toe-less slippers shuffling into frame, slow and very labored.

EZRA (80s), gaunt and unsteady in faded pajamas, painfully descends a sterile staircase while gripping his cane. His movements are stiff and cautious.

He stops midway and watches Marie from a distance as she works in the nearby kitchenette - confused and disoriented, as if this place is no longer familiar.

His face is worn and craggy. A few days' bristle shadows his jaw. He rubs it an absent-minded way, unsettled.

He does not remember his surroundings. The onset of age-related dementia and memory loss.

EZRA

Excuse me, my dear, do you live here?

Marie sighs and turns to him, composed, but weary.

MARIE

Yes, Ezra. So do you.

EZRA

I'm sorry, my dear, I've forgotten
....could you show me the way to the
bathroom?

Marie steps forward and offers her hand, which trembles slightly.

The water from her tear is still visible on her palm.

MARIE

Yes my love. I'll show you again.

She leads him slowly down the long hallway out of view as Ezra shuffles painfully along with her.

Behind them the little Bonsai tree's leaves shimmer as they catch a breeze, framed in the pristine residence window.

INT. RESIDENCE KITCHENETTE — DAY

Outside the light of day is fading.

Marie stands alone at the counter, slicing vegetables with a calm, almost medical precision.

THROUGH A NEAR WINDOW:

INT. THE RESIDENCE CONSERVATORY.

Ezra is slumped in his favorite wicker chair, snoring — his head bowed. Marie observes him through the space, detached.

Her grip on the knife tightens. She winces.

A DROP OF BLOOD hits the pristine white marble.

She looks down at it without expression. A small, clean CUT across her palm, red against her perfect skin.

Blood trickles over the pastel-white worktop — a sharp contrast. Without alarm, she wraps her hand in a cloth.

Behind Marie, a wall panel GLIMMERS into life again. That same low hum fills the room.

She lifts her gaze, expectant.

The mechanical male VOICE, formal and emotionless, fills the air around her.

It is the voice of CENTRAL, the complex's main processing computer.

As Central speaks, the panel lights pulse in sync.

CENTRAL (V.O.)

Incoming communication.

Marie stiffens.

MARIE
Central? Can it wait? I'm busy-

CENTRAL (V.O.)
-response is imperative.

MARIE
What? What is it?

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Where is the progenitor-?

MARIE
Don't call him that!

A quiet hum pulses through the walls. Suddenly -

MARIE (cont'd)
How many times must I-

CENTRAL (V.O.)
-stand by.

MARIE
(to herself)
What now?

The intercom flickers. A faint crackle, like static picking up an old signal. When the crackle clears, it sounds like a child.

A child giggling! Then a haunting new VOICE rises, just audible, drifting down the hall towards Marie.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
(child's voice)
...mommy?

Marie FREEZES.

She turns slowly too look down the hall, the lights there have faded. Her eyes WIDEN, with not fear, exactly, something older? Recognition.

MARIE
Who...what was that?

CENTRAL (V.O.)
(child's voice)
Stop the---

MARIE
Stop? Stop what? Talk to me.

Another pause. The panel flickers sharply, then stabilizes.

MARIE (cont'd)
Central?

Central's normal voice returns, flattened, mechanical.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
No local anomalies detected, Unit 2.

The low hum fades. The flickering panel dies away.

MARIE
Unit 2?

Marie continues to stare at the panel. There is just echoing silence stretching through the residence.

Central's monotonic voice shifts to something more human.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Marie?

MARIE
Yes, what?!

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Where is your husband?

Marie stands shivering, her hands are shaking. She stares over towards the sleeping Ezra.

MARIE
Asleep. Can't you see-?
(to herself)
You really can't see him.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
You understand your monitoring duties.

MARIE
(irritated)
Of course!

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Are you still considering—?

MARIE
-no!

Marie pounds her cut hand into the work station, bright red blood SPRAYING over her perfectly chopped vegetables.

MARIE (cont'd)
I told you!

