

THE GATHERINGS

Written by

Laurie Simons & Terry Sterrenberg

ACT ONE

INTERIOR DENNIS & ALLISON'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT, MORNING, 2040

A vase of fresh flowers is bathed in soft morning light on the sideboard. DENNIS (46, Black, intellectual) yanks open a stubborn drawer.

His long dark fingers pull out a weathered cardboard box. He touches the jumble of memory cards and portable hard drives.

DENNIS

There they are.

Allison, you need to see this!

ALLISON (47, white, energetic) walks close, and peeks over his shoulder.

ALLISON

Are those the videos of the early Gatherings?

DENNIS

Yep. And this one. This has the interview. You're in it.

(looks at her, admiring)

You started it all, Allison. People should know that.

ALLISON

It wasn't just me. You know I don't like being in the spotlight, Dennis.

DENNIS

I know.

(thinking, in jest)

Okay. I have an idea. I could put these recordings in a TIME CAPSULE marked "Don't open for a hundred years!" Then you won't have to deal with it...But when they finally open it...everyone will know it was you.

She smiles affectionately, glances at the clock.

ALLISON

I gotta go. I'm gonna be late.

She grabs her purse and keys and exits quickly, leaving Dennis behind in silence.

Dennis stands frozen. Opens his laptop and plugs in a memory cards marked 2035.

The screen flickers. A shaky camera shot of 200 people in a packed classroom. Two empty stools at the front of the room.

Dennis skips ahead through the footage. Stops. Presses play.

Two women, Allison (age 42) and interviewer ESTHER MANNING (57, Black) are seated on the stools each holding a microphone.

ESTHER MANNING

(on screen)

So, in the beginning, people told you it wouldn't work.

ALLISON

(on screen)

Yeah, they did.

But the world was a mess. It felt like everything was falling apart. Like there was no way out.

Dennis hits pause. He leans back in his chair, eyes still locked on the screen. Presses play again.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

People were ready for something new. We had to start somewhere.

A beat of silence. Dennis nods.

SIXTEEN YEARS EARLIER. EXTERIOR SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. AFTERNOON. SPRING. 2024.

Yelling and arguing breaks out on the school playground. AARON (8) and LORENZO (9) face off in anger.

AARON

Not like that, you idiot!

Aaron grabs the red flag.

AARON (CONT'D)

You're supposed to take the green one.

LORENZO

I want the red one. Give it back!

The boys voices get louder. Teacher (Allison, age 31) appears. Lorenzo's elbow freezes in the air, mid-punch.

INTERIOR THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM. LATER THE SAME DAY

The words "Social Studies" are handwritten on the smart board. Allison stands at the front of the class.

ALLISON

I notice that it's sometimes hard for kids to get along on the playground.

AARON

Well, Lorenzo took the red flag. I don't know why.

ALLISON

You don't know why.

AARON

No.

Allison looks at Lorenzo. Waits.

LORENZO

(glancing over at Aaron)
He grabbed the red flag out of my hand and called me an idiot.

AARON

But he took the wrong flag.

LORENZO

Well, I was mad. I didn't want to take the green flag.

ALLISON

You were mad and so you took the red flag. What was making you mad?

LORENZO

(looking down)
He picked Joel instead of me for his team.

AARON

(surprised)
You wanted to be on my team?

LORENZO

Uh-huh.

AARON

Really?

I didn't know that. We're not really friends or anything.

They fall silent for a moment. Allison looks between them.

ALLISON

So we call people names or jump on them when something that is important to us isn't happening.

Following the rules is important to Aaron, and being picked for the team is important to Lorenzo. So you ended up fighting.

STUDENT 2

(looks over at the map)
Well what about countries, when they fight? That's different, right?

STUDENT 1

Like when Hamas attacked Israel. That was a sneak attack. We can't let them get away with it. We have to fight back. Those are really bad people.

STUDENT 4

Why did they do that? It was so mean.

ALLISON

You're asking a very important question.

STUDENT 1

We have to help Israel get them.

STUDENT 3

But Israel is bombing hospitals and schools where there are kids and babies!

STUDENT 1

My dad says that's where the bad guys are hiding. That's the price of war.

STUDENT 3

But kids and babies? And thousands of people? That's not right.

The bell rings. Allison looks at the clock.

