

# THE DENRUX DIMENSION

Episode #101:

*I'll find a way*

by

Sean Taylor

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213.999.8363  
ST@seantaylorcreates.art

FLOWING WATER. MUFFLED BREATHING.

FADE IN:

**INT. VOLV INC - POD ROOM - DAY**

Glass pods hang from metal frames in rows. Dark figures are seen floating in some. One pod illuminates with light. A man is inside, wearing a wetsuit. He straps on a respirator. He has clear, determined, eyes -- STEVEN (30s).

STEVEN (V.O.)  
Being underwater always felt like  
going home... Like magic...

**INT. VOLV INC - POD ROOM - STEVEN'S POD - DAY**

Steven's eyes close as he takes deep, calming breaths. WATER RISES and fills the pod. Dozens of mechanical stingrays -- SENSE-RAYS -- detach from the bottom and swim in circles.

STEVEN (V.O.)  
DenRux's technology confirmed the  
notion.

The glass pod illuminates with bolts of lightning and --

WHOOSH! Steven stretches, BLASTS THROUGH A TUNNEL OF COLOR AND LIGHT TO...

**INT. STONE WELL - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

...an ancient stone well. Hands climb. Steven is now in brown desert wear with his eyes painted black. He climbs towards a circle of moonlight. On his left arm is a large wristband of silver triangles (DD HOLO BRACELET).

Pebbles fall from above and Steven tenses as they PATTERN his head and shoulders. He blows off the dust and freezes when he hears a HISSSSS above. Steven looks up and his eyes widen.

Above, a large python with skin of pure gold SLITHERS out of the shadows -- the GOLDEN SNAKE.

STEVEN  
Hi there.

The Golden Snake flits its tongue at him.

Steven taps his Holo Bracelet. The hologram of a pint-sized woman appears -- IVANNA. Authoritative. Cold. Something false about her.

IVANNA  
How can I help you, Steven?

STEVEN  
There's a snake blocking my way.  
Any recommendations?

IVANNA (HOLO)  
The start of this test involves  
answering a riddle. Get it correct  
and the snake will let you pass.

STEVEN  
What if I get it wrong?

IVANNA (HOLO)  
Climb farther. Once you get close  
enough, it will pose the riddle.

He climbs higher and IVANNA DISSIPATES. The Golden Snake circles inside the tunnel, blocking Steven's way. MUSIC RISES. The creature flits her tongue and recites --

GOLDEN SNAKE  
*When looking for a leader,  
Look to the creator,  
The one in dark,  
In madnsss...  
Do you know our dear, dear DenRux?  
In the desssert  
Beyond the ssstatue  
Into the labyrinth  
Isss what you ssseek...  
Sssso now, Sssteven, I asssk you...  
If I am a pathway  
Between two worlds,  
A link between beginningsss and  
endsss,  
A way acrosssss obsssstaclesss...  
What... am... I?*

Steven looks into the snake's beady eyes.

STEVEN  
A bridge.

The Golden Snake HISSES --

GOLDEN SNAKE  
Yesssss...

Slithering out of Steven's way, the Golden Snake disappears into a hole in the wall. Steven climbs on and as he passes, the Golden Snake pokes out its gleaming head --

GOLDEN SNAKE (CONT'D)  
 Sssteven, DenRux will reach out  
 sssoon... Watch for sssignsss...  
 Lisssten...

The Golden Snake disappears retreats into darkness.

STEVEN  
 (to Golden Snake)  
 I will.

Steven climbs towards a circle of moonlight.

**EXT. DESERT - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Steven emerges from the well and is surrounded by sand. Amidst endless moonlit desert, there is a lone tree. Strange fruits hang from the tree's branches.

IVANNA (HOLO)  
 Excellent work, Steven.

STEVEN  
 Thank you.

SAND RUSTLES behind Steven. A moving lump. He doesn't notice.

IVANNA (HOLO)  
 Try exploring on your own. We will be watching to analyze what you focus on and how you interact but I hope this knowledge does not hinder your performance.

Ivanna's hologram DISSIPATES.

STEVEN  
 Being reminded of that doesn't help.

Looking around, Steven notices footprints in the sand.

STEVEN (V.O.)  
 Follow the signs...

EXT. DESERT DUNE - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]

Steven arrives at the base of a sand dune and stumbles up, following the footprints.

When he reaches the top of the dune, Steven clamors over the edge to see --

A MASSIVE STATUE looms on the horizon. Fallen and crumbled in the sand, its figure is shrouded in shadow.

STEVEN (V.O.)  
Beyond the statue...

Steven walks down the other side of the dune. A TAIL FLICKS PAST IN THE SAND BEHIND HIM.

**EXT. STATUE - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Up close, the enormous statue is clear: A WOMAN LYING ON HER BACK WITH LEGS SPREAD WIDE, A BABY CROWNING.

The baby's open mouth forms an entrance to the statue. As Steven approaches, he notices a trough of water filled with black, tentacled creatures.

Steven moves toward them, inspecting, when --

VOICE (O.S.)  
Don't even think about it.

A wide-eyed, pale woman with long hair and searing yellow eyes stands near the baby's open mouth -- LAO (AI) holds out a spear --

LAO  
Step away from the Konchas and put your hands in the air.

STEVEN  
What are Konchas? Where did this statue come from?

LAO  
We don't like people who ask questions.

STEVEN  
We?

A dog-like creature rises from the sand beside Lao. Tattoos and scarifications cover its striking skin all the way down its purple tail -- WHITE (AI)

WHITE GROWLS MENACINGLY but still manages to be adorable.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Who's this little guy?

LAO  
Did V send you?

STEVEN  
I thought you didn't like questions.

Lao looks at White. A slight smirk.

LAO  
Let's tear him to shreds, White.

STEVEN  
You don't like questions? How about a joke? What do the-- Wait. You aren't Catholic, are you?

LAO  
Catho-what?

STEVEN  
Is that not a thing here? Then you wouldn't get it. How about...  
Hmmm...

Steven paces back and forth. Stops. Taps his foot like an impatient cartoon character.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
What's a good joke? Hmmm...

White tilts his head.

Steven turns dramatically, making Lao and White jump.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
I got it! What do puppies have in common with near-sighted gynecologists?

Lao stares at him blankly. White cocks his head.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
How about instead of a joke, you give me a tour? Is there a lot inside? Is this your *home*?

Steven motions to the statue and attempts a smile.

Lao shows no emotion.

LAO  
I'll leave it up to White. He's an  
excellent judge of character.

White GROWLS menacingly.

LAO (CONT'D)  
Either he trusts you which means I  
trust you, or...

STEVEN  
Or what?

LAO  
Or he tears you to shreds.

Steven gulps.

LAO (CONT'D)  
Go on, White.

White leaps into the air and DIVES HEADFIRST INTO THE SAND,  
disappearing effortlessly, as if swimming through water.

There is a silent moment and then --

Steven yelps when White POPS OUT OF THE SAND beside him,  
making Lao laugh.

White lowers his head as he stalks toward Steven.

STEVEN  
Whoa, let's talk about this.

Steven steps away, one hand held out in defense, the other  
hovering above the knife at his belt.

White GROWLS, saliva dripping from his teeth.

Steven gives White a look, trying to win him over.

White stalks closer, SNIFFING the air. Steven braces for a  
fight but --

The creature's demeanor shifts, snarl turning to a PANTING  
smile. White nuzzles Steven's leg and Steven hesitantly lays  
a hand on its strange, iridescent skin.

Lao walks away.

Steven runs his fingers along White's markings. The  
creature's leg kicks involuntarily.

Lao reaches the statue entrance and turns back, scoffs at the sight of Steven and White playing in the sand, rolling around. Steven scratches White's belly. Lao WHISTLES.

PANTING, White goes to her, looking back at Steven as they enter the mouth of the statue. Steven follows.

INT. STATUE - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]

In the darkness, a light blooms bright. Lao carries a lantern and the three of them approach a thick metal gate. Holding out the lantern, Lao walks closer and closer to the metal gate without slowing down.

Steven watches, thinks she's going to walk into it when --

WOOMMPHH -- she walks through the gate. A hologram.