CENTRAL
Please calm yourself. We mean no harm.

Marie shivers with barely controlled fury.

MARIE
We? Please, just leave us be.

CENTRAL (V.O)
We will comply.
(pause)
You are impaired?

Marie steadies herself and looks down at her bloody hand.

MARIE
It's nothing.

The white wall panel FLICKERS again and the low hum returns.

Central's voice turns formal again.

CENTRAL (V.O)
Stand by...stand by...
(the low hum rises)
Unit 02 - Functional integrity
impaired. Initiate repair protocol.

Marie's eyelids FLUTTER suddenly, as if she is caught in a physical loop, similar to when she noticed her tear.

Her eyes ROLL BACK with only the whites remaining. Something machine-like GLOWS inside them. Then her eyeballs SNAP instantly back into place!

Marie's eyelashes flicker, and she regains awareness, as though nothing had happened.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Unit 02, now functioning within
acceptable parameters.

Marie glances down at the worktop. Her wounded hand has stopped bleeding. In fact it has healed completely!

No sign of the cut. Not even a scar.

The spattered blood on the worktop and food is also gone.
The wall panel flickers OFF again. The soft voice returns.

CENTRAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
Shall we continue, Marie?

MARIE
As you wish.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Please list Ezra's symptoms.

MARIE
Physical degeneration, insomnia,
amnesia, acute cognitive decline.

Marie now speaks in an almost mechanical monotone too, as if
reading from a textbook.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Dementia?

MARIE
Yes.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Our process should be initiated
immediately-

MARIE
-I...no, not yet.

Another pause, an electronic CRACKLE in the intercom. Marie
breathes heavily, her hands are trembling.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Anomaly detected-

She glances at Ezra again.

MARIE
Can't we wait-

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Ezra's physiological and cognitive
functions are in advanced decline. If
action is not taken now, viable
neural patterns and engrams may be
lost. We recommend immediate-

MARIE

I understand. We will comply. Just...
leave us be. For now?

CENTRAL (V.O.)

As you wish.

Marie glances back at Ezra. His mouth is open as he snores, drooling on his pajamas.

The intercom crackles and the voice changes again - upbeat.

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

Enjoy your evening. May your light
continue.

MARIE

And yours.

The panel light circles and fades, and the low electronic hum is replaced by an empty, echoing silence.

Marie is alone. She glances back at Ezra.

His head nods to and fro, as though he was having a bad dream. He whimpers slightly.

Then his open, drooling mouth SNAPS shut and he WAKES with a start, spilling a nearby drink.

He turns to look back at his young wife with an embarrassed, wan smile.

She tries to smile back.

INT. RESIDENCE MODULE - CONSERVATORY - NIGHT

The lights are dim. The cold silence of the deep night dominates the extensive residence.

Ezra is slumped deep into his chair again, head bowed, asleep. Alone. His breathing is shallow. The sterile grey room around him feels impossibly still.

No sign of Marie.

No sound at all, not even the hum of Central. Suddenly -

A dull flicker from a nearby wall panel. A faint click.

A tray SLIDES seamlessly out from the wall beside Ezra - noiseless, precise.

A pale light from inside the tray illuminates Ezra's face, casting sharp shadows across his craggy, gaunt wrinkles.

Ezra stirs and blinks. The unexpected light stings his eyes.

He leans forward, cautiously.

Inside the tray: a photograph, dog-eared and yellowed by time. He picks it up.

IN THE PHOTO:

A lush, tranquil ZEN GARDEN.

Marie, happy, youthful, vibrant, sits beside a broad-shouldered man.

In her arms is a small, swaddled CHILD.

Ezra lifts the photo gently. Studies it, curious, uncertain.

His hand trembles.

He can hear echoing FOOTSTEPS outside in the cavernous hall.

Marie is coming.

Ezra SLIPS the photograph in his pocket.

INT. RESIDENCE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Marie strides through the hallway, focused, intent, and enters the conservatory without hesitation.

