

THE BECKONING

STORY BY
Catarina César & Loïc Bagnoud

SCREENPLAY BY
Catarina César

Inspired by two real events.

Moita, Setúbal. Portugal

Email 1: catarina.s.cesar@gmail.com

Email 2: sirkstar@gmail.com

Telephone: (+351) 915000558

FADE IN:

SPACE.

No sound.

EXTREMELY CLOSE-UP: A flock of human hair drifts away in the vast and endless space.

It disappears in a large speck of a pitch-black imperfectly sphere of empty space. - A piece of darkness in slow expansion, surrounded by an ocean of stars.

The dreadful darkness swallows the stars.

A single star remains in the sky, flickering a red light mirrored in the Iris of a woman's eye. Her eye engulfs the universe and everything in it.

This woman is Esther "ESSIE", old 20s, staring at...

INT. UNIVERSITY PLANETARIUM - DUSK

INSERT: The Böotes Void projected on the ceiling.

MAN (O.S.)

We live in a Universe that
encompasses billions of galaxies,
and then we have this... I could
say, this abnormality.

This man is VIKTOR, early 30s, who talks with ESSIE. She holds university BOOKS of Philosophy. Viktor wears an astronomy sweater. They sit closed to each other in the empty planetarium.

The silence between them, while they smile at each other, suggest more than friendship.

ESSIE

What? A black hole!?

VIKTOR

No. That's the Böotes Void. A black hole has mass, and density. This is the opposite of that! It's not anti-matter, nor dark-matter. No, this is something else! A void, a gap, a big nothing! It is actually larger than a black hole, and it defies even the best explanations.

ESSIE

Ok, you lost me already, Viktor!

VIKTOR

This Void is three hundred and thirty million light years in diameter... It's fascinating how...

She kisses him while he speaks, to shut him up.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

(muffled by the kiss)
It could be a Dyson Sphere...
A civilization stealing light...

Viktor runs away from this monster of kisses.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

No! You won't escape my theories!
Your power of seduction won't
silence me!

She stops and points at the Böotes Void, thinking.

ESSIE

It can't be nothing. Just thinking
about nothing, makes it something.

VIKTOR

Correct, except that you're
thinking about the rules of this
world, Essie.

She runs towards him again with a surprise kiss.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

No! Scientists cannot have
girlfriends, or any kind of social
life. Help! I'm being seduced!

She throws him to the floor, and they face the ceiling again,
laughing out loud with each other.

He puts his arm around her and kisses her forehead.

They look up, to the projected stars, and see the logo of a
BIG SCIENCE PHYSICS & ASTRONOMY INSTITUTION passing by and
dissolving, like an advert.

Essie's mood instantly changes by looking at the logo, it
brings her sadness.

She looks at Viktor, who smiles, proudly. He then notices her
reaction, and interrupts her thoughts.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Hey. First we dream, then we build.

She nods, holds his hand, and they continue staring at the stars, galaxies and the Milky Way. The brightest star loses its lights, like it was swallowed by darkness. The stars around it turn to 2D drawings of STARS.

PAN DOWN, from the starlit ceiling to...

INT. ROOM - NIGHT. FEW YEARS LATER.

...Essie again, a few years older, now standing in a large auditorium, with walls full of medieval angels and demons. She wears dark/funeral clothes, and a christian cross.

She is looking at a COFFIN, in a small memorial with flowers and incense, next to a scientific newspaper with the NEWS OF "MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION LEAVES 12 VICTIMS. The same logo is in that page.

The room is empty, she is the only one there. She holds her tears while touching her ENGAGEMENT RING in the right hand, with the names "Viktor & Essie".

Tears turn to rage. As she leaves the room, she pulls out her Christian Cross and THROWS IT IN THE BIN.

EXT. EMPTY STREET / BUS STOP - CONTINUES

It's late. Essie walks while lost in thoughts, with her head down and hands in her pockets.

ESSIE'S FEMALE FRIEND (V.O.)

It's getting late. Are you sure you don't need a ride home?

ESSIE (V.O.)

Yes, I just need to be alone.

She's tired, like she has walked for miles. She stops and looks ahead, confused. Then turns to the opposite side and hesitates. Looks around. She's lost, in the middle of nowhere, with nothing at sight but a desert road, street lamps, and a BUS STOP. She cleans her tears and keeps focused.

She goes to the Bus stop.

It has been raining. The post lights illuminate the wet streets with a tense orange light. Everything is quiet.