White follows Lao through. Steven stops and stares in awe.

Lao leans her head back through, appearing to be split by the bars --

LAO

Come on.

White BARKS from the other side and PANTS happily. Steven steps to the bars and slowly presses one hand against them. It passes through.

Carefully, he steps through.

STEVEN

Whoa.

Lao turns and walks away --

LAO

You ain't seen nothing yet.

BEYOND THE GATE,

Lao and White continue down the tunnel to another metal gate with Steven trailing behind. Lao looks back at him with a smirk --

LAO

This one's real.

She lets out a LOW WHISTLE. BRRUUMMM -- the gate GRINDS open.



INT. STATUE - ANIMAL CAVERN - EVENING

Steven follows Lao and White into a cavern lit by FLICKERING TORCHES and an ornate CRYSTAL CHANDELIER, the flames of which change colors organically, morphing through the color spectrum. The cavern is filled with plants.

Steven takes it all in.

LAO

This is the Animal Cavern.

STEVEN

Why's it called the-- Oh!

A CREATURE pops its head out of the thick foliage, inches from Steven's head. Steven jumps back.

LAO

That's why.

The Creature does not attack. Steven observes.

STEVEN

It looks like a camel.

Suddenly, the creature rises, revealing its full height. It was lying down among the bushes. As it rises, its WINGS SPREAD WIDE.

Steven steps back.

LAO

You must have Grehrs where you come from...

STEVEN

We have something similar... Not the wings, though. Or the green eyes. At least I don't think so. I actually don't know if I've ever seen a camel in person. Well, maybe at the zoo, but--

LAO

You are rambling.

Steven laughs. The Grehr leans its head down to Steven. It looks him up and down. After a long inspection and a blank stare, the Grehr stretches out its long tongue --

SLLLIICKK -- licks Steven's face.

INT. STATUE - ANIMAL CAVERN - LATER [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]

Steven, Lao, and White walk through the enormous cavern, down a path between the bushes and fruit trees. Steven watches the Grehr as it walks beside them, weaving between trees.

LAO (CONT'D)  
Animals seem to like you.

STEVEN  
They always have, I don't know why.  
How do plants grow in here? There's  
no sunlight.

LAO  
(frowns)  
Sunlight kills plants.

Steven looks around at the eclectic mix of plants.

STEVEN  
Interesting. In my world, plants  
need sunlight. What are those?!

PONDS AHEAD CATCH HIS ATTENTION. He runs to the water's edge. Large golden fish swim beneath the surface. Steven is hypnotized.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Beautiful...

LAO  
These are sacred. Do not stare too  
long.

Steven's eyes flicker.

STEVEN  
Why shouldn't I... stare... too...

All sound seems to fade as the hypnotic effect completely takes over. A tear drips down Steven's cheek.

Suddenly, AN ALARM BLARES. Holograms rise out of Steven's Holo Bracelet. A symbol flashes in red. Steven is finally shaken from his daze and turns away from the golden fish.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
I gotta go.

Steven holds up his Holo Bracelet --

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
I'll be back soon.

LAO

I hope so.

Steven looks at her for a moment before tapping his Holo Bracelet three times and WHOOSHES THROUGH COLOR AND LIGHT.

**INT. VOLV INC - POD ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Steven opens his eyes. The water around him DRAINS and he pulls off the respirator. He looks at his watch -- a smaller version of the Holo Bracelet. A hologram of the emergency symbol flashes.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Being jolted back to reality always felt like when you're hiking down a path and the stick in front of you starts to move.

Steven taps the emergency symbol. The pod sack lowers to the metal drain below.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Not my favorite feeling.

A hologram of a DOCTOR materializes from Steven's watch.

STEVEN

Play.

Steven removes his pod gear as DOCTOR (HOLO) speaks --

DOCTOR (HOLO)

Corea Ora activated her Life Switch and was found at ten past eleven this morning, having seizures. As her I.C.E. Contact, I am obligated to inform you that she is located in Hospital 747, Floor 42, Room...

The pod door WHOOSHES open and Steven takes off running.

**INT. VOLV INC. - ENTRYWAY - DAY**

Steven taps his Holo Bracelet as he runs out of the building.

**EXT. VOLV INC. - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Running across the parking lot, Steven talks into his Holo Bracelet, leaving a message --

STEVEN

Hey Mr. Koenig, I had to leave. My Grandma's in the hospital and I have to get over there. It's an emergency.

Steven gets in his car and the door SLIDES SHUT.

**INT. STEVEN'S CAR - DAY**

Steven touches the dashboard and the car WHIRS to life.

STEVEN

(into bracelet)

I'll be back tomorrow. Okay. That's it. Thank you.

PING -- Steven taps the bracelet and the message ends.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

(to dashboard)

Take me to Hospital 747, please.

VOICE (AI)

To access your Autopilot feature, you must pay your monthly subscription fee of--

STEVEN

Stop. Stop. Manual's fine.

He grabs the steering wheel. A hologram appears beside him and he moves his fingers across it, shifting gears.

**EXT. VOLV INC. - PARKING LOT - DAY**

Steven's car reverses.

**INT. HOSPITAL 747 - GRANDMA ORA'S ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Steven rubs a wrinkled hand. Machines WHIR and BEEP. Steven sits beside GRANDMA ORA (80s), asleep in the hospital bed. She has an air about her, a sense of alive calm.

STEVEN (V.O.)

My grandma was everything to me. She was the only one in the family who understood my constant search for adventure.

He watches her for a long time.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Her motto, "Come as you are" is one of the greatest, rarest treasures you can give.

DISSOLVE TO LATER, Steven is curled up in the chair, asleep, still holding her hand.

LATER, Steven sits by the window. He rubs his eyes from exhaustion. He flips open a journal on the table.

As he turns pages, sketches are visible of pods in various forms of development, as well as creatures, mechanics, and tiny handwriting.

Steven pulls out a leather pouch and flips it open.

Inside are three fountain pens. Steven grabs the purple pen and sets the pouch aside.

Spinning the pen in one hand, he self-soothes with the other, thumb to each finger, one at a time. He begins to draw. There is fire in his eyes.

GRANDMA ORA (O.S.)

Steven. My Steven.

Steven drops the fountain pen and goes to her.

STEVEN

I'm here.

GRANDMA ORA

You don't have to stop--

She breaks out in a coughing fit. Steven pours water and hands it to her. She sips.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)

You didn't have to stop. I was just saying hello.

(cough)

What are you drawing?

STEVEN

Do you know where you are?

GRANDMA ORA

Of course. I told the nurse to discharge me as fast possible before they pumped me full of drugs and forced me to sleep.

Steven takes her hand again.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)  
 Make nice things, think good  
 thoughts...

Grandma Ora leans in close.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)  
 Otherwise I'll come back and haunt  
 ya!

She busts up laughing. Steven shakes his head.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT**

The front door slides open. Lights illuminate in the entryway and living room. Shelves are visible, covered with books and crystals. Speakers are mounted in the walls around the house and glowing panels are on the walls in each room. Grandma Ora rolls in on an electric wheelchair.

GRANDMA ORA  
 I don't need this stupid chair.

Steven follows her inside and the front door SLIDES shut.

STEVEN  
 The doctor said to use it just for  
 a few days. It's safer.

GRANDMA ORA  
 Safer! Safer! How do you think your  
 grandma got to be this old and  
 amazing? Did I tell you about when  
 I moved to Alaska?

STEVEN  
 Tell me again. But stay in the  
 chair. Try not to give me a heart  
 attack.

GRANDMA ORA  
 You! A heart at-- Ha!

She stands. Wobbles. Sits.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)  
 Fine. I'll use it tonight. Just  
 tonight!

Grandma Ora directs the hover wheelchair to the kitchen.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)  
 What can I fix you to eat?

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Steven follows Grandma into the kitchen, walking past one of the panels on the wall. As he passes, an animated eye smiles and blinks at him. Steven touches his Holo Bracelet.

STEVEN

How about I order something for us?

GRANDMA ORA

Order! So lazy, Steven.

STEVEN

Useful. And efficient when I need more time to work.