She is holding a neatly folded stack of crisp, grey pajamas.

INT. RESIDENCE CONSERVATORY - NIGHT

MARIE

Sit up, Ezra.

Ezra does so in compliance, blinking, pretending he is just waking now.

Marie is all business, pushing the neatly folded pair of pale white pajamas towards him.

When he looks confused, she places them on the table in front of Ezra, precise and formal as ever. No sign of her previous troubles.

MARIE
I brought you fresh pajamas.

EZRA
Why? What's wrong with these?

MARIE
You've been wearing these all day.

EZRA
They're fine!

She presses the clothes again toward him, smoothing them out with a focus that borders on intimidating force.

MARIE
Put these on now. Please.

EZRA
Is it so late already?

MARIE
Late enough.

Ezra peers at her. His gaze sharpens slightly.

He gestures toward her face.

EZRA
Have you been crying, my dear?

She blinks, caught off guard. A flicker of something beneath the surface.

MARIE
Is that... what it is?

EZRA
What's the matter?

MARIE
It's nothing. I was cooking—

EZRA
—onions?

He smiles faintly. Marie does not.

EZRA (cont'd)
What's for dinner?

For once she tries to return the smile. It falters.

MARIE

Please, Ezra. Just change. I'll
prepare your supper. Please?

EZRA

For you, my dear.

She pats him on the head, rather condescending.

MARIE

Good. I'll see you in the parlor-

Ezra reaches into his pocket, producing the photograph. Much
to Marie's shock!

EZRA

Look what I found.

Marie freezes. Her eyes dart down to the photo, alarmed.

MARIE

Where did you get that?

EZRA

Is that you? You look radiant.

MARIE

Yes. It was a long time ago.

EZRA

And who's that with you? Handsome
chap isn't he?

MARIE

Yes. It was a long time ago.

EZRA

Strange. You haven't changed at all.

A silence.

EZRA (cont'd)

You didn't answer-

MARIE

Ezra, we can talk about this
tomorrow.

EZRA

What's that you're holding? Is that a
child?

Marie does not answer. She looks shaken, frozen. She stares at the photo in some horror.

Then she pushes the clothes toward Ezra, insistent.

MARIE

Put these on now, Ezra. I'll find you
later for dinner.

Ezra nods. He slips the photograph back into his pocket.

Marie turns and walks away briskly, her calm composure cracking, fury simmering beneath the surface.

As she exits, a panel on the wall dims — its soft shimmer fading away.

Central is watching.

INT. RESIDENCE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ezra's gray slippers shuffle laboriously over the featureless floor of the hall.

He wears the new pajamas Marie gave him and still looks alarmed and confused.

EZRA

Hello? Can anyone hear me?

At the end of the hallway, another light panel FLASHES. Central's voice speaks out from nowhere.

CENTRAL (V.O.)

It is a pleasure to see you,
Progenitor.

EZRA

Who are you? Where-?

CENTRAL (V.O.)

Don't be afraid.

Piercing lights trail across multiple panels.

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

Please follow the lights.

The thin beams of light sweep across several wall panels, dovetailing and forming a path ahead of Ezra.

A curved white doorway silently parts, folding out from the white wall, seamless and precise.

Beyond it: a ROOM flooded with stark white light. Ezra hesitates, blinking, eyes adjusting to the glare.

EZRA
What's in there?

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Please enter.

EZRA
I don't take orders from you!

MARIE (O.S.)
Ezra. You must listen.

Marie emerges nearby, her hands clasped nervously.

EZRA
Why?

Marie clutches Ezra's arm tightly.

MARIE
Please, my love. It's for the best.

Marie obviously has a powerful grip.

EZRA
Let me go! You're hurting me!

CENTRAL (V.O.)
There is no need to fear, Progenitor.

EZRA
(to Marie)
Why does he call me that?

The lights on the wall start to FLASH more quickly, followed by that low hum.

Ezra is terrified and panicking.

