

# ALL ALIVE

A PLAY BY GUSTAVO OTT

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*And so the days were dying and with the days, years.  
 Until one morning something like joy occurred.  
 It rained-a strong but slow rain."*

Jorge Luis Borges, "Funes the Memorious"

## CAST OF CHARACTERS /ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS

W.W., a refugee  
 DR. REY, a doctor  
 VIVIAN MARTINEZ, a doctor  
 ALICIA WELTY, a young woman  
 PETER HARRIS, an editor/ Man 2  
 ILAN LEWIS, a nurse/ a patient  
 JORGE RIVERA, a newscaster/ Man 3  
 BEATRIZ SHAW, director of QCorps.  
 MAGGIE KIERMAIER, a reporter  
 ALFONSO D'AMICO, Governor/ Man I / S.F./ W.S.  
 SUSANA D'AMICO, Governor's wife/ TV2/ TV3  
 JOSELYN H. MARTINEZ, an adolescent/Woman I

## SETTINGS

Vivian and Peter's house  
 Alicia's apartment  
 Ilan and Jorge's apartment  
 The governor's office  
 Hospital  
 Channel 7 newsroom  
 Office of Harris Publishing House  
 Office of Qcorps

## CHAPTER I

1/ POTS AND PANS FALL

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*(Theme music. Vivian and Peter's house. A bed, a door and night table. They are both in bed, illuminated by a dim light. Vivian reads a book. Peter sleeps, he's barely visible. Vivian finishes reading and turns off her light. They sleep. There is a pause, with the sound of everyday noises: barking dogs, sirens, along with others that are stranger. Suddenly, the buzz of a crowd. The couple doesn't wake up until a loud noise startles Vivian)*

VIVIAN: What's that?

PETER: What's what?

VIVIAN: Did you hear that?

PETER: It must be Joselyn.

VIVIAN: *(Loud)* Love, is that you?

JOSELYN: Yes, Mother.

VIVIAN: You don't have to get up so early, sweetheart.

PETER: It's the same thing every day.

VIVIAN: You still have two hours, Josy.

PETER: Always so anxious about getting to school before anyone else.

VIVIAN: She takes after you!

JOSELYN: Mom, Dad... Are you awake?

*(Peter and Vivian look at each other, they laugh)*

VIVIAN: Yes, love, we're awake. But we could sleep a bit more. Go on, back to bed.

JOSELYN: But Mom...

VIVIAN: It's really early, Joselyn. You're not going to be late to school.

PETER: *(Suddenly realizing and annoyed)* But Vivian! School has been suspended since the pandemic started.

VIVIAN: That's right!

PETER: There is no school!

JOSELYN: But Mom... Dad...

*(Peter puts his glasses on)*

PETER: What's the matter, Joselyn? Go back to sleep, the sun hasn't even come up. *(To Vivian)* Are you on duty at the hospital today? *(Vivian indicates that no. To Joselyn)* Mom doesn't have work. You don't have school. And I want to rest!

JOSELYN: But Dad...

PETER: *(Annoyed)* Go to sleep, damn it!

JOSELYN: But there's some strange person walking around the house.

*(Vivian and Peter look at each other)*

VIVIAN: A dream?

PETER: A nightmare of the worst kind.

VIVIAN: It's been like this since the virus started. People sleep less and dream deeper. We think it's distress.

PETER: Go on, you tell her.

VIVIAN: *(To Joselyn)* Darling, it's nothing. You were dreaming. Go on back to bed.

*(They're alarmed by a loud noise inside the house.)*

PETER: What's that?

VIVIAN: It must be the pots and pans. I didn't wash them last night and left them piled up on top of each other.

PETER: Joselyn, are you alright?

*(They hear a man's thick voice)*

W.W: I'm sorry!

*(Peter and Vivian look at each other, terrified)*

JOSELYN: You see?

PETER: Someone's in the house!

*(Vivian gets up, goes to one side, terrified. She takes a baseball bat she has put aside for just such an occasion. Peter takes a book, then decides on another, thicker one)*

PETER: Joselyn, go to your room and lock yourself in. *(Looking at Vivian)* The police!

*(Vivian understands. She puts the bat down and looks for her phone. Going towards the door, Peter stops suddenly when he hears W.W. knock, rather loudly.)*

W.W.: Uhm... Can we talk?

*(Noise with an echo of a crowd)*

2/ THE PEOPLE

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*(The echo of the multitude mixes with the sounds of sirens. Ilan, on stage, looks out the window. Jorge, in bed)*

JORGE: Stop spying on the neighbors, Ilan.

ILAN: No, t's not spying.

JORGE: The "search for reliable information." But they've already complained about your passion for last minute news, my love. By the way, the guy in 4-C thinks you're looking at his wife.

ILAN: I don't like his wife. Him, yeah. But her? No way.

JORGE: Come on. Stop looking out.

ILAN: Jorge, it's that something's going on.

JORGE: What?

ILAN: There's a lot of people in the street.

JORGE: This pandemic will get worse if a group of people keeps doing what it wants and doesn't follow what epidemiologists recommend.

ILAN: No, it's not a group, Jorge. It's lots of people.

JORGE: Lots? How many?

ILAN: Was there an earthquake and we didn't feel it?

JORGE: If there'd been an earthquake, they would have called me, Ilan. *(At that moment Jorge's phone rings)* Witch!

ILAN: There was an earthquake, Jorge. A big one. And us, zilch.

JORGE: You sleep like a log! *(He answers the phone)* Hello?

ILAN: Me a log and you a little sparrow that snores like a hippopotamus.

JORGE: *(He listens)* Yes, of course I'm awake.

ILAN: You may be the handsome newscaster on channel 7, but you didn't notice the earthquake.

JORGE; (*Listening to the phone*) But...

ILAN: Pandemics, earthquakes.

JORGE: (*On the phone*) But are you sure?

ILAN: I guess now you're going to have to leave urgently for the station and me to the hospital to save people. What for? So they can survive the earthquake and then get blown away by the hurricane?

JORGE: (*He listens, worried*) What?

ILAN: What?

JORGE: I don't understand!

ILAN: What don't you understand?

JORGE: (*Into the phone*) I'm on my way! (*He hangs up, gets out of bed and dresses quickly*) I have to go to the station. Something serious has happened but nobody knows how to explain it.

ILAN: Was there a tremor? What happened?

JORGE: Is my gray jacket clean?

ILAN: How should I know?

JORGE: (*He finds the jacket. Sniffs it*) It'll have to do.

ILAN: It's not an earthquake? (*Jorge nods negative*) Something with the virus?

JORGE: It's a different kind of *peligro*. A bigger danger.

ILAN: More than the virus! Then stay with me and we'll hug each and we'll see it all from the window.

JORGE: I have work, love.

ILAN: Pandemic, earthquake and news anchor smelling like a monkey. The end of the world. Are you going to have breakfast? Do you

have your mask? Take a bar of soap and disinfectant with you! (*He puts his mask on*). I'll go see if I can get something to eat so you can take it with you...

JORGE: (*Serious*) Ilan. If they haven't called you from the hospital, stay here. They say the street's unsafe and the authorities have prohibited going out. There's a curfew.

ILAN: (*Pointing at the window*) Jorge, there's a crowd outside! Nobody's paying attention to the authorities. I must be the only one following orders, because everyone else...

JORGE: (*Serious*) Love, they're all at home.

ILAN: And all those people? Explain it to me before I start screaming.

JORGE: They said at the station they're not from here.

ILAN: Bu... Where are they from?

JORGE: From elsewhere. They've come to the city.

ILAN: Don't be ridiculous!

JORGE: (*About to leave*) Keep the phone charged and the TV on; I'll be on at noon and the nightly news. There will be lots of breaking news.

*(Ilan goes to the television. We can't hear or see what he says to it, but we hear the sounds of more sirens and lots of people. With his back to Ilan, Jorge searches in one of his pockets, takes out a little piece of paper and reads it as if it were a prayer.)*

ILAN: Look at those images! So many people! And none of them are wearing masks!

JORGE: I'll call you.

ILAN: Wait, don't go! (*Jorge leaves. Ilan is left alone, watching the TV in disbelief*) And where could that disaster be? Here?

*(The hum of the crowd continues)*

3/ A LITTLE GIRL

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*(The living room of Alicia's apartment. Beatrice, Maggie and Alicia are there).*

BEATRIZ: How awful! And that's what they call an Assistant Technician of Temperatures?

ALICIA: Taking people's temperatures in a store.

MAGGIE: Because of the virus? What do they do to someone who has a high temperature?

ALICIA: And so, are you going to do a story about this?

MAGGIE: Could be. Everything related to the pandemic is of interest to Channel 7. What happens to someone who has a temperature?

ALICIA: They can't come in, of course.

BEATRICE: Nothing else?

ALICE: I think they give them some medicine.

MAGGIE: There's is no medicine for the virus.

ALICIA: And that's what scares me the most. Ever since yesterday I've had this feeling that I've also been infected. And if I'm not, that I will be soon.

BEATRICE: I warn you that if you get sick, I'll lock you up in your room and you're not getting out.

ALICIA: And what would we do with the little girl?

BEATRICE: I don't know, Alicia. One calamity at a time.

ALICIA: Don't be bad, Beatrice. She's not a calamity.

MAGGIE: Sometimes I forget that we have a little girl now.

BEATRICE: We don't have to have her, gals. I've heard that the governor has set up places where you can leave them.

MAGGIE: Beatrice, remember that I'm a reporter.

BEATRICE: And I'm a woman who knows a lot.

MAGGIE: The governor issued an order making it obligatory to take care of pandemic victims until he decides otherwise. Nobody wants people on the streets infecting everyone else.

ALICIA: Yes, that's right, if they're in people's houses, we should take care of them.

BEATRICE: But there's an exception with children. It's discretionary until they're twelve years old--if you agree to take care of them or prefer to send them to a refugee shelter.

ALICIA: Is that what they call them? Refugees?

BEATRICE: Refugees, foreigners, newcomers, indigents, victims.

MAGGIE: They don't agree.

BEATRICE: So, we could get rid of the little girl.

ALICIA: If we want to...

BEATRICE: She's not family, Alicia.

MAGGIE: Yes, we could take her to the shelter, but do we want to?

BEATRICE: What happens if the three of us are working and something happens to her?

ALICIA: She can't stay alone.

MAGGIE: We're quarantined. We can't go out, Beatrice.

BEATRICE: But you go out every day to do your reporting. And Alicia, as a Superior PH.D. Technician of Temperatures and Ovens. And I can't be responsible. The truth is we don't have time for a little girl.

MAGGIE: Let's put it to a vote, like everything in this house.

BEATRICE: Yeah, now you're very democratic because you know I'm going to lose. But when we talked about what posters we can put on the walls, then you weren't so electoral.

ALICIA: There's no need to vote, because I own the apartment.

*(Maggie and Beatrice look at each other, surprised)*

MAGGIE: *(Serious, accusingly)*. This is the first time you've played that card, Alicia.

ALICIA: She's a little lost girl, for God's sake! She said she used to live in this apartment. I believe her!

BEATRICE: She doesn't have rights, Alicia.

ALICIA: If it were me...if I were a little lost girl, I'd also look for my house. The one I remember. And even if other people live there now, I'd go there. And I'd expect the adults who live there to help me, to protect me.

BEATRICE: Alicia, someone is probably looking for her.

ALICIA: And until they find her, she's staying here. Because if I were in her circumstances, I'd feel protected in my room, where my bed was, under my covers. I'd feel safe there.

*(Noting that Alicia has made up her mind, Beatrice let's up on the pressure).*

MAGGIE: You own this place.

ALICIA: Taking care of a little girl is the dream of all of my life.

BEATRICE: Don't forget the agreement we made: no children or partners. We're lucky Holly-Golightlies.

ALICIA: Everything's changed and the world is more dangerous now, like all memories have been erased, like we were new.

BEATRICE:*(Turns on her laptop)* Even so, old or new, as soon as her family appears, she'll have to go.

MAGGIE: Naturally.*(Getting ready to leave--mask, disinfectant)* I have an interview. an I'll be back later.

*(Maggie leaves)*

ALICIA: *(Happy, she yells out)* Rachel, you can come in now.

BEATRICE: How do you know her name's Rachel?

ALICIA: She told me this morning.

BEATRICE: Finally! The girl talks!

ALICIA: Yes. With an accent, but she talks.

4/ PISSING ME OFF

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*(The Governor's Mansion. Governor D'Amico comes into the office, nervous. Dr. Rey is waiting for him there.)*

GOVERNOR: *(Pours himself a whiskey)* Wait a moment, I'm going to have a little refreshment first.

DR. REY: It's early.

GOVERNOR: What?

DR. REY: That it's early for that, Governor.

GOVERNOR: You think so? You think that today it's early for this?

DR. REY: Do you have some problem with alcohol that I'm not aware of?

GOVERNOR: You know everything about me, Rey. And truthfully, precisely today, do you have a problem with this?

*(He pours himself another shot and chugs it down)*

DR. REY: No, of course not. It's just that it surprises me.

GOVERNOR: I surprise you? Today? Me?

DR. REY: Forget it.

GOVERNOR: I've just got up, Rey. Or better said, I was got up. Susana took care of that; she's the only one who gets up early in this house. "The President's on the phone," she says to me. Just like that, nothing more. The President calling my house. I tell her: "Tell his assistant to give me two minutes." "No, Alfonso, his assistant is not on the phone. It's the President himself. And I am not going to tell the President to wait for two minutes." She should be the governor.

*(He takes another swig, this time right from the bottle)*

DR. REY: What did the President say to you?

GOVERNOR: He didn't say, he yelled at me, the son of a bitch. And me, still with my underwear on, or half on because it doesn't fit. Truth

is you can see everything, one ball, both balls sometimes, everything. And here I am, half asleep with both my balls hanging out, terrified because the President is on the phone and Susana hands me the phone right away, like saying, either you talk to him or they'll shoot you. And me: "Mr. President, to what do I owe the honor, Mr. President? Yes, Mr. President, of course, Mr. President." "Every crisis is an opportunity," he says to me.

DR. REY: Commander-in-Chief of Platitudes.

GOVERNOR: That's right. And he orders me to get to the Governor's mansion in ten minutes. How the hell am I going to get there in ten minutes when it takes me half an hour when there's no traffic and none of those refugees in the street?

DR. REY: We don't know if they're refugees yet.

GOVERNOR: Indigents, that's what they are. "I want you sitting down in your office in ten minutes, you bastard." Bastard, the President called me. I call him son of a bitch and he calls me bastard. He always ends up winning, of course, that's why he's the president. Anyhow, all the governors had a zoom meeting with him. National crisis. And there I was, in my little governor's square, in a daze and half dressed. I said yes to everything, of course. And when it was over, I came here to breakfast on Black Label. *(He offers it to Dr. Rey)*. Do you want some?

