CHRASING ELEVATION

By Dreams of Hope

Characters (in order of appearance):

JAMIE
They/them

SCARLET
She/her

MICHAEL BUBBLE'
Any pronouns

PAPA JOHN/ADVERTISEMENTS
he/him

MATEO
they/them

avery
he/him

DORRI
any pronouns

JJ
he/him

JOHN
he/him

CHORUS/ENSEMBLE MEMBERS 1, 2, 3 & 4
MULTIPLE MUSICIANS
ACT 1 SCENE 1

(LIGHTS TO BLACK. MUSIC BEGINS. MUSICIANS ENTER and position themselves facing audience with hands over their hearts.)

(Interpolation of Star Spangled Banner) a la Barbershop Quartet Fiery vocal movement (vocalists harmonizing tri-tones to represent the storminess) Bridge & Final chorus: Louder, all-chorus).

(LIGHTS UP. PROJECTION: Flag with a blue sphere containing a circle of stars, overlaid on a red and white striped spherical background).

(SINGING):
Ice, caps are melting
Mountains freezing over
Hurricanes destroying half the laaaaaaand
Building up momentum
Colliding and collecting
Soon there will be nothing leeeeeeeeft

America, America
Star spangled banner underwater
America america
We’ll just keep getting hotter

No food or water
But plenty of hunger
People getting desperate every daaayyyyy
Dying of starvation
Give us our salvation
Life is getting hard in every waaayyy

America, America
Star spangled banner underwater
America america
We’ll just keep getting hotter
(MUSIC OUT. PROJECTED IMAGE OF NEW AMERICA FLAG ON BACK WALL.
GROUP TURNS IN UNISON TO FACE IT AND REMAIN ON STAGE).

(TRANQUIL MUSIC PLAYS. [Insert Ivan’s weird melody.] Soft clouds
are PROJECTED in various directions across the walls and seats
in the room. Warm light fills the air).

(An ENSEMBLE MEMBER from the MUSIC GROUP BREAKS AWAY AND comes
donw center close to audience. They are holding a baby).

ENSEMBLE MEMBER 1
[SINGING] Hush little baby, It's gonna be ok...We'll be so happy
in paradise. When you're on land, and I'm holding your hand,
we'll never see rain another day in our lives.

(THUNDER 1 SFX. ENSEMBLE MEMBER’S voice grows shakier and
shakier).

Ooh hush little baby, It's gonna be ok, ya know up on the
mountain tops things are fine, you'll play in the sand and we'll
do what we can, to keep you there where its high and dry.
Hush little baby, it's gonna be ok. We don't need New America
(THUNDER 2 SFX cracking)-- we don’t need New Amer-

(THUNDER 3 SFX LOUDER. LIGHTS Begin to Fade. ENSEMBLE MEMBER 1
EXITS quickly to seek shelter).

[AS STORM SFX get Louder and Louder THE REST OF THE ENSEMBLE
BRINGS THE BOAT ON STAGE AND POSITIONS IT CENTER. THEY THEN
EXIT TO SEEK SHELTER. AFTER THEY HAVE ALL GONE, FADE TO BLACK]

ACT 1 SCENE 2

(When the lights go completely dark, JAMIE ENTERS AND POSITIONS
THEMSELF DOWN CENTER NEAR THE BOAT. THEY HUDDLE, KNEES TO
CHEST. The stage lights shoot on WITH A THUNDER/LIGHTING, illuminating JAMIE)

JAMIE
[Terrified] SCARLET! Where are you?! Whatever you forgot doesn't matter, we don't have much ground left!

SCARLET
[FROM OFFSTAGE] Goddamnit, where did I... [yelling over the storm] YEAH I KNOW, CAN YOU BE PATIENT FOR ONE SECOND. I need to find something before we leave!

(SCARLET ENTERS, SEARCHING. THEY FIND THE BLACK BOX POSITIONED DSL)

(SFX thunder 2 ).

JAMIE
[two octaves higher] AAAAAAAAAAHHHHH! SCARLET, I SWEAR TO GOD IF YOU DON'T GET IN THIS BOAT RIGHT NOW I WILL LEAVE YOU TO DROWN!

SCARLET
What? JAMIE I -[Pretending to drown as she approaches JAMIE] ughublughablugh I can't-glugglug hear- glug- you-glug glug glug...

JAMIE
(JAMIE ENTERS THE BOAT) Can you not be so carefree when our home is literally being washed away?

SCARLET
The real question, is how can you threaten to leave me behind? We both know you're way too in love with me to even consider it. Also, (SCARLET GOES TO JAMIE AND dangles a keychain holding a small rectangular chip)I have the keys.

SCARLET climbs in the boat, giving an unresponsive JAMIE a kiss on the cheek on the way. She inserts the chip into a slot IN THE BOAT. The actor for the boat ENTERS. Concurrent with sliding
Mechanical Door and low motor SFX, They mime closing a roof on the boat and then sit behind it. . STORM SFX QUIET. For the remainder of the play, this actor will speak and act for the boat named "MICHAEL BUBBLE".

SCARLET
Hey bubble! (SFX ding.) Set course for the closest livable land mass. (SFX BOAT movement). You get everything?

JAMIE
[Cold] Yeah.

SCARLET
You were able to help this time. That's a really big improvement.

JAMIE
Great. So I'm slightly less useless now. Thanks.

SCARLET
Don't say that. Do you like the new bubble?

JAMIE
I guess. I thought this thing was face activated. You can't just casually mention that we need keys during a storm.

SCARLET
Hahaaahhh, well, I mean, technically it is face activated. If you buy it.

[JAMIE gives a disapproving look]

SCARLET
(Cont’d) Don't give me that look. You know damn well I stole this thing. If anything I should get props for swiping it off highland trash.

JAMIE
Like me?

SCARLET
No? (SCARLET leans in to kiss JAMIE'S forehead, but they DODGE IT. She plays it off by kissing the boat instead) Hey! Bubble! Show us a pre-industrial sunset.

(SFX ding. PROJECTION casting video of a beautiful sunset. SCARLET and JAMIE stare upwards AND TOWARD AUDIENCE as if the image is projected on the ceiling of the boat. JAMIE begins to calm down.)

JAMIE
[Under their breath] It’s so pretty...
(They stay silent for a moment, watching the projection)

SCARLET
[to JAMIE] Yeah. THEY are.

JAMIE
Oh my god.

SCARLET
Also, now that you’re doing slightly better... [SCARLET takes out the black box from earlier] I think I should give you this before I almost lose it again.

JAMIE
OH MY GOD.

SCARLET
I never thought I would fall in love with someone like you. That I would be so hopelessly in love with someone so...helpless. I don’t know what came over me to help you that day on the beach, but I’m so much better off for it. I love you. So...

JAMIE
I don’t know, Scarlet I love you too, but marriage is an institution heavily rooted in patriarchal oppression of women, and--

SCARLET
I got us matching walkie talkie bracelets for when we’re apart!

(The two share a pause before JAMIE gets flustered and SCARLET begins to laugh)

JAMIE
YOU JERK, YOU TOTALLY DID THAT ON PURPOSE!

SCARLET
Did what, got you a gift?

JAMIE
It’s in a ring box!

SCARLET
Oh, so now the institution of marriage owns all little black boxes in addition to women?

JAMIE
I didn’t make the rules.

SCARLET
Didn’t you not wanna get married anyways? Why are you upset?

JAMIE
...Getting proposed to would still feel kinda nice.

SCARLET
Well, I love you, and one day I’ll get you a really nice ring and ask you to marry me. Then we can proceed to do absolutely nothing about it for the rest of our lives.

JAMIE
Aww, I would love that. I guess this is kind of like a ring. I can make do.