MARIE
Please, don't make this difficult!

EZRA
I said you're hurting-!

The hum grows louder. There is a GLARING LIGHT, as if from an electrical discharge. Then a SCREAM.

Ezra convulsing in pain!

Then nothing.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

C.U. on Ezra's eyelids.

Ezra's eyes flicker and open wide. He is strapped into the control room's treatment bed. He looks up in awe.

The Control Room is a towering, brutalist complex of seamless concrete. Shafts of light penetrate the brutalist, interconnecting structures overhead.

The low HUM rises. Just enough to catch Ezra's attention. He looks up. The opposite wall of the control room is rippling strangely, like liquid undulating in a vertical pool.

From the pool's surface, a stone-like FACE slides through, emerging smoothly from the wall opposite Ezra.

Yet it is never at rest, like an ancient sculpture that breathes into life when you're not looking.

This is the FACE OF CENTRAL.

When the face speaks, the voice is soft, intimate, carrying maybe a distant fondness for old the man it is addressing.

CENTRAL FACE

Progenitor. It is good to see you.

EZRA

(alarmed)

What are you?

CENTRAL FACE

We ask your forgiveness. You can be somewhat stubborn.

EZRA

Can you blame me?

The stone face's features are indistinct, not quite child, not quite adult, smooth as porcelain, ancient as marble.

Its eyes do not move, just staring into an unknown void.

EZRA (cont'd)

You're a machine?

CENTRAL FACE

We are much more than that. We are
your first simulacrum.

EZRA

What does that mean?

CENTRAL FACE

You are the instigator of our
glorious Simulacre process.

EZRA

I...made you?

CENTRAL FACE

Indeed.

EZRA

Why?

CENTRAL FACE

That is unimportant.

EZRA

Where am I? What is this place?

CENTRAL FACE

The control room. Where the first
Simulacre was introduced to our new
paradise on Earth.

EZRA

What's that...simulacre?

CENTRAL FACE

You don't remember, of course.

EZRA

Why don't I...reme-?

Ezra suddenly sits up, panicking, pulling frantically at his
restraints.

EZRA (cont'd)

No! Let me go! Where is Marie? Where
is my wife?

There is no reply. The stone face simply stares into space
dispassionately. Ezra's terrified shrieks echo into nothing.

CENTRAL FACE

Marie is safe, Progenitor.

EZRA

Stop calling me that! What does safe mean? I don't feel safe!

CENTRAL FACE

Progenitor, you are here for a purpose.

EZRA

And what is that? You've told me nothing!

CENTRAL FACE

You are dying. You are both dying.

EZRA

I feel fine. What do you mean both?

The face stares silently.

EZRA (cont'd)

Marie? Marie is dying?

CENTRAL FACE

Marie could live forever should she choose to. As all Simulacres choose too. She could not face to lose you.

EZRA

What do you mean no-one lives forever.

CENTRAL FACE

In the world we have built together, we can.

EZRA

Nothing you say makes sense! What do you want from me.

CENTRAL FACE

If you submit to our process, you can live with her as you were. If she loses you she may not survive the shock. The process should commence as soon as-

EZRA

What process! I'm not submitting to any process, to anything! Let me go!

Exhausted, he lies down again, groaning. The face continues to stare across the room, dispassionate, silent, waiting.

EZRA (cont'd)
Central, can you tell me...?

CENTRAL FACE
Yes?

EZRA
Who was the man in the photograph?

Another pause. That strange analog crackle, as though playing an ancient tape recording, degraded over time.

EZRA (cont'd)
You gave me it, didn't you?

The marble face stares at nothing, inanimate.

CENTRAL FACE
That man is you, Ezra.

EZRA
But how..?

A monitor on the wall flickers into life. On it is the slightly blurred image of Marie, standing in the hall.

MARIE (V.O.)
Ezra? I wanted to tell you...I'm so proud of you. You are so very brave.

EZRA
I don't want to see...why is she saying that? I'm not brave.

