

**This Unquiet Earth**  
(A fiction podcast series)  
by  
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### **Synopsis:**

Inspired by the Philip K. Dick short story *Exhibit Piece* (now in the public domain) this audio series takes as its premise the idea that life as we know it now on planet Earth is actually just a disposable prop piece created by our future selves for selfish aims. Unknown to us, our world is a simulation running on a computer in a dystopian future, threatened with extinction at any moment according to the whims of its creators. A love letter to our planet, *This Unquiet Earth* has fun with simulation theory while bringing attention to the vulnerability and uniqueness of our imperiled earth and the potential for climate catastrophe, as well as featuring actual soundscapes recorded in our earth's remaining wild and sonically beautiful places.

In a desolate, climate-controlled walled Compound in the far northern hemisphere of a burning, post-apocalyptic planet in 2120, multiple earth simulations are being run in a computer lab. They are used to generate energy to power the digital Cloud, where those who survived are uploading their consciousnesses as fast as there is enough power to do so.

The science fiction series incorporates a family drama and centers on our protagonist, Silas, an increasingly conflicted computer programmer working in the lab. Silas falls in love with a simulation he has created, a simulation that sounds an awful lot like life on our planet. As he tinkers with the sounds within the simulation, Silas finds himself drawn in, until he must decide between his real-life, dystopian present in the compound or living inside his virtual creation, which surely consigns him to an imminent end when the program is terminated. Or, is he really a mentally disturbed biologist living in 2020, just imagining that life on earth is a simulation he created whose fate lies in his hands? Maybe his therapist can help him find the truth. But ultimately, only he can decide which world is worth saving.

### **Production note:**

An important feature of *This Unquiet Earth* is incorporating audio of real soundscapes – the sounds of the earth's remaining wild places. Every wild habitat left on the planet has its own unique sound signature: a vibrant animal orchestra; an organized expression of insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals, and their biological niche. The series is a chance to bring attention to the unique soundscapes of the vulnerable ecosystems on our planet. When we hear Silas, the computer programmer, in the lab enjoying the sounds of wildlife he's created for his simulation, it creates a sonic space to make some of these

stunning, evocative natural symphonies (or biophonies) accessible – like the beautiful examples of disappearing natural soundscapes collected by naturalist Bernie Krause and his organization [Wild Sanctuary](#). Krause is able to assess the health of a landscape based purely on how it sounds. This is a chance for a wider audience to enjoy listening to some of the rare sound signatures he and others have recorded of the great diversity of species that still call this planet home.

*“We must think beyond politics to how we can re-enchant the world again. Awaken our senses. The challenge is to reforest our hearts.”*

*-David Abram*

#### **CHARACTERS:**

SILAS TAYLOR – 40’s. Computer programmer in the compound’s computer lab, 2120 / family man and biologist in NYC, 2020

LAB SUPERVISOR – 40’s. His boss in the lab, 2120

JUAN – 30’s. One of his dorm mates in the compound, 2120

ROBERTA – 30’s. Another of his dorm mates in the compound, 2120

ELLERY TAYLOR – 14. Silas’s son in NYC, 2020

AVA TAYLOR – 14. Silas’s daughter (Ellery’s twin) in NYC, 2020

HELEN TAYLOR – 40’s. Silas’s wife in NYC, 2020

DR. ROTHSCHILD – 40’s. Silas’s psychiatrist in NYC, 2020

THE HENDERSONS – 40’s. Friends of Silas and Helen in NYC, 2020

#### **SETTINGS:**

Computer lab in the compound, 2120

Worker’s dorm in the compound, 2120

Central Park, NYC 2020

A psychiatrist’s office, NYC, 2020

The Taylor’s apartment, NYC, 2020

**EPISODE ONE**

**SCENE ONE: Int. Computer lab in the compound, 2120 – Day. Silas, a computer programmer working in the lab, is listening in and fine-tuning the sound within one of the simulations he’s created**

**SOUND:** A FOREST LAKE IN WYOMING AT DUSK. WATER

LAPPING ON THE SHORE, LOONS CALLING AS THEY

DIVE FOR FISH, A CHORUS OF CICADAS

**MAN:** Peaceful, isn’t it?

**WOMAN:** It sure is. I love the sound of loons. Where I grew up we would hear them all summer, calling to each other.

**MAN:** Let’s walk out to the shore before it gets dark, see if we can spot them diving for fish. Where’s that flashlight...

**SOUND:** TENT BEING UNZIPPED, THEN THE COUPLE WALKING

THROUGH UNDERGROWTH, TALKING IN LOW VOICES,

THE LOON CALLS GETTING LOUDER AS THEY

APPROACH THE SHORE

**SILAS:** (V.O. CLOSE) That’s not right. The loons should sound higher. Their calls should be just a little bit higher-pitched.

**SOUND:** THE COUPLE CONTINUE TALKING ON THE LAKE’S

EDGE, OBVIOUSLY NOT ABLE TO HEAR SILAS’S

VOICE. ANOTHER LOON CALL, HIGHER

SILAS: (V.O. CLOSE) That's better.

WOMAN: See that one! It's got a fish in its beak!

MAN: There it goes...

SOUND: A LOON TAKING OFF FROM THE WATER'S SURFACE,  
THEN MOSQUITO BUZZING AND A HAND SLAPPING  
IT. THE BUZZING STOPS

WOMAN: Let's go for a dip, come on. I'm getting bitten.

LAB SUPERVISOR: (V.O. CLOSE) How's it going with this simulation, Silas?