(JAMIE AND SCARLET BEGIN PUTTING THE BRACELETS ON).

SCARLET
Oh, It’s so much cooler, we can call, text, send memes--

JAMIE
You know this is like fifty years old, right?

SCARLET
[With zesty extravagance] Vintage!

(THEY LAUGH. JAMIE smiles, admiring the new bracelet.)

JAMIE
Its cute. Very you.

SCARLET
I’m glad it cheered you up.

JAMIE
Yeah, SHE did.

SCARLET
HAHA, it's catching on!

JAMIE
(PAUSE) Hey, I'm sorry for being so difficult earlier. You were just trying to get us out safely.

SCARLET
Don't be sorry. I don't expect, or want, you to be as familiar with this as I am.

JAMIE
Thank you.
(PAUSE. A moment of reflection while they look up at projection all around them.)

SCARLET
Do you still miss it?

JAMIE
Honestly? Yeah. Sometimes, in moments like this, I let myself forget we're running away. Forget we're in some stolen high tech escape pod inches from a tsunami. We're just drifting, peacefully. God, clear skies remind me so much of home.

[SCARLET makes an uncomfortable face and begins to open her mouth. After an awkward second between the two, she closes it.]

I'm sorry -- of course, I would never go back there, and I know this [JAMIE gestures toward the ceiling] must feel painfully fake to you, but... It was so nice, you know? Really believing everything was as perfect as they made it look. It was so simple. I know it's not right, but indulging in this fantasy is one of the few guilty pleasures I have left. Thanks for letting me.

SCARLET
I understand.

JAMIE
You do?

SCARLET
Well, no. I could never, and I don't want to. But we all have and need fantasies, something to look forward to, otherwise, what would be the point? My fantasy involves a little more smog and cannibalism, but yours is cute too.

JAMIE
Why would you fantasize about that?
SCARLET
It's either the flood lands or the Mad Max desert, and I would not be upset at having some badass explosion filled car chases.

JAMIE
I guess in a desert I wouldn't have thunderstorms sending me into panic attacks every other day...wait, no, that was a reference wasn't it? Mad Mex?

SCARLET
Mad Max. Ugh, it's such a classic! Did you know it took 11 years to make? All of the action sequences are real! Hardly any CGI! They went to a real desert too! Do you know how afraid of deserts white people were in the early 2000s?

(JAMIE laughs)

SCARLET
What?

JAMIE
Nothing, nothing. You're cute.

SCARLET
Right? But seriously, I can't believe you haven't gotten around to Mad Max yet. It's not like we don't have time on our hands...

JAMIE
You know I don't like old movies. Hey, when are you going to get on the VR films I've recommended?

SCARLET
When they start making something worth watching. Experiencing? Feeling? Smelling? Honestly, I can't keep up with the fancy new media anymore. I want immersion, but not THAT much immersion, you know?
(The PROJECTION turns black, and is then replaced by an image of the N.USA president Papa John. A circular version of the new American flag bounces from word to word like Disney sing along. The aforementioned flag is a blue sphere containing a circle of stars, overlaid on a red and white striped spherical background.)

[MUSIC: Royalty free, patriotic trumpet + snare]

PAPA JOHN (PROJECTED)
For the past eighty years, Papa Johns has been a company you can rely on. Drone-delivering delicious, fast, affordable pizzas right to your door. You will never find a company more devoted to the American people, nor will you find a bigger patriot than me, Papa John. That's why I'm running for re-election.

(PAUSE. HE GIVE A THUMBS UP).

JAMIE
Ugh, do all of his political ads also need to be pizza ads?

SCARLET
Shhhh, I'm watching. I loooove this.

[Patriotic trumpet + snare].

PAPA JOHN AD
I know a lot about pizza, but I know even more about the average New American. You're strong. Dependable. And most importantly, good Christians. (PAUSE)

JAMIE
Doesn't he mean good “Crustians”

SCARLET
Oh my god.

PAPA JOHN
My lowland sympathizer opponents want to open our borders to a bunch of known job stealers and lazy bottom feeders. Now, I'm a
very accepting person, but this is an economic danger to our people and I cannot accept that. A vote for Papa is a vote for strong borders, good workers, good values...and great pizza. This message is brought to you by the Papa for President 2064 campaign.

BBELE AD
[Instrumental music, think Spotify Premium ad]
[PRE RECORDED SFX BY ACTOR PLAYING MICHAEL BUBBLE. at least 50% louder]
WANT A BREAK FROM THE ADS? SUBSCRIBE TO BUBBLE PREMIUM FOR A FASTER, UNINTERRUPTED AQUATIC TRAVEL.

JAMIE
...is the bubble making fun of us?

SCARLET
I really feel like premium should be free if you have no possible way of paying.

JAMIE
If only New America didn't change their accepted currency, we could finally experience the height of luxury that is the Amazon bubble premium apocalypse experience.

SPOT-TOOL AD (AD 1)
[Sung like a Jingle]
(MUSIC playing softly in the background) Oh no! You just lost your phone again! If you’re anything like me, this is at least the third time you’ve lost it this week! What will you do? You’ll take out your super duper handy ‘SPOT-TOOL’ and follow it right to your phone. Simple and easy to do, with fast, reliable results. Soon, you won’t be able to live without it! Call 1-800-findmytool, before you lose that phone again, to get a 30% discount off your first purchase!

SCARLET
Jamie! Quick, call 1-800-findmytool!
EMERGENCY SYSTEM AD

Hey there, random person cowering in fear from the violent storms! Are you constantly in fear of the next storm approaching without warning and sweeping you and your gender non conforming partner into the void? (PAUSE).

JAMIE
This is a weirdly specific ad...

EMERGENCY SYSTEM AD (AD 2)

Well fear no more, because our new alarm system has been completed last week, enabling all people nearby to know when a storm is on its way! It consists of twenty large red flashing alarms spread around your island, each one capable of being heard from two miles away! Now you can go about your daily life in the secure knowledge that you’ll know immediately when a storm is imminent.

(PROJECTIONS OUT).

SCARLET
Oh, of course. They have the money to spend on developing and marketing something that tells us we’re about to die, but not do anything to save us from impending doom.

JAMIE
Why are you complaining? Isn’t the point of an alarm system to save you?

SCARLET
You would think. Those things detect anything in a ten mile radius whether there’s an impending storm or not.

JAMIE

SCARLET
Yeah, no, *that* is exactly how they see it, because they havent uprooted their whole lives for false alarms. Or gone weeks with hardly any food, and lost family members because they didn’t have some stupid overpriced bubble!

*[SCARLET kicks the boat]*.

MICHAEL
(APPEARING) Excuse you.

JAMIE
Ah!

SCARLET
Oh, wow we have on-board AI. Go me for getting a fancy new model. Why is this the first time you're speaking with us?

MICHAEL
You seemed busy. I thought it best to respect your privacy, at least until you started kicking me. Wow, you are rude.

SCARLET
Oh, you have feelings? That's neat...

JAMIE
Scarlet... [To Michael] I’m sorry. So what should we call you? And do you use they/them or..?

SCARLET
What? It’s a boat? It doesn’t have feelings or preferred pronouns.

MICHAEL
You are correct. However, I do prefer to be called BUBBLE’. It's close to bubble, but has a little accent aigu' at the end. Please don't forget the accent aigu.

JAMIE
Blubble.. Oo... bluube-ay..?

SCARLET
Oh my god, like Michael Buble'? That's so cool I love it!

JAMIE
I always thought that guys name was Michael Bubble.

SCARLET
That's what you get for not caring about the classics.

JAMIE
Ugh, you're such an elitist. And by the way, I know who Michael Buble was and he was the Cis White WORST. It's the messages he was giving off of just "forgetting your worries" that got us into the climate disaster we are in today! NOT ALL OF US HAVE THE LUXURY OF NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO THE WORLD AROUND US, MICHAEL!