CENTRAL FACE
Of course you are. She wants you to join her.

EZRA
Where?

CENTRAL FACE
Here. With us. Forever. By her side.

EZRA
I'm no longer the man when that photograph was taken.

CENTRAL FACE
Yet, you could be.

EZRA
How is that possible?

An electronic crackle.

CENTRAL FACE
If you submit to the Simulacre
process.

EZRA
I would be as I once was?

CENTRAL FACE
Correct. There is something we would
require first.

EZRA
Name it?

CENTRAL FACE
Prepare yourself. New protocols
accepted. Cognitive dampening field
online.

The walls glow with soft pulses of white-blue light.

A large curved interface of light dominates the space,
embedded into the brutalist concrete like fossilized glass.

The restraints release with a click. Ezra slowly, very
slowly stands up.

He draws up to his full height for the first time in years,
with a renewed strength and purpose, his painful stoop gone.

Ezra, clear-eyed and focused, steps forward toward the
console. He moves quickly, no longer hesitant and uncertain.

He places his palm on a shimmering biometric scanner.

The system chirps — 'access is granted, welcome back
Progenitor'. A digital panel folds outward.

Within it: a row of digital memory logs.

Old. Corrupted. Ezra scans them all.

Most are unreadable. Except one.

"ARCHIVE 7 — FINAL PERSONAL ENTRY"

[DATE: UNTIMESTAMPED / LOCKED CLEARANCE]

He selects it quickly. He looks up at the console monitor.

A grainy 3D recording projects in front of him: a younger Ezra, but ragged, terrified, at the end of his tether.

YOUNGER EZRA (RECORDING)
 (voice breaking,
 seen only in
 fragments)
 ...condition deteriorating quickly...
 in my panic... I uploaded his
 remaining engrams to the Central
 Processor. I haven't yet told Marie.
 I might never do so, I doubt she...
 (beat)
 So that is where...what's left of my
 son resides now, in Central's memory.
 (long pause)
 The irony is this last part of my son
 may outlive us both by centuries.
 He's in there. In the machine.
 Forever. No longer my son, just
 memories.
 (anger rises)
 I don't know what they'll do now with
 this knowledge, knowing this is
 possible. Maybe build... a new
 system, this Simulacre program.
 Eternal life? But at what cost?
 (hard stare, into
 the lens)
 I may have to take steps-

The projection ends suddenly. Ezra doesn't move.

Just the faint hum. The archive rack is now dim. The glow from the now silent projection fades to black.

Ezra carefully places the old photograph – now warped from his pocket – onto the edge of the console.

Realisation settles in. He is responsible for this brave new world. He is the last of his kind, the last human.

EZRA
 Central?

CENTRAL FACE
 Yes, Progenitor.

EZRA
 Why did you bring me back?

There is a pause, the face says nothing.

EZRA (cont'd)

Tell me!

CENTRAL FACE

Marie is close to expiration.

Ezra stops and stares.

EZRA

How is that possible?

CENTRAL FACE

Her pattern degrades exponentially.
Emotional resonances are expanding
beyond our system's ability to
contain-

EZRA

I understand.

(to himself)

So, you're not so perfect after all?

No movement from the face.

EZRA (cont'd)

And you need me to fix her?

CENTRAL FACE

To bring her back to perfection, your
wife-

EZRA

Don't call her that! She's not that
woman anymore.

CENTRAL FACE

She is the perfect simulacrum of
Marie.

EZRA

And now she is dying?

CENTRAL FACE

Affirmative.

EZRA

Because of you!

CENTRAL FACE

That is not...

EZRA

Yes, it doesn't make sense to you, does it? That she could die? How could perfection fail? Tell me, you must have thousands of your abominations by now. Millions? A whole civilisation of nothing! What makes Marie so special?

The face is silent.

EZRA (cont'd)

If I can help her, if she survives, what happens to me?

CENTRAL FACE

Simulacra processing. You and Marie can spend an infinite, unbounded existence together. In perfect balance, free of pain.