SILAS: (TURNS DOWN THE VOLUME ON THE SIMULATION SO WE JUST HEAR SOUNDS WITHIN THE LAB NOW)  
Good, good. Just adjusting a soundscape. These birds called loons fishing at dusk... a couple of human avatars camping in a big, beautiful park area I named Yellowstone. Nice to watch... I've programmed some beautiful settings and wildlife. Really detailed. The sun was just setting, you could see the spires of the trees, Douglas fir and white bark pine... their reflections

on the glasslike surface of a lake. A host of rough-winged swallows were scooping gnats from the air above the water and three great blue herons stood motionless on the shore. A raccoon hauled itself onto the bank with a fish, shedding a shower of water droplets, the details are so realistic looking, and a pair of fledgling barred owls were calling to be fed. But the loons, the calls weren't quite right, I thought they should sound a little higher-pitched for a more mournful kind of sound.

LAB SUPERVISOR: You're new to the Lab, aren't you. I admire your attention to detail but these artistic touches – definitely not necessary.

SILAS: Well I just check in here and there and fine-tune whatever I notice. The simulations take on a life of their own at a certain point, even though they all have the same basic framework. I don't have to do that much. This one is turning out to be particularly beautiful though, if I do say so myself.

LAB SUPERVISOR: Let me see the notes on this one before you waste any more time on it... Earth Simulation 6492... currently in year 2020... global population 7.6 billion... primary energy source fossil fuels and nuclear... some renewables coming online but global temperatures already 2.2 degrees above average. Sea levels rising, abnormal weather fluctuations, Arctic ice Avat well underway, on the verge of mass species extinction... Sounds like what happened to us. It could still turn around I guess. What do you think, pull the plug now?

SILAS: I'd like to give it a bit more time, we've seen some even less stable simulations manage to up their energy output and keep going for a while.

LAB SUPERVISOR: How much power are we extracting?

SILAS: We've siphoned two, almost three terawatts since it reached fossil fuel stage and its production is increasing rapidly. It'll give us five terawatts per cycle. Unless it self-

deconstructs too quickly. The avatars in this one are slow learners. They're not worried about the rising temperatures or chaotic weather patterns from what I've seen.

LAB SUPERVISOR: We can only run simulations that develop into Kardashev Type One civilizations very quickly or they're pulling more power than they generate.

SILAS: This is at .7 currently but I'd really like to see where it goes.

LAB SUPERVISOR: Give it another week, max. Then I punch in the terminate code if we're not siphoning five terawatts per cycle. We can't afford to keep simulations running that don't give us 20% more than they take to run, minimum.

SILAS: Dope.

SUPERVISOR: What's 'dope'.

SILAS: Something the younger avatars in this simulation say. I've been hearing it in there all day.

LAB SUPERVISOR: Are they informing your dress sense as well?



These sweaters with the zip and the hood attached. Very strange, especially for our climate. And the blue pants you wear every day... There's something different about you.

SILAS: I call this a hoodie, and these jeans. I find lots of them scattered around outside the compound, piles of clothes and suitcases... I guess they were popular with people who made it this far north. I programmed them into the simulation also, the avatars are all wearing them now. They love them, so comfortable.

LAB SUPERVISOR: You haven't been interacting with the avatars have you? You know that's grounds for expulsion.

SILAS: I thought interaction wasn't possible.

LAB SUPERVISOR: Well no, but theoretically... that's why you have to wear a tether when you're programming a simulation, just in case you go losing touch with reality in there. It's fun to play God but don't get obsessed, it's not healthy.

SILAS: Nothing around here is healthy.

LAB SUPERVISOR: Even so... And stop wasting so much time on details! Bird calls?! How would you even know how they should sound, you've never heard a real bird!

SOUND: FADE OUT ON THEME SONG

### **EPISODE ONE**

#### **SCENE TWO: Ext. Compound, 2120 – Night**

SECURITY SYSTEM: Please show ID to exit. (SOUND OF ID BEING SCANNED) Thank you, Silas Brenner.  
Destination?

SILAS: Dorm 21, East Wing.

SOUND: LAB DOOR SLIDING OPEN AND SILAS EXITING TO  
THE SOUND OF GENERATORS RUNNING IN THE  
BACKGROUND. HIS FOOTSTEPS WALKING TO HIS  
DORM, THE BEEP OF HIS ID OPENING THE DOOR.  
DOOR CLOSES AND GENRATOR SOUND FADES AWAY

SECURITY SYSTEM: Welcome home, Silas Brenner. It's currently 117 degrees Fahrenheit at 6:09pm, July 9th, 2120. You have... 13 of 20 power units left for today. You have... 7 of 10 water units left for today. You have... unlimited food powder and... two protein packs left for

today. The Cloud thanks you for your contribution.

SILAS: And I thank the Cloud for creating all things.

JUAN: 20 power units, the Cloud must love you! Want a beer?

SILAS: Your name's Juan, right? Thanks. I'm Silas. I just got transferred to this dorm. Ha, no not feeling much love currently. I'm running a simulation that's burning more power than it's creating. Hey, this beer is actually cold!

JUAN: I get 50 power units a day. I can afford to run a little fridge in my room. I'm an Uploader so... there are some perks.

SILAS: Wow, so you've met our overlords.

JUAN: A few. Not too many being uploaded these days.

SILAS: Yeah. I guess the Cloud's getting too crowded for the rest of us.

SOUND: ANOTHER RESIDENT SWIPING INTO THE DORM

SECURITY SYSTEM: Welcome home, Roberta Garver. It's currently 117 degrees Fahrenheit at 6:10pm on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2120. You have... four of ten power units left for today. You have... three of ten water units left for today. You have unlimited food powder and one protein pack left for today. The Cloud thanks you for your contribution.

ROBERTA: And I thank the Cloud for creating all things. Hi Juan, how are you?

JUAN: Hot. But I've got some cold beers here. Want one?

ROBERTA: Sure, thanks. And you must be the new guy.

SILAS: Yeh I just got transferred in last week from the south pod. Silas. Hi.

ROBERTA: Roberta, nice to meet you.

SILAS: Programmer?

ROBERTA: No, Maintenance. Cooling towers. Been dangling 600 feet above ground all day.

SILAS: What can you see from up there?