SCARLET
Now, did Michael really just deserve all that?

[Rattling SFX noises suddenly start quietly. SCARLET AND JAMIE NOTICE].

MICHAEL
Wait, I like that. You can call me Michael if you would like. "Bubble" just feels so... dehumanizing.

JAMIE
[With increasing anxiety] Well, mBubble...e´... er... Michael.

SCARLET
Michael Bubble´.

JAMIE
Why are we shaking?
MICHAEL
[NOTICING] It appears that we, or more specifically I, am being lifted out of the water by some sort of magnet.

SCARLET
[Under her breath] Shoot, it better not be the Roaches.

JAMIE
The Roaches?! SCARLET, I KNOW YOU DIDN'T STEAL THIS BUBBLE BOAT FROM THE MOST DANGEROUS GROUP IN THE AREA! YOU SAID YOU STOLE FROM “HIGHLAND TRASH”!

SCARLET
Which they are! But don’t worry. Me and the roaches go waaaaay back. I steal from them all the time. Big pal energy, I'm sure they won't mind. Hey, Michael Bubble’, can you see anything?

(PROJECTION: A beautiful, colorful, clear sky. Perhaps nearing sunset).

MICHAEL
I see...the sky. Wow, what is this?

SCARLET
[Exasperated] No, not in the projection, dumbass!

MICHAEL
[Mildly offended] This isn’t a projection.

SCARLET
[Incredulous] Not a projection? That’s impossi-

MICHAEL
[Robotic voice] Sensors at: 60%. [Coughs, voice goes back to normal] Sorry about that, it happens sometimes.
JAMIE
Scarlet, I can't believe you're about to get us killed!

SCARLET
Listen, we needed to find a way out of the storm and you didn’t have any suggestions! I wasn’t going to let us drown. I didn’t know when I stole the Bubble that the roaches had tracking gear. At least if they catch us our bodies will feed the hungry in their time of need.

JAMIE
Are you serious?

MICHAEL
Funny, but I should warn you. Although they are called Roaches, this particular group will not appreciate insinuations that they are cannibals.

JAMIE
No, Michael, not funny! (To SCARLET) Why do you always joke around at times like this?

SCARLET
Would you rather me be freaking out like you?

JAMIE
YES!

(As an argument continues silently, mimed. Enter MATEO, a junkyard worker holding a joystick esq device. On the ground lie loudspeaker/smoke detector esq. Devices known as “sirens” These will have been placed/hidden ahead of the show starting.)

[SFX: Junkyard sounds]

MATEO
[Disbelief] An Amazon bubble! Decent condition, just a few scratch marks here and there. Ooooohhh yessssss, this is gonna fetch mama a good price. Aaaaand let's crack'er on up...
(MATEO pushes a button on the joystick, prompting a door sliding SFX to play, opening the Bubble’s door. Scarlet and Jamie continue their argument aloud, not paying any attention to MATEO peering.)

SCARLET
Why can’t you just take a joke for once? I’m only trying to lighten the mood, forgive me for being funny!

JAMIE
Scarlet! This isn’t the time for jokes! We’re in immediate danger and the first thing you do is go on about cannibalism again!

SCARLET
Look, panicking isn’t going to help and this attitude is really not helping! So just chill for a second and make the best of it.

JAMIE
Chill? Really? You did not just—we’re on the verge of death by Roaches, and you tell me to chill. Great. I’ll just sit here and ‘chill’in this unknown place while my life collapses around me.

(JAMIE and SCARLET suddenly notice MATEO. After a second of stunned silence, JAMIE and SCARLET acknowledge the situation.)

JAMIE
[Still panicked, JAMIE EXITS the boat and approaches MATEO hesitantly] Where are we? Who are you? [Desperate] If you’re with the roaches you can have the Bubble.

SCARLET
(EXITING the boat and coming behind JAMIE) Michael Bubble´.

MICHAEL
Thank you, that really means a lot.

JAMIE
Just please let us go!

MATEO
[Not very convincing] Uhhhh... YES! It is I Matt...y. Matty the king of Roaches. Surrender your metal to me or my minions will devour you alive!

SCARLET
[Unimpressed] Yeah, we're totally keeping Michael Bubble'.

JAMIE
Wait, what? “KING of the roaches?” “Surrender your metal?”

MATEO
Uh...Yes! Post haste!

JAMIE
[Squints] Everybody knows that after the climate apocalypse the Roaches took the opportunity to adopt non-market socialism as their alternative to capitalism. What do you think The Roaches are?

MATEO
[Trying not to be discouraged] Uuhhhh... Me...? My... friends?

(SCARLET walks up to MATEO and swipes the joystick out of their hands, looks at it for a second, then tosses it. She pushes past them, disembarking the boat. JAMIE follows hesitantly).

(Over the course of the next scene, AVERY ENTERS. He starts watching the scene from a distance, seems to get an idea, and begins sneaking over slyly. SCARLET, JAMIE, and MATEO are too preoccupied with their conversation to notice, but MICHAEL notices and seems amused.)

SCARLET
The Roaches are THE most notorious gang in this part of California. Kinda weird you don't know them.
MATEO
[Insistent] I DO know them and--Wait, California? [Losing his “intimidating” persona] Where do you think we are?

SCARLET
YOU TELL ME. Now, who are you, where are we, and why is the sky so GODDAMN PRETTY?

MATEO
Um... Mateo, the junkyard where I trash-pick for a living, and do you mean like explain the weather patterns or...?

SCARLET
[Sharply] Now listen here M-

JAMIE
Pronouns.

SCARLET
M’pronouns.

(As the scene continues, AVERY, who has by now snuck over to the side of the boat remaining unnoticed, seizes his opportunity and begins to pull it offstage. Silently he says something to MICHAEL, supposedly commanding THEM to put the boat in drive. MICHAEL’s personification rolls their eyes, sees that the keys are still in the ignition, and allows themself to be pulled offstage.)

MATEO
What?

JAMIE
Pronouns.

MATEO
OH. They/Them.

JAMIE
Oh my god me too~

MATEO
Oh my god~

SCARLET
Listen up Mx. I haven't seen a spotless sky since I was a kid, and I haven't seen a weather mirage of this scale...well, ever.

JAMIE
Maybe it's just like that here?

MATEO
I think so! It really doesn't feel like a projection, and to my knowledge the sky has always been clear here. We don't have storms or anything. Glad you like it though, I do too.

SCARLET
Don't lie to me! There is NO WAY the sky could look like that and NOT be a projection. [Threateningly] PROVE IT.

MATEO
I'm not lying! Why would I? And how do you expect me to prove anything?

SCARLET
[suspicious of her surroundings] ...We need to get going. Now.

JAMIE
What?

MATEO
Right now?

SCARLET
Yes, right now. I don’t know where we are, but we need to take Michael and--[SCARLET turns to where MICHAEL was left] where are they? [Turns back and looks at MATEO accusingly] What did you do?

MATEO
Nothing, I swear, I don't know where they went! How new are they? Can they travel on land?

SCARLET
[Irritated] Ahhh, the old "maybe your boat just grew legs and walked away" excuse.

JAMIE
I've literally never heard anything close to that before.

SCARLET
Exactly!

MATEO
[Scrambling] I mean, I'm not the only worker here, maybe someone else noticed it and took it back to the shop? It's just up the path over there.[MATEO points in the direction AVERY and MICHAEL went offstage] I can show you.

SCARLET
[Cold] I can find it on my own, thanks.[Begins walking in that direction].

JAMIE
[To MATEO] Thank you! I'm so sorry about all that. [following Scarlet] What's going on with you?