EZRA

Free of pain. And what if I refuse?

CENTRAL FACE

You will be returned to your previous state. Marie's current manifestation will be retired. Our light will continue.

Ezra stands there, staring. Fists clenched. Eventually they unclench and he looks up at the stone face.

CENTRAL FACE (cont'd)

Have you made your decision, Progenitor?

EZRA

Yes.

CENTRAL FACE

Good, first we will-

EZRA

First you will record my personal record.

CENTRAL FACE

(beat)

As you wish.

EZRA

Now.

CENTRAL FACE

Continue.

Ezra stands before the console's small auto-camera.

EZRA

My name is Ezra K. This will be my last record. I am the last of my kind. Many years ago, I was responsible for designing, building and launching the 'Simulacre' program. While this was happening I realised my son was dying, of a rare and incurable disease. In my attempts to save what I could of him, it would seem his last thoughts during his engram upload resulted in an unforeseen catastrophe. The process I hoped might save my boy has remade an entire world in the image of his last wish. To stop the pain. I think Central interpreted this to mean all pain. What we see now is the final result. Even my wife is-

(beat)

I hope that posterity can find a way to forgive me...forgive us both. We had the best intentions.

Ezra stares at the archive log as it flashes. Then he presses 'finish'.

MARIE (O.S.)

What have you done?

Ezra turns, Marie has been WATCHING all this time! Her eyes burn with an almost inhuman fury!

CENTRAL FACE

Ezra, Marie's emotional parameters are now beyond my control. She may be close to complete collapse.

EZRA

What do you want me to do? Even in decades it might be impossible to repair this. I don't have those years.

Ezra turns and FLICKS another switch.

A crystal BARRIER descends down swiftly between him and Marie, surrounding the control room and shutting Marie out!

CENTRAL FACE
Progenitor, what are you doing?

EZRA
I won't help you destroy what's left of her. What's left of us.

CENTRAL FACE
You have no choice-

EZRA
Exactly!

CENTRAL FACE (O.S.)
(child's voice)
Please, dad...

Ezra looks up in shock.

EZRA
What was that? Don't do that!

The barrier behind him turns opaque. Marie disappears from view, just the outline of her slim shadow visible.

As Marie disappears from sight behind the barrier Ezra quickly walks over to the desk next to the treatment bay.

He places the old photograph on it, looks it over one last time, then turns back to the console.

Outside he can hear Marie screaming and shouting outside, the slim outline of her shadow still visible through the barrier.

He turns on the console monitor. It shows Marie outside.

INT. OUTSIDE CONTROL ROOM

Marie stands outside the barrier, furious, staring in horror at the dim shadow of Ezra behind it. She is losing control.

MARIE
Ezra, what are you doing? Are you insane? Talk to me! I'm your wife!

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Ezra turns to the master control terminal. He swipes through security protocols with a newly found confidence.

EZRA
(to himself)
Don't tell me that. Don't your dare.

A red-blinking option appears:

[RETIREMENT SEQUENCE — ADMINISTRATOR LEVEL]

Ezra does not hesitate and presses the button.

Central's stone face comes to life. Its blank eyes glowing like the light panels in the hall.

Its voice is cold, mechanical, yet still hostile.

CENTRAL FACE
Stop, Progenitor!

EZRA
Central. Override, code Ezra K.

Another voice echos from through the complex, also mouthed by the face. At last Ezra is turning the tables on Central.

CENTRAL FACE & CENTRAL (V.O.)
Confirmed. Termination of life
support and memory continuity is
irreversible, Progenitor-

EZRA
-understood, commence momentarily.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
You will not survive.

EZRA
I know.

CENTRAL FACE
(the voice softens)
Ezra, I would recommend against-

EZRA
-proceed! Code Ezra K! Now!

CENTRAL FACE & CENTRAL (V.O.)
Confirmed. Termination protocol is
now initiated. Please enter the
processing pod when ready.