ALLISON

I agree. It's not right. We have to do something. We should all go to the protest tomorrow. Support Palestine.

Dismissed.

INTERIOR. MUSEUM IN THE FUTURE. THE YEAR IS 2149. SATURDAY MORNING

Two figures walk through the archway that says "Headlines from the 21st Century".

They stand, silhouettes in the shadowed glow of a holographic display: ELIANA (28, mixed race, composed) and her nephew MICAH (11, mixed race, wide-eyed, agile).

The holographic exhibit bombards them with footage, news reports, images and headlines from 2024 and 2025:

HEADLINES: "More Guns, More Shootings"; "Immigration Crackdown"; "Trade Wars: Global Economy on the Brink"; "Poverty Doubles in U.S."; "More bombs kill dozens in Gaza overnight"

IMAGES AND VIDEOS: A woman is taken from the street and put in black vehicle; Men in chains, heads shaved, crouch in a prison hallway; Families walk through dusty rubble as they evacuate Gaza.

Micah flinches as a building collapses onscreen.

MICAH

What is this? Was it really this bad? What happened to the kids?

Eliana doesn't answer. Her jaw tightens. Micah looks up at her. There is a tear on her cheek.

MICAH (CONT'D)

Why did you bring me here?

A long pause. Eliana brushes away the tear.

ELIANA

To see what it was like before.

He turns to her.

MICAH

Something must have changed... what was it?

ELIANA

Let's keep going. You'll see.

INTERIOR. CLASSROOM OF THIRD GRADERS. A WEEK AFTER THE PLAYGROUND FIGHT.

Classroom clock says 3:15. Bell rings. Students leave.

Allison shuffles papers and jots down notes at her desk. A voice comes over the intercom.

VOICE (O.S)

Ms. Silver, please report to the office.

Her eyes dart towards the intercom speaker. She takes a breath, stacks the papers and grabs her purse and coat from the locker. Her footsteps echo through the empty school hallway.

PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. LATE AFTERNOON.

Allison hesitates for a moment at the open door.

MR. JONES (50s, stern, unyielding). Sits behind his desk, his posture rigid. He gives a curt nod toward the chair across from him.

Allison enters slowly, and takes a seat.

MR. JONES

Ms. Silver, do you have any idea why I've called you into my office?

Allison's jaw tightens.

ALLISON

(making every effort to avoid sounding sarcastic)
Well, sir... I imagine you're about to tell me.

MR. JONES

It's come to my attention that you've been encouraging students to attend anti-Israel protests. That crosses a line.

Some of our students have families in Israel. I can't have that kind of influence in my school. You were warned, Ms. Silver.

Allison meets his gaze.

ALLISON

You're firing me?

MR. JONES

Please gather your things. This is your last day.

Allison stares at him. Then stands up slowly, and moves towards the door. She casts a final glance at Mr. Jones. He doesn't look up. She exits the office and steps into the hallway.

EXTERIOR STREET IN BROOKLYN. LATE AFTERNOON. SAME DAY

Allison walks briskly, a box of personal items tucked under one arm. The sound of chants and drums grows louder from just around the corner. A rally.

People wave signs, and shout slogans. A PROTESTING WOMAN holds a sign that reads: "I Sure Hope This Works." Allison's eyes narrow as she approaches her.

ALLISON

What's going on here?

PROTESTING WOMAN

The government's gone too far. They're telling us what we can and can't do with our bodies. We're done staying silent.

Allison sets her box down carefully on the ground, and takes a deep breath.

ALLISON

Do you have any extra signs?

INTERIOR. R TRAIN. THE NEXT DAY. MORNING, 2024

A distorted voice blares overhead. "Please stand clear of the closing doors. Next stop, Times Square."

Allison holds on tightly as the train jerks forward.

Moments later the train screeches to a halt. Allison dashes up the stairs into the chaotic sounds of the street, glancing up at buildings towering above her.

NEW YORK CITY. 40TH STREET, BRYANT PARK.

Allison walks past a man with a cardboard sign that reads "Hungry- anything helps". She drops a quarter into his cup.

She enters the park, eyes searching and spots her friend Dennis (30, Black, reserved, intellectual) sitting cross-legged on the grass, completely absorbed in his laptop. She quickens her pace.

DENNIS

(looking up)

Hey. You look, uh, hassled. What's going on?

