

THE PHANTOM CITY

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EXT. SPACE: EARTH ORBIT - DARK SIDE OF PLANET

Constellations of city lights paint North America below...

The International Space Station -- a jangled construction of various sized modules and fragile-looking solar arrays. One section is larger: The Destiny Science Module.

A robot arm releases a small, silver probe -- slender antennas strike out in all directions.

INT. ISS DESTINY SCIENCE MODULE - DAY SHIFT

The probe sits beyond the viewing portal. Numerous monitors course with raw data. Floating at the main screen -- HAMLIN THORNE. African American. Early 40s.

HAMLIN

Janus Dimensional Energy Probe is free and clear. All sensors nominal.

Hamlin speaks to one of the laptops with a live video feed of a woman in a control center. She is, CONTROL.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Control, are you receiving?

CONTROL (ON MONITOR)

Data stream is live. You are clear to proceed.

The STATION COMMANDER hovers nearby with ASTRONAUT #1.

STATION COMMANDER

Are you ready, Dr. Thorne?

HAMLIN

After three years of ignoring my family and trying to convince NASA I haven't become a crackpot physicist, I am more ready than you can imagine.

Hamlin taps the enter key of a laptop. A photo of a white woman in her late 30s and a five-year-old girl is taped to the monitor. He touches it. Smiles. The graphs of data on the monitors fluctuate. Shift colors. Suddenly spike. A red warning flashes on one of the screens.

STATION COMMANDER

What's wrong?

HAMLIN

I don't know.

Hamlin furiously types at the keyboard.

STATION COMMANDER

Shut it down!

HAMLIN

I'm trying! It's not responding!

The lights in the science module flicker. Beyond the viewing portal -- bolts of blue lighting arc between the antennas of the probe.

EXT. SPACE: EARTH ORBIT - DARK SIDE OF PLANET

The arcs of electricity around the probe expand in a brilliant flash as the lights of the space station wink out. A moment later the probe goes dark.

INT. ISS DESTINY SCIENCE MODULE - DAY SHIFT

The lights of the science module blink back to life.

ASTRONAUT #1

Backup power online. That surge took down the whole station!

STATION COMMANDER

I don't care how important this project is to NASA. Shut that damn thing down!

Hamlin looks out the viewing portal at the inert probe.

HAMLIN

It's dead. Completely burned out.

Hamlin turns to one of monitors and speaks to Control.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Control, did you get all that? There must be a massive dimensional displacement to create that kind of energy surge.

CONTROL (ON MONITOR)

We received the data, Dr. Throne, but there's something more important. Your sister is on the line.

The video feed on the monitor switches. On the screen -- ZOE THORNE. African American. Late 30s. She is distraught.

HAMLIN

Zoe? What's wrong?

ZOE

Hamlin. I'm so sorry. It's Emily and Rebecca. There was a fire at the house. And...and they're gone.

Hamlin looks to the photo of the woman and girl.

HAMLIN

Oh my God. The garage!

ZOE

Yes! The garage. How did you know?

Hamlin turns to the dead probe outside the space station. Blinks back tears.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT - DARK SIDE OF PLANET

The sun crests the curve of the Earth. A wave of light washes across the many modules of the space station and a small, inert ball of silver.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - SUNSET

Light recedes across the desert valley, past a ranch house with several barns, an RV, three aluminum campers, an old steel-latticed windmill, a small solar array, and the bone-white skeleton of a long-dead tree.

EXT. THORNE RANCH BACKYARD - SUNSET

Hamlin sits on a wooden bench beside the tree. Two gravestones rest nearby.

TITLES: New Mexico -- Three Years Later

He places two flowers beside the gravestones which read: "Emily - Loving Mother" and "Rebecca - Beautiful Child." After a moment, he stands and walks toward the ranch.

EXT. THORNE RANCH - SUNSET

Hamlin steps toward the main barn as a car pulls up. Zoe gets out of the car.

HAMLIN

Zee! You're early. I wasn't expecting you until tomorrow.

Hamlin embraces her.

ZOE

I decided to drive straight through from Albuquerque rather than stay in a hotel. Did I miss anything?

HAMLIN

No. We're still waiting for a signal surge. It can be unpredictable.

Hamlin leads Zoe to the barns, past three campers and an RV.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

There's a guestroom set up for you in the house. We've added a few barns since I bought the place. These campers are where the team stays. Everybody lives here. It's easier. We work late nights. We use the RV for remote signal tracking. And Max's hunting trips, of course.

ZOE

How do you afford all this? You said the NASA dropped the project.

HAMLIN

They did. But we have a few very eccentric investors. And the life insurance policy paid for the ranch.

Hamlin looks toward the tree. Sad. Suddenly, the door of the main barn bangs open, and MAX runs out. Tall. Burly and bearded. Early 40s. White. Southern accent.

MAX

Zoe!

Max bounds over and picks Zoe up in a bear hug.

ZOE

Max! It's so good to see you.

MAX

I made you a coconut cream pie.

ZOE

Ooo. I should have visited sooner.

Zoe grins as Max puts her down. Hamlin takes her hand.

HAMLIN

Come on. I'll introduce you to the rest of the team and show you the control lab. Max, how are the pretest checks looking?

MAX

Like a pork roast at a church picnic, Bubba.

HAMLIN

I don't know what that means, but I'll assume it's good.

Hamlin smiles and leads Zoe to the main barn. A motorcycle leans against the wall.

INT. MAIN BARN - SUNSET

Hamlin ushers Zoe into the barn. Max follows. Old rafters and new electronics. Tables with computer towers, large monitors, and laptops on one side -- a machine shop on the other. A coconut cream pie sits at Max's station.

Two identical women stand at workstations. ISABELLA (IZZY) and GABRIELLA (GABBY). Korean American. Late 20s. Twins. Izzy sports pink hair, a leather biker jacket, and black leggings. Gabby wears jeans and a flannel shirt.

HAMLIN

This is our command center and lab. This is Isabella, she's an electrical engineer who works with Max on the physical systems integration. And this is Gabriella, she's a software engineer, who for reasons she won't disclose, has an art history degree. She's creating the systems code. They're both brilliant. This is my sister, Zoe. The most popular reporter on the Hive Collective.

IZZY

Hi, I'm Izzy.

Zoe shakes Izzy's hand.

ZOE
Nice to meet you.
(Turns to Gabby)
You must be Gabriella.

Gabby is flustered by Zoe's dazzling smile.

GABBY
Yes. I'm Gabriella. Gabby. Hi. I'm a
huge fan. I've read all your
articles.

ZOE
That's sweet. I've never had a fan.

HAMLIN
Let me show you our new toy. Open the
barn doors, Izzy.

Izzy flips a switch on the table beside her control station. The rear doors of the barn slowly open. A large red barn sits in the distance.

HAMLIN (cont'd)
Eject the Zeus Converter, Gabby.

Gabby taps a button on a laptop. On one of the monitors: a video stream shows the door of the red barn swinging upward.

EXT. NEW MEXICO RANCH - RED BARN - SUNSET

Sunlight illuminates the edge of a curved metal cylinder. The red barn slides backward on rail tracks revealing a long metal machine with strange protuberances. Two liquid nitrogen tanks hug the walls of the the barn.

INT. MAIN BARN - SUNSET

Everyone watches the gleaming machine revealed. Max hands Zoe a piece of pie. She smiles and digs in.

MAX
Looks beautiful in the setting sun.

HAMLIN
That is the future of free energy.
The Zeus Dimensional Energy
Converter.

(MORE)

HAMLIN (cont'd)

After what happened with the sensor probes, Max convinced me to keep it far from the lab. But, if this test goes well, we can get our investors to re-capitalize and everyone can get paid.

GABBY

We're not here for the money.

IZZY

We're here for the entertainment value.

HAMLIN

Funny, that's what my wife used to tell me.

Hamlin looks at his workstation. The photo of Emily and Rebecca is taped to the monitor. He smiles briefly.

ZOE

So, what's your contribution around here, Max? Head baker?

MAX

Oh, I tinker with this and that...

HAMLIN

It's Max's design.

MAX

Half my design. I helped Hamlin figured out how to take his theoretical physics and turn it into practical engineering.

ZOE

As usual.

Zoe smiles.

GABBY

It's like cold fusion amazing.

IZZY

More like the ARC reactor from Iron Man amazing.

HAMLIN

The prototype converter produced a thousand kilowatts of power during our last test.

MAX

We had enough charge in the flywheel battery wells to be off grid for a month.

HAMLIN

We're hoping for ten megawatts with this test.

ZOE

How is this supposed to work again?

HAMLIN

The Zeus Converter harnesses the dimensional energy between adjacent realms and transforms it into standard electricity.

ZOE

You realize an explanation needs to make sense, right? Adjacent realms are like alternate universes?

HAMLIN

Okay. Sorry. Not alternate universes where things turn out differently, where Max is short and I'm bald, but alternate realms: universes where the basic rules of physics might be completely different. My theory predicts that the dimensional friction between those realms produces waves of energy that can be harnessed.

MAX

That's not a windmill outside. It's part of a sensor array.

IZZY

And a dimensional energy conduit.

GABBY

There are two more around the ranch.

HAMLIN

The energy doesn't usually manifest in our realm, but it gives off a signal that we can track.

ZOE

Like the space probe.

HAMLIN

Exactly. We're trying to use the energy sensor to predict when the surges will happen, and the converter to turn it into usable electricity. Eventually we'll be able to tap into the energy without the surges.

IZZY

Yikes! Hamlin, I've got something on the sensor array.

Red lights flash on monitors around the barn.

HAMLIN

Stations everyone!

Hamlin turns to the nearest monitor to watch the data streams and video feeds.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

What's our status?

IZZY

The signal is really strong, Boss.

MAX

Zeus array fully deployed, Bubba.

Gabby points to a fluctuating graph on one of her monitors.

GABBY

It's not just the dimensional energy. This is spiking across a broad spectrum. Radio. Microwave. Infrared. Ultraviolet. Not in the visible spectrum, but it's close.

ZOE

Is this supposed to happen?

HAMLIN

Who knows? We're like Ben Franklin flying a kite in a lightning storm.

ZOE

That sounds dangerous.

HAMLIN

A little bit, yeah.

Hamlin grins. Zoe shakes her head.

MAX

Zeus Converter functioning at ninety-five percent. We just crossed the ten megawatt mark.

IZZY

The surge is spiking higher.

GABBY

This is greater than anything we've seen so far. We're going to need more battery wells.

The lights in the barn flicker.

IZZY

We've got a massive energy surge!

HAMLIN

Everybody step away from your stations! Ground yourselves!

The Zeus Converter outside the barn sparks with electricity.

MAX

Whoa! The Zeus Converter is overloading!

HAMLIN

Shut it down!

Max taps his keyboard. Nothing. Tries again.

MAX

It's not respondin'. I can't shut it down!

Hamlin runs to Max.

HAMLIN

Try the secondary control line.

MAX

Nothing. Still crankin' up. Twenty percent over the redline!

GABBY

The energy burst is still increasing.

IZZY

It's going to blow!

Red alarm lights start blinking on Hamlin's monitor.

HAMLIN
This shouldn't be happening. Not
again.

Hamlin runs out of the barn.

EXT. RANCH - MAIN BARN - SUNSET

Hamlin pulls the motorcycle from the side of the barn. Kicks
it to life. Races off across the sagebrush desert.

INT. MAIN BARN - SUNSET

They all watch through the barn doors as Hamlin rides toward
the Zeus Converter.

ZOE
What the hell is he doing!?

MAX
There's a manual shut-off on the
converter. If he can get to it in
time. It's overheatin' like a can of
baked beans in a campfire.

GABBY
The phase conversion field is
fluctuating. The surge must have
fried the control unit.

IZZY
Energy surge still spiking. It's the
longest one ever.

ZOE
Come on, Ham!

Zoe stares out the back door of the barn.

EXT. RANCH - ZEUS CONVERTER - SUNSET

Hamlin skids to a stop and leaps from the motorcycle. He
shields his eyes and runs to the back of the Zeus Converter.

INT. MAIN BARN - SUNSET

Max looks up from his monitor.

MAX

One hundred eighty percent capacity.
Still spinnin' up. Heat levels are
too close to critical. It's got
seconds before it blows.

ZOE

Damnit Hamlin!

Zoe clutches at Max's arm.

EXT. RANCH - ZEUS CONVERTER - SUNSET

Large red handle. Hamlin tugs at it. Doesn't budge. Warning
lights flash.

HAMLIN

Come on! Move!

Hamlin pulls again, lifting himself off the ground. The
warning lights continue to flash. He slowly brings the
handle down.

The converter shuts down. Hamlin falls to his knees.

INT. MAIN BARN - SUNSET

The alarms stop.

MAX

Shut down complete.

ZOE

He did it!

GABBY & IZZY

And we're all still alive!

Zoe stares out the barn doors at Hamlin.

EXT. THE RANCH - MAIN BARN - SUNSET

Everyone exits the barn as Hamlin rides up and hops off the
motorcycle. Zoe smacks him upside the head.

ZOE

That's for Grandma, since she's not
alive anymore to knock some sense
into you.

HAMLIN

This from the woman who walks into war zones.

ZOE

I get paid to do that.

HAMLIN

We all know you'd do it for free.

Zoe punches Hamlin in the chest and then hugs him. Max embraces him as Zoe lets him go.

MAX

You saved our baby, Bubba.

HAMLIN

It's my fault. You said to spend the money on the top of the line surge protectors for the control unit, and I said we couldn't afford them. This is what happens when you buy cheap shit. And we really need to oil that cutoff switch.

ZOE

It was very impressive before it tried to kill everybody.

GABBY

Do you have to mention that it nearly blew up when you talk to the investors?

IZZY

You could say it exceeded performance expectations.

Hamlin turns to the team.

HAMLIN

Okay, we had a successful test of the Zeus Converter. The sensors recorded some key data. And nothing exploded. That calls for beer and nachos on me at the Red Wolf.

Izzy and Gabby cheer as they all head back into the barn.

EXT. THE TOWN OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The silhouette of the small town of Moonrise stands out against the dim glow of the desert beneath the full moon.

INT. THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Hamlin and the team are spread around the bar. A band plays in the corner. Locals dance. Eat. Drink.

Hamlin brings a beer to Zoe, who is eating nachos.

ZOE

You remembered my favorite.

HAMLIN

That's easy. It's my favorite too.

Hamlin sits down beside her.

ZOE

So, you seeing anyone?

HAMLIN

What? No. No, I'm not...Max keeps trying to set me up with this local florist, but no. I'm not...How about you? What happened to...