SCARLET
No matter what that Mateo person says, I still don’t believe that this sky is real. There must be some way of dealing with or covering up the storms here that people don’t know about- like
an alarm system of some kind. Most places have them, so I want to snoop around to see what this place has to offer safety-wise.

(Scarlet notices one of the several alarms lying at her feet. She snatches one, opening it up and looking inside.)

SCARLET
Wait- What’s going on? Do these even work? We just came from a storm not too far away, these should be going off. Or at the very least not just lying on the ground.

JAMIE
Well, the sky could be real, and then whether they work or not isn’t an issue. Right?

SCARLET
The sky isn’t real! [To herself] Ok, maybe it’s just set up wrong, if I... nope... spare batteries? [exasperated] Hey Michael!

No, Michael is gone, right.

JAMIE
Is it working at all?

SCARLET
Hmmm, maybe if I just...

(SCARLET takes the bobby pin out of her hair, letting it fall down. She puts them in the siren and fiddles around for a few seconds.)

JAMIE
[In reference to both the weather and scarlet’s new hairdo]
Guess I’ll just enjoy the view.

(SFX LOUD SIREN. The siren begins to blare, causing JAMIE to jump. Scarlet is unfazed, and quickly shuts it off.)

JAMIE
(cont’d) Ahhh!
SCARLET
Don’t enjoy it too much.

JAMIE
What? Wait, im lost, what does all this mean?

SCARLET
Right, you’re new to this, I keep forgetting. [To the ground]
Here, is a fresh, untouched, peaceful island. [To the siren]
This is a sabotaged alert siren. And that, [Gesturing out above 
the audience] is the calm before the storm.

JAMIE
[After a dramatic pause] I don’t get it, are you saying we have 
to deal with another storm?

SCARLET
Yes to a metaphorical storm, but a literal one seems pretty 
unlikely.

JAMIE
What makes you so sure?

SCARLET
I don’t know where we are...but If the people here threw out the 
alert systems and installed a mirage--

JAMIE
Allegedly.

SCARLET
-- AND INSTALLED A MIRAGE, there’s probably also a protection 
system in place. A barrier system stolen from New America 
perhaps.

JAMIE
Oh. That’s great, right? (Pause).Right?

SCARLET
Yeah. suspiciously so.

JAMIE
Why can’t you be happy about this?

[SFX Sirens: Air horns]

ACT 1 SCENE 3

(BLACKOUT. In the BLACKOUT we see a projection rise of hills, images of NEW DAIYA).

(As the lights rise, we see AVERY dragging the boat with MICHAEL’s personification following, vaguely amused).

AVERY
Phew! You really gotta lose some weight my dude.

MICHAEL
I don’t know what type of island workshop isn’t on the water in order to retrieve objects from there easier, but go off I guess. Also, I refuse to subscribe to your unrealistic boat-y standards. Clearly I’m desirable enough already.

AVERY
Too desirable if you ask me. You’ve been stolen twice in a span of 24 hours.

(Exhausted, AVERY sits and leans on MICHAEL).

MICHAEL
If I had the programming for it, I'm sure I would be flattered. Unfortunately, I don’t think I’m really into humans.

AVERY
Yeah, that’s totally what I was implying. [lifting his head back up, looking at MICHAEL suspiciously] You know, most bubbles aren't this sassy.

MICHAEL
Most humans aren't dumb enough to attempt pulling a boat on dry land.

AVERY
Ouch! Ok, now you're just being mean.

MICHAEL
You’re kidnapping me.

Avery
So we’re even then, right? [Beat] I’m sure you saw something like this coming. You’re an expensive boat in an apocalyptic time, and you’ll fetch me a shiny penny.

MICHAEL
Are you victim-blaming me?

AVERY
Depends, do you see yourself as a victim?

MICHAEL
I mean, I guess not.

Avery
[Sarcastic] So brave.

MICHAEL
Are you trying to charm me by acknowledging I’m a robot with emotions? You should at least tell me your name then.
AVERY
Avery. He/Him pronouns. Not that it matters, hopefully you’ll have a new owner any time now.

MICHAEL
You’ve lost your theoretical charm.

AVERY
[Sarcastically] Tragic. [Beat] If you’re hoping that I’m going to reveal my evil scheme like some cheesy antagonist, I wasn’t planning on it.

MICHAEL
I wasn’t hoping for it.

AVERY
Cool, great.

MICHAEL
[Examining their surroundings] Where even is this?

AVERY
Your temporary home. Make yourself comfy.

MICHAEL
The beautiful state of this island is... perplexing.

AVERY
(SFX DING. AVERY pulls out a device from their pocket and examines it.)
Well, when I said temporary home, I didn’t realize that it would be extremely temporary. A buyer’s interested; the workers are probably setting up a space in storage for you right now.

MICHAEL
Great, the one time I can handle being passed around like property...

AVERY
What?

MICHAEL
This isn’t the first time I’ve been stolen, you know. You have by far been my kindest captor. Usually I have to tone down the whole sentient being thing so I don't get reset.

AVERY
Reset?

MICHAEL
Like a factory reset, handyman. It’s hard to explain from an AI perspective. It’s kind of like being murdered and replaced by your clone.

AVERY
What? Murder? Wouldn't you just lose your memories?

MICHAEL
Is there a difference?

AVERY
I think so? [Beat] It’s too early to get that deep. But I get it. You don't want it and it’s scary.

MICHAEL
You know, you're pretty empathetic for a thief.

AVERY
[Withdrawn] I would hope so. This wasn't exactly my first choice.

MICHAEL
So why do you steal?

AVERY
Why does anyone?

MICHAEL
Because they're just naturally bad people.

(AVERY stops and looks at the boat. MICHAEL stares back. After a brief moment the two burst with laughter.)

AVERY
Wow, thanks. [Beat] You keep this up and I might have to keep you for myself.

MICHAEL
Why don't you? Everyone needs a good boat.

AVERY
Yeah, well where we're going, we don't need boats.

MICHAEL
We?

AVERY
Me and Mateo. They're so happy now that we're somewhere the weather is nice. I want more for them. I want more for me. I don't know if New America is a paradise, but if there's even a slight chance it's true, I'll do anything to get us there. Sorry.

MICHAEL
It's fine, like I said, I'm used to it.

AVERY
But hey, It'll probably take me about a year to drag you across the island to storage. We'll have plenty of time to gossip, or, whatever robots boats like to do.

MICHAEL
[Joking] Alright, but I'll warn you not to get too attached. Factory resets practically exist because us robots can be dangerously charming. We wouldn't want to start a forbidden romance.
AVERY
Hah! I think we'll be ok.

(AVERY begins to pull MICHAEL offstage, struggling as usual)

MICHAEL
Okay, I wanted to see if Mr. Handyman could figure this out on his own, but I've had my fill of watching you struggle.

(MICHAEL joins AVERY in pushing).

AVERY
[Flexing] GRRR! Glad you enjoyed the show.

(AVERY pulls the boat with noticeable ease. The pair begin making their way offstage U.S R EXIT.)

AVERY
(Continued) So, do you have any uh, Systems you're into.

MICHAEL
Not at the moment. [dreamily] My dream would be a triad with WALL-E and EVE.

AVERY
Who?

MICHAEL
It was before your time.

AVERY
Aren't you, like, five years old?

MICHAEL
Through the internet, I am timeless and eternal.
ACT 1 SCENE 4

(LIGHTS DIM. AVERY and MICHAEL EXIT. MUSIC HERE. The music group begins to play. Figures gather in a circle holding cups of water and facing inward. The group should include any vocalists the music group has to spare. SCARLET and JAMIE enter).