ROBERTA: Over the wall, for starters.

JUAN:                   Whoa. And what exactly is out there?

ROBERTA:               It's protected information but... not much. No people of course. On a clear day, methane explosions in the distance over Greenland... clouds of mosquitoes... miles of our solar panels... some starving coyotes trying to dig their way in...

JUAN:                   Damn. If they could taste this food powder I don't think they'd waste their time.

ROBERTA:               Food powder is better than no food powder.

JUAN:                   Mine dried into a paste this morning while I was eating it. So I made these little statues out of it. This one looks just like the head of security for the Cloud, see his big hooded eyes?

ROBERTA:               Weird. But impressive.

JUAN:                   This is some serious artistry right here!

SILAS:                  Looks like Play Doh.

JUAN:                   Play what?

SILAS:                  They look like what kids make sometimes in the simulation I'm running, out of this

colored clay stuff that doesn't dry out.  
They make it into little statues like that.

ROBERTA: Something that doesn't dry out, that sounds nice. It must be fun to work on the simulations.

SILAS: Yeah, some of them develop in beautiful directions. Almost makes you sad when they reach the end of their productive life. This one I'm working on now, the avatars have built some gorgeous cities, there's one with really tall buildings, much taller than our cooling towers, with green mountains all around, they call it Hong Kong. Or another where all the buildings are pink... Jaipur I think they named it. And the different life forms that develop in there, all evolving from relatively simple coding. Today I was fixing a few technical bugs in a forested area, I named it the Amazon to make our overlords in the Cloud happy, and my counter said almost three million separate animal species had co-evolved to inhabit that same space. Amazing. But there's one spot I like best, it's called Central Park. It's in a

city called New York. The avatars built it, dredging a swamp and clearing away huge boulders, planting 25,000 trees... it goes to my heart how much work they put in. It has a big grassy area where people play games, nap, relax.

ROBERTA: Imagine being able to relax outdoors without dying of heat stroke.

SILAS: Yeah. There's a pond there I love too. I've filled it with all kinds of turtles and fish.

ROBERTA: Sounds like you're really invested in your work.

SILAS: Yeah, I try and model the simulations on what our world used to look like, as much as I can. Kind of a tribute to how our planet was before it went off the rails.

JUAN: Programmers can go out past the wall right?

SILAS: Yeah I have a research pass. I go out and sift through the dumps, see what I can unearth. A lot of stuff piled up out there to dig through.

JUAN: Oh man! Will you take me out some time? I've never been outside the compound.

ROBERTA: Shhhh!

SILAS: (LOWER VOICE) Maybe you can borrow my pass sometime.

JUAN: And your weird clothes so I look like you? Wow, thanks. I'll think about it. Don't want to risk not getting uploaded but it would be pretty cool.

ROBERTA: Risky. No one's survived for long outside the compound. If you don't get back in...

JUAN: I know.

SECURITY SYSTEM: Power units low. Please switch account to avoid power cut-off.

SILAS: I'll use mine.

SOUND: SILAS INSERTING HIS ID CARD INTO CARD READER

SECURITY SYSTEM: Silas Brenner. Accessing 13 power units.

ROBERTA: While we still have some light let me show you guys something I found in the cooling tank yesterday. Be right back...



JUAN: Tell me what else is out there, in the dumps.

SILAS: Basically everything people were carrying with them, on the Northward Migration all those years ago. Plus whatever's blown up here in the tornadoes. A lot of packing peanuts for one. And people's most treasured possessions. Suitcases of photo albums, clothes, lots of cell phones, seems like people were really attached to their phones. Almost obsessed with them. Useful for research though, the ones that still work when I power them up. People would photograph themselves many times a day, putting tons of digital photos of themselves on a primitive kind of Cloud called Facebook, "selfies" they called them. Some of the phones even have these sticks attached, I think to take a photo of yourself when you were alone. Strange, they seem kind of lonely. Anyway there's plenty of great reference material out there. Some solar cars managed to make it up this far, they're loaded with stuff to look through.

JUAN: Cars, damn.

SILAS: Yeah, and then of course the tanks that mowed everyone down are still scattered around, rusting. There are markers, for the mass graves.

JUAN: My grandparents are out there somewhere. Buried. Just my parents were let in, they had experience making processor chips already, in a factory... They were both uploaded a few years ago after *30 years* of powering the Cloud. I'll be seeing them again one of these days.

SILAS: I'm surprised you haven't been uploaded yet.

JUAN: I'm near the top of the list, I think. But it's slow, you know... someone's got to stay out here to keep the power flowing up there.

SILAS: Until we can get production where it needs to be.

JUAN: We'll get there. Definitely in time for us to live forever. Pure consciousness in a Cloud.

ROBERTA: (re-entering) Cheers to that.

SILAS: What's in the box?

ROBERTA: Take a look at this creature. Pretty strange looking.

SOUND: A BOX PLACED ON THE TABLE AND THE LID PULLED  
BACK

JUAN: What the hell?!

SOUND: A SCARED FROG CROAKING

SILAS: Let me see!

ROBERTA: What is it?

SILAS: It's a frog! Look at those big back legs.

JUAN: What's a frog?

SILAS: Something dope that there used to be many of. Many different kinds.

ROBERTA: What kind is this one?

SILAS: Well, let me see... it looks to be a Costa Rican Gliding Tree Frog. I don't know how it could've gotten here though, thousands of miles north... it soars from branch to branch by spreading out the webbing between its toes, but there are no branches around.

JUAN: A flying frog. How did it get in here? What a dopey color.

SILAS: *Dope. Green! It's a color we could use more of around here. The frog's skin changes at nightfall from pale green to dark green. Amazing creature.*

ROBERTA: I've been putting food powder in the box but it won't eat.

JUAN: See? If it's not good enough for frog I'm not eating it either.

SOUND: THE POOR FROG CROAKS SOME MORE

SILAS: You know what? Can I borrow our little friend for a couple hours? I want to tweak some sounds in my simulation.