DR. REY: Alfonso, I haven't had a drink in...

GOVERNOR: Ten years, I know. Now tell me, what do you have for me?

DR. REY: We think there are between 98 and 105 thousand.

GOVERNOR: A week?

DR. REY: Daily.

GOVERNOR: In the whole country?

DR. TREY: In the state.

GOVERNOR: Holy shit!

DR. REY: The numbers are worse in other states.

GOVERNOR: All those people in the street.

DR. REY: Without masks, or disinfectants, and they don't follow social distancing. It's a disaster, Governor. The biggest problem are the ones who have gone into private homes. People react badly: there've been fights and even murders.

GOVERNOR: Have you found any in your house?

DR. REY: No, not yet.

GOVERNOR: Do these refugees have anything to do with the pandemic?

DR. REY: Most likely. In the face of a catastrophe, people are given to fleeing. It's a human instinct. We've questioned a few of them but they refuse to talk.

GOVERNOR: But where do they come from? The south? By sea? Do they speak French?

DR. REY: We're finding out. Everything is in the hands of Homeland Security.

GOVERNOR: Just so it's clear that I was not elected to babysit beggars in the middle of a world-wide health crisis.

*(Susana comes in, happy. She leaves her purse near the door)*

SUSANA: A beautiful and radiant day!

GOVERNOR: Sweetheart, I'm in the middle of a meeting...

SUSANA: *(Seeing the whiskey)* Hello, Rey.

DR. REY: Hello, Susana. Nervous?

SUSANA: Not at all. Every crisis is an opportunity.

GOVERNOR: Another commander-in-chief!

SUSANA: The press is sounding the alarm and you have to respond. A press conference?

GOVERNOR: Yes, let's organize a meeting with the press.

SUSANA: You can come out of this crisis like a beauty queen or an idiot. Up until now you're a finalist in the latter. We've got to change the narrative. Inform. Let them know that we're in control.

GOVERNOR: We're not in control, Susana! The epidemic is growing, and the number of refugees is increasing.

SUSANA: Alfonso, are you sure they're from here? They seem like foreigners to me. They talk funny, like strange.

GOVERNOR: We think they come from the south.

SUSANA: Do they speak Spanish? If so, we can deport them.

GOVERNOR: *(To Rey)* I think so. Right?

DR. REY: Technically, yes. But they're people and...

SUSANA: We can throw them out of the state. That they're back in the morning? Well, by the afternoon they're on their way again. You call up the National Guard and in three days they're gone. Let the other governors take care of the problem, but they've got to go, my love.

GOVERNOR: Very well. That's what we'll do. Rey, arrange a meeting with the team. *(To Susana)* What would this state do without its lady governor?

SUSANA: It would collapse with the immigrants and your indecision.

*(Governor makes a sign to Dr. Rey, who leaves, reluctantly)*

SUSANA: For the press conference you need to shine, like someone who knows what he's talking about. *(She takes the bottle of Black Label and puts it next to her purse)* No alcohol. Will you behave well? *(He agrees)* Statistics. Understanding. Affected by the refugees and the pandemic, but in control of everything. You're looking for a solution that will involve everyone affected.

GOVERNOR: And then I throw everyone out.

SUSANA: Blame them for the virus. They've brought the disease; they're filling up our hospitals and draining our resources. The voters

will adore you when they find out that what the state's got in the bank is for its residents and not outsiders who don't even speak our language. Ah! And don't mention the President.

GOVERNOR: I won't name the son of a bitch.

SUSANA: Very good. Let's get to work.

GOVERNOR: My love, I really think that now I do need an assistant.

SUSANA: Another intern?

GOVERNOR: I've been without one for a while.

SUSANA: No, you don't! Do you think I'm an idiot?

GOVERNOR: Of course, I don't!

SUSANA: We'll see each other later, amore.

*(Susana leaves with the bottle of Black Label. The governor walks around the room not knowing what to do. He looks for another bottle he has hidden. He pours himself a drink)*

GOVERNOR: Harpy!

5/ W.W.

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*(Vivian and Peter's house. Joselyn, to one side. W.W. in front of them, nervous)*

W.W.: I have a few questions, obviously.

PETER: Like we do.

VIVIAN: First, what's most important: do you feel better?

W.W: Today? Yes. What day is it?

VIVIAN: You arrived three days ago.

W.W: But... But what have I done during all that time?

JOSELYN: You've slept.

PETER: Three days sleeping!

W.W.: I've always been a sleepy head. Maybe that's why I'm so hungry. Do you have something? Bread, perhaps?

*(Vivian gives him a mask and looks for something to eat)*

VIVIAN: That mask is yours. No one's used it.

W.W.: Mask?

VIVIAN: Do you know what it is?

W.W.: Of course! I was once a nurse.

*(W.W. puts the mask on like a professional and takes it off every time he speaks)*

PETER: Because of the pandemic, sir. We don't know who you are or where you've been.

W.W.: I don't think I have any disease, if that's what you're referring to. But I do have lots of questions. *(Vivian gives him a sandwich)* Do I eat without a mask or through it?

*(They laugh)*

JOSELYN: You can take it off while you eat.

W.W.: Thank goodness.

VIVIAN: And you don't have to wear it while you talk, either, if and when we maintain social distance.

W.W.: Very well!

PETER: But you must understand that we also have questions.

VIVIAN: For example, what are you doing here?

PETER: How did you get in? The doors were locked. Through the window? Is that it? You entered through the window?

W.W.: No, of course not.

PETER: Then tell us how you got in and what you want.

W.W.: It's just that I don't remember.

VIVIAN: How's that?

W.W.: Suddenly I was here. I think I used to live in this house.

PETER: You mean when you were young?

VIVIAN: A long time ago?

JOSELYN: You were the old owner?

W.W.: Old, yes, without a doubt...

VIVIAN: And you still have the keys?

PETER: Please excuse me, but you don't need to lie to us.

W.W.: I don't tell lies. Ever.

PETER: I don't mean that you'd lie on purpose, but something is wrong with what you're saying. Because it's simply not possible that you have the keys. We've lived here for fourteen years. We've

changed the locks some four times since then. You must have come in through the window or some other way.

W.W.: I'm telling you what I remember, but maybe it's not true. Aren't we on Mickle Street?

VIVIAN: You see? This is Martin Street.

PETER: Anyway, to avoid any more problems, I think it's best that you leave. It doesn't really matter how you came in, what's important to us is that you leave our house.

W.W.: But I don't know where to go.

VIVIAN: To your house on Mickle Street?

PETER: Or to a shelter...

W.W.: I don't remember...

JOSELYN: Maybe you have a disease that makes you forget who you are and where you come from.

W.W.: I know perfectly well who I am and where I come from, Miss ...

JOSELYN: Joselyn. Joselyn Harris-Martínez.

W.W.: What a lovely name. Where is it from?

PETER: From here, sir. We are all from here. The one that doesn't seem to be from here is you, if you'll forgive me.

W.W.: Are you telling me that you think I'm not from this country?

PETER: Maybe you are. Or not. But you don't know, and we don't either. Do you have any documents? (*W.W. indicates that he doesn't know*). Maybe you got lost and have forgotten everything.

JOSELYN: Maybe you get lacunae and get lost...

W.W.: Lacunae, that's a word I like. Lacunae! It has a sonority, a special evocation.

PETER: Do you think we should call the police?

W.W.: "Police," now that's not such a pretty word.

PETER: Perhaps they can take you back to your family, to your house on Mickle Street. Surely, they're looking for you. Should I call?

VIVIAN: We can't do that, love.

PETER: Why?

VIVIAN: Because I've already done it. A few times. I've been calling for three days, ever since he came in. And the police have given me the same answer: that we should assume responsibility for him. That if he's not dangerous, we should keep him here until everything is taken care of.

W.W.: Of course, I'm not dangerous!

JOSELYN: He seems more like a grandfather.

PETER: (*Annoyed, to Vivian*) Did the police really tell you to assume responsibility? What are they there for then?

VIVIAN: They said it was because of the refugees in the streets.

PETER: They should get them off the streets, as well. Supposedly we're in quarantine. That nobody's supposed to go out! That the virus is spreading fast. We have nearly three thousand dead a day.

W.W.: Jesus... Not even in war!

PETER: That's right! Not even in war!

VIVIAN: The police said that they're no longer taking calls about people who have gone into houses. That if there's no imminent danger, we should follow the Emergency Law and take care of them. That the police have more serious things to attend to.

PETER: More serious, like ...?

VIVIAN: Murder, robberies, firearms, And it's true, Peter. We're at capacity in the hospital. There's no space for one more patient. I feel a bit like the police: with the virus and the violence out there, having this gentleman here doesn't seem like a big sacrifice to me.

PETER: Well, not me. I read somewhere that the boss of the house can act as a proxy for the law within the perimeter of his house. Is that right?

VIVIAN: Yes, but you are not the only boss in this house, Peter. Besides, you're a publisher, an intellectual, you don't have a policeman's instinct to confront a foreigner.

W.W.: And I inform you, so that you'll calm down, that I am not a foreigner. I'm from here. And I'm not looking to confront anyone. (*Suddenly, interested*) You're a publisher?

PETER: Peter Harris, Head of Harris Publishing House.

W.W.: I love publishers. You could say that I'm one, too, although I've only published what I write.

PETER: You write?

W.W.: Can I tell you something curious? Three days ago, when I looked out of the window, before you woke up, I was looking at a bit of the street, that I thought was Mickle. I saw the stores and the construction sites and also the multitude that was walking up and down around here, searching for refuge, like me, even though I, at least, found this house, so similar to the one I used to have. The fact is the rest of the street seemed to me more like a pagan heaven than a city: living stars, celestial happenings, everything twinkling.

VIVIAN: I imagine it's changed since you were young.

JOSELYN: Do you remember in what year you lived here?

W.W.: After my mother died, I think from '84.

VIVIAN:(*To Peter*) Alzheimer's affects language and particularly, numbers.

(*Suddenly, there's some noise outside. Megaphones, shouted orders. Gun shots. A multitude running. W.W. puts on his mask and raises his arms, as if surrendering. Joselyn goes to the window, looks out.*)

PETER: What's this?

VIVIAN: Joselyn, don't look out.

JOSELYN: Come, so you can see.

VIVIAN: What's happening?

JOSELYN: The National Guard is dispersing the refugees.

W.W.: My children! My younger brothers!

PETER: Get away from the window!

VIVIAN: I can't believe it. They've called in the army! I'll have to run to the hospital.

PETER: Don't go out, Vivian!

JOSELYN: It's like we're still asleep. Right?

*(More gunshots. Multitude that yells, in unison, at the guards.)*

6/ QUOTATIONS

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*(The echo of the multitude ceases. Lights. Channel 7 TV. A sign with the channel's logo, a table. Ilan brings Jorge some food)*

JORGE: Salmon, Ilan? Seriously?

ILAN: It's good for the heart.

JORGE:*(Eating)* Just so my co-workers don't see it. Most of them are living on French fries for lunch and dinner. And me, salmon.

ILAN: Because no one loves them the way I love you.

JORGE: That's for sure, my love.

ILAN: You have to eat well, Jorge. You've not been out of here for a whole week. You really can't go home for just a minute? Too much is urgent, too much is at the last minute?

JORGE: It's not a joke, Ilan. The station needs all of us. A lot of people have been missing work, what with the sick ones and suicides.

ILAN: We're not much better off in the hospital. Drownings, gunshot wounds... The number of people in the streets doesn't help. Every day there's more. It seems like the whole country has come to live here. Did you know that, in five days, we've had eighty people go through windows?

JORGE: That wanted to commit suicide?

ILAN: No, that our friends and neighbors have thrown out of the windows.

JORGE: How awful! But it was to be expected.

ILAN: It's a crime.

JORGE: I'm not justifying it, of course not. But I understand them. That they've been obligated to live with strangers in their house.

ILAN: The fact is that these days there are lots of people who need to be saved, Jorge.

JORGE: What do they say in the hospital? Is it true that the virus has multiplied eighty times since they arrived?

ILAN: And we don't have any more space there. And we're terrified, Jorge, going crazy.

*(Jorge finishes the salmon)*

JORGE: That was delicious, my love.

ILAN: Of course. I made it.

JORGE: But it's not necessary for you to come all the way here. I promise to come home tomorrow and we'll eat together, like always.

ILAN: It's that in addition to wanting to make sure you at least ate well today, I wanted to talk to you, love.

JORGE: Yes, me too...

ILAN: About something in particular.

JORGE: Ah! About something...

ILAN: I was reading that among the refugees there are many children. And that they're taking them into custody...

JORGE: Separate from everyone else. Yesterday I saw them in cages, actually.

ILAN: They say they're facilitating temporary adoption of these children until their parents show up.

JORGE: *(Understanding)* Gotcha! And you want to see if we can have one.

*(Nervous, Jorge takes out a piece of paper; he reads it like a prayer)*

ILAN: With more flexible regulations, maybe they'll accept us more quickly now. First, a probationary period. And if no one comes to claim the child, adoption. We'd have time to... *(Seeing that Jorge puts the piece of paper in his pocket)* What's that?

JORGE: What?

ILAN: That little piece of paper. You've been doing that a lot recently. Why do you have little pieces of paper in your pocket?

JORGE: I'm not sure...

*(Nervous. He takes a piece of paper out of the other pocket)*

ILAN: What a lot of paper you have on you!

*(Jorge turns his back to him and reads it quietly. When he's finished, he puts it back in his pocket)*

ILAN: What is that? A prayer? Something religious? I thought you weren't a believer, Jorge! You aren't going crazy, are you?

JORGE: No, Ilan. I'm not crazy yet, but I will be. I've seen things these days that I'd never seen before. I'm nervous and when I go around nervous, I make these pieces of paper.

ILAN: I didn't know that you made pieces of paper.

JORGE: They're quotations. I write them down and stick them in my pocket. Having them with me all day calms me down. They're for reading in moments of exhaustion. If I feel upset, I take out a quotation. The bad thing is that sometimes I forget to take them out and my pockets get full of paper.

ILAN: Show me. Read one.

*(Jorge takes another paper out of his pocket. Maggie enters from one side; they can't see her)*

JORGE: "And so the days were dying and with the days, years. Until one morning something like joy occurred. It rained--a strong but slow rain." Borges.

ILAN: And why did you get nervous when I told you that we could take advantage to adopt a child?

JORGE: Take advantage? That's what you call the crisis?

ILAN: With the dead, the refugees, along with this calamity, suddenly we can adopt a child. Like...

JORGE: Like a hope.

ILAN: Like help for another human being.

JORGE: And what are we going to do with a child in the middle of all this?