Too quiet. Only a FAST SHADOW of a MOTH who appears and disappears in the pale light of the bus stop.

She sits and looks at the time in her wrist. By the look of her face, it's later than she thinks.

INSERT - PHONE. She then tries google-maps on her cellphone. There's a photo of herself with Viktor in the screensaver. NO CONNECTION. LOW BATTERY.

Then looks at the dark sky. No moon. A falling star quickly passes seconds before THE BUS arrives.

The BUS STOPS in front of her and the doors open. The DRIVER, old 50s, is an Afro-American working in auto-pilot.

INT. BUS - CONTINUES

She enters the bus.

ESSIE

To Bushville, in the country-side.

DRIVER

Well, I am not taking the Highway!
The road is still blocked since the
accident. New orders are that we'll
have to travel through the
mountains. I can only take ya to
the closest city, there's no more
buses tonight but you can get a
cab.

ESSIE

That's not a problem.

DRIVER

Sixteen dollars and ten.

She pays him, and while she waits for the change she notices the driver's FAMILY PHOTO, a humble family with a humble house. The driver gives her the change and a receipt.

ESSIE

You said the mountains?!

DRIVER

Yeah, tell me about it! I told'em
it will be slow, especially with
this rain, but they couldn't care
less. Ya wanna know what I think?

(MORE)

DRIVER (CONT'D)

I think they're all incompetent in that station! Nobody knows what they're doing.

The doors close and she continues her way into the bus.

There are only TWO PASSENGERS on board; A PUNK-GIRL (20s) - full of crystals-pendulums, piercings and tattoos, who listens Dark-Wave from her headphones and reads a book in the darkest spot, illuminated only by her book light - and...

HOMELESS

(out loud, happy)

COMPANY!

...A drunk HOMELESS, 30s, dressed like a junky, who occupies all the back seats. The driver interferes, angry.

DRIVER

Hey, I told you already! I'll let you stay only if you remain quiet! Don't disturb mah passengers.

Essie sits in the middle of the bus, near the window. The bus starts moving and the journey starts.

She faces the hollow road in some angst. She touches her ring again, to the shining reflections of its crystal and then to herself in the window.

The bus changes its direction to a busy road.

She looks at herself in the mirror while trying to get some sleep. A few cars speed up from the opposite direction. Their lights move across the inside of the bus, like ghosts.

The bus continues its way... away from houses and gardens.

Essie looks through the window: On the sidewalk, a MAD MAN (80's) walks sluggishly talking to himself.

And suddenly, the man appears with Viktor's serious face looking at Essie, his face deforms as he looks right towards us. The BUS STOPS.

Essie wakes up back to reality. It's still night.

The doors open near a bus stop, and a BUSINESS WOMAN (30) enters, while typing on her phone.

BUSINESS WOMAN

You're late!

DRIVER
No, you're early.

BUSINESS WOMAN
(typing on her phone)
Funny.

DRIVER
Damn right it's funny, so let's
keep your schedule.

BUSINESS WOMAN sits in the middle of the bus, opposite side
as Essie.

The Driver starts the engine when a KID (12) comes running
and knocks on the bus doors.

KID (O.S.)
Wait, wait!

DRIVER
You shouldn't be home, kid?

KID
That's what I'm trying to do, dah-
ha!

DRIVER
(sighs)
Get in.

The driver does not charge him and lets him in. The kid looks
around and sits next to Essie, even though most of the seats
are empty.

The Driver TURNS ON THE RADIO.

Focus on Essie and the Kid.

ESSIE
Do you want the window seat?

KID
Nah, it's ok.

ESSIE
It's kinda dangerous for a kid to
catch the bus alone this late.

KID
It's just as dangerous for a girl.

ESSIE
Your parents know that you're here?

KID

It's only me and my mom, but she
sleeps too much, and she's always
in a bad mood when she wakes up.

Essie notices his dirty clothes and second-hand shoes. He always looks to the empty space, a little off, as if avoiding questions.

The bus gets deeper into the forest, towards the mountains roads. Always moving forward in a straight line.

The radio is interrupting with static, so the Driver punches it, and it starts working again. He drinks a last sip of coffee, and looks surprised when sees he does not have any more coffee left for the road. He YAWNS.

INSERT - Radio: The hours change suddenly. NO TIME.

BUS P.O.V: The narrow and endless road continues after the forest in a straight line to the horizon, a fine line between the floor and the open night sky. The light from the street posts are getting darker, showing signs of deterioration and becoming deformed like burnt metal.