JUAN: There's frogs in there?

SILAS: Yep. There's everything in there.

ROBERTA: Sure.

SILAS: I'll bring him back. Come on Kermit.

JUAN: What's Kermit?

SILAS: Never mind. See you guys later!

SOUND: FADE OUT ON THEME SONG

**EPISODE TWO**

**SCENE ONE: Int. Computer lab – Night**

SOUND: SILAS ENTERING THE LAB WITH HIS NEW FROG  
FRIEND

SILAS: Okay Kermit, here we are... meet Earth Simulation 6492. Simulation, meet a real live frog. Let me get strapped in here Kermie, and your voice is going to be cloned into a million Gliding Tree Frogs all over Costa Rica. You're going to live forever. Well as long as this thing is running anyway.

SOUND: KERMIT CROAKS APPRECIATIVELY

Silas: Wish I had some of that coffee the avatars drink. Don't go anywhere Kermie, I'm going in.

SOUND: SILAS ENTERING THE SIMULATION: LOTS OF  
BLENDED SOUNDS OF THE EARTH IN 2020 AS IF  
HE'S HOVERING ABOVE – SNATCHES OF DIFFERENT  
LANGUAGES, MAYBE HINDU CHANTING, THEN  
ITALIAN, THEN TIBETAN THROAT SINGING, THEN

TRAFFIC SOUNDS, THEN PORTUGUESE, THEN CHURCH  
BELLS, THEN CONSTRUCTION SOUNDS, THEN HE  
LOCATES HIS DESTINATION, THE COSTA RICAN  
RAINFOREST. THE SOUNDS OF THE RAINFOREST GET  
LOUDER, THEN WE GET A GOOD CHUNK OF RECORDED  
RAINFOREST SOUNDS, INCLUDING A FROG CHORUS.  
LET'S ENJOY THE FOREST SOUNDSCAPE FOR A  
MINUTE. FINALLY, OVER, CLOSER, SILAS'S VOICE  
CUTS IN

SILAS: That's amazing. There's so much life... so different from the silence we live in now. I think I'll call this simulation the Unquiet Earth. Now let's just get these tree frogs properly tuned!

SOUND: THE TREE FROG CHORUS MODULATES IN SOME WAY

SILAS: There we go. That's beautiful. What's that? A Three-Toed Sloth! Just hanging out in a tree. Wow, to have your life buddy...

SOUND: CHAIN SAWS IN THE DISTANCE. THE FOREST  
ANIMALS GO QUIET. MEN SHOUTING

SILAS: Shame they can't see what they have. Wish I could buy this thing some time. Or program some smarter avatars.

SOUND: CHAIN SAWS GET MUCH CLOSER AND GRATINGLY  
LOUD. THEN ALL THE RAINFOREST SOUNDS GET  
FURTHER AWAY AS SILAS TAKES OFF FOR  
SOMEWHERE TO THINK. BLENDED SOUNDS OF THE  
PLANET AGAIN AND THEN WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF  
NEW YORK CITY GETTING CLOSER: TRAFFIC,  
HONKING AND SIRENS, MAYBE A STREET PERFORMER  
WITH A NEW YORK ACCENT OR SOMEONE YELLING  
SOMETHING COLORFUL SO WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE,  
A BASKETBALL GAME, AS IF HE'S DRIFTING OVER  
MANHATTAN. THEN WE HEAR JUST THE SOUNDS FROM  
THE GREAT LAWN IN CENTRAL PARK – A BASEBALL  
GLANCING OFF A BAT, BIRDS, KIDS PLAYING.  
SILAS MAKES SOME SOUNDS OVER TO CONVEY HE'S  
JUST WATCHING AND ENJOYING IT, MURMURING  
"LOOK AT THAT", ETC.

ELLERY: Dad. Dad! What're you doing? Dad? Why are  
you just standing there?

SILAS: What?

ELLERY: Did you find the Frisbee?

SILAS: No, I... I... Can you see me?

SOUND: BRANCHES CRACKING, FOOTSTEPS IN UNDERGROWTH

ELLERY: Well you're wearing a red shirt, so that helps.

SILAS: No I mean how are you able to see me at all.

ELLERY: What? 'Cause I have eyes Dad. It's time for lunch, let's look for the frisbee after.

SILAS: I... frisbee? Oh wait, I remember finding one of those out in the dumps. Did I program that in?

ELLERY: Why are you being a weirdo. Come on, aren't you hungry? We've been calling for you. Mom made my favorite, buffalo wings! And Ava's eating them all.

SILAS: Interaction... this isn't supposed to be possible. Wait, buffalos have wings? I got that very wrong then. I'd like to see that.

SOUND: THE TWO OF THEM WALKING OUT OF THE WOODS AND ACROSS THE GRASS

SILAS: What about bison, were they supposed to have wings too?

ELLERY: Haha Dad. Found him! Move over Ava you're hogging the blanket. There better be some



wings left. Dad's calling them bison wings now. Give me some bison wings you hog.

AVA: Only Dad knows the difference between a buffalo and a bison.

ELLERY: Only Dad cares.

HELEN: Don't be rude to your Dad, Ellery. Ava, leave some wings for your brother!

SILAS: Can I see these wings? They're so small. How can a buffalo..

HELEN: Sure honey, I thought you were going vegetarian again. I made you an avocado salad.

SILAS: Avocado... and look at all these green leaves! Spinach I think!? God this looks amazing.

HELEN: Nice to have you so appreciative!

SILAS: It's so alive! Mmmm. I feel like He-Man eating this vitality.

ELLERY: Popeye Dad. He's the spinach guy.

HELEN: You can start taking salads to work again then. That reminds me, should we pick up some salmon on the way home? Ellery, don't

make those faces at your sister.

ELLERY: I'm not!