ZOE

Let's not talk about that, or I'll get angry or drunk or both. So, I thought you abandoned all this strange energy research.

HAMLIN

I did. Or at least I tried to.

Hamlin looks at his beer.

HAMLIN

After what happened with the sensor probe in space, NASA shut me down. And after the fire at the house and...everything, I couldn't look at my research. So, I mothballed it.

Zoe puts her hand on Hamlin's arm.

ZOE

It wasn't your fault, Ham.

HAMLIN

Max says the same thing, but it's hard to believe him. She was his sister. Anyway, he came to visit, and we started talking about my theories, and then one of the old sensors went off and pointed to New Mexico. So, he convinced me to set up shop here.

ZOE

And now you two are building your inter-dimensional energy thingy?

HAMLIN

The Zeus Dimensional Energy Converter.

ZOE

Zeus? For the god of lightning? A little on the nose.

HAMLIN

I know. But Max likes it. And we think we can power the world. Unlimited free energy for everyone. I just need to figure out why these surges are happening and how to control them without destabilizing the membranes between realms.

ZOE

I know I'm going to regret asking, but what happens if these membranes are destabilized?

HAMLIN

An unchecked energy release could destroy the very fabric of reality. Or maybe nothing? I'm not sure. The math is fuzzy on that. We're only at the prototype phase, so nothing bad can happen.

ZOE

That sounds like what you said when you were twelve and invented a laser carving knife that set the dining room table on fire.

HAMLIN

Come on. That was brilliant. It carved and cooked at the same time.

ZOE

And what did Grandma tell you when she got home?

Hamlin takes a deep breath. Sighs.

HAMLIN

The same thing she always said: "How can anyone so smart have so little common sense?"

Zoe laughs.

ZOE

And you're sure this Zeus contraption that almost blew up today is a good idea?

Hamlin sighs again.

HAMLIN

I think so. If it works, we'll help billions of people. And, honestly, I need to make it right some how. Make their deaths mean something.

Zoe sighs.

ZOE

I think they'd be proud. Even Grandma would be impressed.

HAMLIN

As long as she didn't know how much it cost to build.

(Smiles.)

I'm glad you came.

Zoe smiles back.

INT. THE RED WOLF BAR AND GRILL - NIGHT

Izzy and Gabby are at the bar.

IZZY

You should ask her to dance.

GABBY

I can't. I just...She's Hamlin's sister. And she's older. And it's not that kind of town. It's just...Stop.

IZZY

You're so pathetic. She could be Xena to your Gabrielle.

GABBY

She is kinda tall, right?

Gabby sips her beer and looks across the room at Zoe.

INT. THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Max and Zoe sit at the table.

ZOE

How's he really been?

MAX

I reckon he's alright. The anniversary is hard. You know Ham. The more he needs to deal with his shit, the harder he works so he's too tired to deal with his shit.

ZOE

Typical. I should visit him more often. So, how are you?

MAX

Better. We both are. It was a hard loss for both of us. Emily was... special. And Rebecca, well.... He had me worried for a while, but I think he's in a good place now. Or he fakes it better. It's nice you're back. He needs you around more.

ZOE

Thank you for taking care of him.

Zoe reaches out and takes Max's hand.

INT. THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Later, at the bar, Hamlin brings drinks to Izzy and Gabby.

HAMLIN

So, what did you want to talk about?

IZZY

My sister thinks your sister is hot. What are her chances?

GABBY

Oh my God, you are so... shut up!

IZZY

Is she Batwoman or Wonder Woman?

GABBY

I so hate you.

HAMLIN

In my experience, that depends on who she's with. You should ask her to dance.

IZZY

Told you!

HAMLIN

You wanted to talk about Zoe?

GABBY

No. Definitely not!

IZZY

So, ever since we were little kids we were interested in science and space and sci-fi.

GABBY

When we were teens, we followed you while you ran the Nebula Project for NASA.

HAMLIN

Wow. That makes me feel really old.

IZZY

That's why we came to work for you. We wanted to do something exciting and make the world a better place.

GABBY

And we think the Zeus energy technology will change the world.

IZZY

Remember when we started writing gaming apps in our free time because the desert is so boring.

HAMLIN

The desert is slow, not boring.

GABBY

Those are synonyms. Anyway, we created *Killer Zombie Bees* and *Vampire Robots*.

IZZY

It turns out, they're really popular. So, we have some money saved up, and we want to invest it.

HAMLIN

Okay. So how much do you have?

Hamlin takes a sip of beer.

GABBY

About one point six million.

Hamlin coughs and chokes as he tries to swallow.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Hamlin and the team are leaving the bar. Zoe takes his arm.

ZOE

I'm going to stay a bit. Gabby will drive me back.

HAMLIN

Did she ask you to dance?

ZOE

In fact, she did. How did you know?

They look through the door to see Gabby, smiling at the bar.

HAMLIN

I know more than you know I know.
Play nice.

Hamlin kisses her on the cheek.

ZOE

Don't I always?

Zoe smiles a wicked smile and saunters toward Gabby.

INT. HAMLIN'S SUV - NIGHT

Hamlin drives. Max sits beside him. Izzy is in back.

MAX

One point six million!

HAMLIN

It's a lot of money to invest in a wild theory.

IZZY

We're thinking of it as our retirement plan. For our thirties.

The car shakes. Lightening fills the sky. Hamlin looks in the rear-view mirror. Slams on the brakes.

INT. THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Zoe and Gabby are slow dancing.

ZOE

So, tell me about this art degree.

GABBY

Oh, you know. There was a girl. She was...and then we moved into together...and it got all...

ZOE

I got a tattoo for similar reasons. You're better off with the degree.

The bar shakes and the lights flicker. Zoe and Gabby stop dancing. Look around.

ZOE

What's that...?

The air becomes electric.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Hamlin, Max, and Izzy stand outside the car, eyes wide.

Instead of the town lights they see a brilliant haze of blue-white light in the shape of a city.

IZZY

That's a freaking city!

MAX

Right smack where the town oughta be!

IZZY

How the hell is that possible!?

HAMLIN

Something is horribly wrong. An energy rift has opened between the realms. Back in the car!

Hamlin leaps in the SUV. Izzy and Max scramble to follow.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Hamlin's SUV races along a narrow road across the desert.

INT. HAMLIN'S SUV - NIGHT

Hamlin drives with one eye on the rear-view mirror.

IZZY

You're going the wrong way! We have to head back to where the town was. Gabby and Zoe were there.

HAMLIN

We will. But we need to get the RV and some equipment first.

MAX

Where'd the town get off to?

HAMLIN

I'm guessing the town is wherever that city used to be.

Hamlin pulls into the driveway of the ranch.

INT. THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

The bar is dark. People moan. A light comes on. A smartphone flashlight. Zoe holds it up.

ZOE

Are you okay?

GABBY

I feel like a Klingon kicked me in the head.

ZOE

Let's get out of here.

Zoe grabs Gabby's hand and they stagger to the front door.

EXT. THE RANCH - MAIN BARN - NIGHT

The SUV skids to a stop in front of the main barn. Hamlin, Max, and Izzy leap out of the vehicle.

HAMLIN

Max, get the RV. I'll get what we need from the lab.

IZZY

What should I do?

HAMLIN

Go in the house, and grab whatever food you can. Fast.

IZZY

What do we need food for?

MAX

In case we can't find any inside that city.

IZZY

We're going into that freaky thing?!

HAMLIN

It's the only way to find out if the Zeus Converter is responsible for shifting it here and figure out how to push it back where it belongs.

MAX

You think we did this?

HAMLIN

Right now, the best explanation I have is that this is my fault. If it is, I'll fix it. But, we need to hurry. The sensor data near the event will be crucial.

Izzy runs toward the house. Max runs toward an RV. Hamlin races into the main barn.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Zoe and Gabby lurch out of the bar and look upward.

ZOE

Oh shit!

GABBY

Where the hell are the stars!?

The sky above is a deep velvet black with a red slash bleeding a faint crimson light.

INT. MAIN BARN - NIGHT

Hamlin dashes to various tables. Grabs laptops and equipment. Shoves them in a shoulder bag. Stops at his station. Looks at the photo of Emily and Rebecca. Takes it. Stuffs it in his shirt pocket.

EXT. THE RANCH - MAIN BARN - NIGHT

Hamlin steps out of the barn. A battered RV with antennas mounted to its roof pulls to a stop. Max gets out. They stare across the desert.

HAMLIN

This was all a mistake. Coming here.
Building the Zeus Converter.

MAX

It wasn't a mistake, and this ain't
your fault.

HAMLIN

This feels like last time. Not seeing
something obvious that becomes a
disaster.

MAX

What'd I tell ya on our first huntin'
trip?

HAMLIN

"Always keep an eye out for bears."

MAX

No. Well, yes, but the other thing I
said, the important thing, is that I
always got your back. True then. True
now. We'll get 'em back, Bubba.

Max puts his arm around Hamlin.

HAMLIN
You're good friend, Max.

Izzy staggers out of the ranch house with two large bags of groceries. Max goes to help her.

IZZY
I grabbed as much food as I could.

HAMLIN
You did great. Let's go. We might not have much time.

Hamlin climbs in the driver's side of the RV.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RED WOLF BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Zoe turns her phone light off. Dials a number.

ZOE
We need Hamlin. Damnit! No signal.

Gabby looks up from her phone as well.

GABBY
I think something happened with that energy surge today.

ZOE
What could...Oh, my God! There's something behind that truck!

Something large, red, and fast snatches a man beside a truck before disappearing behind a building. The man's wails die fast. Gabby screams. Pulls Zoe across the parking lot.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Hamlin's RV speeds down the road. Ahead, a small city with oddly shaped structures is silhouetted against the sky.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Hamlin drives. Max sits beside him. He wears a black hunting vest. The RV is a mobile version of the control lab. Izzy sits at one of the workstations.

IZZY

The energy signature is nearly as great as the spike we saw today. How is that possible?

HAMLIN

At a guess, I think the Zeus Converter ripped something open between the realms when it nearly exploded today.

MAX

But how could that happen?

HAMLIN

I have an idea, but I hope I'm wrong.

Hamlin slows the RV to a stop.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - OUTSIDE THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The RV sits at the edge a severed building. The Phantom City bends around in a perfect circle, structures cut in half. Narrow and slender. Fat and round. The buildings are various shades of green. Few more than six stories tall. Vegetation with thick green vines and red-gold leaves climbs the ruins.

A row of lights come to life atop the RV. A curving, stone-paved street is revealed in light and shadow.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Hamlin leans over the steering wheel.

HAMLIN

Going into that city is the only way to find out what happened and how to get Zoe and Izzy back, but you two don't need to go with me. This is my fault. I don't know what we'll find and I don't know how easy it will be to get out.

IZZY

Gabby is stuck wherever that city came from. If going in gets her back, I'm going in.

Hamlin looks to Max.

MAX

Bubba, she ain't my sister but she's close enough.

HAMLIN

Right. Thank you. Both of you.

Hamlin squints and drives the RV into the Phantom City.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Izzy, keep an eye on the energy signature. And make sure the cameras are all recording.

IZZY

Already on it.

Max looks out the window at the undulating buildings.

MAX

Looks like somebody got drunk on moonshine and tried to build a tree house out of kudzu.

HAMLIN

The shift between realms sliced through these buildings leaving the city in a perfect circle. So, the epicenter of the event is probably in the middle of this place. We just have to find a way to get there.

Hamlin stares at the twisting streets.

EXT. STREETS OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

People run screaming. Cars crash into each other. Madness.

Dark shapes dart through the crimson shadows -- horse sized grasshoppers with leathery, red skin.

An old green pickup truck squeals out of the parking lot of the Red Wolf Bar & Grill. Gabby is behind the wheel.

INT. GABBY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Gabby grips the steering wheel tight. Zoe records everything on her smartphone.

GABBY

You're recording this?! Now!?

ZOE
I'm a reporter. Look out!

The truck lurches sideways. One of the phantom creatures strikes a side panel.

EXT. STREETS OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The phantom creature leaps into the bed of the truck.

INT. GABBY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Gabby looks into the rear-view mirror. The phantom creature steadies itself in the truck bed. A single oblong eye above a maw of knife-blade teeth stares back.

GABBY
Glove box! Glove box!

Zoe opens the glove box. Inside: a silver Colt 9mm semiautomatic. She snatches it. The creature smashes the rear window.

Zoe chambers a round. Turns. Expertly fires repeatedly at the phantom creature's head.

EXT. STREETS OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The phantom creature staggers from the repeated gunshots -- unharmed. Gabby hits the breaks. Turns the truck down another street. The creature falls to the ground, shakes itself. Races off in pursuit of slower prey.

INT. GABBY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Gabby slams the accelerator down. Zoe stares through the shattered rear window.

ZOE
What the fuck are those things?! I
shot it in the head!

Gabby turns down another street. Jams on the breaks. The truck slides to a stop.

ZOE
Holy shit!

GABBY
We are so, so screwed.

They stare out the truck windshield.

EXT. EDGE OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

A wide plain of jagged rocks. Charcoal gray trees with knife-blade branches dot the landscape. In the nearest tree -- something milk-white slithers to the ground. Twin heads with glowing orange eyes glare at the truck.

INT. GABBY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Gabby and Zoe stare out the window in horror.

GABBY
I think an energy burst knocked us
into another realm.

ZOE
"Nothing bad can happen" my ass.

Gabby backs the truck down the street and into town.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The large wheels of the RV roll slowly over wide paving stones. The bright top lights illuminate bizarre buildings curving and twisting. Windows are plentiful, organically sensuous in form. Most of the panes are shattered -- only shadows visible inside.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Hamlin drives cautiously.

HAMLIN
Any pings on the sensors from the
city?

IZZY
Nothing so far. No electrical
activity. No radio. And these
buildings seem to eat up infrared.

HAMLIN
How's the energy signature looking?

IZZY
Fluctuating a little faster.

Izzy looks to Hamlin.

IZZY (cont'd)
Where the town is, where Gabby and
Zoe are, this other realm, how do we
know it even has air to breathe?

HAMLIN
Adjacent realms should be similar to
ours. I hope.

Hamlin glances at Max and Izzy, worried.

MAX
We've come nearly a klick. Maybe we
should get out and take a look
around. See if the locals will come
out and offer us pie and ice cream.

Hamlin brings the RV to a halt.

HAMLIN
It's worth a try. These streets twist
so much I'm not even sure which
direction the center of the city
might be. I'm positive what caused
this will be there.

IZZY
I can launch the drone.

Max climbs into the back of the RV. Hamlin follows.

HAMLIN
Good idea. Put it up. Keep an eye on
us. And monitor the energy signature.