ALLISON

I'm so bummed. Yesterday, I got fired. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

Dennis blinks, his eyebrows knit together in concern. He bites his lower lip.

DENNIS

Fired?! What happened? You loved that job.

ALLISON

Yeah, I did. The kids were awesome. But honestly, it was hard to keep my mouth shut about how we should be solving problems, instead of... going to war.

DENNIS

You're such a maverick. That's something I admire about you.

Allison looks straight ahead, preoccupied.

ALLISON

Well, it got me this time. I can't afford to stay in my apartment anymore.

Dennis opens up his MacBook Air and starts searching.

DENNIS

Well, let's see if we can find something you can afford.

Dennis starts scanning listings. His eyes dart quickly up and down the screen.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

You wanna stay in Brooklyn or...?

He doesn't wait for a response. His eyes are glued to the computer.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Okay, here's one: Studio apartment in Bed-Stuy. Basement level. 400 square feet. \$2300 a month.

ALLISON

You're joking, right?

DENNIS

I wish. But... it's New York. Rent just keeps going up. Who can even afford to live here anymore?

INTERIOR MUSEUM. FUTURE. 2149. SAME SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Micah and Eliana enter another display called "Inequality in the 21st Century".

The projections display mansions, sports cars, people laughing on yachts.

ELIANA

They thought having more was better. It meant status. Worth. Freedom.

MICAH

That's strange. Now it just gets in the way.

Images shift: shelters under bridges, tents lined up along streets, people wrapped in blankets, clutching shopping carts. He goes still.

MICAH (CONT'D)

They didn't have homes?

ELIANA

Some couldn't afford one.

MICAH

But... why didn't they just give them one?

ELIANA

Because if you didn't pay... you went without.

Micah studies the face of an older man on the screen. Exhausted, forlorn.

MICAH

We'd never let that happen now.

Eliana rests her hand on his shoulder.

ELIANA

No. We sure wouldn't.

They stand in the shadow of the display. Neither speaks.

INTERIOR DENNIS'S APARTMENT. EVENING 2024

The door opens, Allison enters, slips off her coat, hangs it on the hook by the doorway. Her left shoulder bears a TATTOO of a starfish.

Dennis, sits at the kitchen table with his laptop, catches her eye and gestures toward the chair beside him with a subtle nod.

She sits. A Zoom call on the laptop screen features the faces of six participants.

ALLISON

Good to see all of you. Hi MEL.
It's been awhile! I haven't seen you since Zuccotti Park.

(MORE)

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Wow, that was 12 years ago already!

Dennis told me a bit about your new project. I'd love to know more.

MEL

(78, long hair, white beard)

We believe we can heal the divides in our country if ordinary people learn to listen to each other.

DENNIS

(sarcastic)

You mean instead of shooting each other?

Allison gives Dennis the elbow. Moves on.

ALLISON

You mean like therapy groups?

MEL

No, no, it's not about therapy. We're aiming to revive and strengthen democracy.

ALLISON

Okay...that sounds interesting to me.

MEL

We'd love it if you could help out.

INTERIOR MUSEUM. FUTURE 2149. LATER SATURDAY.

Eliana and Micah step into a darkened chamber. Above them, glowing letters say: DEMOCRACY.

Interactive holograms flicker to life. A President speaking at a podium, hand raised, flags behind him.

ELIANA

Democracy was meant to be about choosing people to represent your views.

The image glitches slightly. New footage rolls: angry debates in Congress. Faces red, fists pounding, microphones cut off mid-yell.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

But. It drifted.

Micah watches the shouting match.

Then, rallies. Fireworks. Slogans. Candidates waving. Flags everywhere. Faces in crowds, cheering like fans.

MICAH

They look like teams. Trying to win something.

ELIANA

Winning became the point.

Micah frowns, absorbing it.

MICAH

Is that why it got so bad?

Arguing and debates continue on the screen.

ELIANA

There were so many things getting in the way of solving problems, that the problems kept getting worse.

MICAH

It's not about winning now. We're always solving problems.

ELIANA

Now we are. Back then there was something else getting in their way. Something quieter, but dangerous.

MICAH

What was it?

ELIANA

Othering.

MICAH

Othering?

News images of handcuffed people being escorted onto planes by guards with guns.

ELIANA (NODS)

It's when people decide that someone else doesn't really belong. That they're too different. Too strange. Not "us."