GRANDMA ORA

What are you working on? You always were the creative one of you kids. Always drawing in the corner like your dad.

Steven is focused on his Holo Bracelet, scrolling through holograms of menus --

STEVEN

Do you like Thai food?

GRANDMA ORA

Yes. I think so.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING**

Steven and Grandma Ora are seated at the kitchen table. Beside them is UNCLE JAY (50s), the kind of person who hugs everyone. He is autistic and nonverbal. The three of them eat Thai food from silver plates. Uncle Jay eats quickly.

GRANDMA ORA

Slow down, Jay.

Uncle Jay leans down and slowly shovels massive amounts of noodles into his mouth.

Grandma Ora laughs.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)

You little rascal!

Steven stares at the ceiling, deep in thought.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)

What's on your mind, little one?

STEVEN  
I'm not so little anymore.

He flexes playfully.

GRANDMA ORA  
You'll always be little to me.

STEVEN  
I'm just thinking. Brainstorming.

GRANDMA ORA  
Well, that's good.

STEVEN  
I'll find a way...

Grandma Ora looks concerned.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - MORNING**

Steven lies in bed, wide awake. An ALARM blares beside him but he pays it no attention until --

GRANDMA ORA (O.S.)  
What's that noise?!

STEVEN  
Sorry!

Steven taps his Holo Bracelet. Stands.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING**

Grandma Ora and Uncle Jay are seated at the kitchen table. Steven rushes around, grabbing a mug of coffee from a machine for her, a bowl of oatmeal from another for him.

There is A ROW OF SLOTS FILLED WITH EGG-SHAPED DEVICES at the end of the table -- THE NEST.

They dig into their food. All chew silently until --

There is a DING from The Nest. One of the silver eggs illuminates and fades, indicating a message. Uncle Jay laughs excitedly and reaches over.

STEVEN  
Stop. Wait. Please, Uncle Jay.

Jay TAPS the egg and A HOLOGRAM OF STEVEN'S FATHER APPEARS, a gruff man with weary eyes and a beard.



STEVEN'S FATHER (HOLO)  
 Hey mom. Got your call. I'm glad  
 Steven was able to be there for  
 you. I'm trying to get up there for  
 a visit but with the animals...

STEVEN  
 I have to go to work.

GRANDMA ORA  
 No time for Itsy Bitsy Spider?

She pouts dramatically and runs her finger down her cheek,  
 miming an imaginary tear.

Steven reaches over and taps, freezing the hologram.

STEVEN  
 One dance. But please --  
 (pointing to hologram)  
 Wait on that until I'm gone.

GRANDMA ORA  
 Of course, sweetie.  
 (off)  
 Angelo!

Nothing happens.

STEVEN  
 Are you trying to--

GRANDMA ORA  
 Angela!

STEVEN  
 I think it's--

GRANDMA ORA  
 She never listens to me! Your dad  
 buys me this thing and it doesn't  
 work!  
 (off)  
 I don't like you either, robot  
 lady!

STEVEN  
 Angel...

The lights in the room change slightly.

ANGEL (VOICE)  
 Yes, Steven?

STEVEN  
Please play Itsy Bitsy Spider.

ITSY BITSY SPIDER PLAYS throughout the house.

GRANDMA ORA  
See, she just doesn't like me!

STEVEN  
You have to say Angel to-

The MUSIC STOPS.

ANGEL (VOICE)  
Yes, Steven?

STEVEN  
Nothing, Angel, keep playing.

The MUSIC RESUMES.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
You have to say her name for it to work.

GRANDMA ORA  
That's stupid.

STEVEN  
How would you want it to be different?

GRANDMA ORA  
I want to set the name. Something easier to remember.

STEVEN  
You can change the name. What name do you want to use? You can choose anything.

Grandma Ora thinks for a moment.

GRANDMA ORA  
Celestial Matter.

STEVEN  
That's what you want to call it? Celestial Matter?

GRANDMA ORA  
Yes. And I don't want a woman. I want Sean Connery.

Steven goes to a panel on the wall and taps, flips through menu holograms, searching --

STEVEN

I'm not sure that's a setting we can-- Wait, that's actually in the top ten...

GRANDMA ORA

See? Your grandma knows.

Steven TAPS a few times. The panel glows green.

STEVEN

Alright... All set.

Steven sits. SEAN CONNERY'S VOICE rings out through the house, making everyone look around --

SEAN CONNERY (VOICE)

Hi there. I'm Sean Connery.

Grandma Ora flutters her eyelashes --

GRANDMA ORA

Ooohhh! I like that!

STEVEN

Still don't know who that is.

She fans herself. Uncle Jay laughs uncontrollably.

GRANDMA ORA

Sean, play Itsy Bitsy Spider.

Nothing happens.

STEVEN

You said you want to call it "Celestial Matter", right?

SEAN CONNERY (VOICE)

Yes? How may I help you?

GRANDMA ORA

That's too confusing. Let's just call him Sean. That's his name.

SEAN CONNERY (VOICE)

What is confusing?

STEVEN

Celestial Matter, we would like to change your Response Title to "Sean", please.

SEAN CONNERY (VOICE)

Done. Anything else?

GRANDMA ORA

Yeah, Celestial Matter, play Itsy Bitsy Spider.

Nothing happens.

STEVEN

We just changed his name to Sean.

SEAN CONNERY (VOICE)

Yes? How may I help you?

GRANDMA ORA

Play Itsy Bitsy Spider!

ITSY BITSY SPIDER PLAYS throughout the house. Grandma Ora motions for them to rise --

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)

Dance with your uncle.

Uncle Jay goes to an open area in the living room and --

Kicks, punches wildly to the music.

Steven joins. They dance to ITSY BITSY SPIDER in their own eccentric way.

**EXT. VOLV INC - PARKING LOT - MORNING**

Steven's car crosses the VOLV parking lot, passing all types of vehicles including hover bikes and repurposed classics.

As Steven turns, his car makes a loud GRINDING SOUND.

**INT. VOLV INC - ENTRYWAY - MORNING**

An open plan office with staircases leading off in every direction. The place screams of science and technological achievement with its DNA strand structure and painted murals detailing the company's creations.

STEVEN (V.O.)

This place was legendary. The hub of VOLV Inc. They pretty much cornered the market on experimental gaming with their patented pod technology and the DenRux Dimension. Before she disappeared, DenRux created an entire galaxy in ornate detail, one where you could become anything you wanted it to be. You could be the hero or the villain.

Steven approaches a carousel gate. Scans his Holo Bracelet. There is a green light and a PING and Steven passes through.

Steven approaches a massive statue surrounded by benches and chattering employees --

The ceiling stretches up dozens of stories, housing the same statue as the one Steven encountered in the DenRux Dimension: A woman on her back with legs spread wide, a baby crowning.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Complete creativity. The DenRux Dimension was a safe place to escape...

Steven looks at the statue with wide-eyed wonder.

STEVEN (V.O.)

...or so they thought. Users started dying. Brain damage. Seizures. Drowning... The company was shut down and now, years later, they were reopening and needed pod users like me to test for bugs.

Steven disappears into the crowd.

**INT. VOLV INC - HALLWAY OUTSIDE POD ROOM - MORNING**

Steven approaches a door where a woman with short, spiked hair raises a tablet. REEF (20s) --

REEF

Name?

STEVEN

Steven Ora.

REEF

Been training with the Ivanna Holo?

STEVEN  
Yes, that's right. Yes.

REEF  
(reading tablet)  
Good reports. Keep it up.

She returns her attention the tablet and swipes --

REEF (CONT'D)  
Next.

STEVEN  
Thank Ivanna for me.

REEF  
You realize she isn't real, right?

STEVEN  
Right. Well, AI can still recognize  
gratitude.  
(beat)  
Are we going back to the DenRux  
Dimension today?

Reef tilts her head, studying Steven.

REEF  
You aren't a Den-Head, are you? I'm  
pretty sure that irritating Orin  
guy is a Den-Head. Please tell me  
you're not.

STEVEN  
Nope. I don't have an addictive  
personality. But I am passionate  
about DenRux and her work.