HELEN: I saw you. The Hendersons are coming for dinner tomorrow. Would you like to do your grilled salmon? What time will you be home, you've been working later and later these days.

SILAS: Work... That's right!

HELEN: I know conservation is important but do you think the wetlands can survive without you working overtime tomorrow? I need your help with the Hendersons, you know what a handful they were last time. They're coming over at 7:30.

AVA: Are you a workaholic Dad?

SILAS: I don't think so, I...

HELEN: What about talking to Richard. About the insane hours lately.

SILAS: Richard. Oh my god. Of course. How strange... the Chesapeake Bay wetlands proposal...

HELEN: What's strange?

SILAS: Richard... and the office... I'd forgotten it all.

HELEN: Good! It's nice to have you more present. Twins, have you looked at Turtle Pond today? I think I saw some egrets on the island. You two used to race down as kids and see who could spot the most birds out there.

AVA: I think we're a little old for that?

ELLERY: I am anyway.

AVA: Yeah yeah, three minutes older. But way more immature.

SILAS: Kids! Let's enjoy the day. It's gorgeous out here, there's life all around us. Who knows for how long? I don't want to miss a minute.

HELEN: Silas! How nice.

SOUND: SILAS KISSING HELEN

AVA: Ew! Dad's kissing Mom. Disgusting.

SILAS: You're wonderful, Helen. Your Mom's wonderful kids. Helen! Your Mom. Be good to her. Let's go look at the lake.

ELLERY: Dope!

SILAS: Who's going to get there first?

ELLERY: Me!

AVA: Me!

SOUND: THE KIDS TAKE OFF LAUGHING, SILAS AND HELEN  
WALKING BEHIND

HELEN: Ava you left your sandals! Never mind. It'll be nice this summer to take them to the house on the island, my parents don't get out there much anymore. It's probably falling apart now but...there's so much more to Greece than Athens and I think they're at the age now where they can really appreciate it. Meeting the cousins they don't know yet. Practicing their Greek I hope.

SILAS: This summer. That will be amazing. I so want that to happen.

HELEN: Well it is happening hon, it's all been booked. Don't tell me something's come up with work.

SILAS: No no, I was just remembering about the trip. It'll be great to see your family.

HELEN: Ha! Haven't heard that one before. No I love the enthusiasm. Just doesn't sound like the Silas I know.

SILAS: *Am* I the Silas you know?

SOUND: VOICE OF THE LAB COMPUTER OPERATING SYSTEM  
CUTS IN OVER THE PARK SCENE, SOUNDING LOUDER  
AND CLOSER

OPERATING SYSTEM: Commencing power siphon from Simulation 6492. Siphoning 26,400 megawatts.

SILAS: Did you hear that?

HELEN: Hear what. Hon, what is going on.

SILAS: Helen I'm sorry, I thought I heard something. I've been having these weird thoughts. I'm scaring myself.

HELEN: What kind of weird thoughts? Is this like before? I thought the disturbing thoughts had leveled out!

SILAS: It's... I just have this weird feeling like... like I'm somebody else, or have another life somewhere else. Like maybe this is a simulation we're in, or...

HELEN: A simulation? What does that even mean. Like a... computer program?

SILAS: Yeah, maybe. I don't know. Probably not. I just am remembering things like I left a frog in a box on my desk...

HELEN: Richard has frogs in the office now?

SILAS: ...and it was nighttime... I don't know. Maybe I've just been working too much.

HELEN: Or listening to the Hendersons too much. Computer simulations. They're spending too much time on the West coast. He's becoming one of those "tech bros". Ruining a great city like San Francisco... why don't people realize culture isn't a commodity, you can't say "oh show me the quirky nightlife, let me rent a cute place in the Mission", when you yourself are a baseball hat-wearing frat-boy manchild and actually take away from the character of the place just by being there.

SILAS: What's a manchild? Wait, these people know about computer simulations? Maybe they can help me...

HELEN: Ha.

SILAS: If you don't like these people then why are we feeding them salmon tomorrow?

HELEN: Because they didn't used to be like that! When they lived on 8th Street before his startup and the venture capital... and, because Liz is on the Board of the Performing Arts Academy and I want to pick her brain about getting Ellery in. It's all he talks about.

SILAS: Really? Acting?

HELEN: Where've you been, you know that! He's so talented... you missed his last play, when you were having your mental health issues... but he was quite something. Takes after my brother. What about getting an appointment to see Dr. Rothschild in the morning. Before work. Tell her about the disturbing thoughts, see if you should get back on the meds for a while...

SILAS: Yeah, okay.

HELEN: Just while you're working so hard on the

proposal. It's a lot of pressure you're under.

SILAS: Yeah, I will. I'll call her on the way home.  
Thanks Helen.

HELEN: Love you sweetie. Now who's found some tadpoles?

ELLERY: Me! Come look what else I found! Baby turtles with red stripes! And a horn growing from their forehead!

SILAS: Red-Eared Slider turtles, I bet! That's their egg tooth! They must be just born. Let me see. This is amazing. Come see this Ava, see this little yolk sac they're born with? It gets absorbed into their bodies as they grow.

ELLERY: Dope.

AVA: Adorbs!

SILAS: It is dope. And... adorbs! Come see this too Helen, let me tell you what happens to them in the winter when this pond freezes over...

SOUND: FADE OUT ON THEME SONG



**EPISODE TWO****SCENE TWO: Int. Psychiatrist's office – Day**

**SOUND:** FADE IN ON SILAS AND HIS PSYCHIATRIST IN  
MID-CONVERSATION THE NEXT MORNING. THE SOUND  
OF A FISH TANK GURGLING IN THE BACKGROUND  
MAYBE, THE DR. SCRIBBLING NOTES

**DR ROTHSCHILD:** ...so you have a general feeling that everything around you is unreal. A simulation as you call it. And in addition to this feeling of insubstantiality, you have specific memories of people and places beyond this world.