INTERIOR. ALLISON'S APARTMENT. A WEEK AFTER THE ZOOM WITH MEL.

Allison grabs her tea and laptop, gets comfortable on the couch, and logs on to another Zoom meeting. Several faces appear on the screen.

MEL

Hi everyone, I want to introduce you to someone very special.

The Zoom screen lights up with the smiling face of XIMENA, mid sixties, warm and confident.

MEL (CONT'D)

This is Ximena. I'm really excited that she agreed to join us today. In her work, she brings together groups from different backgrounds, helping them find common ground.

XIMENA

Hi everyone! It's great to meet you all. I'll send over some links to articles that might give you more context about my work. Let me get to know you a bit first.

The Conversation proceeds with introductions and connections. But Allison's attention is entirely fixed on Ximena.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Connections happen when we welcome diverse perspectives, listen deeply and reflect back what we have heard.

But the real magic begins when people combine their wisdom and create something new together.

Allison's eyes widen. She leans forward slightly, completely absorbed.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

I've worked in places where it seemed like there were no solutions at all. But when everyone feels their words are welcomed and honored, ordinary people thinking together can come up with extraordinary ideas to alter the future.

ALLISON
(under her breath)
This is exactly what I needed to
hear.

Allison takes a sip of tea, without taking her eyes off the screen. The other voices in the Zoom meeting blur into the background.

INTERIOR. ALLISON'S KITCHEN. LATE THE SAME NIGHT.

The clock on the wall reads 11:48. Allison sits at the kitchen table, eyes fixed on her laptop screen.

ALLISON
(to herself)
What was the name of that magazine
Ximena mentioned? The one like Time
Magazine, but in Canada?

She types "Canadian Magazines" into the search bar, her face lighting up as she finds what she's looking for.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
Maclean's. Yes.

She quickly types: "Macleans magazine experiment 12
Canadians". Her eyes scan the results.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
Got it. The People's Verdict. July
1, 1991.

She leans in, absorbing the article, her excitement building.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
This is amazing.

Allison gets up and fills her coffee cup. Returns to her computer, reading silently.

The clock shows 1:00 AM. Then 2:00 AM. She continues reading, nodding vigorously.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
This could change everything!

She picks up her phone, and begins typing a message to Dennis.

ALLISON(TEXT) (CONT'D)
I found something. Let's talk
tomorrow.

She hesitates for just a second, then pushes send.

Her gaze shifts to a framed photo on the wall beside her. An image of herself as a young child (age 8) with UNCLE STEVE (38). She exhales and closes her eyes.

INTERIOR. COUCH AT ALLISON'S CHILDHOOD HOME AUGUST 2001.
FLASHBACK

The room is quiet except for the sound of pages turning. YOUNG ALLISON age 8, sits close to her uncle Steve, who is reading aloud, his voice slow and steady.

UNCLE STEVE

(reading)

The old man says, "What are you doing?"

And the little boy answers,
"Throwing these starfish back into
the ocean so they won't die."

Uncle Steve hesitates for a moment, and then flips the page.

UNCLE STEVE (CONT'D)

The old man says, "But there are too many of them. Throwing that one back won't make any difference."

(pause)

The boy throws another one into the ocean and answers, "It made a difference for that one."

Allison looks up at her uncle, admiringly, then looks back down at the book.

UNCLE STEVE (CONT'D)

And that one... And that one...

He turns to face her, looking in her eyes warmly.

UNCLE STEVE (CONT'D)

Allison, you remind me of that little boy.

INTERIOR ALLISON'S APARTMENT. CONTINUOUS.

Allison opens her eyes and her gaze shifts to another picture on the wall. Uncle Steve, 38, dressed as a firefighter. On the frame is written "Never Forgotten, September 11, 2001".

INTERIOR COFFEE SHOP. THE NEXT MORNING.

The bell over the door jingles. Allison slips in, slightly out of breath. Dennis is already seated with two coffees. He raises his cup, smiles.

DENNIS
Right on time.

ALLISON
You're a lifesaver.

She slides into the seat across from him, warming her hands on the cup.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
I barely slept. My brain wouldn't shut up.

DENNIS
I figured.

ALLISON
It was Ximena. Something about the way she listens. Like she's not waiting to talk.

DENNIS
She's got that stillness.

ALLISON
Yeah. And somehow, she made not knowing look like a strength.