ILAN: Protect it. *(He looks at Jorge, pleading)* What do you think?

*(Maggie greets them)*

JORGE: Hi, Maggie. This is Ilan.

MAGGIE: Is he your partner?

JORGE: We're married, Maggie!

MAGGIE: Hi... Are you the nurse?

JORGE: Yes, love. He is The Nurse. For me there is none other.

ILAN: Ilan Lewis.

MAGGIE: Nice to meet you. I'm Maggie Kiermaier. Reporter for the station, although I don't appear much on camera. I was thinking about doing some interviews about the immense amount of work you have in the hospitals.

ILAN:*(Excited)* Where can we do the interview?

MAGGIE: Here?

*(Maggie is going to sit down but has an idea)*

MAGGIE: Can I take your picture?

JORGE: With me?

MAGGIE: You want to? I think that your story would make my work more profound and attractive.

ILAN: I've never refused a photo in my life, Maggie Kiermaier, go ahead and shoot.

*(They pose, making light. Maggie takes the photo. She looks at it. A strange expression on her face)*

MAGGIE: It didn't come out well. Another one!

*(Ilan and Jorge pose, more serious now. Photo. Maggie looks at her telephone again, surprised)*

7/ DEMOCRACY HOWLS

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*(Alicia's apartment. Beatrice and Alicia on stage)*

BEATRICE: So that thing about the temperature doesn't work? Can I put that up on the web?

ALICIA: And are you going to insult me afterwards?

BEATRICE: It will go on our QCorps website as "a reliable source has confirmed for us..."

ALICIA: Don't all those insults get to you, Beatrice? Yesterday I was looking over what they said to you and I almost started crying.

BEATRICE: Hate is also a business, Alicia. So? Can I say that the thing about the temperature is manipulation?

ALICIA: They take the clients' temperature to put them at ease, but it doesn't serve any purpose. Anyway, I'll work until Friday and then see what else I can do with my life.

BEATRICE: What do you want to do?

ALICIA: To be useful doing something that I like.

BEATRICE: A vocation?

ALICIA: Who would have said that wanting to do something useful is so difficult?

BEATRICE: Is that why you want to keep the little girl? To be useful? *(Alicia agrees)* You don't even know if she wants to stay. She hardly talks. Perhaps she prefers to be with her relatives.

ALICIA: And if they're dead?

BEATRICE: It's possible. With the pandemic and the refugees, death defines everything.

ALICIA: For me feeling useful is like a disease.

BEATRICE: Since when?

ALICIA: Since the pandemic started. (*Beatrice looks at her disbelievingly*) Since the refugees arrived.

BEATRICE: Aren't they the same thing? (*Alicia doesn't answer*) Alicia, do you want to do something truly useful? Would you work with my people?

ALICIA: The Nazis?

BEATRICE: We're not Nazis, Alicia!

ALICIA: That's what they call you.

BEATRICE: Do you think I'm a Nazi?

ALICIA: No, but I've seen symbols in your room that...

BEATRICE: We're not Nazis! For God's sake! We're normal, people like you, we believe in what you believe in. We want to be alert and not swallow what the media say. For example, the pandemic... Do you know someone who's sick, truly, have you seen it? No, you've not seen anyone with your own eyes, just on television or the internet. Could it be that they don't exist? Couldn't it be that all of this is a conspiracy to subjugate us to the millions of refugees that have come to the city? Do we know where they come from? Those people who break the law and talk funny and don't know anything about us? It's a question of being for our culture, our history, and to be the protagonists of this extraordinary documentary that's being made today, live, Alicia.

ALICIA: Yes, that, I've thought that! That we're a documentary in real time. That everything is real. And that we are the protagonists, the stars, and that someone will see us in the future.

BEATRICE: Would you work full time with us in the offices of QCorps?

(*Maggie arrives*)

ALICIA: Full time? And who would take care of Rachel?

BEATRICE: I told you the girl would be a problem.

MAGGIE: But I bring a solution. I've just come from interviewing a nurse from the Municipal Hospital and while he talked with his partner, they said that they wanted to adopt a child.

ALICIA: They can't have one of their own?

MAGGIE: No, they can't. So, they're looking for one.

BEATRICE: You see? An immediate solution to a problem that you really didn't want to talk about.

ALICIA: But I wanted to have her...

BEATRICE: Maybe it's time to put this to a vote.

MAGGIE: Democracy in action?

BEATRICE: Raise your hand in favor of giving the refugee girl a home with a properly married couple, security and protection. Besides, she spends the whole day alone in this house.

*(Maggie and Beatrice raise their hands. Alicia bows her head)*

BEATRICE: It's better for her, Alicia.

ALICIA: Maybe...

MAGGIE: A done deal then! They'll have her until the adoption is approved, and they've said that you can visit her whenever you like.

BEATRICE: And it doesn't matter to that couple that the girl is a foreign refugee?

ALICIA: We don't know if she's foreign.

BEATRICE: She's got an accent.

ALICIA: Because she's afraid.

BEATRICE: *(To Maggie)* Have you told the couple?

MAGGIE: They say that's what they want.

BEATRICE: Why?

MAGGIE: To help.

ALICIA: I'm already liking them, because that's just what I thought.

*(Alicia about to exit)*

MAGGIE: Okay, I've got to go the Governor's press conference. Here's the husband's card. He works with me at Channel 7. You've likely seen him. He's the newscaster.

BEATRICE: Wasn't he a nurse?

MAGGIE: That's the other husband. One reads the news, and the other is a nurse. The girl will be very well taken care of.

BEATRICE: You mean they're both men?

MAGGIE: Yes, but they're married and...

BEATRICE: We'd best keep the girl, Alicia.

ALICIA: What?

BEATRICE: She won't have a good home with them.

MAGGIE: But Beatrice, you were...

BEATRICE: Alicia, this has to do with what we talked about. If it's a same sex couple, well, no. We want nothing to do with them. They'll turn the girl into one of them. And worse: when she grows up, she'll be a weapon. She'll be trained to fight against us.

MAGGIE: Where do you get such craziness?

BEATRICE: It's not craziness. It's the truth and it's well documented. *(To Alicia)* Should we put it to a democratic vote? *(Alicia agrees)* Who agrees that the girl should stay with us and that we should find a normal couple and not give her those two degenerates?*(She raises her hand. She looks at Alicia)* Alicia?

*(Alicia also raises her hand, terrified)*

BEATRICE: Democracy has spoken.

MAGGIE: Yeah. Democracy howls.

*(Maggie picks up her things and leaves. Beatrice hugs Alicia)*

8/ ALL ALIVE

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*(The governor's office at the Governor's Mansion. This scene combines all the settings used up to this point. On stage, the Governor, starting the press conference. Next to him, Dr. Rey)*

VOICE: And now, from the Governor's Mansion, Governor Alfonso D'Amico will address...

*(Sounds of the press and flash bulbs going off. All the set is bordered by shadows, very cave-like)*

GOVERNOR: My fellow citizens. Following the President's instructions, I want to share information about recent events that the country has had to face and the measures that we will take within the framework of the National Emergency Law.

*(Voices. Maggie appears to one side, taking notes)*

GOVERNOR: As you know, we are facing two very serious situations. First, the pandemic. We know that this virus, called SARSCO-1290, is the most virulent we've faced. The government has recommended following the official mandate to stay at home and to not go out except for food. To always wear a mask, to carry hand disinfectant, to maintain general physical hygiene, to disinfect hard surfaces and to observe six feet of social distancing.

*(Noise, photos)*

GOVERNOR: The second serious event is the presence in our streets of the so-called victims, refugees or foreigners. We have expert information about this. *(He points to Dr. Rey)*. Dr. Rey, Chair of the Task Force on the Newcomers.

MAGGIE: Newcomers?

GOVERNOR: This is what we've decided to call them, in all our country and all the world.

DR. REY: Thank you, Mr. Governor. We have crucial information about the Newcomers. We've discovered that...

*(Noise and music. Lights: Vivian and Peter's house)*

VIVIAN: Sir, can you at least tell us what you do?

PETER: Or what you did before?

W.W.: As a young man, I was a reporter.

PETER: But where? How can we find your name?

W.W.: When I was younger, I worked as a nurse.

JOSELYN: In what country?

W.W.: But the truth is that all my life I've been just one thing. *(Pause. They look at him)* A poet. I'm a poet.

*(Noise and music. Lights. The Governor's office)*

Dr. REY: Every morning people from all over the planet are coming to cities. They don't carry any identification and their manner has been brusque, strange. We don't have any reliable record of who these people are. But we can tell you two important things: *(He takes a deep breath)* One: that everyone we've seen in the streets up until now and who we call the Newcomers, are citizens of this country. *(Surprised voices. Photos)* And that these people have not migrated from other states, nor from the suburbs or the countryside, as many have suggested. In other words, these compatriots are NOT victims or refugees.

*(Surprised voices. Photos. Noise and music. Lights: Ilan and Jorge's apartment)*

JORGE: I can't believe they're going to tell it. They're going to tell the truth.

ILAN: Are you saying that you already knew?

JORGE: I never thought they would reveal the secret to everyone.

ILAN: To me, whatever it is, that seems for the best.

JORGE: No, it's not for the best. People aren't going to understand, Ilan. There'll be panic. If there is fear in the streets now, who knows what will happen from this point on.

ILAN: Don't scare me. Tell me? What is it? Should I run away?

JORGE: You're not going to understand.

ILAN: I prefer an explanation that I don't understand to not knowing what's going on.

*(Noise and music. Lights. The Governor's office)*

Dr. REY: Before continuing, we want to warn our citizens that we're dealing with an unprecedented situation and that we are still collecting more information about the Newcomers...

*(Noise and music. Lights. Alicia's apartment)*

BEATRICE: They're getting us ready for the colossal lie, the great deception. They have something planned, Alicia. We must resist!

ALICIA: How do you know it isn't true if they haven't even said it?

BEATRICE: Because we have a plan. I know.

ALICIA: And that plan is...

*(Noise and music. Lights. Office of the Governor)*

DR. REY: *(He drinks water)*. The people who are in the streets are not only from here, but in addition they have lived here before. That's why some of them are in houses or apartments that were theirs in the past.

*(Voices of people yelling. Some react violently. Maggie's voice asserts itself)*

MAGGIE: Less preamble and get to the point, Dr.

DR. REY: Very well. I was saying that all the people who've been arriving to our streets or houses once lived here. Many are appearing in the same places where they died; others where they were born or in any other place that...

*(And explosion of yelling. People annoyed. They throw things. A group of them insults Dr. Rey. Others ask more questions)*

MAGGIE: Are you saying that they've resuscitated?

*(Noise and music. Lights. Vivian and Peter's house)*

PETER: And you, poet, what's your name?

W.W.: My name is Walt Whitman.

*(Noise and music. Lights. Ilan and Jorge's apartment)*

JORGE: They already know!

ILAN: But... Is it possible? That they were dead?

JORGE: They're all arriving. From every time period.

ILAN: But... Has reality gone crazy?

*(Noise and music. Lights. The Governor's office. Dr. Rey has to speak over the deafening noise of the press, who ask questions and hurl insults)*

DR. REY: *(Answering the press)* This is happening all over the world, not just here! NO, we don't know that yet. No, not that either! There is nothing certain about what you're saying. *(Louder, imposing himself)* We don't know why or how many are going to come. *(A tense silence)* But what we do know is that every dawn, during the last ten days, an extraordinary number of people who once lived on this planet are re-appearing. From all centuries, from all races and from all places.

*(The press asking questions again. Noise and music. Lights. Alicia's apartment)*

BEATRICE: You see? That's it! We're being invaded by all races.

ALICIA: Beatrice, I'm scared...

BEATRICE: *(Possessed)* Good. You're off to a good start. First, fear. With it, we'll achieve great things.

*(Noise and music. Lights. The Governor's office. The press continues shouting its questions. The voices subside when the Governor speaks)*

GOVERNOR: The President will send additional troops today. And each state will receive supplies from the Army. So, we're informing you that the National Quarantine Decree is in place because of the pan-

demic will now be enforced by martial law, with a national curfew in place at 00 hours tonight. Anyone who is out on the streets will be transported as a Newcomer to shelters designated for them.

*(Noise and music. Lights. Vivian and Peter's house)*

PETER: You? Whitman? Can it be?

W.W.: He said that the army will be in the streets. I remember something similar that that imbecile McClellan did.

JOSELYN: Are you talking about the Civil War?

W.W.: Well, I imagine that's what happening, according to that box with colors.

VIVIAN: Television.

W.W.: What a pretty name! Lagoons Television!

*(Noise and music. Lights. The Governor's office)*

MAGGIE: Governor. If the Newcomers are those who were once alive then does the planet expect about one thousand million new inhabitants?

*(Noise and music. Lights. Ilan and Jorge's apartment)*

ILAN: Jorge, do we know anyone among the dead?

JORGE: The Newcomers.

ILAN: Sorry. The Newcomers?

JORGE: You see? We've already started with offensive language.

ILAN: Just how ancient are the de... The Newcomers?

JORGE: On Saturday my mom told me that two family ancestors knocked on the door of our house. They came from the end of the nineteenth century. And yesterday I spoke with a group who had just arrived from the eighteenth century. When they saw my telephone, they ran out because they thought it was a weapon!

ILAN: They must be terrified.

JORGE: Not all of them. Two days ago, we filmed a man who was yelling in the streets that he had invented all of this. Know who it turned out to be? Orson Welles.

ILAN: Orson Welles! Can you believe that? (*Terrified*) Can you imagine if my grandfather showed up?

JORGE: What would happen?

ILAN: We'd have to lock him up.

JORGE: Why?

ILAN: Because he was a murderer.

JORGE: Are you serious?

ILAN: Do you really think that these days I'm going to be telling lies? I may be a nurse, but I'm scared.

(*Noise and music. Lights. The Governor's office*)

MAGGIE: About how old are these Newcomers, Dr. Rey?

DR. REY: Here we've registered some from the sixteenth century, but in Europe there are reports of Newcomers from Ancient Greece, the times of Pericles. For now, in our state, they seem to be concentrated between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

MAGGIE: Do you mean to say that there's no order to their appearances?

DR. REY: No, there's no order, none that we can see.

(*Noise and music. Lights. Vivian and Peter's house*)

W.W.: There has to be an order. Everything has it. (*Suddenly, strong, in control*) "A vast similitude interlocks all . . . / All distances of place . . . / All distances of time . . ."

JOSELYN:(*Recognizing the poem*) "All souls, all living bodies . . ."

W.W.: "All identities that may have existed, or may exist . . . / All lives and deaths, all of the past, present and future . . ."

JOSELYN & W.W: “This vast similitude spans them / And shall forever compactly hold and enclose them.”