REEF  
Like what?

STEVEN  
Specifically her research  
catalogued in her coded journals  
from 2057 until she disappeared.  
I've read the "Purple Roses"  
journal dozens of times... She was  
so close to transforming the world  
of medicine...

Reef softens.

REEF

We are indeed going back to the DenRux Dimension. To Rumin City. The outskirts. We'll start in the Briefing Room and then we'll get everybody into pods.

She nods down the hallway where a green arrow lights up, spirals from floor to ceiling, and reappears for another spin. Steven hesitates.

STEVEN

I've never been down here before.

REEF

Go on. Don't have all day.

Another TESTER walks up to Reef to check in. Steven follows the green arrow down the hallway.

**INT. VOLV INC - BRIEFING ROOM - MORNING**

TWELVE TESTERS bustle around a grey room. Steven stands alone and notices a fit man around his age across the room, also alone. He goes to him and waves lightly --

STEVEN

You from a different VOLV location?

ORIN

Phoenix.

He reaches out his hand to shake --

ORIN (CONT'D)

Orin.

STEVEN

(shakes)

Steven.

ORIN

Where you from, Steven?

Steven points down --

STEVEN

Right here.

ORIN

Nice. Well, Steven, I'm not tryna steal your promotion, I'm just here on other business and asked if I could join. Can't go long without TDD.

STEVEN

(chuckles)

Right...

ORIN

How long you been using pod tech?

Reef enters before Steven can answer --

REEF

Morning, morning! I know you're all anxious to get back to the DenRux Dimension...

MUTTERS among the Testers.

REEF (CONT'D)

Today we're going to be focusing on the unique creatures that DenRux placed there. I'm sure none of you are ready to take on Gliders yet, so today...

Reef walks through the crowd of Testers, sizing them up --

REEF (CONT'D)

We're going to throw you in and see how you react. What do you know about Grehrs?

More MUTTERS among the crowd. Steven sees a shit-eating grin spread across Orin's face --

ORIN

They're basically a dragon's inbred cousin.

LAUGHS from the group.

ORIN (CONT'D)

They're temperamental, eat constantly, and don't even have fire breath!

Steven looks around. Raises his hand. She points to him --



REEF

Yes.

STEVEN

Grehrs were designed by DenRux based on a dream her wife had. They're essentially camels with wings. DenRux proposed to her wife while riding a Grehr and described the experience in the "Sand & Fog" journal of 2055. The way her wife's eyes gleamed in the light of the three moons was "beyond magical" as she described it. Grehrs play a major role in their love story.

REEF

That's right. Someone did their research. Thank you, Steven.

(turns to Orin)

Someone might wanna get their shit together since their scores will be sent to the Phoenix office.

Orin smiles and shrugs --

ORIN

I'll do my best, darling.

REEF

My name is not "Darling," it's Reef. Like coral reef. Simple enough even for you to learn.

(tilts her head)

Any other wisecrack remarks before we begin?

(turns to group)

You are advanced pod users, otherwise you wouldn't be here. But you'll be tested on more than technical intelligence. Ingenuity. Intuition. How you interact with the artificial people and animals. For the testers here in Batavia, you have been starting in solo sessions and given free reign. That will resume tomorrow, but today we're joined by a few visitors -- Orin, from Phoenix, the individual incapable of controlling his tongue.

Laughs from the group.

REEF (CONT'D)

And Stu, an executive from VOLV Headquarters who has come to shadow. He's a pretty big deal so be on your best behavior...

Testers look around. Several laugh uncomfortably. A bald man emerges from the shadows. Sharp and intense, he seems like the kind of person who has eyes on the back of his head -- STU (60s).

REEF (CONT'D)

Head to the Synapse Room and suit up! Your pod coordinates have already been set.

**INT. VOLV INC - SYNAPSE ROOM - MINUTES LATER**

Steven, Orin, and other Testers suit up in pod gear.

**INT. VOLV INC - SYNAPSE ROOM - MORNING**

Pod doors SLIDE open. Steven steps into a glass pod and puts on his respirator. A panel RISES and SEALS. Lights darken.

**INT. VOLV INC - SYNAPSE ROOM - STEVEN'S POD - MORNING**

Water rises, swirling with Sense-rays.

Steven closes his eyes. The glass pod illuminates with bolts of lightning, their branches slowly connecting.

STEVEN (V.O.)

Magic...

Steven STRETCHES through color and light.

**EXT. RUMIN CITY - OUTSKIRTS - EVENING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Bright sun. Sweltering desert. Steven is among excited Trainees at the base of a stone wall that towers overhead.

Steven shields his eyes as he looks up to a spire. He is shoved accidentally by the group of Trainees. They move toward Reef's shouting voice.

Steven follows and joins the group, gathered by a group of camel-like creatures with wings.

Reef stands beside one of them, stroking its mane --

REEF

These are Grehrs! Does anyone know why they are out in the open rather than in a pen?

Steven raises his hand. Reef nods at him.

STEVEN

DenRux didn't like the idea of animals being in cages.

ORIN

(mutters)

Hippie...

Another TESTER shushes him.

REEF

That's right, Steven. Come here.

Steven goes to her.

REEF (CONT'D)

Have you seen a Grehr before?

STEVEN

Yes.

REEF

Where?

STEVEN

In the statue during my last session.

REEF

They let you into the statue already?

STEVEN

Yes. Why?

The Grehr leans down its head to Steven, much like the other one, and looks at him like it already knows him. A long tongue SLOPS his face.

REEF

Let's see how much they trust you.

Reef grabs Steven's foot and raises him onto the Grehr. Steven grabs ahold of the creature's thick red fur and --

With a HOOT, the Grehr TAKES FLIGHT.

**EXT. GREHR FLIGHT - EVENING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Red and black wings FLAP. Steven smiles with delight and throws his arms out wide, looking around with wonder.

Below him is Rumin City -- the city in the labyrinth. Passages branch into covered corridors. Beyond, there is sand in every direction.

**ATOP THE GREHR,**

Steven leans forward to clutch the Grehr's neck --

STEVEN

Thank you!

The creature lets out a HOOTING HOWL and SWOOPS on.

**IN THE LABRYINTH BELOW,**

A beautiful reflecting pond. Small islands. Birds.

And A RHYTHMIC POUNDING echoes up from below.

STEVEN

What's that sound?

The creature HOOTS, circles around a different way.

**BELOW,**

Two creatures fight in a circle of dirt surrounded by a colorful coliseum packed with CREATURES who CHEER and CHANT.

**ATOP THE GREHR,**

Steven points --

STEVEN

What is that? Can we get closer?

The Grehr makes a NOISE.

Steven tries to maneuver the Grehr to fly that way but --

The camel-like creature shakes and FLAPS, sending Steven flying up into the air, only barely holding onto the long red fur --

Steven lands hard on the Grehr's back. Hangs on tight.

The Grehr flies backs toward the outskirts of the labyrinth.

Steven pulls the red mane, forces the Grehr to change direction. Steers it toward the coliseum.

The Grehr GROWLS.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Just a quick look.

They fly closer.

**EXT. RUMIN CITY - COLISEUM - EVENING**

CLANG! Armored creatures battle with swords, surrounded by CHEERING FANS. One creature SLICES the other and KICKS him in the face.

The creature falls, pretending to be dead, as the other waves for more admiration from the crowd.

The creature on the ground stands and SPITS black tar.

The other creature clutches its face, HOWLING with pain.

FROM THE GREHR,

Steven watches the fight. The Grehr SQUAWKS and FLAPS its wings, soaring away.

STEVEN  
Okay, let's go... I've seen enough.

**EXT. RUMIN CITY - OUTSKIRTS - EVENING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

The Grehr veers down toward Reef and the other Testers. With a RESOUNDING HUFF, it lands, KICKING up sand. Steven clings to its back but --

The Grehr ROARS and SHAKES Steven loose. He falls into the sand, rolls, and rises, drawing a knife.

The Grehr kicks up its front legs, ROARING and HUFFING. Steven circles, eyes focused.

Reef watches, glancing at Stu the Executive to see whether she should intervene or not.