Max goes to a locked cabinet, enters a numerical code.
Inside: a gun rack with two semi-automatic hunting rifles
with scopes, two handguns, and a shotgun. They grab the
rifles and extra ammo magazines.

MAX
And you thought I was crazy to want
rifles for hunting and fending off
bears.

HAMLIN
I will never question your redneck
ways again.

Izzy puts on a headset and hands them each a walkie-talkie with an earpiece. They both grab a flashlight.

IZZY

Be careful. It may be dangerous.

HAMLIN

How many times have I heard that?

MAX

How many times have you listened?

HAMLIN

Excellent point. Keep this locked.

Hamlin reaches for the handle of the side door.

IZZY

I'm Izzy. The one with pink hair. The paranoid one. I'm locking the door as soon as you're out.

Hamlin smiles and opens the door.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Hamlin and Max emerge from the side door of the RV. Turn their flashlights on. They move cautiously. Like hunters, not soldiers. Hamlin keys his walkie-talkie.

HAMLIN

Mic check. Izzy, do you copy?

A sunroof slides back and small aerial drone rises into the night air from the top of the RV.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Izzy controls the drone with a large joystick. The monitor ahead of her shows a camera view from it.

IZZY

I see you and I hear you, but audio and video signals are a little sketchy. I don't think we will get much range out of either of them. The energy signature is bleeding into the other spectrums.

HAMLIN (O.S.)

Copy that. We'll stay close.

Izzy pushes the joystick forward.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Hamlin and Max walk slowly toward a curving portal of the nearest building.

IZZY (O.S.)
Do you see anything?

HAMLIN
Nothing. No one.

They pause. Max turns to Hamlin.

MAX
The daring hero of the story always goes first. The lovable sidekick watches his back.

HAMLIN
I thought we were partners.

MAX
When there's money involved. When there's a dark room in a spooky city, I'm your sidekick.

HAMLIN
Next time, I get to be the sidekick.

Hamlin sighs. Enters the building.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Hamlin's flashlight illuminates an oblong space with curving walls. Large tables grow out of the floor. Wide benches sprout from the walls. A room for giants.

MAX
Remind me...when the bears came home, did they eat Goldilocks?

Hamlin runs his finger along a dusty tabletop.

HAMLIN
This place has been deserted for a long time.

MAX

So much for askin' the locals how to make their city go away.

HAMLIN

This doesn't make sense. Let's keep moving.

They walk back through the entrance portal.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Hamlin and Max continue walking up the winding street. The drone hovers above them.

MAX

Is it freakin' you out that it's so quiet?

HAMLIN

The lack of sound is the least of the many things freaking me out.

IZZY (O.S.)

Guys, there's something up ahead. I can't see it well with the night vision. It's in the shadows, but it's popping up on infrared.

HAMLIN

What is it? Is it a person?

IZZY (O.S.)

I can't tell. It looks...big.

MAX

Bears?

Fifty feet away, a phantom creature enters the street.

HAMLIN

That is not a bear.

MAX

You think maybe it's friendly?

Max raises a hand to wave. The phantom creature charges.

HAMLIN

Not friendly!

Hamlin and Max open fire on the phantom creature. The bullets have little effect.

MAX

It's like throwin' rocks at a gator!

HAMLIN

In here!

Hamlin pulls Max through the portal of a nearby building.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max and Hamlin quickly reload with magazines from their back pockets. The phantom creature rushes the open portal. They fire a hail of bullets. It doesn't retreat.

MAX

How are we gonna kill that thing!?

HAMLIN

I don't think we can!

Hamlin runs out of ammo. The RV slams into the creature. Roars past the entrance of the building.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The RV screeches to a stop. The phantom creature writhes in the street. One of its six appendages oozes a viscous black blood. It gets up. Scurries down an alley.

Izzy hops out of the side door. Shotgun in her hands.

IZZY

What the fuck was that?!

MAX

Better question -- is it alone?

HAMLIN

Best question -- is it a baby or a
momma unkillable monster?

MAX

Can we not just be frightened? Do we
have to be terrified?!

IZZY

I'm already terrified!

MAX

At least we know what happened to the locals.

HAMLIN

I think that thing came into the city from someplace it jumped to. This isn't the first time the city has shifted between realms.

MAX

Great. So, there could be even more freaky monsters that wanna to kill us. What's the word for more terrified than terrified?

An alarm rings loudly from inside the RV.

IZZY

The energy signature is spiking!

Izzy runs inside the RV. Hamlin and Max follow.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Izzy slides into her workstation. Max stands behind her. Hamlin locks the side door and joins them.

IZZY

It's building up again. This matches the data the system recorded before the city appeared.

HAMLIN

Well, the good news is, I don't think the Zeus Converter caused the rift between realms that swapped this city and the town.

Hamlin slips into the driver's seat and starts driving forward. Max climbs into the passenger seat.

MAX

The bad news is going to be really bad ain't it?

HAMLIN

I think the rift has existed for years and the city is going to jump between realms again.

MAX

Well, hell. Looks like we came to the party late, and we're leavin' early.

HAMLIN

Izzy, tell me how to get out of here. I need a place to turn around or a path out.

Izzy squints at the video feeds from the drone.

IZZY

There's a cross street coming up. Hang a right.

Hamlin turns the large steering wheel.

EXT. STREETS OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

Sounds of sporadic gunfire compete with screams of terror. Zoe and Gabby leap from the truck. Race to a hardware store. Gabby grabs the door handle. Locked. Zoe shatters the upper glass pane of the door with the handle of the gun.

A shriek from the street. A creature turns to the sound of the shattering glass.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - NIGHT

Zoe and Gabby rush inside. Zoe slams the door shut. Locks it. Gabby pulls her away.

GABBY

Get back!

The phantom creature crashes into the door. Glass shatters. It screeches. Wedges its body through the door frame.

Zoe screams and fires at the creature. Pulls the trigger until empty. The creature squeezes further through the door.

Gabby spies a display of CO2 fire extinguishers. Grabs one. Hands shaking. Opens the valve. Blasts the creature's head.

The creature howls. Tries to back away. It's wedged in place. Zoe grabs a fire extinguisher. Joins Gabby. Ice cakes the creature's crimson skull. It stops making noise.

Zoe drops her empty fire extinguisher. Looks around. Sees axes on the wall. Grabs one.

Swings it at the creature's head. A chunk shatters off. It wails and thrashes. One of its appendages hits Zoe. Knocks her to the floor.

Yelling, Gabby grabs another axe. Chops at the creature's head. One of its limbs smashes her. Sends her sprawling into a display shelf.

Zoe staggers to her feet. Snatches the fallen axe. Swings. The side of the monster's skull shatters. It flails for a moment. Then it's still.

Gabby stands, left arm bleeding. Zoe goes to her.

GABBY (cont'd)
I'm fine. I cut myself when I hit the shelf.

Zoe and Gabby look at the dead creature.

ZOE
How did you think of that?

GABBY
Steve McQueen. *The Blob*. Izzy and I watch it every Halloween.

ZOE
Do you feel that?

Zoe and Gabby look around. Anxious. The store shakes.

GABBY
The town is shifting again!

ZOE
Shifting to where?!

Zoe and Gabby run for the back door.

EXT. ABOVE THE STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The RV races down a winding street. The drone flies above. The edge of the city is close. The air begins to shimmer in an electric blue haze.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Hamlin jams the accelerator to the floor.

MAX
We're not going to make it, Bubba!

HAMLIN
We'll make it!

The glow becomes blinding. Hamlin slams on the breaks.

HAMLIN (cont'd)
Shit! We were so close.

An orange glow suffuses their faces.

EXT. EDGE OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAWN

A sun sits above a mountain range casting an amber blanket of light across a barren snow-covered landscape.

INT. RV - NIGHT

Hamlin and Max stare at the plains of ice.

MAX
We didn't jump home.

HAMLIN
Almost. The sun is right. And those mountains are in the right place. But this desert shouldn't be covered in snow. The displacements are more complicated than I thought. We've jumped from another realm to an alternate universe in our own realm. I made a mistake. We should never have entered the city.

Izzy squats down between their seats.

IZZY
Where are Gabby and Zoe?

HAMLIN
I think when the city jumped into our world it displaced the town, pushing it to the last realm the city was in. Now that the city has jumped again, hopefully the town will slide back into our realm.

MAX

But this is an alternate universe in our realm?

HAMLIN

Exactly. A parallel universe. The interdenominational math I created suggests this is possible, but I didn't pursue it too far because I didn't want to be tempted.

IZZY

This is too confusing. Just tell me you have a plan to get us home.

HAMLIN

Think of the alternate realms as a really tall bookcase. Jumping between realms, universes with different laws of physics, is like jumping between shelves of the bookcase. Now imagine our realm as the shelf in the middle. It has books spreading out left and right into infinity. Those are alternate realities with different timelines. We've just jumped from a shelf with an alternate realm back to our shelf, but into the wrong book, into an alternate reality.

IZZY

You realize you're freaking me out not calming me down, right?

MAX

The plan, Bubba, the plan.

HAMLIN

The Zeus Converter definitely didn't create these displacements, but they are not natural events. I think some kind of device is causing this, and I think it's broken. And whatever it is, it's at the center of this city. We need to find it, figure out how it works, fix it, and make it take us home.

MAX

Okay, that's a plan. Totally unfeasible and completely unrealistic, but it's a plan.

IZZY

I'm going to find us a path to the city center so I can focus on something and stop panicking.

Izzy slides to the back of the RV.

MAX

Bubba, sometimes people just wanna know you've got a plan. They don't wanna know how difficult it is.

HAMLIN

Right. I'll try to remember that.

IZZY

Back up a little and take the first left. I think I see a path to the center of the city.

Hamlin puts the RV in gear.

EXT. ROAD OUT OF MOONRISE - MORNING

A caravan of vehicles speeds down the main road out of town. Gabby's truck is one of them.

INT. GABBY'S TRUCK - MORNING

Gabby drives. Zoe holds two smartphones.

ZOE

Nothing. No signal at all. Where the hell are they? Why aren't they waiting for us?

Gabby points to a gas station up ahead.

GABBY

I'm going to pull in here. They have an old pay phone. Maybe we can get through on a landline.

Gabby pulls into the gas station parking lot.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - MORNING

The gas station is old and weathered. Cars and trucks are already parked there. Gabby and Zoe get out of the truck. A line has formed at the pay phone.

A GAS STATION ATTENDANT, talks loudly in a circle of people. He holds up a large smartphone.

GAS STATION ATTENDANT

It was right there. Huge and weird looking. You can sort of see it here. Like a big shadow squatting where the town ought'a be.

People point excitedly. On the smartphone: The Phantom City.

GABBY

That city pushed the town out of our realm when it jumped in. We got sucked back as it jumped out again.

ZOE

At least we know where Hamlin and Izzy and Max are.

GABBY

They wouldn't go in there! That would be crazy.

ZOE

That city is the most interesting thing that's ever happened. My brother wouldn't think twice about walking into it. And if he thought going in would get us back, nothing would stop him.

Raised voices in the crowd. Zoe and Gabby look back to the main road. A cloud of dust chases a line of large trucks. Two Apache helicopters follow the convoy from the air.

GABBY

Thank God. The military is here.

ZOE

And now we know what's wrong with the phones.

GABBY

They're jamming the phones? Why?

The trucks pull into the parking lot.

ZOE

To quarantine the town.

Soldiers with rifles wearing hazmat suits exit the trucks.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

The RV rolls along the twisting street.

INT. RV - DAY

Hamlin is at the wheel. Max scans the street with binoculars. Izzy monitors the drone.

HAMLIN

How close are we, Izzy?

IZZY

Not sure. Not all the streets are wide enough. It looks like a main avenue is coming up. The streets are interconnected like branches of a tree. How did people ever find where they needed to go?

Max lowers the binoculars.

MAX

Maybe giant bears aren't in a hurry?

IZZY

I've got motion!

Hamlin slows the RV. Max raises the binoculars.

MAX

I don't see anything. Where is it?

IZZY

Sixty feet ahead. Near that alley. I'm trying to get a better angle.

Izzy pulls the joystick to the side. The video view from the drone rushes over the buildings.

IZZY

It's small. Narrow heat signature. Maybe it's a smaller version of the thing that attacked us. Wait! I have it. Oh shit! It's a little girl!

MAX

I caught a glimpse of her.

Hamlin stops the RV.

HAMLIN
Is she still there?

IZZY
She's moving deeper into the alley.
There's some kind of vegetation
growing there. It's blocking my view,
but infrared shows her moving to the
back. It's a dead end.

HAMLIN
Do you see anyone else?

IZZY
Nothing. But the walls of the
buildings are thick. I couldn't see
either of you on infrared when you
were inside.

Hamlin heads to the back of the RV. Max follows.

HAMLIN
We should go talk to her. Probably
sucked in during some other realm
jump. She may know something that
could help us. She's got to be
special to survive with those
monsters around.

Izzy points to the rifle Hamlin slings over his shoulder.

IZZY
Don't scare her. She's our Newt.

Hamlin and Max nod and head out the door.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin and Max exit the RV, rifles pointed down. They walk
quickly but cautiously toward the alley.

HAMLIN
You should go in first.

MAX
Why me?

HAMLIN
You're the big jolly guy kids wish
was their uncle.

MAX
Now I'm the redneck Santa Claus?

Hamlin and Max stop at the alley.

EXT. ALLEY OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

The vegetation in the alley is thick. Hamlin and Max shoulder their rifles. Hold up their hands.

MAX
Hello, little girl.

HAMLIN
I don't see her. Izzy, can you tell where she is?

IZZY (O.S.)
All the way at the back.

MAX
We spooked her.

Max slides around the vines. Hamlin follows.

MAX
Hey, little girl. We're looking for a way home. Like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. I'm like Dorothy. My friend is like Toto.

Hamlin shakes his head.

IZZY (O.S.)
Guys, she's gone.

Hamlin and Max walk faster through the alley.

HAMLIN
I thought it was a dead end.

IZZY (O.S.)
It is. She was there one second and the next she was gone.

MAX
A drainpipe?

HAMLIN
Let's look. Maybe...

IZZY (O.S.)
Shit! Where did she come from?

HAMLIN
What? What do you see?

IZZY (O.S.)
There's a woman just inside the head
of the alley. I don't know how she
got there. She's got a rifle!

A bullet splinters the wall beside Hamlin's head. He and Max
duck to the ground behind thick vines. Max returns fire.

HAMLIN
No. Wait!

MAX
For what? I don't like bein' shot!

HAMLIN
I saw her face.