*(Noise and music. Lights. Alicia’s apartment)*

ALICIA: And us? What will happen to us?

BEATRICE: What do you mean?

ALICIA: If we die, will we come back?

BEATRICE: That makes no sense.

ALICIA: Sense? Really? All this makes sense?

*(Noise and music. Lights. The Governor’s office)*

MAGGIE: Dr. Rey, so you think that with the Newcomers the pandemic will get worse?

DR. REY: Logic tells us that yes. We continue to have a deadly virus among us. A virus that we don’t control just like we weren’t involved in the return of the Newcomers. We have no explanations, nor do we have a vaccine against the virus or even an effective treatment. *(Music until the end of scene)* But, at the same time, we’re facing an extraordinary event. An immense group of people is arriving. People who are loved and admired, people we’ve missed, but also, perverse people who hate. They’ve come looking for relatives, loved ones and vengeance, what was left undone. The only thing scientific about this are the facts. And the real indisputable fact is that people who were once alive on the face of the earth are coming back. All alive. All here.

*(Dark on almost all the stage; spot on Dr. Rey. Shadows, like at the beginning of Chapter 1. The music continues. Lights out)*

END OF CHAPTER I

## CHAPTER 2

## 1/ FIVE ALLEGORIES

*(Loud music. A collage of images projected onto the stage: multitudes, hospitals, people wearing masks, politicians, meetings, military, protests. Jorge and Channel 2 reading the news)*

JORGE: Respecting the limits placed on us by the Law of Emergency, we're not allowed to give exact number of victims, but we can say that it has risen almost ten times in just fifteen days. The reasons? Absence of masks, lack of hospital supplies, and the massive presence of the Newcomers. *(Someone says something to him)* Seriously? *(He gestures at the camera)* You can't see me? Do you see me?

*(Lights. Office of Harris Publishing House. Peter, Maggie and Joselyn in an interview. Not visible, a camera man from Channel 7. Maggie gestures at him. Absent from the conversation W.W. is more interested in watching TV. Suddenly, he turns to Joselyn)*

W.W.: Joselyn, if we are the Newcomers, what do they call all those who are from now--you?

JOSELYN: They call us Us.

W.W.: Are Us the Other?

JOSELYN: No, you are the radically Other. We are Us.

*(W.W. understands, but it displeases him. He turns the sound up on the TV and writes down the following names as they are read)*

TV2: *(Very theatrical)* And like every day, here is a list of the famous Newcomers from the last 24 hours. In Germany, and from the IXth century, Charlamagne, King of the Lombards. In Russia, Catherine the Great, XVIIIth century. In China, its first emperor, Qin Shi Hung, IVth century B.C. And in Italy, they've confirmed yesterday's news: The artist Michelangelo Buonarroti has arrived! We're hoping for an exclusive and that he'll tell us his secrets... And about his private affairs. As always, we finish the list with the oldest and the youngest of the day. The oldest Newcomer of today is...! *(Ridiculous fanfare)*. From the Sumarian city of Ur, Iraq, and from the XXIIIth century BC, we have here with us the poetess Eendeduanna! The first woman writ-

er--or if you like, just writer--known to humanity! Imagine that! Hey, compañera. Let's hear it for Endehuana (*Ridiculous canned applause*). You know, chica ... um, colleague, (*Awkward laughter*) you'll give me that interview, right? And finally, the youngest arrival today is...! (*Ridiculous fanfare*) The Lithuanian philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, who died (*Mockingly*) in 1995, has arrived in Paris. A mere child. Anyway... Emmanuel, welcome, philosopher; I imagine someone must miss you. (*She makes a comical expression of terror. Awkward laughter*) Welcome, everyone!

W.W.: (*Happy*) A philosopher and a poetess! That's ten in a row. I think we're winning.

PETER:(*To W.W.*) Walt, we're in an interview...

(*W.W. realizes he's interrupting. He gestures "sorry," and puts his earphones on; the TV is muted. He also uses his phone and an iPad*)

MAGGIE: (*Laughing*) Does he always listen to the TV so loud?

PETER: I thought he had hearing problems.

JOSELYN: He's obsessed with the TV: the news and the list of daily arrivals.

PETER: And then he researches those he's not heard of.

MAGGIE:(*on topic*) Very well, Mr. Harris... Where were we?

PETER: We were talking about the increase in reading...

MAGGIE: Exactly. And why do you think that's happening?

PETER: Which camera? (*She points to it and also lets him know they're still filming*) I was saying that I think that people don't believe in conventional media. The on-line content, when it's consumed in a massive way, it gets boring. The same happens with fiction: from seeing the same stories so much on television, we can figure out all the tricks. We know beforehand what will happen and that disappoints us, too.

MAGGIE: And that's why the book?

PETER: That's why the book.

MAGGIE: But what kind of reading is that?

PETER: We're reading more about the occult, what's hidden. Something we intuit that makes us disappear. Common knowledge is not fashionable. We want the clandestine. That's what the sales say.

MAGGIE: Is the publication of books about conspiracies why Harris Publishing is in such demand?

PETER: It's not so much...

MAGGIE: You went from being a marginal press, or even less than that, to one of the major sellers in the country.

PETER: I think our titles are the most current.

MAGGIE: Might your decision to name Walt Whitman--no less--Director of Publications and Marketing have something to do with how things have changed for Harris Publishing?

PETER: It's not just because of him...

MAGGIE: *(To W.W.)* What do you think, Mr. Whitman?

*(W.W. touches his earphones, indicating that he doesn't hear what she's saying)*

MAGGIE: I'd like to ask you a question, Mr. Whitman...

*(W.W. gestures that he'll talk to her later. That he's busy. That she wait. That she continue with Peter)*

JOSELYN: When he's glued to the screen nothing can disturb him.

MAGGIE: What I mean to say is that Walt Whitman is the hook. People want to read the books that he recommends. He does book presentations, he does interviews.

PETER: Only on television...

MAGGIE: What I mean is that he is the image of the publishing house. That's no small thing, Mr. Harris.

PETER: It's not but...

MAGGIE: Well, I came all the way here because he called me.

PETER: Whitman asked you to interview me?

MAGGIE: Yes, and he refused to answer any questions about the publishing house. He said: "The star here is Peter."

PETER: (*Annoyed*) Well, even though he may be who he is, the success of this press is due to my vision. Maybe the moment's arrived to tell people the truth.

MAGGIE: And just what truth are you referring to?

PETER: That we're being substituted. Replaced by "Them." Did you see what's happening in universities? There are hardly any professors left giving classes who are Us! Almost all of them are Newcomers. The same thing is happening here. Readers prefer to see their literary idol in person. I have a bunch of kids, calling themselves poets, asleep at the office door, waiting for Walt to arrive to take a selfie with him.

MAGGIE: Maybe the Newcomers deserve this. Look at Oscar Wilde, creating an uproar in London, they treat him like a rock star. He calls his lectures "concerts." And he deserves it. After the way he was treated!

JOSELYN: Kafka is the director of film in the Czech Republic, a real superstar. He complains that he can't go down the street without being bothered!

MAGGIE: Van Gogh made it onto Forbes' list of multimillionaires. You see? Great men and women who died impoverished or thinking they were a failure, now suddenly are celebrities, with that incomparable XXIst -century kind of fame.

PETER: Yes, Newcomer stars. I don't criticize them. But there are also some lamentable cases. Have you seen how French television only broadcasts Latin American telenovelas since Balzac was named director? And did you hear about Plato?

MAGGIE: What's he done now?

PETER: He declared the Parthenon a free state and camped there in a site full of hippies! They say it's had the worst outbreak of the virus in all Athens! The police don't know what to do.

MAGGIE: That's no small thing. It's about Plato! And what does he want?

PETER: He demands the release of Socrates, of course. If they don't release him, he'll start to cover the whole Acropolis with graffiti.

MAGGIE: I didn't know that they had detained Socrates.

PETER: They haven't! He hasn't even arrived. I imagine that Plato thinks it's three thousand years ago. These Newcomers don't need recognition, they need psychiatrists.

MAGGIE: This is very interesting, Mr. Harris, because you—a publisher, an intellectual, a leftist, are saying something that few people dare to say. Do you believe that if people from the Classical period or other important Newcomers assume the most relevant positions of our time, that we will be displaced?

PETER: That we will be the victims. If Martha Gellhorn appears as a reporter... *(W.W. takes his earphones off. He listens without their realizing)* How could you complain if they fire you to hire her?

MAGGIE: Are you saying that we'll have to learn to let go of our idols? But... How can I hate someone who was my inspiration?

PETER: By simply hating, like we always have. Just think that that idol threatens to make you irrelevant. *(They look at each other. Maggie makes an ugly face)* You see? It's not so hard to start detesting what you love most.

*(W.W. looks up the internet on his phone. He takes notes on his iPad while watching the news on various TV channels)*

PETER: Everything boils down to sales. Look at how the music industry has grown with Beethoven's presentations on-line.

JOSELYN: He's so good! I didn't know that Beethoven was so radical.

PETER: Don't forget, he's deaf.

JOSELYN: Yesterday he said that he has African ancestry! Very cool!

PETER: *(To Maggie)* You see! My daughter doesn't even question the cultural appropriation, just so it's radical!

JOSELYN: It's not cultural. It's the appropriation of an era..

PETER: Epic expulsion!

MAGGIE: Epic?

PETER: They're displacing us from our times.

JOSELYN: Whatever, but I prefer Beethoven to that fascist Mozart.

MAGGIE: *(To Joselyn)* Are you referring to Mozart's podcasts?

PETER: He does ten a day. He's making a bundle.

MAGGIE: *(To Peter)* To be honest, I can't stand Wolfgang either. Yesterday he announced a campaign against masks. He says it's a conspiracy of the Occupiers. That's what he calls us, as if we were renters. And they're paying attention to him!

JOSELYN: Of course! Mozart's an idol of the far-right. Fuck Mozart!

PETER: They accuse Us. They accuse Us and our era, not with anger but with disappointment. Like when one generation considers the one before it a failure: with pity, with shame. And we can't defend ourselves. We're locked up, riding out the pandemic and meanwhile, they point a finger at us. They don't even get as sick with the virus. I imagine that they have the advantage of knowing how to die, maybe that's why.

W.W.: But what is it to die?

*(Everyone turns around to look at him. He's finally spoken! He gestures at the camera. Maggie agrees to stop the filming)*

PETER: Walt... Were you listening to us?

W.W.: Those of us who have died before have many doubts about what it means to die.

MAGGIE: Mr. Whitman, do you want to join the interview?

W.W.: We should find ourselves again in the change.

PETER: What change?

W.W.: Dear ones, there has been a translation on Earth. A mutation. During the change Us and the Newcomers have gone from being a personal pronoun to an adjective and vice-versa. The living and the dead, we talk to each other.

MAGGIE: Can you say that on camera, Mr. Whitman?

W.W.: No. *(He shows Peter his telephone)* I want us to publish this.

PETER: Lévinas?

W.W.: I just read him.

PETER: Lévinas? What did you read?

W.W.: Everything, of course.

PETER: All of Lévinas in just minutes? *(To Maggie)* You see? These arrivals have special powers!

W.W.: I read it in a short biography on Wikipedia.

PETER: Sorry.

W.W.: He's quite the poet that philosopher. He has many allegories, but five of them have captivated me. *(He goes towards the door, music)* The first was The Door, confinement. We close ourselves when faced with the Other. And when the Other arrives, she bothers us. But the truth is that without our discomfort, the Other doesn't exist. *(Beat)* Next, The Face. *(W.W.'s face is projected onto the entire stage)* We don't recognize the Other's face, because if we did it would confirm that she is there. *(Beat)* He also talks about the tired and fragile: that we either destroy or liberate the weak.

MAGGIE: And who is the weak one? The Newcomers or Us?

W.W.: The orphan. The foreigner. The vulnerable. The one who's different.

JOSELYN: But who defines the Other?

W.W.: The strong one, the one who's sure of himself. The Other is weak because the strong one defines him, gives him a name. *(W.W. walks towards Peter)* The other allegory is Hospitality: do we give to

the Other what she needs, without self-interest? *(To Peter)* You don't help me because I benefit your business, Peter, you do it without self-interest.

JOSELYN: Is that right, Daddy?

PETER: *(He recognizes the indirect reference)* Of course.

W.W.: *(Towards center stage)* And the last metaphor that seduced me was The Caress. Once we love the other, we shouldn't possess him, but rather, recognize him through the caress.

*(The music stops. Maggie realizes she hasn't recorded what W.W. said)*

MAGGIE: Should we film? *(Reacting to W.W.'s "no")* NO?

*(Alicia comes in)*

ALICIA: Am I late?

MAGGIE: Ah, Alicia! You're still on time. *(To the others)* This is Alicia Welty, a great friend of mine. She's training to be a photographer.

ALICIA: It's the dream of all of my life. Can I take some pictures of you?

JOSELYN: Yes, let's take one, as a record of this beautiful moment.

*(They pose: W.W. pointing to his phone with a ridiculous gesture, Peter with a fake smile, Maggie looking at W.W. with admiration, Joselyn in a juvenile pose)*

W.W.: *(Low, to Peter)* You're a miserable piece of work, but I like you.

*(Peter makes an ugly face. Alicia takes the picture and immediately takes a childish selfie with everyone behind her)*

JOSELYN: Beautiful! Give it to me!

ALICIA: Right now...

JOSELYN: *(To W.W.)* Should I put it up on the web?

W.W.: Yes, do it.

*(W.W. puts his earphones on again and gets ready to submerge himself in the TV screens)*

JOSELYN: *(Checking out the picture)* It came out bad.

ALICIA: What happened?

JOSELYN: *(Showing it to her)* You can only see Walt. The reporter, Daddy and I look blurry.

ALICIA: *(Looking at her phone)* The same thing happened with my selfie.

MAGGIE: *(To the camera)* Can you look at what we've filmed?

JOSELYN: You can hardly see us! *(She takes a selfie with her phone)*  
I didn't come out either!

PETER: Let me see.

MAGGIE: *(To the camera)* Nothing? They don't come out? Strange.

*(TV screen. Urgent news)*

2/ CAVEMAN

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*(Theme music from the news. Projection of letters, à la Jenny Holzer: "Extra—Urgent--Breaking News--: 20 million. Jorge, who is hardly visible, reads the news. Sublime music)*

JORGE: Today the world has reached a record that nobody would have wanted to reach: 20 million people, on the entire planet, have died from the virus SARCO-1290. This number puts us close to the most terrible pandemic in all the history of humanity: The Black Plague, which battered human beings in the XIVth century, resulting in around 25 million deaths. Since this modern pandemic hasn't peaked, it's clear that it will be the worst devastation in history. Perhaps only the extinction of the dinosaurs could compare with. So devastating it seems like a metaphor.