It goes on in the open landscape, until the only light is the bus itself and a very small red star in the middle of the horizon, bigger than all the others. The road goes on into both directions: The star and the darkness behind them.

The bus drives into a dark tunnel that seems to go on forever.

Music on the radio turns to STATIC and then silence.

They see only darkness and a very soft light of that red star.

JUMP CUT:

The bus STOPS. The GPS reveals they are OUT OF THE TUNNEL.

Yet, outside there is only darkness.

No Road...

Most of the passengers come back to reality.

The DRIVER looks extremely concerned and frowns with confusion. He tries to start up the engine. There is enough fuel and everything seems right, but the bus remains motionless. Picks up the handy-radio.

He hides his fear from the others. Tries to call:

INSERT - DRIVER'S phone: The call is on, but there's no sound from the other side.

Essie looks around, gets up and approaches the driver.

ESSIE
Why did we stop?

She then notices how terrified he looks, and follows the direction of his eyes. She looks outside, in horror, to the car lights that should point to the floor. But instead, they point to darkness.

POV: no sidewalk, no trees, anything. Only darkness and a glitter orange/red light from the little star on the horizon.

DRIVER
(whispers)
Do not move.

ESSIE
Is that a hole?!

DRIVER
Didn't feel like it, we didn't
stumble, and we're not falling.
It's not mud either.

The DRIVER tries the engine again, and then all the lights from inside the bus turn OFF.

Even the PINKGIRL's book lamp flickers and then vanishes, swallowed by darkness.

Essie walks one step forward and the Driver interrupts her by raising his palm in parallel to the floor, afraid that the bus might sway.

DRIVER (CONT'D)
Quiet! No one moves from the seat!

Nobody listens. All passengers speak out loud amongst them.

KID
Are we lost?

ESSIE
What if we're in a cliff?

DRIVER
Just go back, go BACK and let me do
my job! Do NOT run in mah bus!

She returns.

ESSIE

Change your seats! All of you! Go
back to the bus!

PUNKGIRL

Why?

Everybody ignores her. She looks at him with an expression that says "You must tell them." which he denied, "let's not spread the panic".

DRIVER (ON RADIO)

This is a temporary stop due to a malfunction in the system, we will return to the road shortly. Please remain seated.

Essie returns to her seat. From her window there's no light either. The bus remains motionless.

All the other passengers get concerned, except HOMELESS who's sleeping. Some of them start running the curtains and look outside.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Did we stop inside that tunnel? I can't even see its walls...

Business Woman starts eating her nails.

Essie takes a plastic bottle from her bag and positions it on the floor, to check the inclination, but the bottle does not move. Business Woman looks at her, full of questions.

ESSIE

I thought we were stuck near a cliff, but the bottle wouldn't remain in this position.

Business Woman gets up and walks back and forth on the bus. The Driver is scared and pays attention to her steps, expecting the bus to move. But it does not. She then looks ahead, with her eyes wide shut.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Why can't we see the floor?

Then everybody goes to the front of the bus.

DRIVER

I don't know what happened, ok?... suddenly we had no light and... I thought this was some kind of blackout in the area.

The Driver looks back at them, as in feeling their judgmental eyes. He then insists while repeats each physical movement he did before while driving:

DRIVER (CONT'D)

I had my both eyes on the road!
Then I looked at the dashboard to
see the gas... I changed to the 5th
and... I... I can't remember.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Look, I don't know why you did
this, or even how you did this. I
don't know if you're doing this to
extend the time and get a raise or
something, but I have a deadline to
meet!

ESSIE

I'm sure it's not his fault.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Then whom? Who is doing this?

ESSIE

Nobody!

BUSINESS WOMAN

He must have been driving us in
circles, just to make more money!

DRIVER

Circles?! We're in a mountain,
Missy! And guess what, it's a
straight line, there's nowhere to
turn!

ESSIE

Everyone please remain calm, there
must be a perfect explanation for
all of this.

Business Woman checks the top corners, like looking for
hidden cameras.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Oh, I know what this is! Ha-Ah!
Very funny... You almost got me! You
can cut now!

Punkgirl sees Homeless waking up and opening his curtain:
More Darkness. Even he gets concerned.

PUNKGIRL

Guys... It's not a cliff... This is all around us.

Essie tries to look for a piece of land, through the window. But she only finds vast space of darkness.

PUNKGIRL and BUSINESS WOMAN TURN ON THEIR LAPTOPS AND PHONES.