Max risks a look. A bullet whizzes past his head.

MAX
That's Emily!

HAMLIN
Maybe she doesn't recognize us.

IZZY (O.S.)
Your Emily?

HAMLIN
Yes! My dead wife. Max's sister.

IZZY (O.S.)
Why is she shooting at you?!

HAMLIN
She's from an alternate reality.

MAX
Apparently, she has a bad temper in
every universe.

Hamlin drops his rifle and raises his hands.

HAMLIN
Emily! It's Hamlin. Don't shoot.

EMILY 2.0. Late 30s. Slight southern accent. The alternate version of Hamlin's dead wife. She moves to the center of the alley.

EMILY 2.0

How many of you bastards do I have to kill?

She fires another round. Hamlin ducks down.

MAX

Let my try.

Max raises his hands.

MAXD

Hey, sister...who's not my sister.
It's me. Max. Your favorite brother.
Or, your favorite alternate brother.

Emily 2.0 steps forward.

EMILY 2.0

Max? You're with Hamlin?

Max stands up.

MAX

I am. Unless you still wanna kill him, in which case I am here completely by coincidence.

Izzy appears behind Emily 2.0 holding a shotgun.

IZZY

Drop it, crazy duplicate wife!

HAMLIN

Don't either of you shoot!

Hamlin stands up. The sound of rustling leaves draws his attention back into the alley. A girl stands there. She is REBECCA 2.0. Eight years old. The alternate version of Hamlin's dead daughter.

REBECCA 2.0

Mommy?

HAMLIN

Becca?

Hamlin looks between Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0. Surprise and sadness contort his face.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Zoe and Gabby stand in a line of people beside a pop-up tent. Men in hazmat suits swab them for chemicals and check them with Geiger counters. HAZMAT #1 takes Zoe's smartphone.

ZOE

I need that. I'm a reporter. And you need to take us to the person in charge.

HAZMAT #1

After we assess the danger here, you will be processed, and we will take statements from everyone. You're safe now.

ZOE

We are not safe, and you need to take us to the person in charge.

GABBY

We're the only ones who know what is happening and why.

Hazmat #1 stares. Squints. Gestures for them to follow.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

The RV sits idling in the middle of the street.

INT. RV - DAY

Hamlin, Max, and Izzy sit at workstations in the back of the RV. Emily 2.0 sits beside Rebecca 2.0 at the small work table. Rebecca 2.0 is eating an energy bar. Hamlin can barely look at Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0. When he does, his hands shake and his eyes tear up.

HAMLIN

Three years? That's about when I discovered the first energy signature in our world. When I lost my Emily and Rebecca.

Emily 2.0 stares at Hamlin. Nods slightly.

EMILY 2.0

My Hamlin thinks the city has been shiftin' between realms and alternate realities for at least that long.

Hamlin glances at Rebecca 2.0.

HAMLIN

Why are you both here? Why did he bring you?

EMILY 2.0

He didn't. He entered the city with my Max. Becca stowed away in the back of his truck. When I realized what she did, I followed.

REBECCA 2.0

I always get left behind.

MAX

There's another version of me here?

EMILY 2.0

No. One of the creatures got him.

Max frowns.

IZZY

How did you survive so long?

EMILY 2.0

We salvage or steal what we can from other expeditions. Some of the plants are edible. We hide from the creatures. And we stay clear of any copies of him.

Emily 2.0 looks at Hamlin.

EMILY 2.0 (cont'd)

You're usually an asshole. Most of you are tryin' to find the source of the rift and use the energy between realms to build a weapon.

HAMLIN

A weapon would be incredibly dangerous to all the realms. I'm interested in how we can harness the energy between the realms to power our world.

Emily 2.0 looks at Rebecca 2.0. The girl nods at her. Emily 2.0 turns to Hamlin.

EMILY 2.0

Alright. I'll take you to him. Maybe the two of you can figure it out. You have a Max with you. That's new. Your alternates usually show up with soldiers. But if you're lyin' to me, I'll carve you up like an Easter ham.

MAX

It's so nice to hear you threaten people again.

IZZY

Hamlin! We've got a problem!

Izzy points to the drone monitor feed. A black jeep is driving up the street from behind the RV.

EMILY 2.0

There's a new one of you in the city. He's been here for months. He killed two of your alternates. He'll either want to know what you know, or he'll want you dead. Those are his men. We need to move.

IZZY

They've seen us.

Hamlin dashes to the driver's seat.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

The RV races down the street. A black jeep with four soldiers follows close behind.

INT. RV - DAY

Hamlin steers the RV through the winding street. Emily 2.0 sits beside him, clutching Rebecca 2.0. At the rear -- Max stuffs supplies into a backpack.

IZZY

They're getting closer.

EMILY 2.0

Turn left at the fork.

Hamlin turns the steering wheel.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

The RV turns left down a street.

INT. RV - DAY

Emily 2.0 points ahead.

EMILY 2.0
Take this right.

Hamlin turns the wheel.

IZZY
No. Don't!

HAMLIN
Too late.

There is a jeep up ahead.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

A black jeep skids to a stop across the fork in the street.

INT. RV - DAY

Hamlin slows down the RV.

HAMLIN
We're boxed in.

Izzy's station -- the video feed of the drone goes dead.

IZZY
They shot down the drone!

Emily 2.0 points to the entrance of a side street.

EMILY 2.0
There.

HAMLIN
It's too narrow.

EMILY 2.0
No. Pull close. Block the entrance.
We're gettin' out. You have to
abandon this thing.

Hamlin hits the brakes.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

The RV slides to a stop blocking the side street.

INT. RV - DAY

Hamlin gets out of the driver's seat.

HAMLIN
Everybody out.

Everyone grabs a weapon as they exit the RV. Max hands Hamlin a backpack with supplies. Slings another across his shoulders. Hamlin grabs the backpack and his rifle.

EXT. SIDE STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin and the others run down the side street. Emily 2.0 is in the lead with Rebecca 2.0.

EMILY 2.0
Hurry! This way.

Emily 2.0 cuts down another side street. It is narrower. More overgrown. She suddenly stops. Raises her rifle. Begins firing down a fork in the alley. Hamlin races to her side. A phantom creature charges.

Hamlin fires as well. Max and Izzy do the same. The creature stops but does not retreat.

Hamlin shrugs his backpack off and hands it to Emily.

HAMLIN
Take this. Run. We'll catch up. Get her out of here.

Hamlin looks to Rebecca 2.0. Emily stares at him, curious, then grabs Rebecca 2.0 and runs.

Hamlin turns and fires at the creature again.

HAMLIN (cont'd)
We need to give them time.

The creature advances along the wall.

IZZY
It's not stopping!

HAMLIN
Fall back!

Hamlin and the others retreat. Max stops firing. Reaches in his backpack. Bear spray. He sprays it as he runs. The creature hits the toxic cloud. Pauses. Wails. Retreats.

MAX
I told you that bear spray would come in handy!

HAMLIN
Finally, your irrational fear of bears is useful.

Hamlin, Max, and Izzy run. The side street opens into a larger avenue. They stop.

There is no sign of Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0. However, two jeeps with armed men slide to a halt.

HAMLIN (cont'd)
Shit.

Hamlin lowers his rifle and raises his hands.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Zoe and Gabby are led to a large army mobile command unit.

INT. ARMY MOBILE COMMAND UNIT - DAY

Several soldiers work at various tasks. Hazmat #1 ushers Zoe and Gabby into the mobile command unit. At the far end of the cabin -- A woman. Late 50s. Latino. COLONEL MARTINEZ.

HAZMAT #1
Colonel Martinez, these women say they know what's going on.

Colonel Martinez approaches Zoe and Gabby.

COLONEL MARTINEZ
I just saw a dead little girl with her arm torn off. I've got a couple of hundred civilians who are terrified. Some of them wounded. All of them in shock.

(MORE)

COLONEL MARTINEZ (cont'd)

I've also got a town that wasn't there while a city was, and now the town is back. So, who are you, and what do you know? And do not waste my time or test my patience for I am in exceedingly short supply of both.

ZOE

Colonel, my name is Zoe Thorne, I'm a reporter with the Hive Collective. My brother is a physicist who has been studying a phenomenon...a disturbance...

GABBY

We've been tracking the energy signature between dimensional realms, and a rift has opened that displaced the town with something else. A city. From another realm. But now that the city is gone and the town is back, the displacement may happen again.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

And who are you?

GABBY

Gabby. I work for her brother. Hamlin.

ZOE

He's in the city that disappeared with her sister and our friend.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

And this could happen again?

GABBY

There was an energy spike before it happened. We have a sensor array at the ranch, but I can access it.

Gabby bends down and pulls a smartphone from her boot.

GABBY (cont'd)

I wrote an app that encrypts the data from the sensor array and feeds it live to my phone.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

You were supposed to turn in your phone.

Gabby opens the signal app.

GABBY

I did. This is my work phone. I can show you how to install the app.

The screen shows a line graph in constant fluctuation.

GABBY (cont'd)

The energy signature is elevated, but closer to its baseline. The rift between realms is stable for now.

Gunshots ring from outside the command truck. Screams. The screeching of a phantom creature. Colonel Martinez goes to the window. While no one is looking, Zoe grabs a Post-it pad and a pen, stuffing them in her pocket.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

What is that thing?

GABBY

A killer monster from another realm.

Colonel Martinez turns to the communications soldier.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

Tell Captain Hanson to return ASAP.

Colonel Martinez grabs a walkie-talkie from a table and heads for the door.

ZOE

Colonel. We can help. We've killed one before.

Colonel Martinez glares at Zoe.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Soldiers push Hamlin, Max, and Izzy toward the RV, now in the middle of the street. Their wrists are zip tied. A soldier searches them. Finds nothing but snacks in Max's vest pockets. Takes the photo of Emily and Rebecca from Hamlin's shirt pocket. He frowns. Stares at the soldier.

The soldier's insignia -- a flag with a single large, white star and vertical red and white stripes.

The RV side door opens. HAMLIN 3.0 steps out. He wears combat armor and carries a rifle.

The two Hamlins stare at each other. Hamlin blinks, unnerved by his double.

HAMLIN
This is stranger than I imagined.

HAMLIN 3.0
You get used to it.

HAMLIN
Want to explain this?

Hamlin raises his wrists to show the zip tie.

HAMLIN 3.0
A precaution borne out of experience.
I don't always see eye to eye with
myself. Who are they?

Hamlin 3.0 glances at Max and Izzy. Hamlin frowns.

HAMLIN
My research team. Max and Isabella.

HAMLIN 3.0
They stay alive as long as you
cooperate. Understood?

Hamlin nods. Hamlin 3.0 turns to his men.

HAMLIN 3.0 (cont'd)
Back to base camp. We need...

The sky suddenly alters to the blue electric haze of a realm shift. The jump is quicker than before.

Great red and orange arcs of energy collide across slate black clouds. A new realm.

Hamlin 3.0 points to Hamlin as he speaks to his men.

HAMLIN 3.0 (cont'd)
Bring him. They stay.

Hamlin 3.0 strides across the street and into the tallest building. Two soldiers grab Hamlin and push him to follow.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin 3.0 hurries through the oversized room toward a staircase. Races up the wide steps. The soldiers push Hamlin to pursue.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin 3.0 climbs through a portal hatch. Hamlin and the two soldiers follow. The black sky rages -- a clash of thundering energy.

They stand on one of the tallest buildings. Hamlin 3.0 looks past the edge of the city. Another city sits in the distance. It and the landscape around it are being consumed by the massive arcs of energy.

HAMLIN

The energy displacement caused by the friction between the ruptured realms is out of control!

HAMLIN 3.0

It will destroy that city in a matter of seconds.

HAMLIN

It will destroy this whole world! Us included!

The other city crumbles beneath the arcs of energy. Hamlin stares in horror.

HAMLIN 3.0

When we jump again the energy discharge should dissipate.

HAMLIN

That energy wave will destroy us before we jump again!

The arcs of energy race toward the Phantom City.

HAMLIN 3.0

You would think so.

The sky flickers blue with a jump between realms. Clear skies. No arcs of energy.

HAMLIN

Someone is controlling the shifts between realms.

HAMLIN 3.0

We need to talk.

Hamlin looks out at a lush jungle.

EXT. ROAD OUT OF GAS STATION - DAY

A small convoy of army trucks speeds toward the gas station.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

The trucks break to a hard stop. The other army trucks have been circled into a corral. Soldiers are stationed around the corral, and refugees from Moonrise are huddled in the middle. Two Apache helicopters hover above.

Zoe and Izzy stand near Colonel Martinez beside the army mobile command truck. A soldier gets out of the lead truck. Late 30s. White. CAPTAIN HANSON.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

Captain Hanson. We've got one target loose on site. Bullets seem to have no effect. These two women say they've killed one.

ZOE

Their skin shatters when frozen.

CAPTAIN HANSON

How do I freeze them in the desert?

GABBY

C-O-Two. Fire extinguishers. Like in *The Blob*.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

I'll see if I can get some flown in. In the meantime we'll have to do this the hard way, Captain. Our priority is to keep the civilians safe. Take your team and flush it out. If we can get it to run for the desert, we can take it out with hellfires from the Apaches.

CAPTAIN HANSON

Yes, Colonel.

Captain Hanson salutes and heads to rally his soldiers.

EXT. PHANTOM CITY HAMLIN 3.0 BASE CAMP - DAY

A small village of green tents. Each has a clear purpose -- storage, weapons, dining, sleeping, scientific monitoring equipment. All the soldiers are male and white. Jeeps and trucks are parked nearby. The RV sits at the back.

The plaza is circular. At the center -- a smooth egg-shaped structure, narrow at the bottom and wide at the top.

Hamlin 3.0 leads Hamlin through the camp.

HAMLIN

Impressive camp. Your military is funding you well.

HAMLIN 3.0

I have access to resources you apparently don't.

HAMLIN

I like my resources.

HAMLIN 3.0

Co-operate and you can see them again. First question: what's the fastest computer processor speed in your world?

HAMLIN

The fastest is about ten gigahertz with liquid cooling. Standard machines max out around five gigahertz with multiple cores to compensate.

HAMLIN 3.0

Then you're probably not going to be as helpful as I'd hoped with technology that far behind. Next question: did you build a sensor or something more?

HAMLIN

A multi-phase scanner and an energy converter.

HAMLIN 3.0

Interesting. Last question: what's your assessment of this...situation?

HAMLIN

A version of us built something more than a scanner or energy converter. A weapon maybe. Or a device intended to open a multidimensional doorway. And activating that device tore a rent on the dimensional membranes between realms, unleashing unpredictable energy waves that push anything nearby into adjacent realms. Like this city. And something about that device and the placement of the rift is also causing the city to shift between alternate realities.