*(Theme music for the news. Lights. Hospital. On one side, a chair. On the other, a door with a list of patients and a sign indicating NO ENTRY – FORBIDDEN - DANGER. Vivian wearing her white coat and Ilan, with his nurse's uniform. Alicia, to one side, wears the uniform of a public health assistant)*

VIVIAN: *(To Ilan)* There's no room in ICU, the same in the hallways, offices and even on the stair landings. The morgue is set up for sick people and the casualties go straight to refrigerated trucks. The hospital has recruited 22 new nurses today, from among students, pharmacists, chiropractors, veterinarians, masseurs, along with helpers with no clinical know-how, like Alicia, who will be used for small tasks.

ILAN: *(To Alicia)* My name is Ilan Lewis, nurse coordinator. Since this is your first day, I want you to be a nexus with the relatives.

ALICIA: Nexus?

ILAN: Give them information about the patients and let them talk with them, on-line or on the phone. *(He gives her an iPad)* Don't let them talk too much. That cheers the patients up but it also exhausts them.

VIVIAN: There's a lot of them who die after talking with their relatives and "leaving everything in order." They say good-by forever.

ALICIA: "Forever..." Well, we can't know that anymore, right?

VIVIAN: Alicia, we don't want to talk about that in the hospital. Some of the sick are treating death like a passing thing and give in to it. They believe that death has been suspended and the truth is we don't know. Death might be on hold, but at the moment it happens, it's personal and definitive. Besides, it produces a feeling of monumental failure in the doctors, nothing provisional, on hold or in suspension.

ILAN: We're not death, Vivian.

VIVIAN: No, of course not. But I have my doubts.

ILAN: Don't say it like that.

VIVIAN: It's guilt that makes you sick, it consumes you. You feel like the person has gone because of your mistake. If you had done something, acted more quickly, noticed a symptom. I think about it and I believe that it was me.

*(Ilan hugs her. Alicia goes to them, looking to join the hug. Vivian realizes this and laughs. Ilan a little, too. They separate)*

ILAN: Alicia, are you sure you want to help us?

ALICIA: It's the dream of all of my life.

ILAN: Okay. Don't forget to use common sense.

ALICIA: Everyone talks about common sense, but what is it?

VIVIAN: It is categorically what the rest of us would do. Put yourself in somebody else's shoes. A categorical imperative. *(She looks at the clock, sees the chair and sits down)* I still have a few minutes to breathe! I'm so exhausted that sometimes I have to look at myself in the mirror to remember who I am.

ILAN: More help is on the way, Vivian.

VIVIAN: Yes, but we need doctors, not just any volunteer.

ALICIA: I'm not just any volunteer, because this is...

ILAN: The dream of all of your life, we already know.

ALICIA: *(Pointing to the door)* What's there?

ILAN: We try to not go into that area.

ALICIA: The sickest?

ILAN: Sick Newcomers.

ALICIA: New ones?

ILAN: *(Correcting her)* Newcomers.

ALICIA: Ah! The Resuscitated!

ILAN: Hey, girl, watch your language. Don't be offensive, someone might be listening... Newcomers.

ALICIA: The Newcomers, they're separated from everyone else?

ILAN: We don't mix patients who have the virus with those who don't. And we still don't understand the characteristics of the dead refugees. *(They look at him, surprised)*. Sorry, it just escaped... *(He cuts himself off)*. The Newcomers.

*(Alicia gets close to the door)*

ALICIA: Is it true that the Newcomers don't get the virus?

VIVIAN: Yes, they do, but much less. A lot less. We get it twelve times more than they do and the percentage of our deaths is also higher: six times more than that of the Newcomers. We're high risk.

ALICIA: So, then, why are there so many in the hospital?

ILAN: They come with traditional problems.

ALICIA: Related to their previous death?

ILAN: More because of recent wounds: street fights, aggressions, gun shots. The majority aren't famous but rather, common folk who are looking for something passionately.

VIVIAN: And the police, who treat them with special brutality, as if they weren't human.

ALICIA: *(Looking at the list on the door, to Ilan)* Did you see the last name Lewis? It says: "Wounded by gunshot." Serious condition.

ILAN: Yes, he arrived yesterday. A fifty-five-year-old Newcomer. I was in charge of him. He might not live.

ALICIA: Do you know him? He has your last name.

ILAN: My last name, Lewis, is very common, Alicia.

ALICIA: But he's got the same name as you. What a coincidence.

VIVIAN: *(Goes to the door, looks at the list)* Do you know him?

ILAN: No, of course not. *(He gives in)* He's my grandfather.

VIVIAN: When did he die?

ILAN: A long time ago, when I was a child.

VIVIAN: Did you get along with him?

ILAN: No, of course not.

VIVIAN: Why of course not?

ILAN: *(Losing his composure)* Because all his life he was a son of a bitch with my mother and me. He beat the crap out of us! And he was responsible for my mother's death. That's why! *(He calms down)* When he died, I thought that he was good and dead. *(Furious)* But now he's here again and I'm only waiting for him to die again!

VIVIAN: Alicia, from now on make sure that Ilan has no contact with Mr. Ilan Lewis, 55, bed #16.

ILAN: But Vivian...!

VIVIAN: Who can assure me that you won't do him harm while he's here?

ILAN: No one can assure it. Much less me. But he is not a weak patient who needs help. He's a criminal.

VIVIAN: And we're here to save his life. *(Suddenly)* Did you have anything to do with the gunshot that wounded him?

ILAN: Of course not. Not this time.

VIVIAN: This time?

ILAN: I'm the one killed him the first time.

VIVIAN: *(Surprised)* You?

ILAN: It's not a secret. It was in self-defense. I was a child, and he was a monster.

*(Man 1 arrives, agitated, goes towards Alicia)*

MAN 1: My wife? Where is she?

ALICIA: I don't know. Your wife?

ILAN: Sir, who are you?

MAN 1: My wife. I want to see my wife!

ILAN: Yes, but you're not allowed here. *(He gives him a mask)* Put this on!

MAN 1: I'm not putting that shit on and I want to see my wife, now!

ILAN: You can't.

*(Man 1 is going to hit Ilan)*

VIVIAN: Wait! No!

MAN1: Don't tell me I can't see my wife because I'll send you to the morgue with a single punch.

VIVIAN: It's all right, sir. What's your wife's name?

MAN 1: Olivia Maddow. Where is she?

VIVIAN: Is she a Newcomer or one of Us?

MAN 1: My wife is a real human being, one of Us. Where the fuck is she?

*(Vivian gives Ilan a list to look over)*

VIVIAN: We'll locate her. But you need to understand that you cannot enter the hospital without protection. Relatives are prohibited from being here. Our assistant, Alicia Welty, will help you communicate with her on-line.

*(Alicia goes to him and he knocks her Ipad down)*

MAN 1: On-line? Shit! I'm staying here until I see her and can touch her. What are you gonna do? Throw me out?

VIVIAN: Very probably; yes, of course. *(To Ilan)* Call security. Look, we need everything here: nurses and doctors; security guards, that we do have. In abundance. Policemen and soldiers known for their cruelty. I'm sure they would be delighted to meet you...

MAN 1: *(He calms down)* Doctor... Okay. I just want to see my wife for a minute and then I'll leave. That's all.

ILAN: *(After reviewing the list)* Yes, she's here. Olivia Maddow is in intensive care. She's got complications with the virus. She's on a respirator. She's fragile.

MAN 1: I'm going in.

ILAN: You can't.

MAN 1: Don't tell me I can't.

*(Man 1 goes for Ilan, who thinks he's going to hit him. But he's more worried about the virus and puts his mask on. When Man 1 sees this, he grabs Ilan by the shirt and spits on him)*

MAN 1: I don't have the virus, you imbecile!

*(Man 1 lets him go. He goes to Vivian and spits on her, too. The same with Alicia. They scream. Once he does this, Man 1 disappears. Voice of security personnel approaching: Stop there! Arrest him!)*

VIVIAN: Security! *(She goes to Alicia)* Are you alright?

ALICIA: Yes, he just spit on me.

VIVIAN: Ilan?

ILAN: All good. Indignant, but good. Will we have to do the test again?

VIVIAN: Yes, you know the protocol. And you, too, Alicia.

ALICIA: Does this happen a lot?

ILAN: Almost daily. One day we'll have major problems and we'll be the ones who end up in the refrigerators outside. And not because of this fucking virus but stabbed by an everyday criminal.

ALICIA: How is it that people can be so beastly?

VIVIAN: Because they're afraid.

ALICIA: But that man wasn't a Newcomer. He was one of Us!

ILAN: From our era but fringe.

*(Alicia takes off her assistant's uniform and leaves. Vivian and Ilan with a gesture: Another one who leaves us. Ilan is about to go after her, Vivian holds him back.)*

VIVIAN: Let her go. That girl is not made for this. *(She goes up to him, serious)* What will happen to your grandfather?

ILAN: Nothing. I'll visit him tonight and it will be over forever.

VIVIAN: ILAN!

ILAN: I'm joking!

VIVIAN: I don't know. We're all becoming so prehistoric!

ILAN: Come on, stop that and let's go get tested. And I'm going to take a bath. I've heard that the Paleolithic sticks to you, like ticks.

*(They look at each other, laugh, hug each other from a distance, without touching. They're illuminated separately. Lights out)*

*(Office of QCorps. Banner in the middle. Alicia and Susana)*

SUSANA: Public health assistant in the hospital? And you quit?

ALICIA: I worked there until yesterday.

SUSANA: What happened?

ALICIA: It turned out to be a dangerous place. I was assaulted by a prehistoric.

SUSAN: Those Newcomers are really violent.

ALICIA: Anyway, it wasn't a very stimulating job for me. I didn't do anything important.

SUSANA: Important how?

ALICIA: Like saving lives, discovering a vaccine for the virus, ending terror.

SUSANA: Easy things! *(They laugh)* The last time I saw you, you were a little girl.

ALICIA: An adolescent.

SUSANA: You always hung out with my daughter. Did you know that she was very jealous of you?

ALICIA: But Kay was prettier and more popular than me!

SUSANA: Still, she wanted to look like you, be like you. She liked your passions, your life, what you said. She saw you as someone who knew what she wanted out of life and she envied you; I can tell you this now. *(She looks at her)*. I thought you were already married with children.

ALICIA: No, not yet. Although I'm taking care of a nine-year-old Newcomer.

SUSANA: One of those! From what period?

ALICIA: We think she's from the mid-twentieth century, although she hardly talks.

SUSANA: Is she cute?

ALICIA: A beauty and I feel important taking care of her. She's the only good thing that's happened to me in all of my life, to be honest with you, Mrs. D'Amico.

SUSANA: You're a bit strange. That surprises me. And do you like working here, in QCorps?

ALICIA: Yes, it's the dream of all of my life.

SUSANA: Good. You should come to the house some day for dinner. Kay would be delighted. She has two little girls, so we can name you something like a special aunt to my granddaughters.

ALICIA: Two little girls! How lucky!

SUSANA: She's married to a very well-known doctor, Dr. Rey. (*She sees that Alicia doesn't have a clue*). He works with my husband in the Governor's office.

ALICIA: Maybe there's an opportunity for me in the administration?

SUSANA: Work? We can see. My husband is always looking for assistants. How's your mother coming along?

ALICIA: She recovered. The virus really attacked her. The treatment that you sent, I think that's what saved her life.

SUSANA: (*She interrupts her, nervous*) Don't say that so loud... Is this a safe place? You shouldn't talk about the treatment. We've kept it only for Us, you know?

SUSANA: Us Us?

SUSANA: For Us, but just a closed circle of Us friends and Us near to us. It's not like we have enough doses for all of Us. Are you sure this is a safe place?

ALICIA: Safe. (*They laugh at the word play*) Don't worry, Beatrice checks it out every day.

SUSANA: My husband controls the state police but the federal government, you know what fascists they are.

*(Beatrice enters quickly, excited)*

BEATRICE: Mrs. D'Amico! What a pleasure! This is the day for good news, the most transcendental, the ones that will change the whole world.

SUSANA: How marvelous!

ALICIA: Finally, something good!

SUSANA: Tell us, what's happened?

BEATRICE: After so much waiting, He's finally arrived!

SUSANA: May God bless us all!

ALICIA: Who?

BEATRICE: And this time He didn't need to find Us. It is Us who have found him.

SUSANA: But are you sure?

BEATRICE: Yes. He arrived just a week ago, but we decided to wait for proof to clear up any doubts. There are so many who have tried to pass for him.

SUSANA: It's our penitence! Those who have made fun! Those who have denied him!

BEATRICE: Now they'll have to accept it. *(To Alicia)* Alicia, rejoice. We've found him!

ALICIA: Who?

SUSANA: *(Happy)* Who's it going to be! Him!

ALICIA: Jesus?

SUSANA: No! Better!

ALICIA: *(Happy now)* Who?

BEATRICE: Adolf!

ALICIA: Adolf?

SUSANA: *(To Beatrice)* Have you seen him?

BEATRICE: Yes, in a video, when we confirmed that it's him.

SUSANA: We need to protect him, being who He is.

BEATRICE: Our people in Berlin say that they have him well guarded. That He and other comrades who've arrived have met up again and they're living under the party's protection.

SUSANA: And what does He say? What were his first words?

BEATRICE: Like everyone else, he just asks questions. But the important thing is that after the two-week Adjustment Period, he'll assume leadership of the movement, along with the other Newcomers. *(She sees that Alicia is not happy)* Alicia, this means the world for our organization!

ALICIA: But it'll be better when we find Jesus, don't you think? *(Susana and Beatrice agree but with reservations)* Right?

BEATRICE: Yes, of course, Jesus is very important...

SUSANA: More or less, Alicia.

BEATRICE: Yes, right now we're not that sure.

ALICIA: Not Jesus?

BEATRICE: Yes, Jesus, yes. Of course, He's our principal objective but...

SUSANA: What she means is that the Party has agreed that if Jesus arrives, we're not going to support him right away.

ALICIA: What do you mean? He's Jesus.

BEATRICE: I didn't know that you're such a believer, Alicia.

ALICIA: I'm not a Christian. But you've always been so religious, Be-Beatrice, Jesus was always your favorite. That's why it surprises me.

BEATRICE: Yes, he is my favorite, but at the same time, he's more, how can I say it... fickle? Untrustworthy?

SUSANA: There could be inconvenient surprises for the movement.

ALICIA: With Jesus? Like what?

BEATRICE: For example, Alicia, we're still not sure, really...*(Looking for hidden microphones)* that Jesus is like Us.

SUSANA: She means to say that he'd look like Us and not "Them."

ALICIA: But of course, he'll be like them. He'd be a Newcomer.