INSERT - BUSINESS WOMAN phone: No Signal...

No time: --:--

ESSIE

Perhaps if you try to contact the central...

DRIVER

Don't you think I already tried that? It's pointless... The phone doesn't work. Any electronic device works! My best advice is to wait for the sunlight.

Business Woman goes back to her seat, while saying:

BUSINESS WOMAN

Great, we are paying taxes in exchange for incompetence at all levels!

Homeless stretches.

HOMELESS

(teasing)

Well, it seems we're staying here for a long time... Not that I have anywhere important to go. Nice job, driver! Hey, now that we're stopped, you mind if I finally go to the loo?

BUSINESS WOMAN

Is this all a joke to you? Do you value anything at all? Some of us have important stuff to do, you know, a life!

HOMELESS

And going to the loo is a vital part of life!

BUSINESS WOMAN

We should be reaching the Armstrong road by now!

HOMELESS

Doesn't seem like the Armstrong road, to me. I don't think we're getting there.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Shut up!

He change his seat again, this time in front of and Business Woman, and turns back to face her closely.

HOMELESS

What did you say?
(gets closer)
Hey, you look familiar.

BUSINESS WOMAN

I absolutely doubt that.

HOMELESS

Yeah. You don't remember me, do yeah? Shame. Because I remember you, now... pink dress, curly blond hair. Such a pretty cute evil creature, you were.

Business Woman looks closer at him. Now she remembers.

BUSINESS WOMAN

You... That was... 4th grade?...

HOMELESS

Yap. Good times. Interesting turn of events hey?

BUSINESS WOMAN

Choices.

HOMELESS

Oh No, not choices! Not all of us were born in a golden crib.

BUSINESS WOMAN

(insulted)
I did not! How dare you?

HOMELESS (CONT'D)

Spoiled by the parents, loved by the colleagues. I wonder if you ever had any hardships at all? I mean, college was fully paid right?

The other passengers react, but do not interfere.

The Driver ignores them and continues working on the bus, trying to make it work.

BUSINESS WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh please, just stop playing victim! You could have earned a scholarship or God forbid, take a blue collar job for all its worth. Besides, last time I checked this was still a man's world!

HOMELESS

It's so easy to point fingers. You wouldn't last a day in my life! And trust me, it's just as worthless as yours. But maybe you're right. Maybe there should be someone to clean the shit your kind leaves behind... and trust me, it must be a hell of a pile.

Business Woman looks the other way and eats her nails.

DRIVER

Could you please both shut up! I'm trying to think here!

He returns to the GPS and opens it to change the batteries.. nothing. Brings his tools, and opens the radio and walkie-talkie, for a manual connection with the central.

Everybody is silent. Some are scared, others just confused.

PUNKGIRL

This is a nightmare.

BUSINESS WOMAN

(points to Homeless)

Perhaps we are passive smokers of whatever this trash is consuming.

HOMELESS

Uuuh, I like that! Perhaps we are all having the same trip!

DRIVER

Must be a fucking Overdose.

ESSIE

It's a good theory, in fact. Collective thoughts, where we have, perhaps, stumbled upon each other in a kind of collective dream.

Business Woman rolls the eyes to that statement.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Oh common, I don't have time for this, we should focus on trying to find solutions and not in childish theories people invent to concealing their empty lives!

(to Essie)

Seriously, you?! Do you really believe that nonsense.

PUNKGIRL

(angry)

Do you have a better theory, smart ass?

Driver sighs, cleans his sweat and tries the engine again, but the Bus remains motionless.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Who are you calling "smart ass", punk?

KID

Perhaps we should try to open one window.

HOMELESS

Oh look, finally something useful!

He walks to the window, but Essie stops him.

ESSIE

Wait. I'm not sure about that...

BUSINESS WOMAN

God sake, what's now?

ESSIE

I'm only saying that we should analyze the situation first.

PUNKGIRL

And what are you, a scientist?! Perhaps this is your social experiment, isn't it? I guess they don't teach work ethics in school anymore, I'm sure your colleagues are having a great laugh at our costs! This is all a test, han!

BUSINESS WOMAN

Well, there are no cameras.
Besides, no institution would
finance that, trust me, I know'em
all.

HOMELESS

Maybe they did and then forgot
about it. Maybe no one is in
control!

ESSIE

Just look outside! It's too dark,
too much to be... normal.

BUSINESS WOMAN

You prefer to wait, doing nothing?

ESSIE

I am just saying that we don't know
what is out there... It could be
something in the wind, it could
kill us.