Stu is emotionless.

Steven looks at the Grehr without fear --

STEVEN

Easy, now.

The Grehr HUFFS and GROWLS.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

It's alright. I'm not going to hurt you.

He tosses the knife into the sand. The Grehr looks at it, then back at Steven, who steps forward, slowly reaching out his hand.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Shhh...

The Grehr GROWLS and SNAPS, nearly biting Steven's hand but he pulls it back in time and stops moving.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

It's okay, girl.

They circle each other. Orin shouts from the sidelines --

ORIN

Come on! *Do something!*

RRRAAWW! The Grehr turns on Orin, raising its hind legs and WHOOMP, kicks him in the chest. Orin FALLS HARD, screaming in pain. The Grehr TAKES FLIGHT AND CIRCLES.

**INT. VOLV INC. - POD ROOM - ORIN'S POD - SAME TIME**

Floating in his pod sack, Orin's body shakes as the Sense-rays (mechanical stingrays) converge on his chest.

**EXT. RUMIN CITY - OUTSKIRTS - EVENING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Orin clutches his chest.

ORIN

Ahhh!!!

THE GREHR CIRCLES ABOVE, SCREECHING.

REEF

(chuckling)

Hurts, doesn't it?

ORIN

(gasping for breath)

Yes.

REEF

Try not being an ass.

The group chuckles, then stops when A RESOUNDING SCREECH APPROACHES. The Grehr SWOOPS DOWN on Orin and --

BOOMPH! Pins him to the ground, BITING AND KICKING HIM.

ORIN

AHHHHH! HELP!! IT HURTS!!!

Steven looks around at the group of Testers who all stand dumbfounded, motionless. Orin continues screaming in pain.

Steven RUNS TOWARD THE FIGHT. Rather than going to Orin, he goes to the creature's back legs and GRABS ITS CALF. Everything seems to slow. The Grehr stops its attack.

STEVEN (V.O.)

I knew what to do. I had studied.  
DenRux had led the way.

The Grehr FLAPS ITS WINGS and lifts off. Orin clutches his broken body.

In the group nearby, Stu narrows his eyes. Reef checks on Orin and draws a cylindrical tube out of her bag.

REEF

(to Steven)

How'd you learn to do that?

Steven shrugs. Reef TWISTS AND SLIDES the tube until it illuminates. She waves the light across Orin's injuries.

REEF (CONT'D)

Don't give me that--  
(imitates shrug)  
How did you learn? Tell me.

Steven looks around at the group, suddenly nervous.

STEVEN

DenRux wrote in her 2063 Moonlight Journal that when she created Grehrs, she placed a telepathic connection in their back legs. That's why they circle when they fight. If you're able to touch it's back leg and utilize clear thought, you can influence them.

STU

*Control* them.

Everyone looks at the Executive. The first time they've heard him speak.

STU (CONT'D)

You mean you can control them.

STEVEN

Influence. She didn't want the animals to be controlled.

Stu says nothing. Reef lifts Orin to his feet, shaken but healed. He returns to the group of Testers.

REEF

That's enough Grehrs for today,  
let's move on to the next test!

**EXT. RUMIN CITY - DESERT OUTSKIRTS - EVENING**

Reef leads Steven, Orin, Stu, and the group of Testers across the sand, keeping an eye on a hologram of the terrain all around them emanating from her Holo Bracelet.

REEF

No irregularities in the vicinity.  
Let's set up here.

Stu dabs sweat from his brow with a handkerchief, which he neatly folds and slides into his pocket.

Steven looks around at the barren desert. Reef steps away from the group and places a metal cube on the sand. With a touch, it comes to life --

HOLOGRAMS APPEAR ALL AROUND THEM, A HALLWAY OF GLASS ROOMS.

REEF (CONT'D)

Gather round! Let's get started.

Everyone circles around Reef, inspecting their new surroundings.

REEF (CONT'D)

The test is to build a pod!

Excited and nervous MURMURS among the Testers.

REEF (CONT'D)

You will be able to materialize parts but your Holo Bracelets have been limited to lists of possible materials. Thousands of options. Who's ready to build a pod?



Reef looks around.

REEF (CONT'D)  
 You have three hours. There are  
 twelve rooms. One for each of you.  
 Choose one to begin.

Steven makes his way to the end of the hall and slides into a glass room. It is empty except for an orb resting on a platform at the center of the room.

REEF (CONT'D)  
 Ready... BUILD!!!

The Testers know what to do -- they tap the orb on the platform and menus appear in holograms. Everyone rushes.

Steven watches the others for a moment, then taps his orb. Rather than scroll through endless menus, he searches for individual parts.

As he chooses items, they MATERIALIZE IN THE ROOM.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - ORIN'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Orin chooses a part, then changes his mind, whisking it away.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - HALLWAY - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Reef follows Stu as they walk along, sizing up the Testers through the glass walls.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - STEVEN'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

CLINK! Steven slides two pieces into place. The base of the pod is taking shape.

Through the glass, Reef and Stu watch with great interest.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - TWO HOURS LATER [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

A crowd has gathered. Stu and Reef stand against the glass while the other Testers gather around to watch --

Steven assembles a pod with ferocious focus.

Reef turns to the Testers --

REEF

Don't you all have work to do? You have ONE HOUR!

ORIN

You said use any resources available, and since you limited our Holo Bracelets, this is what's available!

One of the Testers enters Steven's glass room. The group goes quiet as TESTER #1 approaches Steven.

Steven looks up, startled.

STEVEN

Yes?

TESTER #1

How did you fit CB-40s into the base?

STEVEN

Use the adapter. Model 1147.

Steven returns to his work. The Tester does not leave. Steven looks up --

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Anything else I can help you with?

Tester #1 wrings their hands.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Go on. What is it?

TESTER #1

What did you use for the lightning glass?

Steven returns to his work while he talks --

STEVEN

DenRux created three quantum processors that she placed at the top and bottom of the pod, fused to the glass, which created the lightning effect. She believed this was the connection between realities.

TESTER #1

Thank you...

Tester #1 doesn't move. Steven looks up again.

STEVEN

Do you need me to show you?

TESTER #1

No, it's okay. You have your own pod to build...

Steven rises and goes to the door. The crowd of Testers part as the two enter the hallway.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - TESTER #1'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Tester #1 leads Steven into another glass room and shows what they have of their pod so far -- only the base is built with a few scattered pieces around.

STEVEN

Okay, that's a good start. Let's get the adapters on and the glass in place.

Steven taps Tester #1's orb and types in a search.

Beyond the glass walls, other Testers watch on, rushing to their own rooms to follow suit.

THREE ADAPTERS APPEAR on the floor and Steven picks one up. Tester #1 picks up the other two. Together, they slide them into place.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Just like that, see? They have to be evenly spaced, one at each end and one in the middle. It doesn't have to be perfect -- DenRux planned for margins of error.

Once the adapters are in place, Steven taps the orb again.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Now, we need the glass. VOLV uses pentagonal glass pods but DenRux wrote in her Waterfall Journal that she felt that organic shapes were stronger. That's why she designed...

(tapping holograms)

This one.

He taps and a slab of glass appears, organic and imperfect at the top, with the base perfectly cylindrical.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - HALLWAY - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Orin turns to Reef --

ORIN

If this is a test, shouldn't they not be sharing information?

REEF

If this is a test, shouldn't you be focusing on your own work?

ORIN

This is for a job promotion that I don't even want. I'm just here for two weeks, what do I care?

REEF

That's a good question: what do you care?

Orin looks sour.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - TESTER #1'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Together, Steven and Tester #1 lift the glass into place.

STEVEN

So those adapters shoot lightning bolts up the glass and now you have the base of the pod ready to go.

Steven steps back --

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Anything else?

Tester #1 shakes their head.

TESTER #1

No. Thank you.

Steven moves to go.

TESTER #1 (CONT'D)

How did you learn all this?

At the door, Steven does not turn back. The Crowd of Testers begin to part for him to move through.

STEVEN

I studied.

Steven returns to his glass room. Stu watches him pass with fear and fascination.