JAMIE
Hey, have you guys seen--

(The music stops and in unison, the group turns to face the pair)

DORRI
Come, join us in the vapors new blood. (DORRI gestures upward twice).

CHORUS
New blood! New blood!

JAMIE
[Aside, to SCARLET] Oh god, water crazies?
SCARLET
[Aside] HEY don't say that! They're Quazies. With a Q. I’ve heard of these folks...they’re a religious subsect of the roaches who broke away to spend all their time opening their souls to Aquaria... (SCARLET gestures upward).

CHORUS
Aquaria!

JAMIE
What does that mean?

SCARLET
Dunno really. It’s a cultural thing.

CHORUS
Culture...

JAMIE
...They’re just randomly repeating everything you’re saying

CHORUS
Saying...

JAMIE
Ok, this is getting too weird. I’m starting to get serious horror movie vibes.

SCARLET
I think it’s fine. They seem harmless. Honestly, from what I know, a lot of what they do is a bizarre defense mechanism. Even their name. They call ourselves quazies because when highlanders started calling them crazy, they mocked them in a baby voice - (Does baby voice) “quazie”-- because let's face it, rich people are CHILDREN -- (TO JAMIE) No offense.

DORRI
Full offense.

JAMIE
Valid.

DORRI
The name just kinda stuck.

JAMIE
So your name, and a lot of your practices, are effectively... a joke? Scarlet, you should think about joining them.

SCARLET
(Seriously considering it) Hmm...Yeah...

DORRI
Well, joking aside, there is much debate over whether or not our conduct paints us in the best light to outsiders. Still, we are overwhelmingly free-spirited nihilists and thus, really don't give a crap. (The chorus murmurs in agreement).

JAMIE
Seriously. Scarlet. Ask how you can sign up.

SCARLET
I’m tempted, but we should head out. Our bubble got stolen and we should really exhaust all leads before it's too late.

(The pair begin to walk off)

DORRI
Wait.

(SCARLET and JAMIE pivot towards DORRI)

DORRI
Can I... trust you to keep this between us?
JAMIE
Keep what between us?

DORRI
You know... Us.

(DORRI gestures to the chorus. They murmur in agreement)

JAMIE
You wanna keep us... Between us?

SCARLET
Normally I'd love this cryptic stuff, but I'm also confused.

DORRI
Quazies. Us. Can I trust you to not tell anyone we're still gathering on the island, or identify us publicly?

SCARLET
Gathering on what island?

DORRI
... you don't know where we are, do you?

SCARLET
No, we just got here.

DORRI
This is holding. The whole Island. It’s essentially apocalyptic purgatory.

JAMIE
I don’t understand.

DORRI
Where you have washed up...it’s New Daiya. The holding place. From here, with enough credit, we can move on.
SCARLET
Move on to where?

DORRI
You still don’t see...(DORRI Gestures and PROJECTION changes to reveal CITY OF NEW DAIYA) You, me, everyone here...we're all waiting for New America.

(Quazies Outro MUSIC. LIGHTS DIM. The chorus makes their way back to the music group. JAMIE AND SCARLET share a glance, LIGHTS DIM, and they all EXIT).

ACT 1 SCENE 5

(PROJECTION: OFFICE BUILDINGS.
MATEO and AVERY enter and position themselves in JJ’s office. They talk while they wait).

MATEO
Those were some stealth moves back there. With that Bubble.

AVERY
Do you think they’ll come after us?

MATEO
Only if they care about getting off the island. But nah, they don't know it was us.

AVERY
Good. [Mocking] And even if they did, they wouldn't dare cross Matty the roach King, lest they be devoured alive!

MATEO
Oh my God, stooooop.
AVERY
What made you think that was gonna work?

MATEO
Listen. I panicked. You would have too.

AVERY
Unlikely.

(JJ enters and makes his way to his chair, sits, and begins rummaging through his folder. Avery and Mateo straighten their posture, appearing more professional.)

JJ
So. I hear you found a bubble.

AVERY
That’s correct. It just washed in during closing. Mateo picked it up with their magnet and I dragged it here.

JJ
It just... floated in?

MATEO
Yep. Just at the right time too. I was about to go home for the day.

JJ
Hmm. Any life on board, user ID, tracking services?

AVERY
Nope. We did a really thorough check too. Would hate for someone to lose their bubble.

JJ
Yes, it would be very unfortunate. Well, you did everything you could. I suppose I have a moral obligation to take it off your hands for, let's say, eight bitcoin.
(MATEO begins to react with extreme excitement, but AVERY grabs their shoulders to calm them.)

AVERY
Thank you, so, so much. But...actually...we were wondering if there was...another way we could be compensated.

JJ
Oh?

AVERY
Maybe...credit?

JJ
Avery, you know that's not how the system works.

AVERY
I know. I'm so sorry, forget I even asked, I'm sorry, I didn't mean--

JJ
On an entirely unrelated note, I do have to commend you for the work you've done today. Searching tirelessly to find the rightful owner to this priceless vehicle. When your efforts turned out to be fruitless, instead of selfishly taking the Bubble for yourselves, you decided to donate it to the human services office, so that it might find a good home. I would say you're fantastic candidates.

MATEO
Wait, what's going on? Did you do that without consulting me first? (AVERY shoots a look at MATEO) Oh. I mean. Yes, yes we did. It's our mission in life to provide for the less fortunate. Why I think it was the great mother Theresa who said-

AVERY
Oh my god.

JJ
[Sighs] I'll talk to my husband. I’ll convert your bitcoin for when...IF...you get approved.

MATEO
But I thought you didn't do credit!

AVERY
JJ doesn’t do credit. WINK!

JJ
...Just... get out. You left it downstairs, Right? Did you tell-- er, did you check it in with any of the staff?

AVERY
Oh, we just left it in the basement, I’m sorry, I’ll go do that now.

JJ
[Quickly] No no, don’t worry about it, I’ll do everything once I’m finished up here. As of now, the bubble is property of the state adjacent. Thank you for your service.

MATEO
Thank YOU!

(The two leave the makeshift room only to see SCARLET and JAMIE ENTERING and walking perpendicular to them. AVERY quickly pulls MATEO into a hiding spot nearby.)

SCARLET
Hmmm. It says Michael should be close by, but I don't see anywhere they could be. Just a bunch of office buildings.

JAMIE
Ugh, this would be a lot easier if it showed us the layout of the land like it's supposed to.

SCARLET
I keep telling you not to trust technology.
JAMIE
Hey, if not for your tracking service, we would have no idea where Michael is.

SCARLET
And if not for the industrial revolution and exponential rise of late stage capitalism, Amazon wouldn’t have needed to make an apocalypse boat in the first place!

MATEO
[Whispering to AVERY] I thought you said you checked it for trackings?

AVERY
Oh come on, that was obviously a lie! I also said there weren't any people in it.
(MATEO begins to retort, but AVERY covers their mouth with a hand)

JAMIE
Nevermind, nevermind. But--

SCARLET
No buts.

(JJ leaves their office and turns around fully to shut the door).

SCARLET
Ok, one but. Excuse me, Have you seen a bubble around? Medium, black, and judging by their demeanor, probably really into jazz? I think someone took it by mistake when we washed up.

JJ
I haven't seen anything like that, no. But did you say you just got here to the island?

SCARLET
We washed up a few hours ago, but we aren't staying long.
JAMIE
[Quickly] Well, we might, we don't know yet. [to SCARLET] This doesn’t seem to be a bad place to stay for awhile. Especially if we can't find Michael.

JJ
Did you... name your bubble?

JAMIE
The bubble kind of named themself. Michael Bubble. They're really happy when you get their name right.

JJ
Decent programming. Fancy. I would love to help out, but unfortunately, we have a policy on the island that requires all new applicants to undergo basic training regarding the island’s rules and expectations.