Dennis nods, unsettled. Allison reaches in her bag and fishes out her cell phone, scrolling.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
I went down a rabbit hole. Those articles, the Canada study, that German thing...

DENNIS
Wisdom Councils?

ALLISON
That's the one. It's another way. Small groups. Big issues. But it makes sense.

She pauses. Takes a sip. Looks at him.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

What if it's not that complicated?
Just people hearing each other.

Dennis taps the folded newspaper beside his coffee.

DENNIS

Weird concept, huh. Wait. What are
you saying?

She leans forward. He feels it. Leans back slightly.

ALLISON

I think this is it, Dennis. I think
this is why I'm here.

DENNIS

Why you're here?

ALLISON

Yes. I finally feel like I'm in the
right place. Like everything's led
me to this.

DENNIS

It's a wild world out there. Trying
to change it could get dangerous.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INTERIOR MUSEUM. FUTURE 2149. LATER SATURDAY.

In the heart of the exhibit hall, a luminous hologram hovers midair: BREAKTHROUGH.

Micah steps forward, eyes wide.

MICAH
Breakthrough?

Images of protests, people marching and shouting, fade. An animation appears. Labeled 2024. A room with twelve figures sitting in a semicircle; two others, the facilitators, standing in front of them.

MICAH (CONT'D)
Is that supposed to be the first one? The first Gathering?

Eliana lingers a step behind him, watching more him than the display.

ELIANA
Yes. People started to Gather. In small groups. To listen. To think together.

Another animated hologram fades in. A second Gathering, then a third.

ELIANA (CONT'D)
To create new solutions out of what was available to them.

Micah watches, awestruck, as the Gatherings multiply.

MICAH
That's just... normal now. Everybody goes to Gatherings all the time.

Dozens, then hundreds of Gatherings, slowly fill the room. Figures coming together, rings forming and reforming in shifting constellations of light.

MICAH (CONT'D)
Who started the first one? Someone had to say, "Let's try this."

ELIANA

Maybe.

Or maybe it just caught on. The way some things do when people are ready.

Micah squints, unsatisfied.

MICAH

Still. Someone must've sparked it.

He lifts his wrist, taps it. The device chirps to life. He speaks into it, steady.

MICAH (CONT'D)

Note to self: Find the genius who started the first Gathering.

Eliana glances at him. The soft light of the circles in the expanding holograms reflects in his eyes.

EXTERIOR. TUTORING CENTER. BROOKLYN. 2024

Allison steps out of the tutoring center, her eyes scanning the street. Behind her, someone removes a "Tutors needed" sign from the window.

She pulls out her phone and checks the time before pocketing it, then continues walking.

INTERIOR. ALLISON'S BEDROOM. SAME AFTERNOON

The room is sparsely decorated, the bed slightly unmade. Allison sits cross-legged in the middle, phone in hand. She texts DENNIS.

ALLISON (TEXT)

Found a tutoring job. Three afternoons a week. Still can't afford to stay here.

She hesitates, staring at her phone. Then continues typing.

ALLISON (TEXT) (CONT'D)

Can I move in with you?

Her finger hovers over the screen. She pauses. She exhales, presses send.

Allison stares at the phone. The three dots appear almost immediately. But then they pause.

She waits, staring, holding her breath. Her fingers tap nervously against the bed. Then, finally:

DENNIS (TEXT)

I'll add your name to the mailbox.

Allison exhales deeply. She flops back onto the bed, eyes closing for a moment.

INTERIOR ALLISON'S APARTMENT. A FEW DAYS LATER. MORNING.

Allison stands at the bathroom sink, brushing her teeth with a quiet focus. Through the mirror she can see pictures and posters still on the wall in the next room.

DING! BUZZ!

Her phone breaks her concentration. She spits into the sink, and dashes to the kitchen.

She digs through the clutter on the counter. Finds her phone under a pile of papers and reads the text.

DENNIS (TEXT)

Ready?

She smiles slightly, fingers tapping the screen quickly.

ALLISON (TEXT)

Give me 10 minutes.

She presses send, steps over to the wall and removes the two pictures of her Uncle Steve. She carefully places them in a cardboard box.

Goes back to get a framed child's drawing of a small person holding a crudely drawn star. The picture is dated August 25th, 2001. On the bottom in wobbly capital letters is the name "Allison".