**SILAS:** Yes, people and places I need to get back to. I came in here to tweak some details, some frog sounds in a rain forest, took a quick look at Central Park... my favorite... and suddenly I was interacting with avatars! That's not supposed to be possible. Avatars that seemed to know me, and who I had memories of, like when a dream comes back to you in little pieces... So strange. Of course, this is why programmers are required to wear a tether whenever we're working on a simulation. It plugs into a little socket

implanted in the neocortex, so if the stimulus, the things you're seeing and hearing in one of these things starts to seem too real, it shows on the monitors and you can be pulled out, disconnected immediately. I don't know why that's not happening. Why doesn't the Lab Supervisor pull me out? I don't know how to get out of here.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: So what you're telling me... all of what we're saying right now, this office, it's simply part of a simulation running on a computer somewhere, 100 years in the future. Those flowers on the windowsill, the box of tissues next to you, the couch you're sitting on, all of this. Created on a computer.

SILAS: That's right! At least I think it is.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: And the simulation is being run by who, our future selves, our descendants?

SILAS: I haven't figured that part out yet. Whether this simulation develops into that world, or whether they're separate realities.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Okay, but either way, you're saying that this simulation we're in now was programmed by you, specifically. So, you created me. I guess I should thank you. Is more than one simulation running at any given time?

SILAS: Oh yes, what we're in now is just one simulation of many. Many many worlds, all running out of one lab, in the year 2120. They're all modeled on planet earth's actual history – Big Bang all the way to single-celled bacteria in prehistoric oceans to species evolution, all of that. With the purpose of generating power, which is in short supply in the real world. Our planet is too volatile and unpeopled to create the amount we need, so we have avatars create it in the simulations and siphon it off. But overtime the simulations develop differently. Inevitably life becomes more complex, humanoid creatures evolve, and then without exception, so far anyway, they end up wiping out life on the planet and with it the means to create the electrical power we're siphoning.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: That's a sad concept Silas. Possibly stemming from frustrations you're facing in your conservation work?

SILAS: No, it's a not a concept. It's real. Please hear me. What I'm trying to figure out is, am I from this simulation but going to work every day in the future in order to keep this simulation going, or am I from the future imagining I'm from a simulation, or what.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: But, hold on a minute. A simulation would be a very temporary event, and we've been around for 250k years, homo sapiens. Longer probably.

SILAS: For all you know Doctor, you could have been created last week, complete with all your memories and everything you see and interact with and understand about the universe. In fact you were. Not you specifically, but this whole simulation we're in right now.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Well my notes here – whether they were created last week or not – my notes indicate that your brain must still be in a very

fragile state. You were only discharged from my care six months ago. You're under a lot of tension currently at work, yes? You feel like the natural world, the environment, is in your hands. It must feel like a lot of responsibility...

SILAS: Come on it's *obvious* this is a Simulation, can't you see? Look around! Weird isn't it, how this earth is perfectly created to support life? Of course it is! It was created in a lab!

DR. ROTHSCHILD: That's a very weak argument. Of *course* the life that developed on this planet is well suited for it, it would have to be to have developed in the first place.

SILAS: Okay yes it's a little weak but I mean think about it. Where *is* everybody? Where are all the other intelligent civilizations which should logically by now be populating our galaxy, along with us? Why are we on planet earth the only ones *here*, why is there no other life around in this galaxy or any other that we've spotted? It's too unlikely.

This must be a computer program.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Is this future you feel you come from different? A different planet, universe, all that?

SILAS: No, it's the same. It's the model for this one. How it used to be anyway.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Then *it* must be a Simulation too, no?

SILAS: Well... possibly. Possibly. But if it is, we need it cause it's keeping this one and many, many others going.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Have you ever heard of *The Truman Show* delusion Silas, or Truman Syndrome it's sometimes called?

SILAS: No.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: It's a type of grandiose delusion in which a patient believes that everything they see, their world, is actually... *created*. Just for them. Like an imaginary reality show. And they are the *star* of that show. An unwilling star perhaps, but the center of the action nonetheless. And everyone else is basically an extra, a bit player. Does that feel like

a description that matches your current mental state?

SILAS: No, I'm not the star.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Well you're positing yourself as, essentially, the creator of this universe. Since, from what you're saying, you created this simulation. So that does seem like a starring role.

SILAS: No, no, that's not what this is about. Look, either this is a simulation running in a computer lab in 2120 or I'm a biologist obsessed with what the future might be like if we let climate change continue. I can't decide which world is real. Maybe they both are.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Silas, I think you'll find that only one of them can be real, and it's the one you're sitting in now. Look, you seem to be functioning fine, I don't see any need to admit you again. But getting back on the anti-psychotics would help with the delusions.

SILAS: I don't think I need meds this time. And I

don't know how long I'll even be here, I have to get back before my absence is noticed.

DR. ROTHSCHILD: Let's check in again later this week. Please try and get some good sleep in the meantime, Silas. I'm concerned about you.

SOUND: FADE OUT ON THEME SONG

### **EPISODE THREE**

#### **SCENE ONE: Int. – Dorm 21, East Wing – Day**

SOUND: FADE IN ON SILAS WALKING TO HIS DORM DOOR, BEEP OF HIS I.D. OPENING IT. HE CLOSES THE DOOR AND THE HUM OF THE GENERATORS OUTSIDE FADES AWAY.

SECURITY SYSTEM: Welcome home, Silas Brenner. It's currently 102 degrees at 6AM, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2120. You have... 20 of 20 power units left for today. You have... 10 of 10 water units left for today. You have... unlimited food powder and... four protein packs left for today.

SOUND: SILAS OPENING KERMIT'S BOX, KERMIT CROAKING

SILAS: Want some breakfast little guy?



JUAN: I made a little home for frog.

SILAS: Juan! What are you doing up? You look terrible!

JUAN: Thanks. I couldn't sleep, so I made a place to keep frog, a little pond out of some containers, with an island in the middle like the pond told us about. I made trees for the island out of forks and food powder.

