

Aldebaran

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EXTERIOR, CITY STREET. NIGHT.

WIDE SHOT: The Panoptis Theatre in Soho. Figures rush in quickly through sheets of rain.

INTERIOR, PANOPTIS THEATRE.

CLOSE-UP: Hands exchanging money for tickets at ticket booth in the lobby. Camera

FREEZES on words on tickets – *Aldebaran*. Panoptis Theatre. September 23.

WIDE SHOT: Patrons finding their seats, chatting, laughing, looking around. The lights dim as the red stage curtains open.

Music rises – slow, quiet, atonal, searching. Onstage, a projection screen illuminates – an image forms of a cityscape composed of futuristic structures ringing a dark body of water. The sky is a deep red. A lone figure enters from stage right, walking very, very slowly. At first, it is unknown whether the figure is male or female. A spotlight fades up in the centre of the stage. The figure walks into the spotlight and pauses. It is a woman, in a flowing dress of crimson-red silk. The music stops abruptly. A flaming sphere rolls before her. Mesmerized, she follows it until it stops

at the edge of the stage. Silence. She picks up the sphere. An expression of what can be described as either disgust or anger forms across her face.

MEDIUM SHOTS: Patrons' reactions to the performance – fear, confusion, laughter.

She lifts the sphere high above her head slowly – then smashes it to the floor behind her. It shatters into many pieces. Atonal music begins again – at a higher volume and faster tempo. She rushes offstage. The music continues. Five more flaming spheres roll across the stage – all stopping at the edge of the stage. The image on the screen dissolves into a montage of close-up images of the same futuristic city – windows cut into the sides of buildings in strange, acute angles; empty streets that wind and intersect in labyrinthine contortions; signs written in an unintelligible language; a dimly lit sun in the horizon.

DOLLY SHOT: A latecomer enters the theatre lobby, shakes off the rain from his coat. A young woman in the ticket booth recognizes him immediately and dashes towards him. She hands him an envelope with a handwritten message on the outside – “For Albert – Thank you for your inspiring book – we hope you enjoy our interpretation...” He opens the envelope and gives her his ticket. Before taking off his coat and handing it to her to check in, he pulls out a book from the inner pocket. She hands his coat to another staff member and walks him to his seat inside the theatre.

CLOSE-UP: His hands flipping through the pages of what appears to be an ancient book of drawings – planetary orbits, architectural sketches, flora and fauna. Back to the front cover – *Aldebaran, City of Tomorrow. Albert Pierce.*

MEDIUM SHOT: He looks up from the book and turns to see...

MEDIUM SHOT: A man and woman in the audience, shivering, mesmerized.

CLOSE-UP: The couple's hands are clasped tightly.

Onstage, the flaming spheres are extinguished. The image on the screen becomes a starfield. Slowly, the stars shift out of focus. She returns to the stage, serene.

CLOSE-UP: His hands scanning through the pages of the book: strange, unknown symbols, sketches of ruined buildings – sharp structures scratching at the sky – and drawings of mounds of decaying trees, plants and unidentifiable organisms. His hands stop on a page with a drawing of a woman and flaming spheres.

MEDIUM SHOT, TILTING DOWN: He watches as the image starts to vibrate – the spheres begin to move, rolling across the page.

CLOSE-UP: Fear spreading across his face. He is shivering. He looks up from the book towards the stage.

She stage-whispers – “Who has built this place? Who has named this city? Who has defined what is inside or outside? Where are the spaces within spaces? I know there are other frequencies of sound and image. I know there exist spheres of music with the power to modulate identity. I know there are images with the power of harmonic construction.”

EXTERIOR, CITY STREET. NIGHT.

MONTAGE: Pulsing lights in the streets outside the theatre. Circles of light ascend to the sky – flaring, reflecting. A woman walks alone. A group of older men laugh and joke. A family reunites. The frames begin to overlap: the face of one person is imposed on another. The child becomes older. The man becomes woman.

Onstage, images seep across the screen: – an archaeological excavation site, the sharp ruins of ancient structures, a smashed clock tower, a viscous river, molten metal, sand dunes, blazing sunlight. The camera pans across the stone and wood wreckage. Windows are framed with carvings of undecipherable symbols. Doorways lead into darkness. She pauses and stares at the screen. The screen goes red. She turns to face the audience once more. The screen pulses red as she stage whispers – “There are artifacts yet to be found. Languages yet to be translated. Stories yet to be told.”

MONTAGE: He looks down again at the book in his hands. The strange symbols are gliding across the pages, onto his hands, and spilling onto the floor. All he can do is watch as an

unknown language moves across his skin. He had not noticed before, but the symbols are making small cuts in his hands. Blood drips down to create thin creeks along the theatre floor. The creeks become a red, viscous river beneath his feet. He looks around – no one has noticed what is happening. Everyone else continues to be transfixed on the red screen onstage. Do they not see? Do they not care to see?

CLOSE-UP: A red streetlight pulses rhythmically, outside the theatre.