**EXT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - FORTY MINUTES LATER - ESTABLISHING  
[THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Three moons shine above the hallway of glass rooms surrounded by drifting sand.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - STEVEN'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX  
DIMENSION]**

Beside the platform with the orb is a complete glass pod. Similar to the ones at VOLV but with a few modifications. Steven is on the ground, making a few finishing touches.

From other glass rooms, Testers look over at Steven, trying to match his work. Their pods are in various phases of creation.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - ORIN'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX  
DIMENSION]**

Orin angrily throws a wrench at one glass wall -- it passes through, landing in the desert sand.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - STEVEN'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX  
DIMENSION]**

Steven stands, looks over at Reef, and nods.

Reef steps into Steven's glass room. Stu stands in the doorway.

REEF

Done?

Steven nods.

REEF (CONT'D)

Show me.

Other Testers leave their glass rooms to converge around Steven's room again.

STEVEN  
Where do you want me to go?

REEF  
I'll program it.

She moves to the pod, inspecting, and then touches a pad on the side -- HOLOGRAMS APPEAR. Reef turns them away from Steven and the others.

REEF (CONT'D)  
You'll meet someone and she'll share with you one phrase. Come tell me that phrase and I'll know the pod is functional.

STEVEN  
Anything else?

REEF  
Go.

She finishes setting the coordinates and taps some more. The glass door on the pod starts to slide closed and Steven ducks inside.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - STEVEN'S POD - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Steven straps on the respirator and closes his eyes. The pod RUSHES WITH WATER. Sense-rays detach from the bottom of the pod and swim in circles.

**INT. V'S CASTLE - HALLWAY - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Steven steps shakily onto bright floral carpet. He is in a long, open hallway, flanked on both sides by rows of statues.

The STATUES MOVE SLIGHTLY -- heads turn, hands reach -- but Steven doesn't notice. He hears VOICES at the end of the hall and moves toward them.

VOICE #1 (O.S.)  
She didn't! I know she didn't!

Steven approaches an open door. Flickering firelight within.

VOICE #2 (O.S.)  
How do you know? How well did you know her, really?

VOICE #1 (O.S.)  
 I knew her better than she knew  
 herself! I explored her  
 subconscious like she asked. I knew  
*everything* about her!

Steven creeps closer.

VOICE #2 (O.S.)  
 I know, darling. That was a joke.  
 You really must ease up if we're  
 going to get through this.

A beat. Steven leans around to see two women in nightgowns standing in an eclectic room decorated corner to corner with paintings and trinkets. One woman brushes her hair back and looks very seriously into the fire --

VOICE #1 (O.S.)  
 Cora didn't kill herself...

With a jolt, she looks over at Steven. Caught, Steven touches his Holo Bracelet three times and VANISHES.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - STEVEN'S ROOM - STEVEN'S POD - NIGHT  
 [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Steven opens his eyes. Water drains from the pod. He RIPS off the respirator and touches the glass wall, waiting for it to open. Sense-rays attach themselves to the base of the pod and the last of the water drains.

**INT. GLASS ROOM HOLO - STEVEN'S ROOM - NIGHT [THE DENRUX  
 DIMENSION]**

Reef watches with her arms crossed as Steven emerges from the pod. Stu and the other Testers crane their necks to see.

Steven falls to his hands and knees and keeps his head down, processing.

STEVEN  
 Cora didn't kill herself.

REEF  
 What?

Finally, he looks up at her.

STEVEN  
 Cora didn't kill herself.

REEF

Where did you hear that?

Steven looks at the pod --

STEVEN

It was in a house of statues. They were moving. Alive. And I heard them. I saw her... I saw DenRux...

GASPS and CHATTER emerge from the group of Testers.

REEF

Everyone return to the Briefing Room, now!

Testers tap their Holo Bracelets three times and VANISH.

Stu stares at him for a moment before VANISHING. Steven looks at the glass rooms and desert beyond, then touches his Holo Bracelet three times.

**INT. VOLV INC - SYNAPSE ROOM - POD 98 - AFTERNOON**

Steven opens his eyes in the pod and removes the respirator. The water DRAINS, the mechanical stingrays fold into themselves and return to slots at the bottom of the pod, and fans ACTIVATE, BLOWING Steven dry.

**INT. VOLV INC - SYNAPSE ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Pods WHOOSH open. Testers emerge, Steven among them. All converge in the corner of the room where a pyramid is constructed -- a HOLO PROJECTOR.

Reef is already there with her tablet. Scores are projected in floating spheres.

REEF

Some of you did very well and some of you, not so much.

She looks around. Testers avoid her gaze. Except Steven.

REEF (CONT'D)

Steven!

STEVEN

Yes?



REEF

What scores do you see for yourself?

A sphere near Steven lists his scores for various things including physical and character traits.

STEVEN

Which one? Do you want me to read all of them?

REEF

No, smart-ass. List a few of your strengths and a few flaws. They're listed right there.

(points)

It's not complicated.

STEVEN

Flaws?

Steven's thumb reaches for each fingertip, self-soothing.

REEF

Areas you didn't do well in.

STEVEN

But those aren't flaws...

REEF

Yes. That's what flaws are.

STEVEN

If flaws are defined as a breach of perfection and perfection is an illusion, aren't flaws just quirks?

Reef gives him a look.

REEF

(off)

Turing! Strengths and flaws!

Steven furrows his brow -- *What did I say?*

**INT. VOLV INC - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON**

Testers are leaving. Reef stands outside the Pod Room door with her tablet, the green arrow illuminating the hallway behind her. Steven moves toward her but Orin cuts him off.

ORIN

How'd you do that?

STEVEN

What?

ORIN

Build that pod so fast?

STEVEN

I studied.

ORIN

Interesting... Let's uh- Let's keep  
in touch, okay? Let me get your  
Holo.

Steven presses a finger to his Holo Bracelet. A 3D image of  
Steven appears, smiling and giving a thumbs up.

STEVEN

How long are you in town?

He holds it out to Orin, who scans it with his Holo. They  
glow green and the 3D image appears at Orin's wrist.

ORIN

A few weeks. Let's get together.  
I'd like to pick your brain.

With that, Orin walks off, CLICKING his tongue at Reef as he  
passes. Reef scoffs and shakes her head. Steven approaches.

STEVEN

Hey, Reef?

REEF

Mr. Flaws... What do you want?

STEVEN

I just... What did that mean, *Cora  
didn't kill herself?*

REEF

It means your pod worked... What do  
you want, a gold star?

STEVEN

Had I said something to upset you?

REEF

Not particularly. Why?

STEVEN

I do that sometimes without  
realizing it. I'm neurodivergent.

REEF

Cool. Well no, I don't dislike you, Steven. Quite the opposite... But I have work to do, as I'm sure you do.

STEVEN

One more question: How do I log more time in the DenRux Dimension?

Reef looks uncomfortable. Studies him.

REEF

You sure you're not a Den-Head? If you want more time, go through the proper channels. Apply. Write the essay. Usually takes two to three months to get approved.

STEVEN

I know, but... Are there any other options?

REEF

(dryly)  
Yes. Build your own pod.

She moves away. Steven stands dumbfounded, as if struck by lightning. Gears turn behind his eyes.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Steven and Uncle Jay play cards at the kitchen table. The cards are covered in colored symbols. Nine are laid out in rows of three.

Steven and Uncle Jay stare at the cards.

STEVEN

Set!

Steven grabs three cards. Uncle Jay leans closer as Steven lays out three more.

A moment, then --

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Set!

Steven picks up three cards. Uncle Jay looks frustrated.

Steven fills the gaps with three more cards.

Uncle Jay leans forward, and after a moment --  
SMACKS the table with a groan.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Alright, good. Get em, Jay.

Uncle Jay points to three cards.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Close... But that shape is  
different. They need to all be the  
same or all different, remember?

Uncle Jay stares at him.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
It's okay, you'll get the next one.

Grandma Ora sits on a pillow chair nearby, watching a  
projected screen.

GRANDMA ORA  
Why do you waste your time? He  
likes the hologram games. The easy  
ones.

STEVEN  
Ease does not precede strength.