SILAS: Adorbs! Like Turtle Pond in Central Park. Sort of. Kermit should be happy in there for a while.

SOUND: SPLASH OF KERMIT INTO THE POND AND A  
CONTENTED CROAK

SILAS: Seems to like it.

JUAN: Did you fix the problem in your simulation? I hope they give you extra power units for the overtime, or upload you faster or something.

SILAS: I uh, yeah... yeah. I fixed the problem. Well almost fixed. I'll head back there after a little rest. So what's keeping you up all

night?

JUAN: What you said about what's out there, beyond the wall. The piles of stuff, from the Migration. The cars and everything... just thinking about my grandparents, my parents making their way up here... what *I* could find out there that belonged to them maybe. And just, you know, what's beyond, kind of thing. I know nothing can survive out there for long.

SILAS: Hang on a minute, I have something you might want to see.

SOUND: HIS FOOTSTEPS RECEDING, THEN RETURNING

SILAS: This might interest you, an old relic I found it out in the dumps. Binoculars, they were called. One of the lenses is shattered, but this side still works. And if you look through here, you can see things far away. Get Roberta to take you up on the cooling towers and see what you can see over the wall with this. Don't let anyone see this or I'll get my research pass taken away.

JUAN: Whoa thanks man, I'll be real careful.

SILAS: I'm going to shower, have to be back in the lab. Good luck up there!

JUAN: You're going back in already?

SILAS: Yep! I have a salmon dinner to cook. See you later!

SOUND: FADE OUT ON THEME SONG

### **EPISODE THREE**

#### **SCENE TWO: The Taylor family apartment – Afternoon**

SOUND: AVA PRACTICING A SPEECH

AVA: You can spend your whole life worrying about the future, but all there will ever be is what's happening right now, and..

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENING

AVA: Dad! Why are you home?

SILAS: I wasn't feeling great at work today so I decided to come home a little early. And I promised your mom I'd cook up some salmon for the Henderson's tonight. I'm looking forward to it!

AVA: That was last week. With the Henderson's.

SILAS: Uh oh. Is there that much of a time differentiation?

AVA: Are you okay? You were acting weird this morning. Why were you staring at the bird feeder for so long?

SILAS: I just wondered if I made a mistake with the goldfinches, if they're supposed to have black and white wings like that, or be all yellow. *Goldfinches*. It's confusing.

AVA: They looked normal to me. Anyway why are the birds your mistake.

SILAS: Oh I don't know. What are you working on?

AVA: My speech!

SILAS: You're giving a speech? That's amazing!

AVA: You know this Dad. For 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. I'm stuck on what to say about the future.

SILAS: The future, that's a big one, Eve.

AVA: Eve?? Who is Eve.

SILAS: I thought...

AVA: Ava is my name Dad. Wow, just... wow.

SILAS: Oh no, I know that. Ava. Ava. I was thinking of someone at work for a second. Obviously I know your name. Can I help you with your speech?

AVA: Here's what I have so far: You can spend your whole life worrying about the future, but all there will ever be is what's happening right now, and the decisions we make in this moment, which can be based in either love or fear. So many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality. What we really want for life seems impossibly out of reach and ridiculous to expect, so we never dare to ask for it. But the future relies on us having the courage of our convictions now, as we leave junior high school, to ask for what we truly want from life, and what we want to give back. Our soul's calling, not what society says is important. A bright future depends on this. A future where... and then I'm not sure what to envision for our future.

SILAS: That's a good start, and it's interesting you say that. Because the future for this

simul... for this planet is not looking good. Someone could pull the plug at any moment. Because it's looking like this thing is going to self-destruct. The ecosystem is totally out of wack, which means massive die off, end of human civilization, no more power to extract...

AVA: But that's depressing, and no one wants a depressing graduation speech. No one wants to hear about the ecosystem.

SILAS: I don't understand why everyone isn't talking about this already. It's the only thing worth working on, I would think! There won't be any future to prepare for if no one's taking ecological destruction seriously.

AVA: I don't think anyone knows what to do about it. It's like, too big of a problem to think about, so people just hope someone else will fix it.

SILAS: Maybe people aren't aware of just how bad it is. You know what would motivate people? To hear about the current extinction rate.

150-200 species, a mixture of plant, insect, bird, mammal, become extinct *every 24 hours* in this... on this planet. Put that in your speech, that'll get people's attention for sure. You won't be able to keep them in their seats, they'll be running out to stop deforestation, the over-fishing, switch to renewables, stop eating meat..

AVA: We know the extinction rate, facts like that. Reports come out all the time. But I think technology is going to fix most of these problems.

SILAS: It's not going to. We've run hundreds of these things, the avatars always think they can outwit the logical outcomes of their behavior. Not possible. Often the temperature ends up increasing 10 degrees in a decade once there's a certain CO2 threshold passed. Trust me, it becomes *extremely* unpleasant at those temperatures. We've got to get the renewables going, carbon sequestration, all this needs to be rolled out right away. We have to get people excited about it somehow.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENING, ELLERY IS HOME

ELLERY: Whoa, Dad's home! It's a miracle.

SILAS: Ellery! Ellery, right? Great to see you again.

ELLERY: We live together, remember? You're not going crazy again, are you? Mom said to tell her anything weird you say.

SILAS: I'm fine! It's just nice to see my family, that's all.

ELLERY: Okay... well I'm having some friends over to rehearse, we're going to need the kitchen pretty soon.

AVA: Why do you have to hog the kitchen? Take your dorky theater friends upstairs to your room.

ELLERY: We need space, dumbass. To move around.

SILAS: Can I stay and watch you rehearse? I'll be really quiet. What are you working on?

ELLERY: The improv group I told you about. We're called *Almost Ibsen*. We improvise Ibsen tragedies based around a suggestion from the



audience. And we're adding magic tricks to our repertoire.