HAMLIN 3.0

I agree. As did the last two versions of us I spoke with.

HAMLIN

Where are they?

HAMLIN 3.0

I killed them.

HAMLIN

How many of us have you met?

HAMLIN 3.0

Just those two. And you.

HAMLIN

That's not an encouraging ratio.

HAMLIN 3.0

One was unwilling to cooperate and one tried to kill me.

HAMLIN

I can't imagine why.

They head toward the largest of the tents in the plaza.

INT. ANOTHER BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Max and Izzy stand at the back of the room. Two curvaceous windows are covered with a thin, see-through membrane. Two soldiers stand outside the open portal.

IZZY

As kids we were always afraid of being separated.

(MORE)

IZZY (cont'd)

We had to be together constantly. No matter what we did. Like we were two halves of the same person. Like the Wonder Twins. Only both girls, obviously.

Izzy wipes her eyes. Max pats Izzy's shoulder.

MAX

Don't worry, Darlin'. We'll find a way to put this hog back in its pen. I promise. Hamlin probably already has a plan. Assuming his evil double hasn't killed him.

Max looks toward the guards and frowns.

INT. HAMLIN 3.0'S PERSONAL TENT - DAY

Hamlin 3.0's personal tent -- a folding table, cot, several chairs, a sleek laptop with an extra wide screen ratio. Hamlin 3.0 sits. He gestures toward the other chair. Hamlin, wrists still bound, sits. The guards leave them alone.

HAMLIN 3.0

For all our exterior similarities, we are still very different people. Motivated by different things.

HAMLIN

I want to get back to my world and make sure it isn't destroyed, and the people I love are still alive.

HAMLIN 3.0

My world was on the verge of destruction before the rift opened. The Unified States are at war with the communist Chinese. We need a decisive weapon. A non-nuclear option. Some version of myself has handed me the opportunity to save my nation and my world.

HAMLIN

Even if it risks the destruction of other realities?

HAMLIN 3.0

The energy is controllable. The risks can be mitigated.

HAMLIN

So, what do you need me for? Clearly there's a device somewhere in this city center. Probably in that egg in the plaza. All you need to do is find it, and the version of us controlling it, and make him give you all the answers you need to build your world-ending weapon.

HAMLIN 3.0

I found him. But I was forced to kill him. Unfortunately, he hid his realm manipulator. We've searched every room of every building in the city center and found nothing.

HAMLIN

Maybe he left it with someone. Maybe they're moving it to avoid you. Your goons are easy to spot.

HAMLIN 3.0

Not goons. Soldiers. We fought a civil war before the Chinese attacked. Everyone is a soldier now.

HAMLIN

I noticed your soldiers are rather... pale. I don't see any brothers or sisters of any shade out there. You stand out.

HAMLIN 3.0

In my world, I always stand out.

HAMLIN

I'm surprised someone like us is in charge.

HAMLIN 3.0

There was a colonel here. One of our duplicates killed him. As you can imagine, that created a certain tension within the company.

HAMLIN

And now the cog needs to save the machine to prove his worth.

HAMLIN 3.0

To save my world. You couldn't understand. We don't think alike.

(MORE)

HAMLIN 3.0 (cont'd)

But maybe you can think like the duplicate who built the device. I need you to help me find it and learn its secrets. Then we can share the data and each do with it as we please.

HAMLIN

Or you kill me and my friends.

HAMLIN 3.0

It shouldn't be a difficult choice.

HAMLIN

Tell me, what does your sister think of all this?

HAMLIN 3.0

My sister died in the crash that killed my parents. I was raised in an institution.

Hamlin 3.0 takes the photo of Emily and Rebecca out of a pocket on his body armor vest.

HAMLIN 3.0 (cont'd)

I've discovered there are many differences between our worlds. Yours sounds like one of the softer versions. Wife and child, I assume?

Hamlin stares at the photo.

HAMLIN

I'd like that back.

Hamlin 3.0 puts the photo back in his pocket.

HAMLIN 3.0

When we're finished. I'll give you ten minutes to consider my offer. Maybe your friends can convince you to be smarter than our alternates were. With or without you, I will find that device, and I will save my world. But I'd prefer not to kill myself again.

The two Hamlins glare at each other over the table.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Colonel Martinez, Zoe, and Gabby stand at the command truck. Colonel Martinez looks through binoculars into the desert.

Three jeeps race through clouds of dust. Two helicopters circle in the air. One jeep tumbles sideways. A phantom creature rushes into the desert. A helicopter fires a missile. The ground explodes in plumes of sand.

Colonel Martinez speaks into her walkie-talkie.

COLONEL MARTINEZ
Hanson, what's your status?

CAPTAIN HANSON (O.S.)
We wounded it, but it got away,
ma'am. Too much dust. It ran into the
town.

COLONEL MARTINEZ
Copy that. Keep looking for it. Make
sure it doesn't get out.

Colonel Martinez turns to Zoe and Gabby.

COLONEL MARTINEZ (cont'd)
Any idea where it might go in the
town and how we can kill it?

Zoe and Gabby look to each other, worried.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin, Max, and Izzy stand at the back of a large room. The portal entrance is open. Two guards stand outside.

HAMLIN
It's strange to look at my own face
and see someone so completely
different.

IZZY
Welcome to my world. Why doesn't this
evil Hamlin just build the weapon
himself?

HAMLIN
I don't think he can. He's got the
same brain I have, but not the same
mind. He didn't have Grandma or Zoe.
No Max or Izzy or Gabby.

(MORE)

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Years of talking about my theories shaped how I built the Zeus Converter. Would shape any device I might build to manipulate the energy between the realms. He doesn't see problems the way I do, so he can't solve them the way I can.

MAX

So, what do we do? Try to escape?

Max looks to the portal and the guards outside.

HAMLIN

I don't see how we can. We need to help him find the device that created this rift between realms and somehow use it to get back to our world and then destroy it before he has a chance to use it to build a weapon.

IZZY

That plan sounds worse than the last one.

Izzy frowns and then steps back from Hamlin.

IZZY (cont'd)

Wait. How do we know you're the real Hamlin? Our Hamlin? You could be the Evil Hamlin trying to trick us like in those *Star Trek* mirror universe episodes.

HAMLIN

Your sister thinks my sister is hot, and you both invested one point six million dollars in the Zeus Converter.

IZZY

Okay. You're you. But we need a better password. Like "klaatu barada nikto."

MAX

Is that Latin?

HAMLIN

No. It's from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. What is that?

Hamlin points to the wall nearest them. It contracts away from a point in the center. Hamlin, Max, and Izzy step back as a circular portal opens in the wall. Emily 2.0 is on the other side.

EMILY 2.0

Quickly!

They rush through the new portal.

INT. ANOTHER BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Rebecca 2.0 stands with her hand on the wall. She closes her eyes and the portal to the previous room quickly closes. Emily 2.0 flicks on a flashlight.

IZZY

I knew there was no door in the back of that alley.

Izzy turns to Hamlin and Max.

IZZY (cont'd)

The city is alive. Or at least it acts like it is.

Hamlin looks at Rebecca 2.0.

HAMLIN

How do you control it?

REBECCA 2.0

I talk to it. With my mind.

EMILY 2.0

Keep quiet. This way. We have a long way to go.

HAMLIN

You could have saved us at any time in that alley.

EMILY 2.0

I wasn't sure I could trust you with this secret. I'm still not.

She frowns at Hamlin, then leads them across a darkened room where Rebecca 2.0 opens another portal in a wall.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Refugees from Moonrise are climbing into the backs of large army trucks. Zoe and Gabby stand near the command truck. Zoe is writing on the Post-it pad.

GABBY

You're writing an article? Now?

Zoe looks up.

ZOE

I'm trying to, but I keep thinking about Hamlin, trapped in that city.

GABBY

Their smart. They'll find a way back.

ZOE

We were inseparable when we were kids. He even took me along on his first date. I ate coconut cream pie while he flirted our neighbor, Sally.

GABBY

Izzy and I were like that. We did everything the same. Same clothes. Same hair. Same Wonder Woman Halloween costume. Then this boy Izzy liked kept flirting with me by mistake. After that we were never the same again. Now she's Captain Marvel and I'm Batwoman.

Gabby blinks back tears. Zoe wipes her eyes with the back of her hand. An army truck pulls up. Captain Hanson jumps out. Walks toward Zoe.

CAPTAIN HANSON

I found someone in the desert who wants to see you.

Zoe turns as ALTERNATE ZOE, dressed in jeans and a black hoodie, walks forward and raises her hand in greeting.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Hey gorgeous. We need to chat.

Zoe stares at her duplicate, eyes wide in shock.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin 3.0 stands beside SOLDIER ONE in the room where Hamlin and his team were held.

SOLDIER ONE

The guards never moved, Sir. I don't know how they got out.

HAMLIN 3.0

It's obvious. They had help.

SOLDIER ONE

Who? Our men are loyal.

HAMLIN 3.0

Another me. One we weren't aware of. They're working together. I should have considered that possibility. Put every available man on search patrols. And launch all the drones to scan for infrared signatures. Scan this room as well. Maybe there's a trap door we missed. Find them fast. Our world is running out of time.

Soldier One salutes and leaves the room. Hamlin 3.0 stares at the back wall.

INT. BENEATH THE PHANTOM CITY - DAY

Hamlin, Max, and Izzy follow Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0 down a narrow, curving ramp.

HAMLIN

We keep going down. Where are we?

EMILY 2.0

Several levels beneath the streets of the city. We're safe down here.

They reach a dead end. Rebecca 2.0 raises her hand and a portal opens. The others step inside. Hamlin notices that her hand is not actually touching the wall. Rebecca 2.0 follows and closes the portal.

INT. HAMLIN 2.0'S LAIR BENEATH THE CITY - DAY

A room fifty feet wide. Slits along the ceiling glow. Living quarters with human sized tables, benches, and beds.

Canned food on a counter. Another table holds rifles and handguns. HAMLIN 2.0 sits on one of the beds. He looks ill.

REBECCA 2.0

Daddy!

Rebecca 2.0 runs to Hamlin 2.0

HAMLIN 2.0

I see you brought back visitors.

Hamlin 2.0 stares at Hamlin. He is not happy.

EMILY 2.0

I think we can trust this one.

Emily 2.0 leans close to Hamlin.

EMILY 2.0 (cont'd)

You two catch up. But keep in mind what happened to the others.

Emily 2.0 turns to Max and Izzy.

EMILY 2.0 (cont'd)

Come help me make dinner.

Max and Izzy glance at the Hamlins but follow Emily 2.0. Hamlin pauses a moment. Walks toward Hamlin 2.0.

Rebecca 2.0 sits on the bed with her father. Hamlin sits down on a chair sprouting from the floor.

HAMLIN 2.0

Becca tells me you saved her and her mother.

HAMLIN

We helped the best we could. Not that they really needed our help.

REBECCA 2.0

He gave me a candy bar.

HAMLIN

Coconut and chocolate seem to be her favorite in every reality.

Hamlin 2.0 pats Rebecca 2.0 on the back.

HAMLIN 2.0

Why don't you go help your mother with dinner.

REBECCA 2.0
I always have to help with dinner.

HAMLIN 2.0
Because you're the responsible one.

REBECCA 2.0
I hate being responsible.

Rebecca 2.0 hops from the bed. Hamlin smiles at her.

HAMLIN
Thank you for saving us today. You're very brave and talented.

REBECCA 2.0
I know. You're welcome.

Rebecca 2.0 smiles and heads off to help her mother. Hamlin stares after her, his eyes misting up.

HAMLIN 2.0
How long ago?

Hamlin turns back to his duplicate.

HAMLIN
Three years. The day I tested my first full scale energy sensor. How did you know?

HAMLIN 2.0
I know what my face looks like when I'm in pain.

HAMLIN
They died in a fire. It was my fault.

HAMLIN 2.0
Sorry. I can't imagine that. I built my sensor three years ago too. It pointed to New Mexico.

HAMLIN
What about Zoe?

HAMLIN 2.0
She died five years ago in Nigeria reporting on the war. I miss her.

HAMLIN
So do I. We don't see each other enough. My fault. And hers. Weird.

(MORE)

HAMLIN (cont'd)

It was always us against the world as kids. Grandma tried, but it's hard being the only black folks in a small town. Particularly when...

HAMLIN 2.0

...When you're smarter than your teachers.

HAMLIN

Seems we have more in common than our faces.

HAMLIN 2.0

It's easy to see now what we become without them.

Hamlin 2.0 looks to Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0. Hamlin points to the bandages on Hamlin 2.0's abdomen and leg.

HAMLIN

Our twin, I assume.

HAMLIN 2.0

One of them. Not the new one. The one who did this had never met Emily. Certainly not with a rifle. So many strange worlds.

HAMLIN & HAMLIN 2.0

And so many where we're assholes.

They both laugh. The laugh causes Hamlin 2.0 to cough violently. Hamlin hands him a water bottle. Hamlin 2.0 nods his thanks. Hamlin looks across the room at Rebecca 2.0

HAMLIN

So how does she control the city to make the doors?

HAMLIN 2.0

She talks to it. With her mind.

HAMLIN

So she said. It's alive and psychic?

HAMLIN 2.0

I don't know if it's alive in the way we usually mean. It may simply be a sophisticated AI with some sort of molecular manipulation technology and the ability to scan our brains and interpret thoughts.

(MORE)

HAMLIN 2.0 (cont'd)

It's obviously from a technologically advanced alternate reality. It wasn't built by humans.

HAMLIN

I noticed. How does it work?

HAMLIN 2.0

Becca will show you. She's the best at it. Emily and I can create doors and furniture, but slowly. Becca can see what the city sees. I don't think any of the other versions of us have figured this out.

HAMLIN

I talked with our twin. You know what he wants?

HAMLIN 2.0

I do. And I've thought a lot about how to stop him.

HAMLIN

I'm sure you have.

The two Hamlins stare at each other a moment. They smile.

INT. ARMY MOBILE COMMAND UNIT - DAY

Zoe and Alternate Zoe sit at a table in the back of the command truck. Gabby drinks a glass of ice water. Zoe is visibly unnerved by her double.

ALTERNATE ZOE

After my brother's evil duplicate killed him, I stayed at the edges of the city. Waiting. My Hamlin said it was jumping between realms and alternate realities. I didn't think it would get back to mine, but similar is all I needed. When I saw the sign outside the town limits saying, "Leaving Moonrise," I knew I was close enough.