Grandma Ora turns, looks around her chair at Steven --

GRANDMA ORA  
Where did that come from?

She stands and moves to her hover wheelchair.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)  
Easy to forget when time chips away  
at us... Thank you, Steven.

Grandma Ora directs her hover wheelchair to the back room.

STEVEN  
Where ya going?

GRANDMA ORA  
To talk to Harry.

She disappears down the hallway into her room.

Uncle Jay collects three cards.

STEVEN  
Let me check?

Jay holds them out.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Good. Perfect.

Jay collects them and places them on the table face down. Steven lays out three more cards in their place. A DING nearby catches their attention.

Steven automatically looks at his Holo Bracelet but it's not that. One of the EGG-SHAPED DEVICES from earlier illuminates with a message.

Uncle Jay reaches over.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Wait--

Jay taps the device and Steven's Father (HOLO) appears. This time, his expression is much more sullen.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
No! Stop.

Uncle Jay touches the device twice and the hologram comes to life --

STEVEN'S FATHER (HOLO)  
Hey mom. I know you don't want to discuss it but we've been putting it off and now that the doctors say you're terminal, we need to take care of all the arrangements.

Steven's breathing intensifies.

STEVEN'S FATHER (HOLO) (CONT'D)  
Your will needs to be updated and we need to talk about what to do about Jay...

Uncle Jay runs his fingers through the hologram and claps. Steven rises --

STEVEN  
I'll be right back.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - COREA'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Grandma Ora is sitting on the edge of her bed with her hands on her thighs and her eyes closed. Steven steps into the doorway.

STEVEN

Is it true?

Grandma Ora opens her eyes slowly. Peers at Steven.

GRANDMA ORA

Probably... What are we talking about, dear?

STEVEN

Are you dying?

A moment. She pats the bed beside her --

GRANDMA ORA

Sit.

Steven sits.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)

I've known for a while intuitively. Now, it's official. I'm on my way to Heaven's Door.

She looks at a framed photo on the dresser. It is her and Harry (Steven's grandfather) standing on a beach, smiling. Grandma Ora's eyes mist over for a second before she pulls back.

GRANDMA ORA (CONT'D)

That's no reason to slow down or be sad, Steven... For either of us.

STEVEN

You weren't running so fast to begin with.

Grandma Ora lets out a big belly laugh.

GRANDMA ORA

Not all of us have your drive.

STEVEN

I'm gonna fix this. There has to be a way. A cure. And I'm gonna find it. We're gonna fix this, Grandma. I'll find a way.

GRANDMA ORA  
That's nice, dear.  
(taps her wrist)  
Clock's tickin'...

Steven stands --

STEVEN  
I'll find a way. I promise.  
(moves toward door)  
I'll start by consulting the  
expert.

GRANDMA ORA  
And who might that be?

Steven turns back in the doorway --

STEVEN  
Jay.

He leaves. Grandma Ora smiles.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

RAINDROPS PATTERN the roof and skylight.

Steven hands a gelatin snack to Uncle Jay, who digs in with a spoon. Steven sits beside him and taps his Holo Bracelet --

Flipping through holograms, news articles narrow to discussions of DenRux -- "TECHNO-TERRORIST DISAPPEARS AMIDST SCANDAL" and "IS DENRUX THE ANTICHRIST?" among others.

Suddenly, the holograms GLITCH.

Steven tries to adjust the settings but there are more GLITCHES.

STEVEN  
What are you doing? Just work  
properly!

Words emerge from the articles, lining up in a row like a ransom note. As they form a phrase, Steven stares wide-eyed.

In floating holograms are the words -- "DRIVE. NOW."

He raises his wrist and stares at it -- *What the hell?* Then he looks to his uncle.

Jay sets down his spoon and licks the gelatin container clean.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Ready for bed, Uncle Jay?

Uncle Jay shrugs.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - UNCLE JAY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

RAINDROPS PELT glass. Steven puts Uncle Jay to bed.

STEVEN  
Socks off and PJs on, okay? I'll be  
back to check on you in a bit.

Steven leaves as Uncle Jay sits on the bed and peels off his socks. Steven stops at the door --

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
You still want the audio even  
though it's raining?

Uncle Jay groans. Nods.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
(off)  
Angel-- Celestial Matter? Play  
Jay's Sleepytime Playlist, please.

Sounds play of WOLVES HOWLING, WATERFALLS, and BIRDS. Uncle Jay pulls up the sheets.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Goodnight.

Uncle Jay groans.

Steven taps a square on the wall and the lights go out.

In the dim hallway, his Holo Bracelet illuminates. A LOW, GRAVELLY VOICE COMES THROUGH --

VOICE (HOLO)  
Drive.

Steven looks around, spooked. Then, he shakes his head and smiles --

STEVEN  
I'm imagining this. These are just  
bleed-overs from the DenRux-

VOICE (HOLO)  
NOW!



Steven runs down the hallway.

**EXT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Rain soaks Steven as he runs to his car.

**INT. STEVEN'S CAR - NIGHT**

The dashboard illuminates and Steven taps around, changing settings.

STEVEN  
Clear vision.

There is a pleasant DING and the rain on the windshield clears. Steven drives.

MOMENTS LATER,

Steven looks around at the bright streets. He watches as --

A SMALL ROBOT rolls down the street, picking up garbage and placing into its "body" and ZAP! The garbage is incinerated. The Small Robot continues on down the road.

Steven looks at his Holo Bracelet.

STEVEN  
Drive, huh? Where do you want to go?

VOICE (DASHBOARD)  
Autopilot engaged.

The steering wheel moves by itself. Steven lets go.

**EXT. VOLV INC - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Steven pulls up and circles around VOLV Headquarters, to the back of the building. The WINDSHIELD TINTS, TURNING BLACK.

**EXT. VOLV INC - CARGO BAY - NIGHT**

There are lines of metal platforms along the building for deliveries. There are no vehicles or people in sight. Steven's headlights dim as the car comes to a stop.

**INT. STEVEN'S CAR - NIGHT**

Steven squints his eyes, looking through the rain. For a long moment, nothing happens, then he sees...

**EXT. VOLV INC - CARGO BAY - NIGHT**

...THREE ROBOTIC ARMS SWIVEL ALONG THE CEILING AND WALLS, DEPOSITING A GLASS POD ON THE CARGO DECK. Rain BLOWS into the cargo area, misting the pod.

Water droplets converge and snake down the glass.

**INT. STEVEN'S CAR - NIGHT**

Steven's breaths quicken.

STEVEN

You want me to take the pod?

A CELEBRATION SONG comes on the radio. Steven looks from the dashboard to the pod outside, haloed by light.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

How?

The car drives itself away.

**EXT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Steven runs through the rain to Grandma Ora's front door.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Steven goes to a door at the back of the living room.

**EXT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Steven attaches a TRAILER to his car, then runs back inside.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - JAY'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Jay's bedroom door opens and Steven pokes in his head --

STEVEN

Jay! Uncle Jay!

In bed, Jay stirs.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
I need your help.

Jay sits up in bed.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Are you ready for an adventure?

Uncle Jay groans.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Well I see that. Get dressed  
quickly and then you can put on  
your costume.

INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Jay raises his arms as Steven slides on a black coat.

STEVEN  
We have to be incognito. When we  
get there, no sound or showing your  
face, ok? This is a game and we're  
the secret operatives.

Steven slides a balaclava over Jay's face.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
You ready?

**INT. STEVEN'S CAR - NIGHT**

Car doors SLIDE closed as Steven and Jay get situated. Steven reaches for the dashboard but it comes to life on its own.

VOICE (DASHBOARD)  
Autopilot engaged.

Steven looks to Jay --

STEVEN  
Hold on.

Jay raises the mask off his face.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
No, no, no, it's part of the game,  
remember. We can't show our faces.

Jay gives Steven a look.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Okay, keep it off until we get  
there. I'll tell you when to put it  
on.

Jay lifts the mask up to his eyes and sticks out his tongue.

**EXT. VOLV INC. - BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

Steven's car pulls the RATTLING trailer past loading docks.  
The car stops and the DOORS SLIDE OPEN.