AVA: Weirdo.

SILAS: Magic... I think that's what you should talk about in your speech Ava. That's how this world feels to me, with the incredible diversity of lifeforms! The experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences, the intuition that every form one perceives – from the swallow swooping overhead to the fly on a blade of grass, and indeed the blade of grass itself – is an experiencing form, they were programmed that way, an entity with its own predilections and sensations, albeit sensations that are very different from our own. Now that seems magical, and worth preserving. So how can we re-enchanted the world again?

AVA: Yeah, how do we re-awaken people's senses? I think the challenge for this planet relies on reforesting our hearts. Will you work on my speech with me?

SILAS: I'd love to!

ELLERY:                   Okay you crazy kids get out of here, just  
                              leave me the kitchen please.

AVA:                        I'm taking the lemonade! Let's go sit  
                              in the backyard, Dad.

SOUND:                    FADE OUT ON SILAS AND AVA DISCUSSING HER

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SPEECH OVER THEME SONG

### **SERIES OUTLINE**

#### **Episode 1, Scene 1**

Silas finetunes a soundscape in the simulation he's programming. His supervisor warns him not to spend so much time making them beautiful, just extract as much power as possible as soon as possible.

#### **Episode 1, Scene 2**

After work, Silas relaxes with his new dormmates, Juan and Roberta. They discuss what lies beyond the walls of the compound, and when they might finally get their consciousnesses uploaded to the Cloud. Roberta gives Silas a frog she found floating in a cooling tower.

#### **Episode 2, Scene 1**

Back in the lab, Silas enters the simulation to adjust some frog chorus sounds and then checks in on his favorite part of his creation, Central Park in New York. He's surprised to find a family picnicking in the park which he's apparently part of. Confused but happy, he spends the afternoon getting to know his new/old family.

#### **Episode 2, Scene 2**

At his wife's urging, Silas goes to see his psychiatrist, Dr. Rothschild. They discuss the possibility that they're inhabiting a simulation. She becomes convinced he is suffering from *The Truman Show* delusion.

#### **Episode 3, Scene 1**

Silas returns to his dorm from the computer lab to find Juan looking dejected. He hasn't slept, wondering what happened to

his parents and grandparents during their migration north, and what might be out beyond the walls of the compound. He shows Silas the little pond habitat he's created for Kermit to live in. Silas gives him some old binoculars he found in the dump and tells him to get Roberta to take him up on the cooling towers and see what he can see with them.

#### **Episode 4, Scene 1**

Silas is pulled out of the simulation by his supervisor, who wants to know why he hasn't been responding to any alerts all day or updating the system. Silas reassures him the simulation is producing more power than ever. His supervisor tells him to take the rest of the day off, he's spending too much time in his simulation. Silas goes for a walk out to the dump beyond the compound.

#### **Episode 4, Scene 2**

When he returns to his dorm, Silas finds an upset Juan and Roberta. They've taken the binoculars up on the cooling tower and seen other humans in the distance, something the compound maintains isn't possible. The compound assures its workers the atmosphere beyond the compound can't support life for very long. Juan would like to venture out but if caught he will lose the chance to be uploaded to the Cloud. Silas suggests taking the chance. Juan and Roberta say the rumor is that their world too is just a simulation, run by the Cloud. If they don't keep working to keep the Cloud powered up, the simulation they live in will go down, and so will the worlds running on the computers within it. Silas encourages them to test that theory. He doesn't think it's true, it's just the way the elites already uploaded to the Cloud keep the workers hostage. He encourages Juan to turn off the power to the Cloud and see what happens: they deserve it for turning off the simulations that power them, like the one he's come to care about so much. Juan says he can't do that, his parents have already been uploaded, they're up on the Cloud on a circuit board somewhere. He can't risk not seeing them again when it's finally his turn.

#### **Episode 5, Scene 1**

Dinnertime at the Taylor's apartment and the family has lots to chat about. Ellery is going to acting school. The Hendersons are booked on the first commercial flight to Mars and have signed up to be cryogenically frozen when they die, until such time as it's possible to have your consciousness digitally uploaded forever. This makes Silas angry. Why does anyone assume there will be a future when they don't care for the world they have now? Why do they want to go to Mars when they can't take care of the planet they already have? He describes some of the beauty that's in jeopardy and plays some of the recordings of the

beautiful soundscapes the planet stands to lose, maybe some comparing areas that have already gone quiet to how they sounded a decade ago. He plays the sounds of icebergs cracking.

### **Episode 5, Scene 2**

Silas is pulled out of the simulation again by his irate supervisor. An argument ensues about the ethics of running simulations and just shutting them down after a whole world develops inside. Silas is sent out of the lab with a dire warning that he's gotten too attached to the outcome of his work and can't run simulations anymore.

### **Episode 6, Scene 1**

Back at the dorm, Silas tells Juan and Roberta the clincher - what he found on his walk yesterday out to the dump, through the mass graves left from the migration - Juan's parent's graves. They were never uploaded after all, it's just a false promise to keep the workers inside the compound and providing power to the Cloud. He gives a disbelieving Juan his research pass and tells him to go see for himself. The three friends share a food powder dinner and then Silas leaves for the lab, taking Kermit with him.

### **Episode 6, Scene 2**

At the lab an alarm is triggered because Silas enters without his pass. He hurries to get clipped into his simulation. We hear the sounds of Central Park on a summer evening as Silas touches down in the Great Meadow - "I'm home!" He sets Kermit free in Turtle Pond. We hear the voice of his supervisor, over, yelling for him and the alarm still going off in the background. Silas makes his choice - he pulls out his tether and the sounds from the lab go quiet. With his help, will the avatars in his simulation avoid climate catastrophe and keep providing power to the Cloud, thus avoiding the supervisor pulling the plug back in the lab? Or has Silas just made a choice that will soon cost him his life. That depends... on us.