ZOE

I can't imagine losing Hamlin like that. I'm the one who's always in danger.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Me too. Anyway, I figured I could try and find the Hamlin in this world and convince him to stop his evil double from using the realm energy to make a weapon.

GABBY

A weapon using the energy between realms is a really bad idea.

ZOE

My Hamlin is in that city. He'll find a way to stop his double.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Then there's the other problem.

GABBY

Bulletproof monsters.

ALTERNATE ZOE

I saw one. How many came through when the town shifted?

ZOE

One that we know of. It's wounded. It's in the town.

ALTERNATE ZOE

That's bad. Some nasty creatures come in from other realms. These are the worst. If it's wounded, it will start to spawn.

Gabby stares at the ice in the empty glass.

ZOE

Spawn?

ALTERNATE ZOE

Some sort of asexual reproduction. It's like they can clone themselves. If it starts making copies of itself and it gets out of the desert, they could take over the planet. They're almost impossible to kill.

ZOE

We killed one using CO2. Froze it.

Gabby sits up straight.

GABBY

Exactly! We need to flash freeze it!

Gabby turns back, grinning.

INT. HAMLIN 2.0'S LAIR BENEATH THE CITY FOOD AREA - DAY

Max helps Emily 2.0 opening cans of food.

MAX

This is weird, right? The two of us together when the other two of us are dead. I know I just met you, that you're not her, but it feels nice to be with you anyway. I miss her. She was...She understood me better than anyone. Even Hamlin.

Emily 2.0 looks down at the counter.

EMILY 2.0

It is...weird. I didn't get to say goodbye to him because we were arguin' the day he got killed. This is actually the nicest thing that's happened since we've been trapped in this damned city. What's weirder is the two of them talkin' and not trying to kill each other.

Emily 2.0 looks to the two Hamlins.

MAX

We should be proud. He's brilliant in any world, but when there's no you and no me, he's not complete. He's only half formed without us.

EMILY 2.0

Now they both only have one of us.

MAX

So, we're gonna have to work twice as hard to keep him in line.

They smile and continue making food.

INT. HAMLIN 2.0'S LAIR BENEATH THE CITY - DAY

The group sits around a table. The Hamlins at opposite ends. They finish a meal of canned vegetables and meats.

MAX

That was delicious. I can't believe this came from cans. I can never cook with canned food. You steal all this?

EMILY 2.0

My Max loved to cook too. We steal what we can. Eventually they'll notice. I'm sure they're wonderin' about the missing firearms.

Emily 2.0 looks to the table stacked with weapons.

IZZY

How did they know to bring food and trucks and tents? All we brought was an RV and energy bars.

REBECCA 2.0

I would eat an energy bar if someone offered me one. And if it had coconut in it that would be really nice too.

MAX

Lucky for you, Darlin', I have one in my pocket.

Max pulls an energy bar from a pocket of his vest. He looks to Emily 2.0, who nods, before handing it to Rebecca 2.0.

IZZY

Why am I not surprised that's all that's in your vest pockets?

Max offers Izzy an energy bar & she takes it happily.

HAMLIN 2.0

From what I gather, the city was in his world longer than most.

HAMLIN

Our evil twin seems to come from a fascist America, so a massive military mission makes sense.

MAX

Have you met him? He's like our Hamlin with no coffee for a week.

EMILY 2.0

We've been watchin' them from a distance. And sometimes listenin' through the walls.

REBECCA 2.0

I can watch them from anywhere. The city likes me.

She is very proud if this.

EMILY 2.0

Have you two come up with a plan to get us all home?

HAMLIN & HAMLIN 2.0

Sort of. Kind of. Hmmm.

The Hamlins stare at each other a moment.

HAMLIN

We know what we need to do.

HAMLIN 2.0

We're not certain of the easiest way to do it.

HAMLIN

A version of us created the device that did this. So, the two of us should be able to figure out how to use it. Or how to fix it.

HAMLIN 2.0

Thanks to Becca, we know where the device is.

Rebecca smiles brightly.

EMILY 2.0

It's in a sealed room at the top of the inverted egg-shaped building in the city center.

HAMLIN 2.0

That's why our evil twin hasn't been able to find it. The city seems to have hidden it years ago.

REBECCA 2.0

It showed me where it is. The city likes me. It's like a big dog.

EMILY 2.0

It is not a pet. You can't think of it that way.

REBECCA 2.0

Yes, I can. Because I do.

HAMLIN 2.0

Becca helped me see the device. It doesn't look so advanced that we can't figure it out, but it's damaged and acting erratically.

HAMLIN

It was obviously created to manipulate the energy between the alternate realms and open doorways between them, but it's causing an unstable rift instead. I saw that displaced energy annihilate a whole city. If the device causes the rift to widen more than it already has, it could destroy thousands of alternate worlds.

HAMLIN 2.0

From what I can tell, this city has actually been attempting to control the device. Unsuccessfully. But that's because it doesn't really understand it. I think it wants to get home as well.

HAMLIN

Hopefully the two of us can repair the device, and with the data we remember from our respective sensors, we can calibrate it to take us both to our home realities.

IZZY

Not to sound rude, but why haven't you tried this before?

HAMLIN 2.0

I was on my way to the room that holds the device when I was captured by one of the other doubles and he did this.

Hamlin 2.0 gestures to his body. Emily 2.0 takes his hand.

HAMLIN

You have help now. Our plan is simple.

(MORE)

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Since we can't get into the inverted egg from below, the rest of you will create a diversion to draw our twin and his soldiers away from the city center while the two of us sneak in, fix the device, and get us all home.

EMILY 2.0

Are you sure you're ready for that?

HAMLIN 2.0

I have to be. We're lucky that the device has its own power source. A radioactive isotope decay battery, I think. But it's failing. It wasn't designed for this much use. If we don't do something soon, we may be trapped on its last jump.

IZZY

So, we could end up in one of those realms with the monsters? Or without air?

HAMLIN 2.0

That's the fear.

MAX

Sounds like Grandma's recipe for whiskey cherry pie...enough details to get you goin' but missing enough to let you improvise 'til you're drunk. When do we start?

HAMLIN

Tomorrow. We'll need some rest. And we need Rebecca to teach us how to talk to her pet city.

Rebecca 2.0 smiles. Hamlin smiles back. Then looks away.

INT. HAMLIN 2.0'S LAIR BENEATH THE CITY - NIGHT

Later. Hamlin helps Emily 2.0 drying dishes. Rebecca 2.0, Hamlin 2.0, Max, and Izzy play Go Fish at the table.

EMILY 2.0

I see the way you watch her. The way you look at me. What happened in your world?

Hamlin looks to Rebecca 2.0 and then the dishes. His hands shake slightly.

HAMLIN

They died in a fire three years ago yesterday. The day I tested my dimensional energy sensor in space. But I made a mistake. I left my prototype active. I thought it would collect more data for my tests. I wasn't expecting energy surges. Or that they might come in waves. The second wave destroyed my probe in space. The first blew up the sensor in my garage. And killed my Emily and Rebecca. If I hadn't been so arrogant and thoughtless, they'd still be alive. So, seeing her, seeing you, makes me think there's a world where we're all still together and safe. Where I didn't...

Hamlin stops. Gulps for air. His face a mask of inner torment. Emily 2.0 looks across the room at Max.

EMILY 2.0

It's not what happens to us that makes us who we are, it's how we deal with it. But it is comfortin' to know there must be a world where Max is still with me.

Silence. Across the room, Rebecca 2.0 wins the card game.

EXT. COMMAND TRUCK - NIGHT

Zoe, Alternate Zoe, and Gabby stand before Colonel Martinez. Captain Hanson stands nearby.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

I liked it better when there was only one of you.

ZOE

It's a solid plan.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

It's ridiculous.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Ridiculous is the best we've have.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

How long?

GABBY

A couple hours? Probably.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

We have the town cordoned off.
Nothing is getting out of there.

ALTERNATE ZOE

They can mutate when they replicate
and become even more dangerous.

COLONEL MARTINEZ

Right. Show Captain Hanson what to
do. But you three stay behind.

ZOE & ALTERNATE ZOE

Of course.

Gabby sees the look on the two their faces. Sighs.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - SUNSET

Hamlin 3.0 and two soldiers enter a small city room. In the middle of the room sits a large wooden crate with holes drilled in the side. The two soldiers unlock a padlock and open the door of the crate. Inside -- another Hamlin. Thin. Ragged beard. Torn clothes. Wild-eyed. Obviously tortured. The ORIGINAL HAMLIN.

The soldiers pull him out of the crate and handcuff him to a chair. Hamlin 3.0 waves a hand and they leave. The two Hamlins stare at each other.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN

Why don't you just kill me already?

HAMLIN 3.0

You know why. You haven't told me how
you built the realm manipulator and
you haven't told me where it is. Give
me one those, and I'd be happy to
kill you.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN

If I tell you either of those things,
you'll just do something stupid.

Hamlin 3.0 glares at Original Hamlin a moment.

HAMLIN 3.0
I met another one of us.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
Did you kill him?

HAMLIN 3.0
No. He escaped.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
Lucky him. Did you tell him about me?

HAMLIN 3.0
I told him you were dead.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
Promises, promises.

HAMLIN 3.0
He had help. I assume another one of us. Or one of our accomplices.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
So that's why you brought me out.

HAMLIN 3.0
Who else is in this city?

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
How would I know? I've been in a box.

HAMLIN 3.0
You know a great deal. And you'll tell all of it. Eventually.

Hamlin 3.0 turns and walks from the room. The two soldiers enter and begin beating Original Hamlin.

INT. HAMLIN 2.0'S LAIR BENEATH THE CITY - NIGHT

Hamlin, Izzy, Max, and Rebecca 2.0 stand with hands on a wall. Emily 2.0 and Hamlin 2.0 sit at the table.

REBECCA 2.0
You have to listen to it. It's like a bee in your head, but if you listen close you can ask the bee to do things. You ask it to make a door for you. But you can't use words. You need to imagine it.

A portal begins to open for Hamlin. One wavers and disappears for Izzy. Nothing happens for Max.

REBECCA 2.0 (cont'd)
You're even better than Daddy.

EMILY 2.0
Maybe it's genetic.

HAMLIN 2.0
Or like a dog that can smell its
master's sibling.

REBECCA 2.0
See. It is a pet.

EMILY 2.0
Don't start.

HAMLIN
How do I get it to show me things?
Like where the device is?

REBECCA 2.0
You need to ask it. You think about
what you want to see.

Hamlin leans closer to the wall, closing his eyes again.

INSERT IMAGE FLASHES: The inverted egg building...a curving ramp within the building...a hallway...a room...a strange device with bulbous metal limbs, damaged and merged into the floor and wall...the control panel of the device...a screen with a fluctuating energy signature...a digital power meter pegged in the red...

Hamlin leans away from the wall. He looks to the others.

HAMLIN
I think it may only have power for
one more jump. Maybe two.

IZZY
Can we ask the city to stop the
machine from jumping?

HAMLIN 2.0
We've tried that. It can't. It's
trying to control the device as best
it can, but it needs a human.

HAMLIN

We have to go now. If it jumps again,
we'll be stranded where it stops.

The two Hamlins stare at Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0.

INT. THE RANCH - ZEUS CONVERTER BARN - NIGHT

The barn is cramped. Nearly entirely filled with the Zeus Converter. Gabby stands beside two large tanks of liquid nitrogen. Captain Hanson steps up beside Gabby, Zoe, and Alternate Zoe.

GABBY

We use the liquid nitrogen to cool
the processors and components of the
Zeus Converter. We have carts we can
put them on, extra hoses, valves, and
gloves. With this, we can freeze the
creatures solid in seconds.

CAPTAIN HANSON

We'll have to lure them close.

ALTERNATE ZOE

And hide the tanks. The monsters are
smart. They'll spot a trap.

Captain Hanson looks at the Zeus Converter.

CAPTAIN HANSON

So, this machine caused all this
mess?

GABBY

I don't know. It works like trying to
capture electricity from lightning.
It doesn't make the energy surges.
And it wasn't even working when the
city appeared. Hamlin would know.

Captain Hanson turns to Gabby and the two Zoes.

CAPTAIN HANSON

You're the experts. Will it work?

ZOE

We'll have to be close. But it should
work.

ALTERNATE ZOE

It's the best chance we've got.

Captain Hanson turns to his soldiers.

CAPTAIN HANSON

Alright you mooks, you heard 'em.
Pack it up.

Captain Hanson turns to Gabby.

CAPTAIN HANSON (cont'd)

You'll need to show my team what to
do. After that, you three stay
behind. Colonel's orders.

ZOE & ALTERNATE ZOE

Of course.

Captain Hanson walks away to supervise his soldiers.

GABBY

We're not staying behind are we?

ALTERNATE ZOE

I need to make sure they kill this
thing. It's not as easy as it sounds
to macho soldiers.

ZOE

And if you're going, I'm going.

Zoe turns to Gabby.

ZOE (cont'd)

You should stay and monitor the
signal.

GABBY

Yeah. Great idea. Then if you die I
can feel guilty the rest my life.
Screw that. What's the plan?

The twin Zoes smile at Gabby.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

A portal opens in the back wall of a large room. The two
Hamblins walk through, armed with rifles.

HAMLIN

Are you sure it's safe for them?

HAMLIN 2.0

Emily knows what she's doing. So does
Becca.

Hamlin nods. Looks out the window.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max, Izzy, Emily 2.0 stand on a roof top. Armed with rifles. Rebecca 2.0 has both hands on the parapet. At one end of the street -- the tents of Hamlin 3.0's base. At the other end -- paving stones morph and rise up along the lane, blocking off any cross streets. Doors and windows become solid walls -- a canyon of liquid stone.

MAX

This is crazier than the time my
Emily tried to tame a cougar with a
can of tuna.

EMILY 2.0

I did that too! Don't worry. This
will work much better.

MAX

Why are they all locked up like a box
full of badgers?

EMILY 2.0

We couldn't figure out an easy way to
kill them, but we could trap them and
move them into one room. We hoped
they'd kill each other.

MAX

Did they?

EMILY 2.0

No. They multiplied.

IZZY

That is not reassuring.

REBECCA 2.0

Done, Mommy.

Rebecca 2.0 smiles over the edge of the parapet.

EMILY 2.0

Now, Sweetie.

Rebecca 2.0 forms a door in a wall at the end the street.

IZZY
Are you sure they're...

A small herd of phantom creatures charges from the portal.

EMILY 2.0
Everyone down.

They all crouch low as the monsters below race past.

EXT. PHANTOM CITY HAMLIN 3.0 BASE CAMP - NIGHT

The soldiers on guard duty hear something. The stampede of phantom creatures explodes out of the cordoned off street. The soldiers open fire.