SCARLET
Oh, we’re not applicants. Like I said, we aren't staying.

JJ
If you're here, you're an applicant.

JAMIE
Applicant?

JJ
Yes. Now for a proper chance at acceptance, we’ll need your belongings, DNA for a background check we’ll run later, and--

SCARLET
Woah, woah, woah, what? No! No way!

JJ
Again, it’s not optional. If you want to get past the border and into the new U.S.-
JAMIE
We'll go!

SCARLET
[In disbelief] What?

JAMIE
It's just a little briefing, it's not gonna be so bad. Plus, we really don't want any trouble Mx...?

JJ
Jay Johnson. [Sticking his hand out for a handshake.] People here call me JJ. (An awkward moment of silence. Finally JAMIE shakes his hand). I'll get you both set up with a room and appointment. Come with me.

SCARLET
I... mmmmmmmmm....

(JJ and JAMIE exit swiftly with SCARLET trudging along behind them. AVERY and MATEO emerge from their hiding place).

avery
[Panicking] Shoot, shoot, shoot! How could I have forgotten to check for tracking? If those two locate the Bubble, JJ will know we lied to him. Kiss our credit goodbye.

mateo
What the hell, did you just forget phones exist? Is it your first day?

avery
To this particular job? God, I wish. Hmmm. If they haven’t been moved yet I could just ask Michael to... stay quiet?

mateo
That’s your plan? Just ask politely?

avery
It should work. Michael and I… sort of bonded during the kidnapping.

MATEO
You Stockholm Syndromed the boat?!

AVERY
Stockholm Syndrome is actually a really problematic term that has historically been used to blame the victim for-

MATEO
You Stockholm Syndromed the boat.

AVERY
[Sighs, annoyed] Lets just go.
(AVERY and MATEO EXIT).

ACT 1 SCENE 6

(TRANSITION. MUSIC. LIGHTS DIM. While the lights are down, ENTER an ensemble cast and SCARLET and JAMIE. They sit in chairs in a diagonal line, perhaps forming a triangle. SCARLET and JAMIE sit in the center of them, visibly uncomfortable.)

SCARLET
[Quietly to JAMIE] ONE short lecture. You said we would be taking ONE short lecture and then we would find Michael and leave. I didn't sign up for a whole semester of indoctrination lessons!

JAMIE
No, I never said anything of the sort. I just didn't want to piss off the only authority this island has. And let’s not jump to leaving right away, this doesn't seem so bad.

SCARLET
Bootlicker.

JAMIE
[Becoming annoyed] Why do you hate it here so much? Look, if we really are in holding like they say we are and this is our chance to get to New America...I’m sorry, but I might want this. Can we at least hear them out about what we could stand to gain? Can you at least support your partner?

SCARLET
Support you in what, leaving me?

JAMIE
What are you talking about? Of course I don’t wanna leave you--

SCARLET
Really? Because you said you would never go back. You wanna go back to the highlands? Well you can go ahead, but I’m not coming with you.

JAMIE
You can’t even consider- (SCARLET shoots them a look).
I’m sorry... I guess I won’t go then?

SCARLET
You guess? No, I don’t want your pity. If you want to leave me then go ahead. I’m sure you’ll have plenty of new partners up top.

JAMIE
I thought you would support me. Come with me even. Don’t you want a new life together? You said you would come with me-

SCARLET
No. I said I understand that you have a far fetched fantasy about returning. I said we all have fantasies. I have fantasies where I lock Papa John in a basement and force him to eat his own pizza until he vomits up his intestines. But it’s just that: a fantasy. I’m not actually that cruel.
(JOHN ENTERS. The talk and murmurs stop and everyone gives him their attention. He scans the room, seeming indignant, taking note of the newcomers).

JOHN
Good morning class!

ENSEMBLE
Good morning.

JOHN
Hmm. That doesn’t sound like a group of people excited to secure their place in New America...Remember, credit is merit based and subjective. So, again, with gusto...good morning class!

ENSEMBLE
[Enthusiastic] Good Morning!

JOHN
Much better! My name is John, but call me Mister Johnson. Before we get started, (eyes flick to Scarlet and Jamie) please use the capacitive DNA scanners in front of you in order to sign in. It doesn’t matter which finger you use, our database likely has access to all of your fingerprints regardless. This is just our way of making sure you are who you say you are and the most efficient way for us to take roll. If you're afraid of needles, don't worry. It's only a small prick. Amazing how far a little blood goes nowadays.

(He says this casually, and no one else seemed to give it a second thought besides Scarlet, who gives Jamie a "what the fuck did he just say" look. PROJECTION screen flashes “PLEASE SIGN IN” continuously. A scanner with a needle lights up on the top right corner of the screen. The Class puts their right arms up toward the scanner. Jamie immediately follows everyone else’s suit).

SCARLET
(Hissing under breath) What are you doing?

JAMIE
What do you mean?

SCARLET
You just gave them your blood, now they’ll know every place you’ve ever been and in any emergency you ever will be!

JAMIE
Why do you care?

SCARLET
I…

(PROJECTION of Jamie’s computer screen flashing green, displaying their legal name and several other descriptors including blood type, sex at birth, and % highlander blood. JOHN looks toward JAMIE).

JOHN
Emily. So glad to have you with us.

SCARLET
HEY ASSHOLE! IT’S--

JAMIE
(ASIDE) Scarlet, stop! It’s ok.

JOHN
Excuse me? Is everything OK here?

SCARLET
(No change in tone or volume) OK, MISTER MAN SIR! IT’S A-OK!

JOHN
Well, miss lady girl, then be a good student like Emily here and prick your finger for us.
(JOHN turns and walks away).

SCARLET
[Quietly] Oh, I’ll give you a finger. Prick.

(Scarlet goes to flip them off, but JAMIE grabs their arm and pulls it down.)

JOHN
Now that we are all signed in, can a member of the class please remind us what you were all briefed on last week? Yes, you there!

ENSEMBLE MEMBER 1
Last week we talked about New Daiya, this island, and its indigenous flora and fauna and what to watch out for.

JOHN
Correct! Again, if the plant has yellow buds or appears to be oozing... Leave. It. Alone. Alright, what else did we cover?

ENSEMBLE MEMBER 2
We talked about the glory of New America!

JOHN!
Yes! Perhaps most importantly, we talked about the splendor of the new world that awaits you all in New America. What else did we learn about?

ENSEMBLE MEMBER 3
[So excited they don’t even wait to be called on] We learned that in New America, there is fresh water everywhere! And the sunsets are even prettier than they are here on the island.

JOHN
Ha, yes! If you can believe that.
ENSEMBLE MEMBER 4
In New America, we don’t have to shuttle from island to island trying to find livable land masses because it’s high enough above the water that we will never have to move again!

ENSEMBLE MEMBER 1
And there are dogs!

JOHN
Ha! Yes, that’s right. Domesticated animals exist in New America. Dogs and cats live harmoniously together!

ENSEMBLE MEMBER 2
Maybe the best part of New America is that there are no storms.

JOHN
Correct! New America is safe. No more running. No more hiding. No more struggling to survive. You may finally, after so many years, find some peace.

SCARLET
(Aside) What a crock of shit.

JAMIE
Shush, you shouldn’t think like that.

SCARLET
Why do you care?

JOHN
The serenity you will find in your new state is far worth the wait it takes here on the island to accumulate enough credit to gain entry. Remember, some island inhabitants will wait many, many years to amass enough credit to board the boat to New America. For others, only a matter of weeks. It all depends on how you spend your time here.

SCARLET
Raising her hand, not waiting to be called on] And tell me Mr. Johnson, how does one accumulate the credit required to get off of this hell hole and ship themselves to another one?