She puts the framed drawing in the box by the pictures of Uncle Steve, and turns back to the wall to retrieve a poster.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

(reading)

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality... To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Yep. Thank you Buckminster Fuller.

She rolls it up, puts it in the box, and steps over to The Venus Project poster. Jacque Fresco's vision of a futuristic apartment building. Allison's eyes linger for a moment, then she reads the words to herself as she pulls it off the wall.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

"You have to take care of everybody... or the system doesn't work."

Bless you, Jacque Fresco.

She sets it reverently in the box with the other items.

DING! Another message.

DENNIS (TEXT)

I'm here.

Allison grabs the mess of papers from the counter, slips them into the box and types a response.

ALLISON (TEXT)

Coming.

She grabs her jacket, turns back and surveys the empty apartment. Tucks the box of posters and papers under her arm and strides toward the door.

EXTERIOR. FUTURE. 2149. ELIANA'S APARTMENT BUILDING.

The exterior of Eliana's apartment looks just like the one pictured on the Jacque Fresco poster on Allison's wall.

INTERIOR. ELIANA'S STUDIO APARTMENT. TUESDAY MORNING. MARCH 25TH, 2149

The room is bathed in soft morning light as Eliana stirs awake. She stretches, then swings her feet onto the floor and stands up.

A single touch on the wall activates a hidden mechanism, and her bed, sleek and minimal, silently rises and disappears seamlessly into the ceiling with a soft whirr. She heads to the bathroom.

The bathroom is an efficient pod, where every surface is one smooth, seamless piece. The toilet is integrated into the shower unit, with the walls curving elegantly to maximize space.

Eliana steps in and sits on the toilet. A moment later, when she stands, water jets activate, and the shower envelops her with a cascade of warm, vaporized mist. She closes her eyes for a moment, letting the water refresh her.

ELIANA

Ah. That's so nice.

As she steps out, a pair of air jets activate, and warm, gentle streams of air blow from either side of her body, drying her skin and hair.

She glances at her reflection in the sleek mirror in front of her. A U-shaped sonic auto-brush extends from the mirror. Eliana presses her lips gently around it, and it vibrates, cleaning her teeth in a matter of seconds.

She runs a sleek, automated hair wand tool through her long, dark hair, curling and shaping it with ease.

As she exits the bathroom, she taps a button beside the door labeled "CLEAN BATHROOM." The door closes, and a low hum fills the air, followed by a gentle spraying sound, indicating the cleaning process has begun.

Eliana walks back into the main room of the studio apartment, touches the wall on her left, releasing her water mug from a built-in dispenser, and takes a sip.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

(aloud to COMPANION A.I.)

Outfits.

A holographic projection of images of tops and leggings appears, Eliana touches her selection of styles and colors. There is a soft whir, and a drawer emerges smoothly from the wall.

Eliana slips on a form-fitting pair of leggings and a tunic.

She takes a few more sips, then begins a series of morning stretches, fluid and practiced, on the mat beneath the now-retracted bed.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

(aloud to COMPANION A.I.)

Show schedule.

She taps a panel. Seven vertical bars appear. Red for PERSONAL; orange for HOME; yellow for COMMUNITY; green for CIVIC; blue for REGIONAL; violet for GLOBAL.

She taps the violet bar.

The violet panel says "Top global priorities". Coral reef restoration- Great Barrier Reef July 19th to 26th. Plant trees to prevent Canada wildfires, August 12th to 20th.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

I'll check this one. I can do this.

She taps the planting trees item, and the calendar for August pops up. The 12th to 20th dates turn violet.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

Now, back to personal.

She taps the red bar. The personal priorities panel slides into view. SOCIAL: Meet with a friend. SELF-CARE: Visit the Sound Healing Center.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

I haven't seen Rena in a while.

She taps on "SOCIAL" and a list of contacts appears. She selects Rena's name, leaving a message.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

(aloud)

Hey, Rena, let's get together soon.

A ding rings out a few seconds later. Rena's name flashes on Eliana's calendar for Friday, March 28th, from 10:00 to 11:30 AM at the Fountain Cafe.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

That was fast!

Eliana taps Rena's name to confirm, and the event turns red on the calendar. There is a green block in the evening the same Friday, marked Gathering, 7:00 to 8:30 PM.