BEATRICE: We're not referring to that, but that it's possible perhaps that he'll be very different from how we've seen him up until now.

SUSANA: Because we want him like he always is--on the cross, in paintings, in churches. But we don't know that.

ALICIA: What do you mean we don't know that? How was He not like that?

SUSANA: For example, the one in The Last Supper was Leonardo's boyfriend.

BEATRICE: And, of course, the little painter imagined him as he wanted to, as someone he liked, and now we all have that image of him: long straight hair, blue eyes, features like ours.

SUSANA: In other words, we expect Jesus of Nazareth to not be so, so of Nazareth.

ALICIA: But Jesus was a Jew! What's he going to look like?

SUSANA: Exactly. And that's why we're worried that maybe Jesus will be, let's say, a little browner than what we think.

BEATRICE: Brown or black. And that his words will be weak against our powerful enemies.

SUSANA: We don't want any weakness at such an important moment for us.

BEATRICE: This is the opportunity we've been waiting for decades. Compassionate reflection should come later. That's why we think that at this moment in history, Adolf is more important than Jesus. We've told him that and he agrees. He said, "Der Christus wird später sein."

SUSANA: Heil!

BEATRICE: Heil! With someone like him, Alicia, we could finally come together. (*Seeing that Alicia is sad*) Don't take it that way, Alicia, because when Jesus arrives, he'll surely be one of US as well.

SUSANA: He always has been!

ALICIA: But if the other one is already here and in two weeks, he'll head up the movement... What about me?

BEATRICE: You, nothing. I don't understand.

ALICIA: It's that I'm Jewish, Beatrice.

BEATRICE: (*Astonished*) Alicia?

ALICIA: I'm Jewish. My family is too.

SUSANA: Your mother isn't Jewish, Alicia!

ALICIA: Of course she is.

SUSANA: She never said anything to me. She always behaved like a normal woman!

ALICIA: She is normal.

SUSANA: You know what I mean.

BEATRICE: Your last name's Welty, isn't it?

ALICIA: We're Jewish.

BEATRICE: But. I... ah, didn't know. You didn't say...

ALICIA: It never seemed so serious.

BEATRICE: But it is serious. Very. Now I understand why you wanted to keep the Newcomer girl.

ALICIA: What are you referring to?

BEATRICE: You know that she comes from the Protection Shelters we created for them?

ALICIA: How do you know?

BEATRICE: Because I'm not an idiot, Alicia and before I meet people, I investigate them. Rachel Gold, the daughter of a violinist. She died in Treblinka, 1942, for sure at the hands of the Russians.

ALICIA: Gold? I had a relative whose last name was Gold.

BEATRICE: Don't play the fool. Now I know that you did know. You wanted to have her as a weapon.

ALICIA: Beatrice!

BEATRICE: I won't allow it! We'll return her to the authorities right now. Throw her to the lions.

ALICIA: You don't have the power to do that.

BEATRICE: *(Pointing to Susana)* I don't?

SUSANA: *(Takes her phone out of her purse)* If the girl's going to cause problems, I'll take care of it quickly. *(She dials a number)* May I please speak with the Director of Shelters for the Protection of Newcomer Children?

*(Alicia throws herself against Susana like a lioness, to keep her from talking. Beatrice, the stronger of the two, takes her by the neck and Alicia gives in)*

ALICIA: Please! Not the girl! She's the only thing I have. My only desire. The only thing I am.

BEATRICE: We do it for her own good, Alicia.

SUSANA: *(Speaking into the phone)* Yes? I have a Newcomer, a little girl...

BEATRICE: Rachel Gold.

SUSANA: Rachel Gold, who we want to send to the shelter.

ALICIA: No, please! Not that, please! Don't take her from me!

SUSANA: *(Into the phone)* Right now? Very well. *(To Beatrice)* Address? *(Beatrice signals that to hers)* I'll send her right now. *(She arranges everything)* All's ready.

BEATRICE: *(Alicia resists Beatrice, who's holding her back)* And if no one opens the door?

SUSANA: They always open the door, dear.

ALICIA: Don't do it, Susana! Please don't! She's an adorable little girl.

SUSANA: *(To Alicia, a gentle threat)* Behave yourself, Alicia. You'll thank me some day.

ALICIA: *(She breaks loose from Beatrice)* No, never!

BEATRICE: We will be everything, the rest, nothing!

ALICIA: I will not let you take her. No again!

*(Alicia leaves, desperate)*

BEATRICE: Good God! How she deceived us, the little bitch! How disgusting.

SUSANA: It's very common, Beatrice. We go silly over children. We need to be alert. There are many of them among the arrivals.

BEATRICE: Jews?

SUSANA: Africans, Jews, Hindi, Asians, many, millions. They're replacing Us, we're disappearing while "They" remain here.

BEATRICE: But now we have Adolf.

SUSANA: He's my hope.

BEATRICE: Believe me! Write it down! We'll appear in photos once again!

*(Far away, the sound of a news broadcast)*

*(Governor's office. Dr. Rey, alone, watching television. He speaks with someone in the next room who's not visible. He's enchanted watching the news, with a glass of whiskey in his hand. A reporter from TV 3 reads the news, making few mistakes: she looks at the wrong camera, sometimes she doesn't see the teleprompter very well, she talks with her director about some misunderstanding)*

TV 3: Attention! The latest! Israeli authorities have finally confirmed the news and we can verify what we announced earlier, as an exclusive...

DR. REY: *(Amused)* It wasn't an exclusive. It was on all the networks last night.

TV 3: That Jesus of Nazareth has become Newcomer # 5,139,789,002, according to official figures.

*(Dr. Rey gets up and places a letter on the Governor's desk)*

DR. REY: And the unofficial ones add another 50%, sweetie. Let's toast! With so many arrivals and so many of Us gone with the virus, those of Us from this era have become an irrelevant minority. Cheers!

*(Image of Jesus, with strong Middle Eastern features, surrounded by police)*

TV 3: The Nazarene is in custody of the Jerusalem police. Giving no explanations, the police spokeswoman has explained that "the Son of God" is under restricted custody. *(To the camera, annoyed)* In other words, they've taken Jesus prisoner! Can you believe it? *(Voice of her director scolding her)*

DR. REY: She's delightful.

TV 3: Thank you.

DR. REY: You can hear me?

TV 3: *(Back to the news)* However, we've had access to the Nazarene's first words, always according to witnesses to his apparition, still

uncorroborated. Jesus said... *(Seeing her director)* I don't know. Here it doesn't say...

DR. REY: This girl is a sweetheart!

TV 3: Ah! Now I see it!

DR. REY:*(Laughing)* Congratulations! An apology? Right?

TV 3: Forgive me.

DR. REY: Very good. Bravo! Now, what was it that Jesus said?

TV 3: He said: "I can't breathe."*(reading)* And then what? I don't understand.

DR. REY: That we don't appear in photos and videos has been a blessing. Because the Newcomers make so many mistakes, they're more credible and authentic! And hey, this newscaster comes from the Middle Ages! *(Suddenly, loud, to someone off stage)* Can you bring me my phone, too?

*(Alicia comes in with his phone)*

ALICIA: But I miss seeing myself on social media. I have the impression now that I'm no longer here, that I've also disappeared from reality. I see the Newcomers and I'm jealous: their success, their happiness, the photos of their relatives, all of them having such a good time. Did you know that our faces have to be sketched so we can appear on screens? *(She gives Dr. Rey his telephone)* Do you really think the Governor will accept me as an assistant?

DR. REY: I already talked to him and everything is fine.

ALICIA: I'm so excited! But does your mother-in-law know?

DR. REY: Best that she not find out yet. Once Alfonso's approved you, she'll forget about the impasse with the little girl.

ALICIA: Yes, everything's forgotten.

DR. REY: Really? You've forgotten the little girl?

ALICIA: Yes... It was a misunderstanding. I think your mother-in-law acted without thinking. Maybe it was my fault.

DR. REY: You lie well, Alicia. I still can't believe that she did that. And that my wife would see it as something normal when I told her. That's why I've wanted to help you, Alicia. But don't forget that here, among Us, cruelty is finding a home.

*(The Governor enters)*

GOVERNOR: Good day. *(He sees Alicia)* You are...?

DR. REY: This is the intern I told you about.

GOVERNOR: Do I know you from somewhere?

ALICIA: I'm... *(Dr. Rey gestures at her)* We live in the same neighborhood.

GOVERNOR: Are you a Newcomer or one of Us?

ALICIA: Us.

GOVERNOR: That's enough for me. Do you like being here?

ALICIA: It's the dream of all of my life.

GOVERNOR: Good. And if you're recommended by Rey, then welcome.

DR. REY: Alfonso, I left a letter for you there.

GOVERNOR: What letter? *(The Governor takes it. Reads. Serious)* Rey, what's this? Is this for real?

DR. REY: Of course, it's for real.

GOVERNOR: Just like that?

DR. REY: Trust me.

GOVERNOR: Of course, I trust you, Rey. But... with what's going on?

DR. REY: In part.

GOVERNOR: But you're in charge of some of the state's most important task forces.

DR. REY: You've got other competent people.

GOVERNOR: No, I don't! You can't resign just like that, Rey! You're my son-in-law, the father of my two granddaughters. You know I don't trust anyone. The arrivals and the virus have put a knife in the legislators' hands. And the party. They're seriously talking about giving them the vote. Can you believe it? They're everywhere, the country's being overrun, and we're being erased, like in the pictures. Right here there are spies, planted in the walls. Even objects betray us, as if they belonged to them. Yesterday this chair let me fall down! The paintings fade, the telephones don't work. The windows don't let me see out. No, Rey. I reject your resignation. Not approved! (*He gives the letter to Alicia*) Get rid of this, girl.

DR. REY: Even if you reject it, Alfonso, I'm leaving, anyway.

GOVERNOR: You can't! I depend too much on you. The Newcomers are going to destroy the world. Did you see that Walt Whitman is running for governor? He can't even vote but he already wants to be elected. Have you seen what that son of a bitch says about me?

DR. REY: The Poet of Democracy, that what we called him.

GOVERNOR: Democracy's turned to shit and your poet, too. Poets governing? Now it's really true that the planet's coming to an end.

DR. REY: The polls have him way ahead, Alfonso.

GOVERNOR: Of course, he's ahead. You can't see my image but you can see his, with his poet's pose and air of a wise grandfather. We take our photos and we come out all diluted, but them, no! They're complete, radiant, in full Technicolor. And me, when I go down the street, no one recognizes me. They've forgotten me!

DR. REY: Compared to the Newcomers, we seem rotten, rancid, Alfonso. Old. As if we're the ones who come from a different era. They've found Marx in Hyde Park, standing on a box, giving speeches to the masses, broadcast as if he were a pop star. He's going to run in the European elections. It makes you think about what we've done with power.

GOVERNOR: But there's pushback. In Mexico they assassinated Trotsky again. They're not as immortal as they claim.

DR. REY: If you shoot them, they die again, that' so.

GOVERNOR: Including that Marx guy, don't forget. (*He takes out his gun*) If I see one of them fucking around, I swear that...

DR. REY: Alfonso, it's not a matter of Us against Them.

GOVERNOR: How's it not? And the threat to the future?

DR. REY: What threat to the future? Over population? We already know that we can manage it, with sacrifices, but it's possible...

GOVERNOR: I'm referring to the real threat. That these arrivals will resist the virus while we fall like flies. The threat to the future is that only they will remain.

ALICIA: (*Terrified*) Is that possible?

GOVERNOR: (*To Alicia*) Do you have the right to speak? (*To Dr. Rey*) Did you already tell my daughter? Because I spoke with her this morning and she didn't say anything to me. Have you thought about Kay? The girls? About what you're going to do with your career, with your life? Shit, Rey, don't be such a jackass!

DR. REY: Think about the ten things you'd like to do.

GOVERNOR: Are you going to give up now that we're responding to the aggression?

DR. REY: Ten things you'd like to do and haven't been able to.

GOVERNOR: You don't have the virus, do you? Are you going to die?

DR. REY: Death is forbidden, Alfonso.

GOVERNOR: The hell it is! Lots of people have died.

DR. REY: The ten things you'd like to do.

GOVERNOR: I don't think about that, Rey.

DR. REY: For me they're easy. I would like, for example, to be in charge of a public library.

GOVERNOR: That's what you want? I can name you General Director of Public Libraries. *(To Alicia)* Young lady, look for my official agenda. I'll name you right now.

DR. REY: *(Lost in thought)* Surrounded by books and that aroma that is more like an idea: the one from books that have been read for years. As if the letters, from so much contact with the reader's eyes, were perfumed.

GOVERNOR: *(Signing his agenda)* Done. Are you happy?

DR. REY: I'd also like to play baseball.

GOVERNOR: What curse are you under, Rey?

DR. REY: Play with my father. We never did, you know.

GOVERNOR: Is that it? Your father is one of the arrivals?

DR. REY: No, not yet. But I'm waiting for him.

GOVERNOR: I can play baseball with you. Yeah, come on, we can do it right here in the gardens! Miss, get us some gloves and a ball. I'm very good, and very paternal, too. Come on, son, let's go play...

DR. REY: I'd like to go to Stockholm.

GOVERNOR: Seems good to me. You can come and go. Nobody can fly right now, but we have a private government plane.

DR. REY: It's a city I don't know, and I've always wanted to go there. Watch the awarding of the Nobel prizes in person, dressed up formally and drinking Champaign.

GOVERNOR: The Nobel? *(He takes out a small case from his desk drawer and gives it to Rey)* Here's one. We've found dozens of them thrown out on the street, specially the science ones. They're not even good as paperweights anymore.

DR. REY: I'd also like to go back to my childhood home, and also go on a cruise to what once was the North Pole. I know there's no ice anymore, but I'd like to go around this rock that's floating in the universe. And get to know a few places where we've been defeated. Losing comforts me, Alfonso. Being defeated gives me back some humanity.

GOVERNOR: A tour of our enemies' world? It's not the right time but it can be arranged... A vacation? Is that all?

DR. REY: No, that's seven. There's three more.

GOVERNOR: (*Fed up*) Go ahead.

DR. REY: I'd like to go back to being a doctor in a hospital. Be there, help, save people.

GOVERNOR: I'll appoint you Head of the Municipal Hospital. What else?

DR. REY: And one day go out in the street dressed as a woman.

GOVERNOR: You're joking!

DR. REY: See what it feels like.

GOVERNOR: Rey, you aren't...? Does my daughter know this?

DR. REY: My mother, my wife, my daughters. Women have made me feel better than what I am. I'd like to dress like a woman, greet other women, be one more of them, even if it's for an instant. Maybe an era. Because, Alfonso, we men don't look very good at all.