INT. BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The two Hamlins hear the gunfire.

HAMLIN
Let's go.

Hamlin helps his twin out the door.

EXT. PHANTOM CITY CENTER - NIGHT

The two Hamlins run as quickly as possible across the plaza. They see the carnage the phantom creatures are creating in the base camp. They duck inside the egg-shaped building.

INT. BASE OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

The inside of the inverted egg is an open chamber with a spiral ramp around the walls.

HAMLIN
We won't have much time before he figures out what's going on.

HAMLIN 2.0
Becca taught me a trick.

Hamlin 2.0 places his hand on the wall. The ramp morphs to provide steps that continuously flow upward.

HAMLIN
She's a very clever girl.

Hamlin 2.0 keeps his hand in touch with the wall. The two Hamlins rapidly ascend toward the top of the building.

EXT. TOWN OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

Several army trucks stop at a cross street.

INT. BACK OF ARMY TRUCK - NIGHT

The Zoes and Gabby crouch in the back of the truck. Two large tanks of liquid nitrogen are strapped to the wall. The rear door opens. Captain Hanson stares at them.

CAPTAIN HANSON
Did you have a comfy ride?

ZOE
You knew we were here?

They hop down from the truck.

EXT. STREET OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

Soldiers climb into the truck to grab the tanks of nitrogen.

CAPTAIN HANSON
I hoped. I hunted a rabid wolf with my grampa once. It nearly killed us both. The Colonel thinks you're a danger, but you're the only ones to take one of these things down. You want to be here, and I want you with me. So, let's go hunting.

Captain Hanson leads the way into the town.

EXT. PHANTOM CITY HAMLIN 3.0 BASE CAMP - NIGHT

Hamlin 3.0 stands with Soldier One outside the room that held the Original Hamlin. The crate is empty. Chair gone.

HAMLIN 3.0
How long did you leave him alone?

SOLDIER ONE
Five minutes. Just like you said, Sir. I don't know how he got out.

HAMLIN 3.0

I have an idea. I know what's happening. I'm just not sure how.

An explosion billows up at one end of the base camp. Phantom creatures scurry far down the street.

SOLDIER ONE

The creatures are attacking again. The RPGs will slow them down, but they're hard to hit. We've never seen this many at once.

HAMLIN 3.0

No. No we haven't. And that tells us something else.

Hamlin 3.0 looks toward the inverted egg building.

INT. HALLWAY AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

The two Hamlins walk down a curving hallway with no doors.

HAMLIN

Where is it?

HAMLIN 2.0

I think we need to ask.

Hamlin 2.0 puts a hand against a wall. A portal opens several feet away. They walk through. It closes behind them.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max, Izzy, Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0 watch the flames and gunfire from the base camp. A scraping noise draws their attention back up the street.

IZZY

What's that?

EMILY 2.0

There's one left behind.

MAX

Am I seenin' wings? Tell me I'm not seenin' wings!

The creature flexes a pair of broad, blood-red wings.

EMILY 2.0

They can mutate when they replicate.

IZZY

It can freaking fly!?

The creature flaps its wings and leaps into the air.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin and Hamlin 2.0 examine the realm rift device.

HAMLIN

This is years ahead of my world's technology.

HAMLIN 2.0

The version of us that made this is brilliant. The device is generating its own signal, creating a dynamic resonance with the energy in the gaps between realms.

HAMLIN

Which opens the rift and shifts the city between those realms. So, the energy in those various gaps must have significantly different frequencies.

HAMLIN 2.0

And the city has been trying to modulate the frequency and amplitude of the signal the device is generating to control which realms and alternate realities the rift opens to. But it has no baseline for calibration.

HAMLIN

I remember all of the data points from my scanner. That should provide a solid baseline.

HAMLIN 2.0

So do I. The benefits of a photographic memory.

HAMLIN

The interface is damaged, but look at this. It has a root command feature as a backup.

(MORE)

HAMLIN (cont'd)
I think we can control it from there.
It's all weirdly familiar.

HAMLIN 2.0
Like you built it, but you didn't.

HAMLIN
Exactly.

HAMLIN (cont'd)
We don't have time to...

The wall behind them explodes. Hamlin 3.0 and five soldiers rush in. Hamlin and Hamlin 2.0 open fire.

EXT. STREETS OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

Two helicopter's search lights roam the edge of town. The two Zoes, Gabby, and Captain Hanson crouch behind a delivery van. Zoe and Captain Hanson peek around the edge of the van.

The creature is down the block -- looking for prey under cars. Two of the soldiers stand on either side of the street, wearing gloves and holding hoses attached to liquid nitrogen tanks wrapped in tarps.

ZOE
Captain, these creatures are smart. They'll sense a trap. But they don't have great eyesight. Have your men fire from the front of the street and retreat. The creature will charge to attack them.

Captain Hanson glances around the side of the truck again.

CAPTAIN HANSON
Good plan. I thought you were a reporter.

ZOE
This isn't the first time I've been embedded.

GABBY
Is that what this is called?

ALTERNATE ZOE
It makes hunting monsters sound professional instead of suicidal.

CAPTAIN

(To radio.)

Hernandez. Blake. On my signal, engage the creature and lure it into the side street across from the diner. Don't let it get too close. Lewis. Anders. Hit it with the liquid nitrogen when it's in the box. Then take it down.

Captain Hanson looks to the others and then around the van.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The flying phantom creature dives toward the rooftop.

EMILY 2.0

Back inside!

Max and Izzy fire at the flying creature as Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0 climb down the stairs of the portal hatch.

MAX

Go! Go! Go!

Izzy climbs down the hatch. Max continues to fire. He jumps down as the creature lunges.

INT. ROOM OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max tumbles down the stairs. Rebecca 2.0 makes the hatch portal close. They all stare at each other. Shocked.

EMILY 2.0

We need to get out of...

Emily 2.0 lowers her rifle and fires at the open window. The flying creature is trying to get in.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin and Hamlin 2.0 hide behind the rift device and the part of the room extruded around it. They exchange gunfire with Hamlin 3.0 and his men.

HAMLIN

How did he find us?

HAMLIN 2.0

Maybe he heard us talking through the wall.

HAMLIN 3.0

Don't hit the machine! We need it.

HAMLIN & HAMLIN 2.0

Stay close to the machine!

The Hamlins return fire. Hamlin is hit in the arm. He drops his rifle. The soldiers move closer along the wall.

HAMLIN 2.0

That's the exterior wall.

HAMLIN

Good idea.

Hamlin puts a hand on the wall. Closes his eyes.

The span of wall behind the soldiers suddenly opens to the night sky. The floor undulates, tossing them out the freshly made portal.

EXT. OUTSIDE INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

The five soldiers scream as they plummet to the ground.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin 3.0 uses a block table as cover.

HAMLIN 3.0

That's a nice trick. It explains a lot about this city.

Hamlin squints. The portal to the night air seals.

HAMLIN

Why don't you surrender so we don't have to kill you?

HAMLIN 3.0

I was just thinking the same thing.

The three Hamlins are alone in the sealed room.

INT. ROOM OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max, Izzy, and Emily 2.0 fire at the creature. It climbs through a shrinking window. Rebecca 2.0 stands outside the portal to the room with her hand on the wall. Emily 2.0 turns to her.

EMILY 2.0

Not yet. Hold it a little longer.

MAX

You're sure this is gonna work?

EMILY 2.0

I wish you'd stop asking that every time I have a great idea!

IZZY

It's almost in!

Emily 2.0, Max, and Izzy back toward the portal. They cross the threshold as the creature slips into the room.

EMILY 2.0

Now, Becca!

Rebecca 2.0 closes the window and portal at the same time.

INT. HALLWAY OF BUILDING IN THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max, Izzy -- breathing heavily. Emily 2.0 holds Rebecca 2.0 close. The creature screeches inside the room.

IZZY

You did that how many times?!

EMILY 2.0

Eight. I keep hoping it's going to get less terrifying.

MAX

We need to move like a jackrabbit with its tail on fire. We're behind with phase two.

Rebecca still has her hand on the wall.

REBECCA 2.0

The city says Daddy is in trouble!

EMILY 2.0

Can it help?

REBECCA 2.0

I don't know.

The adults spare a moment to exchange worried glances before running down the hallway with Rebecca 2.0.

EXT. SIDE STREET OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

Muzzle flashes light up the night. Two soldiers back toward the head of the side street. The phantom creature charges. The soldiers stumble back to the sides of the street. The creature lunges.

CAPTAIN HANSON

Now!

The two soldiers with the liquid nitrogen hoses spray the creature. It wails and staggers. The other four soldiers open fire. Chunks of the creature's flesh burst away. It tries to run, but its legs are frozen and shot.

Captain Hanson and the others emerge from behind the van as the creature falls still. Dead.

CAPTAIN HANSON (cont'd)

I'll be damn. That actually worked.

ZOE

It's a hell of a lot easier with rifles rather than axes.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Even I was skeptical.

Gabby stares at the energy signal on the smartphone.

GABBY

We should go. The energy signature is starting to spike again.

CAPTAIN HANSON

Alright. Let's move it...

A blur races from between two houses. Captain Hanson gurgles the rest of his words and falls to the ground -- sliced across the neck. A new creature. It attacks another soldier. He drops his rifle as he dies. Gabby screams in horror.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Fuck! Freeze it! Freeze it!

The two soldiers with the liquid nitrogen try to spray the creature but it is too far away. The other soldiers fire at the second phantom creature. It's too fast. Zoe grabs a rifle from a dead soldier. Alternate Zoe grabs his sidearm. They retreat behind a wooden fence.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

The Hamlins exchange gunfire. One of Hamlin 3.0's rounds strikes the side of the rift device. Sudden silence.

HAMLIN 3.0

This is madness. My world is on the verge of being destroyed by a nuclear war. I need that device.

HAMLIN 2.0

You'd risk destroying countless alternate worlds and realms, including your own.

HAMLIN 3.0

It's not a risk. Put your weapons down, and we can fix it together. We can all get home.

HAMLIN 2.0

It's hard to trust you when you've already killed two of us.

HAMLIN 3.0

I had no choice.

HAMLIN

We always have choices. That's why there are so many of us. Choices creating different realities and different Hamlins.

HAMLIN 3.0

You're not giving me a choice now.

HAMLIN

Funny how often we think the alike.

Hamlin -- hand against a wall. The table in front of Hamlin 3.0 morphs, encasing him. Only eyes and nose exposed.

HAMLIN 2.0

You're getting much better at that.

HAMLIN

I had a good teacher. You're wound is bleeding.

HAMLIN 2.0

No. This is new. Bastard hit me in the same spot as the last one.

Hamlin painfully pulls his outer shirt off and rips a strip from it. He presses the shirt to Hamlin 2.0's abdomen to stop the flow of blood. He wraps the strip of cloth around his wounded arm.

HAMLIN

We don't have much time.

Hamlin looks to the rift device control panel.

EXT. SIDE STREET OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The creature is fast. Three soldiers and Captain Hanson are dead. The Zoes and Gabby crouch near the nitrogen tanks.

ZOE

It's picking us off one at a time.

Zoe fires at the phantom creature. Two soldiers join in. The creature runs down an alley

ALTERNATE ZOE

Where'd you learn to shoot like that?

ZOE

Somalia.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Never been there.

GABBY

We need to get it near the tanks.

ZOE & ALTERNATE ZOE

I've got an idea!

Zoe and Alternate Zoe look at the tanks and then each other.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max, Izzy, Emily 2.0, and Rebecca 2.0 walk cautiously toward the Base camp.

EMILY 2.0

I see your RV. And a van. The van will be easier to maneuver. Can you start it?

MAX

I build dimensional energy converters for a livin'. I can start anything.

They continue up the street.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin and Hamlin 2.0 stand at the rift machine.

HAMLIN 2.0

You're certain?

HAMLIN

Positive. You can see the same data I do. You know what it means. The realm manipulator is failing. The city, its AI or its mind, has been compensating for weeks. The device has been jumping randomly and the city has been trying to control it. The device won't work without the city anymore, but it won't go where we want it to without someone to manually input the coordinates.

HAMLIN 2.0

And only enough power left for two jumps. First to your reality and then back to the city's home world.

HAMLIN

It's jumping to your world. You and your family deserve to be home.

HAMLIN 2.0

Our world is a hell hole. I don't want Becca growing up there. One of us has to stay with the machine. It should be me. I'm not likely to make it anyway. You take them back.

HAMLIN

They need their father and husband.

HAMLIN 2.0

Don't be a fool.

HAMLIN

You of all people should know better than to say that.

Hamlin pokes Hamlin 2.0 in his wound. Hamlin 2.0 cries out. Hamlin pushes him to the back wall. Puts a hand on it. Opens a portal. Hamlin 2.0 struggles against Hamlin. He pushes Hamlin 2.0 into the hallway.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Get to the rendezvous point, and get your family out. I'll send you to my world. Max and Zoe will take care of you there.

HAMLIN 2.0

It should be me.

HAMLIN

I lost them in my world. I could never take them from you.

Hamlin closes the portal. He turns to Hamlin 3.0. Still gagged by the table encasing him.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Don't say a word.

Hamlin goes to the device. Starts entering coordinates.

INT. HALLWAY AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin 2.0. Hand against the wall. The portal won't open.

HAMLIN 2.0

Idiot.

He limps down the hallway to the ramp.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Max is wedged in the driver's side of a van trying to hot-wire it. Izzy stares at the blue flashes across the sky.

EMILY 2.0

We need to go. They'll be at the rendezvous point by now. Should we try another one?

Soldiers still fight the creatures across the plaza.

MAX

It's trickier than a weasel with a pecan pie in its mouth.

IZZY

We can't wait. Move!

Izzy pulls Max from the car. Slides into driver's seat. Reaches down to the exposed wires.

MAX

I nearly had it.

The van purrs to life. Izzy smiles. Max looks puzzled.

IZZY

I had a misspent youth. Get in.

Max looks up at the blueish sky and climbs in the passenger seat. Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0 jump in the back.

EXT. SIDE STREET OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The creature dashes out of an alley to attack the soldiers down the street. Zoe and Alternate Zoe turn to Gabby.

ZOE & ALTERNATE ZOE

Run!

As Gabby runs down the street, Zoe and Alternate Zoe backup while shooting at the phantom creature. It turns. Charges.

ZOE

I hope we have the same idea.

ALTERNATE ZOE

So do I!

Zoe and Alternate Zoe continue to back up as they fire. When the creature is almost to them, they each turn and fire at different tanks.