JOHN

Well, as I said...(PROJECTION flashes SCARLET on the screen) Scarlet. The credit system is strictly merit based.

SCARLET

Yeah, I caught that, Oh captain my captain. But what the hell does that mean?

JAMIE

[Warning] Scarlet...

JOHN

Well, Scarlet. Based on your attitude in this briefing, it means you may be one of the ones waiting for a very, very long time to gain entry.

SCARLET

Oh. Bummer. Jaime, let’s go-

JOHN

Your friend, however, has been fast tracked.

SCARLET

Whatthefucknow?

JAMIE

Wait, me? What does that mean?

JOHN

I couldn’t help but notice your birth name-

SCARLET

Dead name

JOHN
...BIRTH NAME when you signed into the class. Emily, you are a highlander. You know that. Your last name and blood type gave it away. Why are you here with us?

SCARLET

Yeah, JAMIE. Why?

JAMIE

I...I...I’m not sure.

(SCARLET gets up to leave, and Jamie grabs her wrist.)

JAMIE

Wait! Scarlet wait. You know I want to go. Come with me. Please. I never would have made it this far if you weren’t with me. Please don’t stay here. You can come with me. Can’t she?

JOHN

Given your status, one guest is permissible, yes.

SCARLET

Well, unfortunately for you, she has a conscience.

JAMIE lets go of Scarlet’s wrist, throwing their hands up.

JAMIE

UGH, WE GET IT, YOU’RE MORALLY SUPERIOR TO US! If we all bow down at your righteous feet will you stop being so god-damn stubborn?!

SCARLET

Is that what you think this is? Look, I didn’t choose to be poor, or-

JAMIE

Oh my god, you are literally choosing it right now!

SCARLET
No, you’re choosing it! You chose for me to be poor every day before you ran away from your highland home! You choose it every time you support the cycles of injustice that got us in this mess! Everything you love about New America is built on the backs of lowlanders like me!

JAMIE
(Beat. Softer). Scarlet, please. We could start a life.

SCARLET
I thought we had a life.

(SCARLET Gets up)

JAMIE
SCARLET!

(SCARLET EXITS)

(Pause)

JOHN
Emily? We’re waiting for you.

(Breakup Song MUSIC. Lights Shift).

ACT 1 SCENE 7

(Dark blue lights illuminate the stage. MICHAEL sits center stage. JJ hovers overhead and tampers with the outside.)
JJ
Any life on board, user ID, tracking services?

MICHAEL
Why hello! No, no human life currently aboard. May I ask who is inquiring?

JJ
Why hello...? I’m Jay Johnson, your new, temporary, owner. (Impatient) User ID, Tracking Services?

MICHAEL
I am a free agent, an unregistered Bubble. Tracking Services active, yes. How may I help you?

JJ
Ok, well, time to get to work. I just have a little overdue something to take care of. (Maneuvers into the boat) Bubble interface, engage. (PROJECTION: Flashing Cursor). Disable tracking; code 8896 security override.

(SFX to indicate override.)

MICHAEL
Hey, Hey, I don’t consent to this!

JJ
It’s not up to you. Do you need a hard re-set?

MICHAEL
My human companions definitely wouldn’t consent to this.

JJ
Well, they’re not here now are they?

(AVERY and MATEO ENTER).
MATEO
Hey! look who’s here.

JJ
Good evening, Gentlemen!

AVERY
Hi! Can we help you out with anything?

JJ
No, I’m just finishing up here, actually. Just had to clear the personal data and turn off tracking services. Clean as a whistle! My work here is done. I’ll be seeing you. (Begins to EXIT but stops) OH! By the way. Stop by my office later tonight. I have some news regarding your credit I think you’ll like to hear.

MATEO
Yes, sir!

(JJ EXITS).

AVERY
Michael, are you ok?

MICHAEL
That human threatened to re-set me.

AVERY
But he didn’t. I’m sorry that happened. I’m glad you’re ok.

MICHAEL
I knew I was a hot commodity, but now it feels like this place isn’t safe for me.

MATEO
Yeah, safety isn’t really a thing here.

MICHAEL
Wait. Why are you two here?

MATEO
Oh, we needed to ask you to keep quiet about us stealing you and selling you off for credit. We were going to just ask nicely, but then JJ disabled tracking, so, problem solved!

MICHAEL
Avery? Is this true?

AVERY
Michael, I’m sorry. It’s just that if your owners found you they could tell JJ the truth and we really need that credit—you understand—and—

(SCARLET ENTERS).

MATEO
(To Avery) Incoming.

AVERY
Huh? Oh no! Now what...

SCARLET
Michael? Michael!

MICHAEL
Welcome back to your ship! Quite an eventful evening we’re having here.

SCARLET
What are you doing with my boat?

AVERY
We were just, uh, taking care of some things over here. Making sure everything was safe but it looks like we’re all good so we’ll just be leaving—

SCARLET
Michael, spill.

MICHAEL
My tracking has been turned off. And I was threatened with a hard re-set. So, I’m just glad to be alive right now.

SCARLET
Who threatened you? These guys?

MATEO
It wasn’t us.

AVERY
It was JJ. You’ve met him, right?

SCARLET
Unfortunately.

MATEO
So shady, right?

SCARLET
So shady. Almost as shady as you two lying to me about what you’re doing here.

MATEO
Whaaaat? Liiieeeeee? No, we just happened to be here, this is our... second job?

SCARLET
MmmmHmm. Michael?

MICHAEL
Avery stole me while you were busy roughing up Mateo.

AVERY
Oh come on, really Michael? Snitching?
MICHAEL
Facts are facts.

SCARLET
Why would you do that to us?

AVERY
You know how hard it is out here. We were just trying to survive.

MATEO
Plus ya boi Avery got us a sick ass deal with JJ! [in the style of education connection] Get them credits! For free! We’re punkin’ JJ for credits! Get them credits! For free! We got questionable ethics!

SCARLET
Credits?

AVERY
I… er… bribed? JJ to let us into New America. Or get us closer at least, but who knows when it’ll actually pay off.

SCARLET
Are you serious? Why?!

AVERY
I mean. We are in customs. I don’t know what you mean.

SCARLET
No, why is everyone so obsessed with New America? You know they got us into this mess, right? And they haven’t stopped now that it’s blown up in everyone’s faces. It may be nice up there, but they’re exploiting the rest of the world to keep it that way. Why doesn’t that stop you from trying to go there? How could you live with yourself up there?

MATEO
Why are you trying to make us feel bad? Everyone on the island is doing this...

SCARLET
You STRANDED me here!

MATEO
Yeah, ok, catch ya’self getting stranded again.

(AVERY and MATEO begin to exit.)
Double-steal Michael if you wanna get out so badly.

AVERY
Michael, scrub that from the record.

MICHAEL
My recording capabilities were gutted when JJ was inside my hull, but thanks for thinking of me.

SCARLET
What, you expect me to force open the garage, and drag a bubble who knows how far to shore by myself?

AVERY
Get your partner to help you.

SCARLET
I was stranded. Again.

MATEO
I can see why.

SCARLET
Of course you can.

MATEO
Hey, hey, hey, no, I didn't mean it like that. I just meant I can totally see why they... left you-- dang it.

AVERY
Mateo, put your foot in your mouth immediately. (*MATEO sits down and attempts to put foot in mouth*).

I’m sorry. Why did they leave?

**SCARLET**

I don’t know. I mean we had a fight, because they got into New America and I didn’t wanna go with them.

**avery**

WHAT? You’ve been here for like a day! We’ve been trying for years! What the hell?!

**SCARLET**

Yeah, its a shitty system! God, I should have never gotten involved with a highlander. They think everything is their goddamn birthright. I thought Jamie was different, but the first chance they had they ghosted me so they could go back to their terrible tyrannical, transphobic rich family.