ALICIA: An era.

GOVERNOR: Are you finished with your sexual confessions? Is that the real reason? You're one of them! Wait until Susana finds out. Did you know they've found Savonarola in Florence? They want to bring him here as chief of the state police.

DR. REY: I want to write a novel about the life I should have lived but didn't want to. And then, wasn't able to.

ALICIA: An era.

GOVERNOR: You've deceived all of us! My poor daughter, my granddaughters...

DR. REY: And finally, the most important thing, Alfonso. What I want to do starting today.

GOVERNOR: *(He writes it down)* What? Assassinate me?

DR. REY: It's about why I'm leaving this job.

GOVERNOR: After your faggot confession, I really don't care. In fact, you're fired.

DR. REY: I want to get ready to be old.

ALICIA: An era...

DR. REY: As training. A course where I have to live like an old man, with the limitations of an old man, with the sad memories and regrets of an old man. What happened to our lives? What's it like to wilt while you compare what you wanted to be with what you became? To be physically what I am inside of me.

GOVERNOR: An old queer?

DR. REY: A human being of the Hurt Generation.

GOVERNOR: Seems good to me, because old people are the first to die from the virus. One last question, Rey. Why?

DR. REY: Let's say that I'm exhausted by our obsession with winning.

GOVERNOR: Get out of here, you imbecile. Get out of here, once and for all.

*(Leaving, he hugs Alicia and says good-bye)*

DR. REY: *(To both of them)* I'm a little dizzy but... Do you want to know the truth about the Newcomers?

ALICIA: What? Which?

GOVERNOR: What truth?

DR. REY: That they don't come from the past. That they are with us now. That they always have been. That everything is happening at the same time. Their times and ours. All alive, happening together, now.

*(Rey exits. Alfonso falls on top of his desk. He turns up the TV)*

TV 3: News of Jesus's escape from the Detention Center in Jerusalem not only has the authorities of Israel on alert but also all of the Middle East...

ALICIA: One era, all eras.

GOVERNOR: What are you doing here?

ALICIA: I'm your intern. I'm working.

GOVERNOR: Then collect your things and go straight to fucking hell. I don't want to see you ever again!

*(Lights. Music)*

End of Chapter 2

## CHAPTER 3

1/ MORPHINE

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*(TV 3 newscaster, very sure of herself, almost a star)*

TV 3: Today, the world has broken a daily record in deaths: 10 million of Us in only 24 hours. And today we also have, on the entire planet, 100 million diagnosed with the terrible virus SARSCO-1290. At that same time, only twenty thousand Newcomers have tested positive, with three hundred twenty deaths. This according to Dr. Albert Einstein, Director of the Center for Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, who also noted that the virus will continue devastating the population of our time, unless a vaccine is developed in the coming months. *(Suddenly to the audience)* What? You thought I wasn't going to learn? Because I'm from the Dark Ages and what not? *(Voice of the director, who scolds her)*

*(The broadcast ends. Lights. The Governor's office at the Governor's Mansion. Official announcement. Maggie's there, too)*

GOVERNOR: And so, we're informing our fellow citizens that schools will open completely after August 15.

MAGGIE: This effort to open the schools, does it have to do with the elections coming up, Governor?

GOVERNOR: No way. I hadn't even remembered about the elections. Our decision is based on numbers...

MAGGIE: The numbers are the worst we've ever had!

GOVERNOR: The numbers, as you know, are opinions. You have yours and we have ours.

MAGGIE: We are everyone.

GOVERNOR: No. We are we.

MAGGIE: Will you open the schools despite the fact the percentage of infections has risen 125% among children and adolescents?

GOVERNOR: The risk of infection is minimal.

MAGGIE: 125% is minimal?

GOVERNOR: In comparison to what students are suffering by not being in class, it is minimal. Besides, schools serve a social role; our children get fed there.

MAGGIE: But your daughter is thirty-five years old, Governor! Are you saying that she uses public school lunchrooms?

GOVERNOR: I'm referring to my granddaughters.

MAGGIE: Who go to private schools. Will you send your granddaughters to a public school?

GOVERNOR: That's up to their mother. Susana and I will support whatever she decides.

MAGGIE: But you don't offer that alternative to everyone else's children, nor to the teachers. They can't make a decision because you're forcing them to go to school in the world's hottest infection spot.

GOVERNOR: And which one is that?

MAGGIE: This country.

GOVERNOR: We're not the biggest source.

MAGGIE: That's what the numbers say.

GOVERNOR: Lies of the press. What's certain is that this is a special country and we've always come out victorious in all of our battles. We'll win this time, too.

*(The Governor waits for applause that doesn't come)*

MAGGIE: Do you mean that while we offer up the victims, you win the battles?

GOVERNOR: How's that?

MAGGIE: Mr. Governor, don't you think that you, the President and all other civil servants have failed?

GOVERNOR: Where have we failed? In this country?

MAGGIE: Here and everywhere you've failed colossally. And those who've done it well, dazzle and are phenomenal just for doing their job. Did you know it's not like that for us folks? If we fail, we lose our job. And if we only do our job, it's ordinary. To dazzle and be phenomenal, we have to be fantastic, incredible, unique. Boy, do you all have it easy, Mr. Governor!

GOVERNOR: But we're winning!

MAGGIE: After ninety million deaths?

GOVERNOR: Those victims are heroic! Their sacrifice will help us recover the economy. While the Newcomers invaded us, the victims—Us—have lost their lives fighting against a disease that, we believe, has been imported from abroad and especially from the past.

MAGGIE: Are you saying the disease comes from the past?

GOVERNOR: The past IS the disease.

MAGGIE: Are you blaming the Newcomers?

GOVERNOR: Well, you figure it out. They don't get sick, we do.

MAGGIE: Is that why the majority of Newcomers has been locked up in concentration camps outside the cities and in the worst conditions?

GOVERNOR: They're not... They are not concentration camps. They're called Protection Shelters and they're to avoid infection.

MAGGIE: But they hardly get infected. You just said that!

GOVERNOR: You're playing with my words. I said that they can infect us.

MAGGIE: The Newcomers aren't infectious.

GOVERNOR: We don't know that.

MAGGIE: Yes, we do! All the scientific studies prove it.

GOVERNOR: But others think differently. People think differently. Science doesn't know everything.

MAGGIE: And the crimes against Newcomers?

GOVERNOR: Look, there are famous Newcomers who can take care of themselves very well, who have thrived, who are once again fashionable people. But there are others, the majority, who are not saints or luminaries. Their past is in their blood and it's almost always violent. They're delinquents and rapists who incite crime, altercations. And besides, they refuse to integrate into our era.

MAGGIE: I don't adapt to my era. Nobody does.

GOVERNOR: But they also speak different languages and it's not been easy to make them understand the law. And so, the Army has had to go out in the streets to control the situation, to submit the violent ones and deport the great majority to the camps... shelters. You shouldn't forget that even though now the Newcomers are the majority, we control the real power and we're stronger.

MAGGIE: In recent months the police and the Army have killed fifty Newcomers for each of Us.

GOVERNOR: It is what it is. Next question?

MAGGIE: Governor, when will testing for vaccines against the virus start in the state?

GOVERNOR: We're starting right away today with the second stage of the vaccine. *(Looking for papers and notes)* Um... we'll start the test in the Municipal Hospital. Um... the first person to get a jab is a volunteer and she has said that...

*(Music. Lights. Two spaces in the hospital. One with a bed. The other, with a chair and the "Do Not Enter" door. In the first, Vivian, with a needle in her hand and Alicia, seated on the bed, with an IV at her side. In the other space, Ilan and Dr. Rey, dressed as a woman)*

ALICIA: This is the dream of all of my life.

MAGGIE: *(From her space)* What do you feel, Alicia, being the first person in the state to test this prototype of the vaccine?

ALICIA: That it's an honor. I feel like part of history. I imagine myself in books and movies, yeah, when they talk about this moment and say: Alicia Welty was the first one. That's how I feel: transcendent, finally with a purpose. My life's dream.

MAGGIE: We're all following behind your bravery, Alicia.

ALICIA: *(To Vivian)* Let's do it!

*(Vivian injects Alice through the IV. Applause. Alicia, delighted, waves. End of TV transmission. The Governor's area disappears. Suddenly, noise and shouts in the hospital. Man 2 enters, with a child in his arms and goes towards Ilan and Dr. Rey)*

MAN 2: My boy! My boy! He's sick.

DR. REY: What's wrong with him?

MAN 2: He can't breathe.

*(Vivian goes into this space. Dim light on Alicia's area)*

VIVIAN: Does he have the virus?

MAN 2: I don't know! I don't know!

ILAN: *(He takes the child)* I'll see to him.

*(At that moment, WOMAN 1 enters, wearing clothing from the XIXth century, helping Man 3, from the same period; he's wounded).*

WOMAN 1: *(With an accent)* Help, please! He's been shot!

DR. REY: I'll take care of him.

VIVIAN: You're Newcomers, right?

WOMAN 1: Yes, from the XIXth century. Help us, please!

DR. REY: Let me see to him.

MAN 2: *(Annoyed)* See to my son first!

DR. REY: *(To Man 3)* Can you hear me? Are you conscious?

MAN 3: Onde estou? Que diz? O que acontece? Ajuda!

VIVIAN: What language is he speaking?

WOMEN 1: Portuguese.

MAN 2: My son speaks our language! He's from here! Take care of him first!

DR. REY: *(To Man 3)* Você está ciente?

MAN 3: Sim, Doutor.

DR. REY: *(To Woman 1)* His wound doesn't seem very serious. We'll admit him to the wing for Newcomers. Don't worry.

MAN 2: The foreigner should wait!

VIVIAN: *(To Man 2)* Sir, we have a wing for Newcomers only. The rest of the building is for those of Us who have been infected with the virus. The whole hospital is full. We'll take care of your son, but please understand that we don't have the means. No respirators, or medications, or beds, not even water!

MAN 3: Then throw all those shit arrivals out into the street and give my son a bed and a respirator!

VIVIAN: They don't use respirators.

MAN 2: Get rid of the zombies.

ILAN: Sir, be respectful. We don't allow use of the Z word.

DR. REY: Watch your language. You don't have to be insulting.

MAN 2: Let 'em go back to their graves! Let these foreign zombies go back to their countries.

VIVIAN: *(About to explode)* I'm going to have to ask you to wait outside the hospital while we treat your son.

*(Man 2 suddenly takes out a knife. Commotion: "He has a knife!" "Help!" "Watch out!")*

VIVIAN: Sir, drop the knife and leave the hospital calmly. I promise you we're going to take care of your son.

MAN 2: Do it now. *(To Woman 1)* And you, foreigner, back to your country!

*(Terrified, Woman 1 is going to leave with Man 1, but something stops her, and she decides to confront Man 2)*

WOMAN 1: I'm not going! You go back to your country!

MAN 2: *(Annoyed)* This is my country, you freak!

WOMAN 1: No, no it's not. Go back to your country!

MAN 2: Damn you! I was born here. You're the one who's not from here.

WOMAN 1: Of course, I'm from here. Not you!

MAN 2: What the hell is this foreigner saying?

WOMAN 1: That you should go back to your country.

MAN 2: *(About to explode)* This is my country, bitch!

WOMEN 1: You've left your country. You abandoned it

MAN 2: I've never been out of my country.

WOMAN 1: What you are, what you think, what you hate, you're not from here. It's you who has to return. So go, go back to your country. And I hope you find it soon, so you'll stop living in the total exile you're in.

*(Dr. Rey sees the opportunity, and he disarms Man 2. He throws the knife to the floor. They fight. Dr. Rey hits him; he's the clear winner. Man 2 realizes that he's dressed like a woman)*

MAN 2: Monsters! Zombies! This hospital is full of freaks, aberrations. I'll kill all of you!

*(Humiliated, Man 2 runs, opens the prohibited door and goes through before anyone can stop him. Dr. Rey's going to go after him but Ilan stops him)*

ILAN: Leave him. He won't get far.

DR. REY: How are you so sure?

ILAN: A special Newcomer is in charge of security there.

DR. REY: Who?

VIVIAN: Sonny Liston.

ILAN: A great guy! Really buff. He keeps my grandfather in a coma, *(ironic)* with love.

VIVIAN: Don't believe him.

*(Ilan gestures to Dr. Rey that it's true. Noise and Sonny Liston's voice in the distance)*

VOICE SONNY: Hey, stop now!

VOICE MAN 2: Don't you dare touch me, you fuckin' animal!

*(Sound of something breaking. Rapid boxing punches. Silence)*

VOICE SONNY: He's calmed down. All's taken care of.

VIVIAN: *(To Ilan)* Ilan, get him a child's bed.

ILAN: We'll keep him in observation.

*(Ilan leaves with the child)*

DR. REY: And the father?

VIVIAN: Sonny Liston will also keep him under observation.

DR. REY: Perhaps he deserves it.

*(Vivian hugs Dr. Rey)*

VIVIAN: Thank you for coming and being with us, Rey. You don't know how much we need you. We're getting left with no doctors. We're the first to get sick! We've asked Newcomer doctors to help us, but someone like you, who knows about today's technology, there aren't many left.

DR. REY: Although our era needs something more than technology, Vivian. Did you know that they named Marie Curie General Director of the Paris Hospital?

VIVIAN: But she died quite old. Won't she be very weak?

DR. REY: Yes, she is. But she inspires everyone else. And they all want to work with her, maybe to feel part of something important. That's what we need to beat this plague: inspiration.

VIVIAN: You believe that? That we'll come out of this?

DR. REY: Yes, we will. I know it.

VIVIAN: Aren't we disappearing? Aren't we facing extinction?

DR. REY: But the population has grown five-fold, Vivian! And we expect another five-fold next year. If there is overpopulation, it's of youth, imaginative people, invincible, experienced people, doctors, philosophers, scientists, artists.

VIVIAN: You know what I'm referring to.

DR. REY: That we, those from this time, will be extinguished.

VIVIAN: Right. And it's not that I'm that sorry or that we don't deserve it, but the waste makes me sad.

DR. REY: The waste?

VIVIAN: Yes, the waste. That with so many resources and possibilities to do great things, we've settled for the insignificant. That we've fucked up, Rey. Right?

DR. REY: Vivian, we're still in control of our times.

VIVIAN: But I can't help lamenting the lost opportunities. Maybe I should do like you do--be different every day, a daily recent arrival, an explorer of my life by being everyone else.

*(They go into Alicia's space and the light brightens. Dim light in the other space)*

DR. REY: We won't disappear, Vivian. Maybe we'll have to set frivolity aside for a while. And perhaps we can't be so indifferent. Suddenly we'll have to look at the Other with admiration. Contempt will have to open up the past, be able to see major metaphors in everyday stories. To sing beautifully, with humanity, with pain.