PUNKGIRL

What's there to analyze? It's dark,
and we're caged in here!

HOMELESS

I vote to open the window! Who's
with me?

They all nod in agreement. Essie was defeated and looks at the Driver, still with his tools, with an expression that says "you have no idea what to do, do you?". The Driver nods, throws his tools into the box and approaches the window.

Every passenger stares in a half circle.

The driver opens the window, slowly. Nothing happens.

BUSINESS WOMAN

At least we have some air... Now
what?

KID

Put your hand off!... I'll do it.

ESSIE

No! An adult should do it.

They all look at each other. Business Woman eats her nails.

DRIVER

Don't look at me, I already opened
the window.

A beat.

HOMELESS

Oh, ok. I'll put my hand off!
Finally, being useful for society,
right? I guess this is my most
productive day.

Everyone looks in an expectant gaze.

Homeless prepares himself, he stares the complete darkness
trying to find courage. Inhales, and finally puts his hand
out, slowly.

HOMELESS (CONT'D)

I feel nothing.

Everybody relax for a moment. Everyone but Homeless.

HOMELESS (CONT'D)

(serious)
Do you hear it?

ESSIE

I'm not hearing anything.

HOMELESS

Precisely. No wind! No
temperature... Nothing!

BUSINESS WOMAN pulls HOMELESS back inside and...

BUSINESS WOMAN

You're feeling it wrong!

...puts her own hand out. Then look at the others with an
expression that says: "He's right."

The kid leaves them and sits in the driver's seat while
everybody is distracted. He looks at the button that opens
the doors.

Essie notices him, and then BUSINESS WOMAN SCREAMS IN PANIC.

ESSIE

Don't open the door! Do NOT open
the door!

The KID OPENS THE DOORS.

Everybody runs to the front of the vehicle, and the DRIVER press the button again to close the doors.

DRIVER

This is mah bus, mah responsibility! No one will open any door during the trip.

They then hear Business Woman LAUGHS from the opened window, still with her hand out. It was all a joke.

HOMELESS

Look who's being funny now.

ESSIE

Do not do that again!

BUSINESS WOMAN

Stop being so stupid, and open the damn doors. You're too old to be afraid of the dark.

DRIVER

No one leaves this bus without mah permission! Do you hear me?

PUNKGIRL

Perhaps one of us should open the hood. Then you could try the ignition.

DRIVER

And you don't tell me how to do my fucking damn job! You're weirdo.

The group gets mad at the Driver and approaches the doors.

ESSIE

Don't call her that!

HOMELESS

Yeah, you might be the driver of this bus but nobody named you our leader!

Driver stands up and confronts them all.

DRIVER

If you ain't gonna stand down, I'm gonna make you stand down!

BUSINESS WOMAN

You don't decide what my choice is!
I have things to do! I have a
deadline to meet! This is my life!

The Driver looks at her, and then to all of them who hold him while Homeless takes out his shoes and uses the laces to tie the Driver against his will.

The kid sits in the back seats, like he's watching the show.

The Driver, now all tied up, eventually calms down.

DRIVER

Your funeral.

Business Woman opens the doors and everybody gets closer to the doors, but the driver. The KID RUNS to be the first in line. He gets near out between the open doors and tries to speak:

KID (MOS)

Hello?

No Sound. The others look at each other and try to speak but no sound come out. "Can you hear me?"; "No"; "What is this?".

They then look down, below the bus.

Nothing. There's nothing holding the bus...

They close the doors.

KID (CONT'D)

How deep do you think it is?

HOMELESS

Let me try something.

Homeless approaches the entrance with his old cellphone. He puts on a POLYPHONIC SOUND.

ESSIE

Don't throw your own phone.

HOMELESS

It's not mine.

Business Woman chuckles sarcastically.

A beat.

HOMELESS (CONT'D)

Ready?

They nod, take a deep breath and OPEN THE DOORS again.

He stretches his arm out off the bus, ready to throw the cellphone while it's RINGING. He lets it fall...

The phone stops ringing immediately while falling, and disappears in the darkness...

Into the void...

Into the vast nothingness!

They stand for some moments.

HOMELESS (CONT'D)
Forget getting out.

ESSIE
This is impossible. It doesn't make any sense! Why don't we move?

DRIVER
What the fuck is happening? What did you see out there? Free me right now!

PUNKGIRL and BUSINESS WOMAN RUN to the opposite side of the bus. Deep darkness again.

PUNKGIRL
How do you open these windows?