The tanks explode. Liquid nitrogen rains over the creature, it's skin flash-frozen. It wails and writhes. Zoe and Alternate Zoe shoot at it. Lumps of flesh fall from its head and body. It crashes to the ground. Dead. They cease firing. Gabby steps up behind them.

GABBY

That's a hell of a lot more efficient!

ZOE
But we can only do it once.

ALTERNATE ZOE
And we'd better hope there aren't any
more of them.

Gabby looks to the blueish tint in the sky.

GABBY
We should get out of here. We don't
have much time.

ZOE
Time enough for this.

Zoe turns Gabby around and kisses her. Gabby kisses back.
They break apart.

GABBY
We should do dangerous things
together more often.

Gabby and Zoe smile.

ALTERNATE ZOE
Right. Back in the truck, lovebirds.
We need to warn the soldiers.

They run back to where two wounded soldiers are hobbling
toward an army truck.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Izzy drives the van. Max sits beside her. Emily 2.0 kneels
between the seats, pointing to a side street.

EMILY 2.0
There! There he is!

Izzy pulls over and hits the breaks.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Emily 2.0 opens the van door. Hamlin 2.0 staggers inside.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Emily 2.0 and Hamlin 2.0 climb in the van.

EMILY 2.0
Oh God! You're bleeding!

Emily starts to apply first-aid.

REBECCA 2.0
Daddy, you're hurt again!

HAMLIN 2.0
I'll be fine, Sweetie. We have to go.

IZZY
Where's our Hamlin?

HAMLIN 2.0
One of us had to stay to control the device. He locked me out of the room somehow. He's not coming.

MAX
Typical Hamlin horse shit.

IZZY
We can't leave him.

MAX
He'll think of something. He always does.

HAMLIN 2.0
We have to go. The city is jumping.

Izzy guns the van.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

The photo of Emily and Rebecca leans on the control screen of the rift device.

HAMLIN
Where are they? Can you show me?

INSERT IMAGE: A van speeds down the winding street.

HAMLIN (cont'd)
We need to hold off a little longer.

Hamlin looks at the control panel of the device.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Izzy steers around a tight curve.

EMILY 2.0

Careful.

IZZY

I'm not just racing to get out, I'm
racing to get away!

The side-view mirror -- two creatures pursuing.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The van races along the street. The creatures chase.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Izzy looks away from the side mirror.

MAX

Hang a left here.

IZZY

Wrong way. I saw the city from above.
I have it all here.

Izzy taps her head. Turns right.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The army truck speeds down a street. Slides around a corner.
Tires squeal. Wounded soldiers bounce around the back.

INT. CAB OF ARMY TRUCK - NIGHT

Alternate Zoe is behind the wheel. Gabby and Zoe beside her.

ZOE

Where'd you learn to drive like that?

ALTERNATE ZOE

Nicaragua.

ZOE

Never been there.

GABBY

Faster!

Gabby points to the blue shimmer around the town.

ALTERNATE ZOE

Hang on back there!

Alternate Zoe pulls hard on the wheel for a sharp turn.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin stands at the rift device.

HAMLIN

Almost there.

A rifle stock hits Hamlin in the side of the head. He falls to the floor. Hamlin 3.0 stands over him, rifle in hand.

HAMLIN 3.0

It took me a while to figure out how you do it. Amazing. A whole city that responds to commands. Now, tell me how to alter the coordinates or I'll kill you.

Hamlin glares at Hamlin 3.0.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Rebecca 2.0 stares out the rear window at the phantom creatures. She closes her eyes.

EXT. STREETS OF THE PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

The ground beneath the phantom creatures explodes in a mass of sharp shards and spikes. The spikes cannot penetrate the creatures' hides, but they distract and slow them down.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Emily 2.0 puts an arm around Rebecca 2.0.

EMILY 2.0

Good job, Sweetie.

Rebecca 2.0 smiles at her mother.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Hamlin shakes his head at Hamlin 3.0.

HAMLIN

You had time to think this through.
You know I won't tell you how to
alter the coordinates. You should
have shot me in the back. But you
wanted to brag. Impress me with
figuring out how to control the city.
An eight-year-old figured it out. Be
impressed with this.

Hamlin's hand rests on the floor. A slender piece the wall behind Hamlin 3.0 swiftly extrudes and pierces his arm. He drops the rifle. As Hamlin climbs to his feet, Hamlin 3.0 places a hand on the wall. A spike juts down from the ceiling. Hamlin dodges it.

The two Hamlins face off, each touching a part of the room, spikes of building material thrusting and slashing at each other -- a sword fight of morphing stone.

Hamlin jumps to avoid several spikes rising from the floor. He lands and thrusts a hand upward. Four spikes erupt and stab Hamlin 3.0 through his armored chest and limbs. His eyes flutter. Blood oozes between his lips.

HAMLIN 3.0

How? You weren't touching anything?

HAMLIN

The city doesn't need contact to read
our minds.

HAMLIN 3.0

But...I always succeed.

Hamlin reaches down and pulls the photo of Emily and Rebecca from the vest pocket Hamlin 3.0's body armor.

HAMLIN

Close. I fail, but I learn from my
failures. Then I succeed.

Hamlin 3.0's eyes close as he dies. Hamlin stares at his dead double a moment and then turns to the rift device. Hamlin stares at the photo of Emily and Rebecca.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

Nearly time.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN (O.S.)
 You need to get out of here.

Hamlin turns around to see the Original Hamlin standing beside an open portal, his hand on the wall. He steps into the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The army truck takes another tight turn and is finally on the main street out of town.

INT. CAB OF ARMY TRUCK - NIGHT

Zoe, Alternate Zoe and Gabby bounce in the front seat.

ZOE
 Can't you go any faster?

ALTERNATE ZOE
 This truck wasn't built for speed.

Gabby looks between her smartphone and the sky.

GABBY
 It's going to peak soon.

Zoe takes Gabby's hand. Holds it tight.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Original Hamlin walks over to the rift device.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
 It's my machine. My mistake.

HAMLIN
 How did you find...? Ah. You hid the device here.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
 Too many curious copies showed up.

HAMLIN
 Wise idea. I thought you were dead.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
 I'm one of the charming ones. We're harder to kill.

Original Hamlin looks at the impaled body of Hamlin 3.0.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN (cont'd)
Wish I'd thought of that.

Original Hamlin leans on the rift device. Weary. Sad.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN (cont'd)
How did you calibrate it? I tried for years.

HAMLIN
I had the data from the energy sensor I created. And the data from another one of us. He and Emily and Rebecca are trying to escape with my Max and Izzy.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
I don't know who any of those people are. I wish I'd met them. And I wish I'd built an energy sensor instead.

HAMLIN
There's not much time, but there might be a way for the city to get you out of here. Someone needs to stay to keep calibrating the device.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
I know. That's me. My grief made this catastrophe. This machine was supposed to open a door between realities. A door to a world where I stopped at that yellow light. A world where Beth and Adam are still alive. Instead, I destroyed a city. Destroyed worlds. This is my responsibility.

HAMLIN
But I need to...I need to make it right.

Hamlin's eyes tear up. Original Hamlin places a hand on his shoulder.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN
Whatever you need to fix is out there. This, this is my job. Now go. I know a trick the city showed me. But we'll need to hurry.

Original Hamlin looks at Hamlin with a hint of a smile.

INT. VAN - STREETS OF PHANTOM CITY - NIGHT

Izzy drives the van past the edge of the city as the sky becomes blue-white light.

INT. CAB OF FLATBED TRUCK - NIGHT

Azure light washes over Zoe, Alternate Zoe, and Gabby.

INT. ROOM AT TOP OF INVERTED EGG-SHAPED BUILDING - NIGHT

Original Hamlin watches the monitor on the device.

ORIGINAL HAMLIN

Now. Now we set it right.

He hits a button and the monitor flashes red.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TOWN OF MOONRISE - NIGHT

The army truck passes out of the blue haze just as it flashes pure white. The Phantom City appears behind them.

A second later the van with Max and Izzy drives out of the city not far away. A cloud of dust billows behind it as it plows into the desert.

The two creatures chasing the van are almost to the edge of the city when it flashes white again. The city is gone. The town is back where it should be.

The army truck skids to a stop. The van stops 100 feet away. Stuck on the desert sand.

The wounded soldiers exit the trucks and aim rifles at the van. Zoe, Alternate Zoe, and Gabby climb out of the truck.

The driver's side door of the van opens. Izzy steps out. Gabby and Izzy run for each other.

ZOE

Don't shoot! They're with us! They were inside.

Zoe runs for the van. Alternate Zoe pauses, uncertain.

INT. VAN - NEW MEXICO DESERT - NIGHT

Max looks back at Hamlin 2.0 and Emily 2.0.

MAX

We're stuck. Hold on, Bubba. I'll go for help.

Max gets out of the van and runs for the army trucks.

Emily 2.0 presses the shirt to the wound. Rebecca 2.0 holds Hamlin 2.0's hand.

EMILY 2.0

Everything is going to be fine. We'll get you to a hospital and patch you up.

HAMLIN 2.0

You're a wonderful woman.

EMILY 2.0

Don't be nice to me now.

HAMLIN 2.0

And you're a very smart girl.

REBECCA 2.0

I love you, Daddy.

HAMLIN 2.0

I love you both.

They hold each other close.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - NIGHT

Izzy and Gabby hold each other tight. Zoe stares at the van. Max holds her.

MAX

He needs help. Nearest hospital is an hour away.

ALTERNATE ZOE

The medic was killed. His medkit is lost.

ZOE

You're sure he's not mine?

MAX

Our Ham stayed behind to make sure
the jump worked and got us here.

ZOE

Idiot.

ALTERNATE ZOE

They're all idiots

Zoe begins to cry. Max embraces her. Alternate Zoe puts a
hand on Zoe's shoulder.

Gabby is crying as she and Izzy look at the van.

GABBY

I'm so happy and so sad.

IZZY

He stayed to save us. He's smart.
He'll figure out a way to survive
wherever he is. And this one...this
one is just like him.

Izzy starts to cry as well. SOLDIER TWO shouts.

SOLDIER TWO

Eyes! Six o'clock. Something's moving
in the desert.

IZZY

What is it? Is it one of those
creatures!?

Gabby takes her smartphone out and turns on the camera. She
taps an app for night vision.

GABBY

I don't think so. It looks like...
Don't shoot! Don't shoot!

Gabby turns and waves to the soldiers.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - NIGHT

Hamlin stands beside a human-shaped pod of pale-white city
building material with a man-sized open hatch. He holds his
wounded arm with the good one. Looks up to see truck lights
heading for him.

One of the trucks slides to a stop. Zoe jumps out. She runs
to Hamlin and throws her arms around him.

ZOE

I thought I lost you! I'm so sorry. I should have been there and I wasn't.

Hamlin puts his forehead to Zoe's.

HAMLIN

No. I'm sorry. I should have asked you to be there.

Max, Izzy, and Gabby come up and hug him.

MAX

I knew you'd think of somethin' to save your ass.

HAMLIN

I met the original me. This was his idea. The city shot me out at the last moment.

GABBY

You missed a lot on this side.

Alternate Zoe steps to stand beside Zoe.

HAMLIN

Two of you?

ALTERNATE ZOE

Now we're twice as much fun.

HAMLIN

Speaking of doubles, where's mine? He needs medical attention.

Max looks toward the van. Hamlin follows his gaze.

INT. VAN - NEW MEXICO DESERT - NIGHT

Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0 hold Hamlin 2.0. Hamlin walks up. They stare at each other a long moment.

HAMLIN 2.0

You made it?

HAMLIN

I got lucky. I met our double who made the realm device. He stayed.

HAMLIN 2.0

Just in time to say goodbye.

EMILY 2.0
Stop talking like that.

HAMLIN 2.0
You're the doctor. You know better
than I do.

EMILY 2.0
I can fix you up. Like before.

REBECCA 2.0
Daddy!

HAMLIN 2.0
I'm so sorry for everything.

Hamlin 2.0 closes his eyes. His body relaxes. Gone. Emily sobs and clutches at Rebecca 2.0

HAMLIN
I did my best and it wasn't enough.

EMILY 2.0
You both did your best.

Emily 2.0 holds Rebecca 2.0 tighter. Lights from approaching trucks catch their attention.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - NIGHT

The trucks pull up. Colonel Martinez exits in a hazmat suit. Hamlin walks toward her.

HAMLIN
Are you in charge?

COLONEL MARTINEZ
Yes. Colonel Martinez. I have a lot
of questions for you, Dr. Thorne.

HAMLIN
Good. I have some questions for you.
Such as who I need to talk to get the
funding for the project that makes
sure this never happens again. We're
going to need multiple satellites and
at least six ground stations. And
then it gets expensive...

Hamlin walks away with Colonel Martinez. He glances back to the tearful Emily 2.0 and Rebecca 2.0.

EXT. NEW MEXICO RANCH - AFTERNOON

Desert landscape. Hamlin and Emily 2.0 sit on the bench beside the graves of Emily and Rebecca.

EMILY 2.0

It's weird here.

HAMLIN

You can stay as long as you want. There's plenty of room. Or we can find you a place. Anywhere. It's your world now.

EMILY 2.0

I mean here. Beside the grave of my double and her Rebecca.

HAMLIN

It's...all weird.

He looks across the yard. Max is at the grill beneath a tree. Izzy and Gabby are setting the picnic table. Rebecca 2.0 plays Frisbee with Zoe and Alternate Zoe.

HAMLIN (cont'd)

But it's a good weird.

EMILY 2.0

You're not him, but you're close. And she needs a father.

HAMLIN

I don't know. I miss my Rebecca. My Emily.

EMILY 2.0

This is the closest we'll ever get to the way things should be. We shouldn't run from it.

HAMLIN

Maybe you're right.

They stand up and walk toward the others.

EMILY 2.0

Do you think it will happen again?

HAMLIN

The membranes between realms are still unstable.

(MORE)

HAMLIN (cont'd)

The rift could reoccur at any time.
It'll be like predicting earthquakes
now.

Rebecca 2.0 runs up and hands Hamlin a cactus flower. He
bends down. Takes it. Happiness and sadness in one smile.

MAX

What do ya'll wanna watch for movie
night?

IZZY

Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

GABBY

The Thing from Another World.

ZOE

How about *The Blob*.

ALTERNATE ZOE

We've been told it's educational.

REBECCA 2.0

Oooo! Can we watch *Star Wars*?

EMILY 2.0

It's her favorite movie right now.
She hasn't realized that everyone
else has seen it a million times.

Hamlin and the others exchange looks.

HAMLIN

What's *Star Wars*?

Emily 2.0 laughs. They all settle in at the table for a late
afternoon barbecue.

THE END