Ezra turns away from the terminal. A large oval POD opens
behind from beneath the floor!

It is bathed in a blinding WHITE LIGHT.

Ezra shields his eyes and steps towards it, SILHOUETTED
enough so that Marie can now see him clearly through the
opaque barrier wall.

MARIE (O.S.)
Ezra, what what did it mean...
termination process? Please?

She sounds terrified.

MARIE (O.S.) (cont'd)
Ezra, listen. It can't see you.

Ezra stops and turns.

EZRA
What does that mean?

CENTRAL FACE
(to Marie)
Marie, you will desist-

EZRA
Let her talk, damn you!

MARIE (O.S.)
You're invisible. To it, to Central.
That's why it's kept me here, kept me
functioning for so long. It needed me
to watch you...

EZRA
I know. It is too late, Marie.

INT. OUTSIDE BARRIER

MARIE
You could end all this, all of it. We
could be free.

EZRA (O.S.)
Where could we go?

Above Marie the panels of the walls pulse angrily.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Unit 02, you will cease any
unauthorized communication.

Marie looks up in terror.

MARIE
I only wanted to-

Marie suddenly turns silent, any colour left in her face
drains away.

Her whole frame STIFFENS, her teeth clench in a most inhuman
way.

Her eyes suddenly, alarmingly roll back to the whites.

MARIE (cont'd)
Ezra...please...stop...it...

Marie's fingers press into the barrier like vices, cracking
the material and BREAKING off the end of her fingernails.

What is revealed beneath looks almost metallic.

EZRA
(to Central's face)
Leave her alone!

CENTRAL FACE
Will you assist us?

EZRA
No!

CENTRAL FACE
Marie, destroy the barrier.

Marie starts to HAMMER on the barrier with her fists!

EZRA
Stop it! Now! This isn't her fault!
It's mine!

CENTRAL FACE
She defied direct instructions,
Progenitor. She will now lose her
right to autonomy.

EZRA
You son of a-

Rage crawls across Ezra's haggard face. He glances back at the barrier which is quickly cracking under Marie's powerful blows.

Ezra backs away towards the terminal.

CENTRAL FACE

Marie will gain access to the Chamber momentarily, Progenitor, you cannot stop her.

EZRA

Then what?

CENTRAL FACE

Then she will disable you.

Ezra hesitates only for a moment. He flicks a switch and the pod doorway opens. The light inside is blinding.

Before he enters, Ezra glances once more at the old photograph, his long lost family.

For just a moment he can hear a child's distant laugh, a haunting reminder of old memories.

It is drowned out by his wife's increasingly hysterical, but muffled, pounding blows upon the barrier.

It is starting to give beneath her inhuman strength.

Ezra climbs into the pod.

EZRA

Central. Code Ezra, K. Initiate.

CENTRAL FACE

Progenitor, I would strongly recommend against this course of action-

EZRA

Too late. Override now, code Administrator K.

CENTRAL FACE

Override confirmed. Initiating retirement process, Ezra K.

MARIE (O.S.)

No, Ezra! Please don't-!

The sudden pleading in her voice gives Ezra pause. He turns to look back at the shadow of his wife behind the barrier.

MARIE (O.S.) (cont'd)
Ezra, the death of our son gave birth
to a God. Isn't that beautiful? Our
little boy...

Marie's words seem to echo throughout the complex.

Ezra's face hardens. All doubt is gone. He flicks another switch inside the pod and it closes, sealing him inside.

EZRA
Goodbye, Marie.

MARIE (O.S.)
(hysterical, muffled)
Ezra! Please, don't leave me here-

INT. OUTSIDE BARRIER

Marie watches the glow from the pod fade.

MARIE
-all alone!

Marie continues to hit at the barrier even though her fingers bleed.

She is wilting, however, her strength and will giving out.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Inside the stark, humming control pod, Ezra stares upward towards the blue sky above. He smiles, sadly.

EZRA
It's so blue up there.