VIVIAN: *(Remembering)* “The Door, the Face, Weakness, Hospitality and the Caress.”

DR. REY: What is that?

VIVIAN: Walt told me: it’s about a possibility for not disappearing. You should go to his campaign; he thinks a lot like you. He has a savage optimism, poetic, absurd.

DR. REY: It’s not optimism, but rather my utopia.

VIVIAN: Then share your exalted utopianism, honest, serious.

DR. REY: Well then, what does Whitman say?

VIVIAN: That we’ve been disappearing for centuries and still, we persist. Like solitude.

DR. REY: “Like solitude.”

VIVIAN: And because of that, the Other.

*(Ilan runs in, alarmed)*

DR. REY: How is she?

VIVIAN: Fine. I think she’s fine. How do you feel, Alicia?

ALICIA: The same. My head hurts a little.

VIVIAN: That’s what we expected.

*(Ilan hands her a report and as she reads it, Vivian looks at Dr. Rey, worry on her face).*

DR. REY: What’s the matter?

*(Vivian hands him the report)*

ALICIA: What?

VIVIAN: Nothing.

ALICIA: Tell me, Doctor. That was the condition I placed for doing the test: that you all would tell me the truth.

VIVIAN: Alicia, the results that we're getting about the vaccines from Asia and Europe are not very promising.

ALICIA: Then?

VIVIAN: There's been a grave error and almost all the patients that we've vaccinated until now have been dying.

ALICIA: How's that?

VIVIAN: That we don't have much hope, Alicia. I'm sorry.

ALICIA: But... But... Even if it happens, I'll come back. Right?

VIVIAN: You already know that we still don't know.

ALICIA: Yes, yes, we do know. I've seen them on the street. Everyone who has been alive comes back.

VIVIAN: Alicia, none of Us, from this era, has come back yet.

ALICIA: No, not yet. But we're getting there. We have faith that we'll come back. We've got proof. It's possible! It's already happened!

VIVIAN: Alicia, do you want us to call someone?

ALICIA: I... It'd be good if you could call God.

ILAN: Alicia...

ALICIA: Because it's time to consult him. Us...why not? Maybe he's punishing Us?

DR. REY: Alicia, it's possible that you'll come back. I think you will, eventually. But for now, you're going to die.

ALICIA: Doctor... Doctor... Doctor. Does it hurt to die?

DR. REY: Yes, it always hurts.

VIVIAN: Although we can help you.

DR. REY: Morphine?

*(Vivian nods yes, Alicia as well. Vivian injects her)*

ALICIA: When I come back, I'll be a little girl and I'll look for my house. The one I remember. And even if other people live there, I'll go there. And I will expect the adults to help me, to protect me. And I'll feel safe in my room, where my bed was, under my covers.

VIVIAN: You don't feel pain anymore?

ALICIA: I'll feel safe in my little girl's room.

ILAN: We'll be with you all the time.

DR. REY: We're not leaving here.

VIVIAN: I ask you to forgive me.

ALICIA: Don't worry, Vivian, this has been the dream of all of my life.

*(Sad music. Lights out)*

2/ THE ORIGIN OF ALL POEMS

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*(Images of very slow-falling rain. Lights. Music. Newscast Channel 7)*

JORGE: After the failure of three vaccines, the tests by Madame Curie in Paris, with antibodies from the Newcomers, are having the results in Us that the world was waiting for.

TV 2: Another Nobel for the French lady? How many does she have already? Seven? These arrivals don't want to leave anything for anybody.

JORGE: *(To TV 2)* Enough with the jealousy. *(To the camera)* The oldest patient in the country, with two amputations and who was on a respirator for almost three months because of the virus, has left the Municipal Hospital today breathing normally.

PATIENT: Everything that is not Us, is now inside of me. And it saved me.

JORGE: Pleased with the news, the German Chancellor, the composer Johan Sebastian Bach, assured that "The past is antibody. And cure." With Madame Curie's new vaccine *(TV 2 coughs)*, with antibodies from the Newly Arrived, the rate of contagion and deaths from the virus is going down throughout the planet. However, the new Secretary General of the UN, the Englishman William Shakespeare, in an exclusive interview with Channel 7, was skeptical...

*(W.S. being interviewed by Jorge)*

JORGE: Mr. Shakespeare, do you think that this is an indication of what we are capable of to achieve victory?

W.S.: On the contrary, I believe that we're done with success. That idea of the successful, of winning, of beating others, of being the best, has not brought us the results we expected.

JORGE: But we'll keep competing. We'll keep looking for the best.

W.S.: That's what I'm referring to. That precisely the victorious have been those who brought us this catastrophe. What's the winners' victory? With death there... what importance is there in being the winner? Just a few days ago, winning was having a respirator next to

you, having a nurse take care of you was a victory, to come out of this unharmed, normal, like always, was a transcendental achievement!

JORGE: But...

W.S.: I think that success has failed. And I think that's a good thing because without that hunger for superiority, maybe we can save ourselves from extermination.

JORGE: Finally, and to clear up the rumors... Did you write all your works?

W.S.: No, you did, you idiot! Try it and call me back.

*(Music. Lights. Peter and Vivian's house. Peter in bed, looking at his phone. Vivian, almost ready to leave for the hospital, puts on lipstick)*

VIVIAN: Finally!

PETER: *(Startled)* What? What?

VIVIAN: I missed putting on lipstick.

PETER: You didn't put it on?

VIVIAN: See? You didn't even notice. Outside the house, wearing a mask all the time, I stopped doing it. Nobody looked at your face. And at the hospital, attention was on sounds, orders, instruments, but not faces. Today is the first time I'll go out without a mask.

PETER: I don't dare. I'm still scared.

VIVIAN: My love, they've lifted all restrictions.

PETER: Yes, I know I can, but being without a mask makes me feel uncomfortable.

*(Knock at their door. Joselyn's voice)*

JOSELYN: Are you awake? Can I talk to you?

VIVIAN: I'm coming, Josie.

PETER: Didn't she say that the university starts next week?

JOSELYN: (*She knocks again*) It's urgent.

(*Lights. Music. Newscast Channel 7*)

JORGE: For the first time since the Newcomers started arriving, there has been a significant reduction in their number. Experts in history and in statistics affirm that almost all of the people who ever lived on this planet have appeared in our era: from the prehistoric to the so-called Recent Ones, dead only twenty years ago. To quote the English Prime Minister, Charles Darwin:

W.W.: (*As Darwin*) We can say, happily, that we are almost all here. And that we have evolved from the survival of the fittest, and in recent times, the survival of the most delinquent, to the survival of the most human.

(*Music. Lights. Ilan and Jorge's apartment*)

ILAN: With so many cavemen running around the street, and now you've become one more of them, Jorge?

JORGE: How's it possible you're calling me a caveman?

(*He takes a paper out of his pocket and reads it*)

ILAN: Because your reaction is over the top. What does the quote say?

JORGE: No, I won't read it to you.

(*Ilan takes it from him*)

ILAN: "For some, man is the enemy / for being who has given/ mistaken caresses." Marcel Proust. (*He looks at Jorge*) Are you accusing me of being mistaken with the caresses I give you?

JORGE: No, it's not that.

ILAN: So, what's it about?

JORGE: It's not about anything!

ILAN: You don't have to take out any papers with mistaken caresses, Jorge; I've been sincere with you, that's all.

JORGE: Then you like Rey?

ILAN: He's very attractive.

JORGE: A little narcissistic.

ILAN: I'm narcissistic!

JORGE: But that you love Rey is an exaggeration, Ilan!

ILAN: And that's enough for us to separate?

JORGE: *(Giving up)* No, it's not.

ILAN: *(He takes a baby out of a cradle that wasn't visible)* So that's that. We'll call him Rey. Like Dr. Rey. More complaints, Mr. Father of Rey Rivera?

JORGE: Rey Rivera. They're going to call him R.R. when he dedicates himself to reading the news on Channel 7.

ILAN: Rey Rivera Lewis will not read the news on Channel 7 or 8. His name sounds more like an author of best sellers. *(He takes the baby over to Jorge)* Give him a kiss before you leave.

JORGE: *(He kisses the baby)* Rey, our newborn baby boy. Welcome to your double world: Newcomer mother and Us father. Your birth marks the dawn of a new era.

ILAN: But we won't tell him until he's an adolescent in crisis. And when he finds out, he'll have a critical conflict in his life, and he'll go out desperate to find his biological parents. And then he'll start writing, discouraged at not being able to find them, and along with the hatred he'll feel for us, he'll become the best writer in the world.

JORGE: How beautiful.

ILAN: You see?

JORGE: We'll see each other tonight, my love.

*(They kiss)*

JORGE: *(Exiting)* If you're going to sing to him, do it in Spanish!

ILAN: Yes, sir!

*(Jorge leaves. Lights. Music. Newscast Channel 7)*

JORGE: We still don't have any news about the Us who have died, or about the hundreds of thousands of Newly Arrived who have died again in our era. According to the president of Facebook, the Austrian Sigmund Freud, it's not crazy to think that they might come back in some kind of digital form. Some kind of meta-world. And to those who keep harping on the claim that his appointment was some kind of subtle hint, the psychoanalyst commented:

*(Images of Freud commenting)*

FREUD: Yes, that's it. Who did you expect? Mickey Mouse?

*(Music, Lights. Alicia's apartment. Beatrice, in bed. Maggie, at a distance)*

BEATRICE: You're lying, Maggie. You and your Channel 7 are always lying!

MAGGIE: I'm not lying to you. There's a police video. The director of Interpol was part of the operation, Beatrice. Hours before he was detained, Adolf demanded that they burn him, and he shot himself.

BEATRICE: Did they burn him afterwards?

MAGGIE: Of course not! All of his faithful followers ran away.

BEATRICE: And who is that damned director of Interpol? A traitor

MAGGIE: A general. Zapata. Mexican.

BEATRICE: It figures.

*(Maggie, leaving)*

MAGGIE: Your nurse will come tomorrow, Beatrice. Get better.

BEATRICE: You're leaving already? *(Maggie gestures "what did you expect?")* You're a traitor. You abandon me like this. When you come begging me for an interview, I'll show you my ass.

MAGGIE: And why am I going to want to interview you, Beatrice?

BEATRICE: Because I'm the last person sick with the foreign virus.

MAGGIE: The virus is old news, not interesting anymore.

*(Lights. Music, News cast Channel 7)*

JORGE: The President of the European Council, the German Bertolt Brecht, declared:

*(Brecht declaring)*

BRECHT: "In dark times/ Will we keep singing?/ Yes, we will keep singing./ About the dark times." What will we do when the times get clearer? We will sing the entire repertoire about the dark times! And we'll do it with all the orchestras, singers, and stages. With absolute wonder!

JORGE: In local news, the 87 managers have finally been detained, after the grand jury agreed that there was sufficient proof of the fraud they committed, in complicity with the ex-governor D'Amico and his wife Susana D'Amico, with monies approved at the time to combat the economic effects of the pandemic. "It's about the largest transfer of public funds to private hands in the history of the country," noted the new governor, the poet Walt Whitman.

*(Governor's office. W.W. comes in, followed by Dr. Rey)*

W.W.: Do I really have to be here all of the time?

DR. REY: It's your office, you can do what you want.

W.W.: Make it clear to them that I might be taking a walk down the street. That you've recommended this for my health.

DR. REY: *(Looking to one side)* He's here already, Governor.

W.W.: Emmanuel?

DR. REY: He says that he really wants to see you.

W.W.: Have him come in. *(Emmanuel enters. He extends his hand, but W.W. embraces him; he kisses him on each cheek and gives him*

*one kiss more*). Embraces, kisses, holding hands. The world demands it. How are you, Emmanuel?

EMMANUEL: Confused. J'ai tellement de choses à apprendre!

W.W.: You'll learn, Emmanuel. *(To Dr. Rey)* Emmanuel Lévinas is in our office!

EMMANUEL: Avec Walt Whitman! My respects, Mr. Poet.

W.W.: He's Dr. Rey, second-in charge of our administration.

DR. REY: What a pleasure to meet you. Five of your metaphors are now part of the Declaration of Human Rights. Did you know that?

W.W.: Don't scare him, he just arrived. A beer, Emmanuel?

EMMANUEL: Oui, oui! Bien sûr!

DR. REY: Photo?

*(W.W. and Emmanuel accept, delighted. They pose)*

DR. REY: *(Before taking the photo)* "The future comes to me and it's not inert. Nothing is immutable. No one. This is why I grew old, to know that I can change everything."

W.W.: Who is it?

DR. REY: Griselda Gambaro.

W.W.: She's beautiful.

*(Dr. Rey takes a selfie, along with W.W. and Lévinas. Theme music. The scene dissolves to Peter and Vivian's house)*

VIVIAN: What's happening, Joselyn?

PETER: Are you alright?

JOSELYN: It's that there's somebody in the house.

VIVIAN: What? Newcomers?

JOSELYN: More or less...

VIVIAN: What do you mean more or less?

*(Arturo's voice)*

ARTURO: *(Voice)* Peter, Vivian, hi! I'm the Other. I'm Arturo, Joselyn's great-grandson. I've just arrived. Don't be afraid, I'm what you'd call a Recent Future. How exciting!

*(Vivian center-stage, to the audience)*

VIVIAN: The Other? Our door is open to you. You're right, this is your home. Let me see your face. Are you weak? You'll regain your strength here. We'll dine together from now on. But you'll always go first. May I ask you a favor? Can I touch you?

*(The light in Peter and Vivian's house dims a little. Light in Ilan and Jorge's apartment. Ilan singing "Duerme negrito" to his baby)*

ILAN: *"Duerme, duerme negrito/ Que tu papá está en el campo, negrito./ Te va a traer muchas cositas para ti..."*

*(Light dims a little. Ilan keeps singing softly. Light on Alicia's apartment. Beatrice, alone)*

BEATRICE: *(Coughing)* Nurse! I can't breathe! Nurse! Is anyone here? They've left me alone!

*(A 9-year-old girl appears on one side of the stage. Beatrice sees her)*

BEATRICE: Who? Who are you? *(Alicia, on the other side of the stage)* Alicia! You came back!

ALICIA: *(To the girl)* Come, Rachel, come, my little one!

*(The girl runs to her. They embrace. The light dims a little. Light on Jorge, who takes a little piece of paper out of his pocket. He reads it, but it's W.W. who speaks)*

W.W: *(To the audience)* "Have you reckon'd the earth much? / Have you practis'd to learn to read / Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems? / Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Walt Whitman, Song of Myself*

*(Almost total darkness. Photos of everyone who had photos taken that didn't turn out-until now. Last one is of Whitman and Lévinas toasting a beer. Lights out)*

End of All Alive