DRIVER
Those windows never open! Only in emergencies.

BUSINESS WOMAN
What do you think this is, idiot?

Essie gets the emergence axe and gives it to her to break the back windows. Business Woman points to PUNKGIRL's NECKLACES.

BUSINESS WOMAN (CONT'D)
Gimme that!

PUNKGIRL
No! This is for luck.

BUSINESS WOMAN
Look how well they're working!

ESSIE
Here, use my book.

Essie hands them the book and they throw it out. Once again, no sound. The Driver reacts confused. Business Woman eats her nails.

Then they try the side windows, and throw another book, a shoe, a jacket, a few tools.

Nothing.

They free the Driver, while Punkgirl and Essie open the top door.

POV: The Sky is complete dark with almost no star.

KID
Are we flying?

DRIVER
We can't be flying, kid.

ESSIE
No, not flying... suspended.

WIDE ANGLE OF THE BUS: THE BUS IS MOTIONLESS. AROUND IT IS ONLY DARKNESS, AND A TINY GLITTER OF RED LIGHT FROM A DISTANT STAR IN THE HORIZON.

MANY HOURS LATER.

Everybody is asleep in seats near each other. The exact opposite to the beginning, when they were all separated.

Business Woman is the first one to wake up.

INSERT - Timer in Cell Phone: --:--

She runs the curtain. Still darkness.

All the others start waking up.

KID
I'm hungry...

ESSIE takes a cookie from her bag and gives it to him.

HOMELESS
HHH. Do you have more?

ESSIE
It's a child...

HOMELESS
So? I'm homeless.

She gives him an ENERGETIC BAR.

HOMELESS (CONT'D)
Thank YOU.

He eats it in one single bite and returns to his seat.

Business Woman stares at Essie with a new expression in her eyes. The expression of who is losing hope.

BUSINESS WOMAN
Do not waste'em.

She sees Essie putting back the cookies in the bag, and goes back to sleep like the rest.

THOUSANDS OF HOURS LATER.

The bus is now messy, suggesting that many days have passed during this endless night.

Everybody is impatient, frustrated and tired. Some sleep too much, other haven't slept at all. The fear of being in a timeless dark cage hit them like a constant headache.

Business Woman eats her nails harder.

BUSINESS WOMAN
(extremely anxious)
The batteries never runs out.
There's no fucking radio. There is no time. NO TIME! I'm sick of this. It's like she said! It's a dream, right? It's the only reason. Look! There's no time anywhere.

PUNKGIRL
In my dreams, I'm more alive!

BUSINESS WOMAN
We just have the feeling that is long. Yes... Oh I'm brilliant! I know how to leave from this, very quick, very quick!

ESSIE
What? What are you talking about?

Business Woman is at the edge of a nervous breakdown.

BUSINESS WOMAN

I just need to force myself to wake up, like in that film. What was the name? Oh, I can't remember, and I have an excellent memory, except, of course, if this is a dream! Of course!

(nervous laugh)

Simple isn't it?

DRIVER

You're just tired..

BUSINESS WOMAN

Tired how?! All we do is sleeping, and we are not even tired for that!

(points at Essie)

It was like she said. The collective conscious theory, like you mentioned before!

PUNKGIRL

What are you saying?

BUSINESS WOMAN

You are me! My conscious, in a very, very long dream.

Business Woman picks one of the Driver's tools from the floor. Essie reacts, in panic.

ESSIE

What are you doing? Stop! We're awake. This is real. That was just a very stupid idea!

BUSINESS WOMAN

It seems real. But it doesn't make sense... So it's not. I have stuff to do, and I was already late when I entered this bus! I can't lose more time with this.

Gives her the tool.

BUSINESS WOMAN (CONT'D)

Just kill me.

PUNKGIRL

That's homicide.

HOMELESS

It finally happened. She lost it!

Business Woman looks at the doors, and goes for it. All the others try to stop her.

ESSIE

STOP HER!

The Driver is the first to approach her, but then she points the tool against him, like a weapon.

BUSINESS WOMAN

STAND BACK! My life will not be dictated by this. You have no idea what I've been through to be where I am. You are all here, judging: You couldn't spend even one day in my life. Do you have any idea what is to work 20/7 just to keep everything from crumble? Avoid ruin, to be someone!

Business Woman opens the doors.

BUSINESS WOMAN (MOS) (CONT'D)

There will be a noise, this time!

DRIVER, ESSIE, HOMELESS (MOS)

NO!