Eliana swipes through a few more panels and clicks on "ELIANA'S MASTERSHIPS." A list of professional requests from the community appears under ROBOTICS.

She quickly drags and drops each of the yellow items into various time slots on her calendar for the upcoming week.

She checks the COMMUNITY PRIORITIES CHECKLIST and up votes her high-priority items.

She turns to exit the apartment. The sliding door opens silently, and she steps into the elevator.

EXTERIOR. WALKWAY OUTSIDE FOUNTAIN CAFE. FUTURE 2149. MID FRIDAY MORNING

The Maglev train glides silently to a stop. Eliana steps off and strides down the tree-lined walkway. No cars.

Toddlers laugh and play, their tiny voices ringing out in the air. Adults chat nearby.

As Eliana approaches The Fountain Cafe, she spots RENA (29, soft reddish buzz cut, dressed in form fitting purple), through the window sitting alone at a table. Eliana enters.

INTERIOR. FOUNTAIN CAFE. SAME MORNING

The atmosphere inside is cool and fresh, scented with flowers from the living green wall. Eliana inhales, smiling. Floor to ceiling windows look out to the path and trees outside. A gentle murmur of conversation fills the space.

Eliana slides into the seat across from Rena, who is already looking at the digital menu embedded into the table.

ELIANA

So happy to see you! Did you pick your food yet?

RENA

Nope. I just got my body scan last week, so I'm debating. Healthy choices or total indulgence.

ELIANA

Tough decision! What's the special today?

RENA

Fig tart with caramelized onions. It's getting top reviews this week.

ELIANA

Sounds amazing. I'll go with that too.

The table display lights up. The women wave their palms over it, their fingers tapping with precision. The order is placed with a soft chime.

RENA

How's everything going with you?

ELIANA

Well, my nephew, Micah is going to be twelve next month. Then he can fully participate in the Gatherings!

RENA

Wow, he is growing up so fast!

ELIANA

I took him for his first visit to the Museum of the 21st Century last week as part of his Coming of Age process. He had some strong reactions.

RENA

Yeah? What happened?

ELIANA

He was horrified. He asked what happened to the kids.

RENA

I remember my first time there. It was brutal. Unbelievable. I was heartsick for days.

ELIANA

He had so many questions about everything. Especially what happened to get us out of the Downturn.

The food cart arrives with a soft whir. Robotic arms place their plates in front of them with precise elegance. The steam from the fig tart wafts in the air.

ELIANA (CONT'D)

(takes a small bite)
This is so good.

They both sip their drinks, enjoying the moment of quiet companionship.

INTERIOR MICAH'S FAMILY HOME. FUTURE. 2149

A sleek minimalist dome with seamless walls bathed in soft, ambient light.

At the center of the room, holographic display hovers in mid-air, projecting Micah's schedule in a 3D grid of floating icons and color-coded notes.

Micah stands scrutinizing the virtual calendar. His parents, SKY (34, short blonde hair) and DANNY (36, mixed race), sit nearby, chatting softly.

MICAH
 (tapping the air to move
 items around)
 Okay, so I've got maker space,
 culinary arts, and storytelling
 meetup.

Micah flicks his fingers, dragging virtual sticky notes that vanish with a swipe, or snap into place on his calendar.

One note reads: "Go to the beach". Its holographic waves crash against a shoreline.

MICAH (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Been wanting to go and visit
 Pietro.
 (out loud)
 Mom, when can we go to the beach?

Sky quickly checks her wrist device.

SKY
 Beach. Let's see. How about next
 Saturday? Danny, can you come too?
 It would be great to see FELICIA
 and GABRIEL.

DANNY
 Sure. Better get over there while
 we still can.

MICAH
 Good.

Micah drags the beach icon to next Saturday on the virtual calendar. The note settles into place, with a ping.

MICAH (CONT'D)
 Oh, yeah, I almost forgot.
 Companion A.I. Who started the
 Gatherings?

COMPANION AI (V.O.)
 (gentle, curious)
 The early Gatherings were
 facilitated by Ximena Sanchez. But
 who set them up is not clearly
 recorded.

MICAH

Huh. That's weird. You don't know?

COMPANION AI (V.O.)

No.
(soft pause. The tone is almost reverent.)

COMPANION AI (V.O.)

Some beginnings stay quiet on purpose.

Micah shakes his head. Not ready to give up.

COMPANION AI (V.O.)