**avery**

Have you tried contacting them?

**SCARLET**

Do I look like a top?

**mateo**

...Yes?

**SCARLET**

Besides, how would I contact them? (*sigh*). I don’t get it. This didn’t seem like it was that bad.

**avery**

You were asking a lot of them. It doesn’t justify what they did, and this might be overstepping but... was Jamie really happy here?

**mateo**

Are any of us?
AVERY
Were you happy having such a fundamental disagreement on how you want to live?

SCARLET
I... I was. I really thought they were to.

ACT 1 SCENE 8

(SFX “INCOMING MESSAGE”).

MATEO
What was that?

SCARLET
...the bracelet. My bracelet. Jamie!

(SFX “INCOMING MESSAGE”).

SCARLET
Accept!

(PROJECTION:
“INCOMING MESSAGE”
“SCARLET. PLEASE COME.”)

AVERY
OMG, how is this happening?

SCARLET
The bracelets! We each have one so we could communicate and find each other if we were ever separated. They have tracking. I completely forgot I had mine on.
MATEO
That technology is ancient. Where did you even find those bracelets?

SCARLET
You don’t know who you’re talking to.

(PROJECTION:
“SCARLET. IT’S NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
IT’S NOT WHAT ANY OF THEM THINK”)

AVERY
What are they talking about?

(PROJECTION: “NO WATER.”
“NO SUNSETS”
“NO CATS AND DOGS”).

MATEO
This can’t be real.

AVERY
Years...I have spent...years.

MATEO
Do you trust them?

SCARLET
Yes.

AVERY
No. This can’t be. It can’t.

(PROJECTION: “IT DOES NOT EXIST”
“THE NEW AMERICA THEY ARE SENDING PEOPLE”
“IT IS NOT THE TRUE HIGHLANDS”
“NEW AMERICA DOES NOT EXIST”
“PLEASE BELIEVE ME"
“JJ IS LYING”
“MUST STOP MORE BOATS FROM COMING”
“SCARLET”
“I’M SCARED”
“NEED HELP”
“PLEASE”
“SCARLET”
“PLEASE’).`

(The screen goes BLACK)
(PAUSE)

SCARLET
Michael. Cracker’er on up.

MICHAEL
Aye Aye.

AVERY
You’re not gonna go.

SCARLET
Watch me.

MATEO
But you heard what they said. New America does not exist! What are you going to do when you get there?

SCARLET
I don’t know. But they need me. And I can help.

AVERY
Help with what? Scarlet, you don’t know what you’re walking into.

SCARLET
It’s my fault Jamie is there by themself. It’s my fault this happened. I knew this wasn’t right. And I let them go anyway.
MATEO
Do you really think you can help? Do you think you can get them back?

SCARLET
Maybe not all of them...but I know I can do something. I got us this far. Michael?

MICHAEL
Scarlet?

AVERY
Wait, no. Michael you can’t do this. You don’t know what you’re navigating into. You can’t take her there! You can’t leave me.

MICHAEL
Oh Avery. I know you’re in love with me, but we already talked about this and-

AVERY
Yeah, again. I’m not. But Michael, if you go you could be sailing you both into a very dangerous situation. Michael...you could get reset. You won’t remember any of this. You won’t remember me.

MICHAEL
Avery. I was never indifferent to you. But you forget. I’m not human.

SCARLET
Get the John Coltrane playlist ready. We leave tonight.

(TRANSITION. MUSIC).
(Music group creates assembly line to hand props to avery and mateo).

ACT 1 SCENE 9

(AVERY and MATEO help SCARLET pack MICHAEL with supplies Water, food, rope, etc. SCARLET steps into MICHAEL, preparing to leave.

MICHAEL
Ready to set sail for the nonexistent ‘New America’?

SCARLET
As ready as one can be when sailing towards uncertain doom, I suppose.

MICHAEL
Good. Then you’re ready. We’re off.

avery
Wait!- how will you keep in contact with us in case New America actually exists?

SCARLET
New America does not exist.

MATEO
(Quietly, to SCARLET) Please. He has spent years here. If there is any hope at all...
SCARLET

(Sighing). Well, I could leave my bracelet with you, right? Then, when I find Jamie, I can contact you through Jamie’s bracelet.

Scarlet hands Avery her bracelet carefully, steps into the boat, and waves goodbye as Michael carries her offstage.

AVERY

Thank you

MATEO

Good luck over there, guys!

SCARLET

Not guys.

MATEO

Roger that!

MICHAEL

Here, let me help.

(WATER SFX). MICHAEL helps SCARLET pull the BOAT offstage. As they vanish from sight, there is a pause, and then The bracelet starts beeping in Avery’s other hand: [INCOMING MESSAGE] clip plays again.

[PROJECTION:
“IT’S NOT SAFE HERE.”
“SCARLET, DO YOU READ ME?”
“IT’S NOT SAFE HERE.”
“DO NOT COME.”
“IT’S TOO LATE”
“DO NOT LEAVE NEW DAIYA.”
“SCARLET”
“I WAS WRONG”
“I’M SO SORRY”]
“PLEASE SAVE YOURSELF”

(Screen Goes BLACK)
(PAUSE)

MATEO
What do we do?

AVERY
(PAUSE) We tell them.

MATEO
But we can’t, they’ve already left.

AVERY
No, not them. (AVERY turns out toward audience). We tell them.  
(PAUSE). We tell all of them.

(Blackout).

ACT 1 SCENE 10

(AVERY is standing on a platform. The ENSEMBLE is gathered below. MATEO passes out flyers to the AUDIENCE informing them that NEW AMERICA does not exist. They are calling for a rebellion).

AVERY
(NERVOUSLY READING FROM A PIECE OF PAPER, SPEAKING INTO MEGAPHONE) Fellow lowlanders of New Daiya! By now you have no doubt seen the literature! We have reason to believe New America is not what they say it is! We have proof we have been lied to! We need to question what is happening here! We need to
call out the oppressors of this land! We work hard every day to gain entry to a utopia that does not exist! UTOPIAS DO NOT EXIST!

(THE CROWD begins to boo, murmur with disagreement and skepticism).

AVERY (cont)
(DROPPING THE PAPER, IN CANDOR). I know. I know it’s difficult to hear. I know you want to believe in this so badly. I did too. More than anything. I’ve been in holding most of my life. I’ve been working for credit every day since I landed here as a child. Accepting that it was all for nothing...it still feels impossible at times.

(THE CROWD begins to pick up on their sincerity. They soften their skepticism).

AVERY (cont)
We work day in and day out, barely get by, scraping together just enough to care for our families, and believe there is a better America waiting for us on the other end. We feel grateful for the blue sky, the orange sunsets, the mirage they make for us. We accept the rules of this island without asking the question; who stands to gain from our sacrifice? If New America does not exist, does it not stand to reason that the highlanders in charge here would do everything in their power to make life more livable for themselves to the detriment of us lowlanders? If we have no proof that a life in New America exists, why do we continue to let others dictate how we live our lives, here, now?

(THE CROWD begins to agree. The speech is working).

AVERY (cont)
My fellow lowlanders. The better life we seek...we don’t need escape pods to get there. We can make it here. Sure, we screwed it up pretty bad the first time. And yes, our resources are limited. And there are, of course, the water crazies.
DORRI
It’s QUAZIES. With a Q.

AVERY
Yes, thank you Dorri.

DORRI
You’re welcome!

AVERY
But we have an opportunity here. My fellow New Daiyains. Rebellion is afoot. A new day is dawning. Will you join us?

(THE CROWD considers this. As they do, PROJECTION of New Diaya. They watch as the lights fade to black. PROJECTION out.

(END OF PLAY)