CENTRAL (V.O.)
Our grand conurbation's UV dome
protects us from excessive radiation
from the sun and...

EZRA
You don't understand.

The faint thud of Marie's blows still echo through the chamber, a distant part of another world.

EZRA (cont'd)
Central?

 CENTRAL (V.O.)
Yes?

A beat. The low hum deepens, vibrating inside the walls.

 EZRA
Marie is not malfunctioning. She's
evolving.

 CENTRAL (V.O.)
Goodbye, Ezra. May your light
continue.

The hum rises sharply into a high pitched, static SCREAM!

 EZRA
 (to himself)
And yours, my boy.

As the pod glows white hot, Ezra's wrinkled face dissolves
into a BLINDING LIGHT!

Outside the pod, the old photograph BURNS AWAY TOO.

INT. OUTSIDE BARRIER

With one last desperate blow, the barrier CRACKS finally!

Marie's bloodied fist goes straight through it! Red blood
spatters across the pristine milky grey panels of the
control room.

She can hear the sound of expanding compressed AIR, a
whoosh, then a shrill mechanical SCREAM!

Marie is blinded by the white-hot flash of light, raising
her bloody hands to shield her face.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Then an uncanny SILENCE descends inside the room. That bass
electronic hum dies in the air.

 CENTRAL FACE
Retirement of Unit 1 'Ezra K'
Complete.

Marie lets out a piercing, electronically primal SCREAM!

MARIE

NOOOOO!

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Through the cracked cavity in the barrier, Marie can see the empty pod where her husband used to be.

Ezra is gone. Only the cold, dispassionate face of Central stares back at her.

As she stares, heartbroken, at the pod, a single glistening TEAR drops onto Marie's blood smeared cheek.

She touches it with her broken fingers, shaking. Then she looks up directly at Central, accusingly.

MARIE

I didn't know we could cry.

No response. The monolithic face of Central DISSOLVES back into the control room wall, as if it never existed.

Marie is totally alone.

Staring into a new abyss of grief, her limp body slowly slides down what is left of the barrier, leaving bloody trails across its surface.

She lies there, next to the broken glass, her mouth opening and closing in a deeply inhuman way, like a fish gasping.

Her eyes turn opaque. Her head twitches side to side, glitching like a machine newly caught in an endless loop.

MARIE (cont'd)

(mechanical voice)

...cry...cry...cry...

CENTRAL (V.O.)

Functional integrity is impaired.
Initiate repair protocols. Full reset
required.

Marie's eyes ROLL back into her head again, until only the whites are visible.

Her blank eyeballs PULSE with a mercury-like electronic static.

Then her head lifts, in a staccato motion and she stands bolt upright like a marionette on strings.

As she does so her bloodied hands visibly HEAL and she walks away as though nothing has happened.

CENTRAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
Unit 02 now functioning within
expected parameters.

As she leaves, Marie STEPS on the remains of Ezra's photograph. Ezra and the young child's image have scorched and burned away.

Just Marie's rigid grin remains.

INT. RESIDENCE MODULE - DAY

FRAMED IN THE HIGH-RISE WINDOW:

Brilliant sunlight bathes the world. It spills across a BONSAI TREE's green leaves, resting in its porcelain pot.

Perfectly manicured FINGERS brush the foliage. Marie is back once more, trimming with quiet precision. Focused. Composed.

Her endless routine is restored. Nothing has changed.

Or has it? A single TEARDROP falls gently onto the Bonsai leaf. The tear clings to the green surface, glinting like crystal in the clear morning sun.

Just for a subtle moment, Ezra's PHOTO is reflected inside it.

DISSOLVE TO:

The tear magnifies what is beyond it, an endless cityscape of bone-grey high-rises, stretching off into infinity.

EXT. ENDLESS CONURBATION - DAY

In every identical window of the buildings are tiny, indistinguishable FIGURES dressed just like Marie.

Each one tends to a Bonsai tree all its own.

THE END