STEVEN  
(to Jay)  
We need to get that on there.

He points to the trailer. Jay nods and they move toward the  
rain-soaked pod. Moving to each side and grabbing ahold.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Lift with your legs!

Without question, Jay lies down on the ground and pushes up  
with his legs.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
No, not-- Come on, like this.

Together, they lift the pod and load it onto the trailer.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT**

Dripping wet, Steven and Jay drag the pod into the garage and  
lean it against a cement corner. Steven looks at the pod with  
hope.

STEVEN  
Thank you, Uncle Jay.

Uncle Jay SLOPS his wet coat on the floor, then goes to the  
door.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Let's get you to bed.

**INT. GRANDMA ORA'S HOUSE - GARAGE - MORNING**

The base of the pod has been disassembled. Pieces lie strewn  
about. Steven is at the desk, analyzing a marble-sized  
processor.

STEVEN (V.O.)  
 I'll find a way... I'll find a  
 way... I'll find a way...

His ALARM BLARES. Steven looks at his Holo Bracelet with tired eyes.

**INT. VOLV INC - POD ROOM - MORNING**

Steven suits up in pod gear.

**INT. VOLV INC - POD ROOM - STEVEN'S POD - MORNING**

Steven straps on a respirator and WATER RISES, filled with Sense-rays.

STEVEN (V.O.)  
 Magic...

Steven closes his eyes and WHOOSH -- stretches through a tunnel of color and light.

**EXT. STATUE - SUNSET [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

It is evening in the DenRux Dimension. The sun sets behind the massive stone statue. Steven approaches the mouth entrance.

STEVEN  
 Hello? Anybody awake?!

Steven grabs a stick and RUNS IT ALONG the cave wall as he enters the darkness. At the mouth of the cave, THE SAND RIPPLES AND BLACK SPIKES APPEAR.

A Glider surfaces, swimming through the sand like water.

Steven stops at a fork in the tunnels.

He looks back and forth between them, trying to remember.

As he does, the Glider silently swims ever closer. It raises its head and opens its jaws, revealing rows of long teeth.

Just in time, Steven turns and spots it!

The Glider lunges at Steven but he jumps aside, narrowly avoiding its bite. The beast lands in one tunnel and spins to face him with a HISS.

With one tunnel blocked, Steven runs down the other.

The Glider effortlessly submerges into the sand.

**INT. STATUE - TUNNEL - NIGHT**

Steven stops running and looks behind him. Silent darkness. He keeps walking, past rows of makeshift doors.

A figure appears, a TRIBESMAN dressed in very little.

TRIBESMAN

Who are you?

STEVEN

I'm friends with Lao... And White.  
I was just chased in here by a  
Glider.

TRIBESMAN

Did it get inside?

STEVEN

What?

TRIBESMAN

Did the Glider enter the statue?

STEVEN

Yes? I mean there's no door or  
anything so--

The Tribesman takes off running. Steven moves to follow but hears a familiar HISS -- The Golden Snake SLITHERS out of the darkness and circles his feet.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Hi, again.

GOLDEN SNAKE

DenRux sssaysss good work,  
Sssteven... Ssshe sssaysss, "Build  
your pod. Find me in in the  
labyrinth..."

The snake begins to slither away.

STEVEN

How do I cross the desert?

LAO (O.S.)

Who are you talking to?

Steven turns to see Lao. He looks back down the dark passageway -- the Golden Snake is gone.

STEVEN

How do I get to the city in the  
labyrinth?

Lao glowers at him. Suddenly, A FIGURE THROWS STEVEN TO THE  
GROUND, tackling him onto the sand --

White LICKS Steven's face. Steven pushes the Div away,  
laughing.

LAO

We're going tomorrow. Caravan  
leaves at sunrise.

STEVEN

Is that an invitation?

LAO

Don't push it.

Steven watches various colored doors pass as they walk.

STEVEN

Where do the doors lead?

LAO

All sorts of places. Keep quiet.  
The less you say, the better.

STEVEN

Where are we going?

LAO

To see Mama. She will decide  
whether or not you can stay the  
night.

STEVEN

And if she says no, I'll be  
sleeping with the Gliders?

LAO

You would not get much sleep with  
them. They would eat you.

STEVEN

I got it, it was a-- Never mind.

LAO

Good. Speak less.

Steven moves his hand across his lips, miming a zipper.

**INT. STATUE - PRAYER CAVERN - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Lao leads Steven and White into a small cavern lit by torches. A large piece of glass is elevated at the far wall, where a woman is kneeling -- MAMA (AI).

Lao places a hand on Steven's chest --

LAO  
Stay here. I will talk to- White,  
no!

But it's too late. White nudges Mama from her prayers and licks her face.

LAO (CONT'D)  
White, come on, we talked about  
this...

Lao goes to Mama and White. Steven stays put. As Lao whispers to Mama, Steven looks at the piece of glass with curiosity --

THE GLASS IS SHAPED LIKE A WOMAN.

STEVEN (V.O.)  
DenRux...

Mama looks over at Steven, who smiles and waves. After a moment, Mama resumes her prayers and Lao returns. She WHISTLES for White as she passes Steven --

LAO  
Come on.

**INT. STATUE - PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Lao leads Steven down a narrow passageway lit by torches. Lao grabs one as she walks.

STEVEN  
Did I pass the test?

Lao opens a door and goes inside. Steven follows.

**INT. STATUE - SLEEPING CHAMBERS - NIGHT [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Lao lights a torch on the wall with her own. There is a floor built over the sand. A cot rests in the corner. There are scratches and finger paintings on the walls.



LAO  
You will stay here. Be ready at  
sunrise.

STEVEN  
Should I wait for you outside or  
stay here?

LAO  
You ask so many questions.

STEVEN  
Sorry.

LAO  
I will come here when it is time.

STEVEN  
Thank you.

Lao points to the cot.

LAO  
That is for sleeping.

STEVEN  
I got that from context. Thank you.

Lao walks towards the door.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
I just have one more question--

He stops when she leaves, SLAMMING the door behind her.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Alrighty, then. No. More.  
Questions...

The door swings open and Lao returns --

LAO  
What was the answer?

STEVEN  
To what?

LAO  
To your joke. "What do puppies have  
in common with near-sighted  
gynecologists?"

Steven smiles.

LAO (CONT'D)

We looked them up and now we want to know the answer.

STEVEN

They both have wet noses.

Lao hesitates as she processes the joke. And then her head falls back as she laughs. Steven laughs too.

**EXT. STATUE - SUNRISE [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Lao leads Steven out of the statue. White nervously SWIMS THROUGH THE SAND. Beside the statue, Steven sees a group of thirty people and dozens of Divs SWIMMING in circles around them.

LAO

Let's go.

The group walks into the desert. They approach the tree with the strange fruits.

LAO (CONT'D)

Everyone take two for the journey.

One man climbs the tree trunk and SHAKES branches. Fruits begin to rain down around them. Steven narrowly dodges one.

Everyone collects two of the strange fruits, placing them in their satchels. Steven does the same and follows Lao.

**EXT. DESERT - MORNING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Steven watches the Divs circling the group, swimming in and out of the sand.

STEVEN

Are they looking for Gliders?

LAO

Yes. They keep us safe.

Steven looks around at the sky.

STEVEN

Why don't you just fly the Grehr to Rumin City?

LAO

There is only one and she is for emergencies.

STEVEN

What if there's an emergency in the middle of the desert?

LAO

Only the strong cross the desert. Rumin City is not for the faint of heart.

STEVEN

I think I can handle it.

LAO

No. You can't.

She quickens her pace. With a look, Steven follows.

**EXT. DESERT - MORNING - ESTABLISHING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Thirty-two people cross the morning desert, their shadows reaching across the dunes.

**EXT. DESERT - MORNING [THE DENRUX DIMENSION]**

Steven's look is focused and determined as he walks with the caravan toward the city in the labyrinth.

STEVEN (V.O.)

I thought of my grandma and kept repeating in my head... No matter how far I must go, I'll find a way... I'll find a way... I'll find a way.

FADE OUT

**END OF EPISODE**