PUNKGIRL SCREAMS, even though no sound comes out.

Business Woman let herself fall from the bus, with open arms.

Homeless closes the KID's eyes.

Business Woman disappears in the void. No Sound.

HOMELESS IS PETRIFIED, hugging the kid.

Punkgirl holds her tears.

Essie stares at the empty space, with the cold expression of whom is already familiar with death and loss.

Everybody stays quiet, staring at the open doors.

The Driver sighs and closes the doors. He looks equally devastated.

HOMELESS

Just think that, whatever you would say, it wouldn't make a difference.

They obey. Everyone seats in separate seats now, alone from each other.

Essie looks at Business' woman tablet in the seat next to her. Her expression changes completely. For the first time she's confused, and putting everything in doubt.

Punkgirl takes one of her NECKLACES and lands it near the doors.

PUNKGIRL

She had someplace else to go and,
she couldn't wait.

The kid frees himself from the Homeless hug and opens his eyes. Homeless looks at the void where she fell, and answers the kids' sadness.

HOMELESS

(serious, desolated)
It's ok, kid. It's just... Death.
The ultimate equalizer.

The Driver throws himself at HOMELESS, in a demoniacal rage.

DRIVER

You did this!

HOMELESS

Seriously?

The DRIVER STRANGLES HOMELESS.

DRIVER

You two had a History, I heard your little conversation! Yes, it was you, you entered in mah bus, use it for free, tied me up and all that just to mess with mah passengers, to ruin me and steal mah bus, mah job, mah life! This won't be on me!

ESSIE

Stop! You're killing'im!

DRIVER

You guys ever wonder why is he so damn calm?! Why? He is a sociopath, is what he is! A parasite!

The Kid is the first to try to separate them, but the DRIVER elbows him and he falls. Essie gets the Driver's tools but then stops herself when she sees the KID on the floor.

She rescues the kid while Punkgirl picks up the DEADLY TOOL instead and KICKS THE DRIVER with it.

The Driver frees Homeless, and is now bleeding. Punkgirl keeps the tool to herself.

Homeless looks at her while touching his damaged throat, as in saying "Thank you".

Focus on the kid, who's being taken care by Essie.

KID
Behind you!

The Driver gets up, THROWS PUNKGIRL OUT OF HIS WAY and takes back his tool. She falls on the seats while the DRIVER ATTACKS HOMELESS again.

He drags him on the floor, but Homeless grabs the seats and KICKS him on the face. Then he jumps up the side seats and OPENS the top window to escape him.

The DRIVER RUNS AFTER HIM.

EXT. TOP OF THE BUS - CONTINUES

Homeless drags himself on the top of the bus, and screams.

BACK TO THE TOP OF THE BUS, Homeless runs to the front of the BUS and SIGNALS from the window to open the front doors, but is surprised once again by the DRIVER who ATTACKS him twice.

INT. BUS - CONTINUES

The passengers look to the ceiling, following the sound of the struggle.

Punkgirl press the button and the DOORS OPEN.

They see someones BLOOD running down the front window, and then a BODY falling down and heating the bus constantly.

The doors remain open, waiting for Homeless, when suddenly the Driver throws the HOMELESS' BODY into the DARKNESS.

The Driver goes back inside from the top window. Closes it and returns to his position, behind the wheel and closes the front doors.

Everybody else returns to their seats, traumatized.

The Kid looks at the driver.

DRIVER

He did not pay the ticket and he certainly a thief! Better death than prison.

KID

I liked him, now he's dead. He and that woman are dead!

Kid starts to cry. Essie tries to comfort him.

ESSIE

We don't know that. They might be alive!

KID

I don't think that's possible.

Essie looks at herself in window, as in recognizing that "not possible" was what she used to say. Then touches her engagement ring.

ESSIE

No, not according to the rules we know.

Punkgirl looks at the star again, like it pulls her.

PUNKGIRL

Did you notice the star? Doesn't it look bigger?

DRIVER

I guess. I don't care.

Punkgirl looks at him. Her anger vanishes within a couple of seconds. Without him realizing it, she's now lost in thoughts.

Essie joins Punkgirl, and they both look at the few stars on the horizon.

ESSIE

He finally fell asleep.

PUNKGIRL

Is this all stars?

ESSIE

Some of them are planets.

ESSIE (CONT'D)

It's rare but Planets can be deviated from their solar system, out of their orbits to drift alone in Space, sunless, without any force to pull them.

PUNKGIRL

We must be reaching somewhere, right? Even though we're not moving. Someone will notice our absence and look for us. Someone might be waiting for us.

ESSIE

My name is Essie, by the way.

Punkgirl opens her mouth to answer when suddenly...

DRIVER (ON RADIO) O.S.

(Backwards)

This is a temporary stop due to a malfunction in the system, we will return to the road shortly...

The Driver immediately grabs the radio and tries to connect with the central. Essie approaches, politely.

ESSIE

Let me try.

DRIVER

No.

ESSIE

Why? Why don't you let anyone else have the radio?

DRIVER

Because this is my responsibility! What will they think if they hear you instead of me?

ESSIE

Who cares what anyone thinks?

PUNKGIRL

I agree with him. He is the one in charge.

Essie goes back to her seat near the kid, who's sleeping, and eats her cookies in front of them, with a selfish look on her face.

Punkgirl then shares her bottle of water with the driver.

PUNKGIRL (CONT'D)
Would you like some, sir?

DRIVER
Thank you.

He drinks. She observes.

The red star keeps shining in the horizon.

LATER.

The kid and Essie sleep.

PUNKGIRL
(whispering)
Help me. I gave him sleeping pills.

Essie is confused and follows her. They both walk towards the Driver. Punkgirl has Homeless' laces, it is obvious now, she will strangle him while he sleeps.

PUNKGIRL (CONT'D)
If he wakes up, hold'im. Then we
get the radio!

Punkgirl nods and then STRANGLES THE DRIVER. He wakes up and tries to fight for his life, but Essie grabs him.

She cannot watch, so she looks the other way, to the KID sleeping peacefully while Punkgirl kills the DRIVER.

The Driver stops moving. *Dead.*

Essie opens the doors, still without looking at him. Punkgirl throws his heavy body out of the bus when suddenly he OPENS HIS EYES and grabs her neck. Essie then PUSHES him out without thinking, but he grabs PUNKGIRL's NECKLACES and she falls along with him.

Essie sees both Punkgirl and the Driver falling. Then she looks at the star, the real enemy, and YELLS AT IT. A silent scream.

UNKNOWN TIME LATER.

The doors are now closed. Essie is sitting in the DRIVER's seat, holding the RADIO.

The Kid wakes up and approaches Essie.

KID
Where are the others?

ESSIE
I need you to do me a favor.

Essie shows him a long ROPE that she made with the fabric from their JACKETS. One end is tied to the seat, and the other is free.

ESSIE (CONT'D)
I will go down and get'em.

KID
Do not leave me!

ESSIE
I need you to be very strong, and answer the radio if someone tries to contact us again. Tell'em that we got lost and stuck in... somewhere.
(beat)
If we don't do something we might stay like this... forever...

C.U. - Essie looks ahead at her reflection on the window, like an overlaid image of two worlds. She moves but her own reflection does not move. She turns back.

ESSIE (MOS) (CONT'D)
Kid? KID!

The Kid has vanished. She's alone in the bus. Then she sees the rope swaying outside of the bus. She PULLS the ROPE with all her strength and then...

The other end of the rope appears TORN. The kid is gone.

She cries, for the first time.

Then, she ties the rope to her belt, takes the radio with her, and throws herself.

Into the unknown, swallowed by darkness.

EXT. BUS - MOUNTAINS - DAY

SOUND OF SIRENS get louder. A DETECTIVE walks towards the investigation scene. She speaks to another OFFICER. She checks the first body on the road. It's Business Woman's.

OFFICER

They run over her. I can't explain it, but she matches the description of that old case you found on the archives, the bus that disappeared with five passengers.

DETECTIVE

This can't be it. That was 50 years ago. What could ever have caused this... abomination.

The Detective comes closer to the dark, frozen-melted BUS, like it was smashed and crooked by gravity.

OFFICER

There's nothing in the cameras. It just appeared, out of nowhere. It sounds crazy. I never seen anything like this. I'm sure nobody has. You want to know what is worst? The engine was still on when we found it. It was moving really slowly. We had to put a stone in the tires to stop it.

A POLICEMAN gets out of the bus.

POLICEMAN

Sir, it looks empty.

DETECTIVE

What about the driver? You must at least see some bones.

POLICEMAN

No mam. I mean empty, there're no seats, no wheel. There's nobody inside. Nothing.

They enter the bus again and sees it...

...Empty.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

In the large auditorium, with walls full of medieval angels and demons. There's the same COFFIN, but with Essie inside.

FADE OUT.

THE END.