Maybe consider inquiring about artifacts at the local Archives.

MICAH

Good idea, I'll go over there now!

COMPANION AI (V.O.)

Let me know what you find.

Micah dashes to the door and presses a button. Sleek roller blades rise from the floor. He slides his feet into them.

MICAH

(over shoulder to parents)
Catch you later!

The sliding door opens automatically and Micah glides out.

ARCHIVES BUILDING. THE SAME DAY

Micah looks up at the word "Archives" engraved above the tall door. His eyes widen when the heavy door swings easily open with a light touch.

He glides towards a neatly groomed gentleman, ZEN, 60, seated behind the counter, preoccupied.

MICAH

Um, excuse me, sir?

A long pause. Micah looks around the large echoing room, with its sleek walls and high ceiling.

ZEN

Oh, sorry, what can I do for you, young man?

MICAH

I'm trying to find out who was the person who started the Gatherings. Thought you might be able to help.

ZEN

You're not the first person who's asked about that! Most people think it was the Facilitator, what was her name? Heem..Zeem...

MICAH

Ximena. Yeah. But do we know for sure?

ZEN

Well, unfortunately, we don't have anything here, as far as I know. Some of the Archived material from back then got lost in the Brooklyn flood. Sorry.

MICAH

Seems weird that nobody knows for sure who it was. Well, thanks, anyway.

INTERIOR. DENNIS'S APARTMENT. EVENING. 2024

Allison's framed starfish drawing hangs on the wall now. Her posters and pictures too. Dennis wipes the kitchen counter, shines the toaster with a dish towel, then hangs the towel neatly over the stove handle.

ALLISON

You busy?

DENNIS

Depends.

She pulls out her sketchbook and markers from inside the ottoman, plops down on the couch.

ALLISON

I wanna show you something.

He joins her.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

So. Imagine about twelve people seated in a semi-circle. Someone up front. Facilitating.

She sketches it quickly: dots in a semi-circle. One dot alone.

DENNIS
No back-and-forth?

ALLISON
Not at first. One at a time.
Everything they say goes up on the wall.

She draws four rectangles behind the Facilitator.

DENNIS
Like... capturing the room's brain.

ALLISON
Exactly. And after everyone's been heard... Things shift. People soften. See patterns. Something clicks.

DENNIS
And that's the magic part?

ALLISON
Yeah.

She adds a line from the group to a new circle labeled "Project."

DENNIS
Is the project the goal... or the side effect?

ALLISON
Still figuring that out.

They sit in that thought for a beat. Allison glances at the starfish drawing on the wall. Smiles briefly. She flips to a new page. Writes FOLLOW-UP, and starts a list.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
Afterward, I'll call folks. Ask what stuck with them. See if they'd host another. Or invite someone new.

DENNIS
Let's see. Scheduling. Locations. Sign-ups.

ALLISON
Oh, and we'll need trained
Facilitators.

DENNIS
A lot of them. ...So. You want me
to build a website.

She nods, already mapping out circles and lines.

ALLISON
And when Gatherings come up with
projects, those get posted on the
website so people can get involved.

DENNIS
You're thinking big.

ALLISON
I have to. Are you in?

DENNIS
It's crazy. But...let's build it.

INTERIOR. COFFEE SHOP. MORNING.

Allison sits at a small table, sipping tea, her laptop open.
Mel walks in, gets his coffee, scans the room. Joins her.

MEL
So. What's the urgency?

ALLISON
Thanks for coming. I've been
thinking about your work.

MEL
Oh? Good.

ALLISON
About listening. What it really
means. And how people shift when
they're heard.

Mel takes a sip of coffee. Watches her.

MEL
That's the whole idea.

ALLISON
I've got something brewing. Similar
roots. Different scale.

MEL

Let's hear it.

ALLISON

Small group. About twelve people.
Weekend event. I want to ask Ximena
to facilitate.

MEL

Just one event?

ALLISON

To start. Then another. Keep it
going. Different people, maybe some
repeats.

MEL

And what's the point?

ALLISON

Listening. Thinking together. Maybe
a shared project. Doesn't have to
be perfect. Just get started.

MEL

Hmm. And you think that's enough?

ALLISON

No. But it's something.

He leans back slightly. Thinking.

MEL

It's not what I would do. I don't
think it'll work. But I don't own
the idea of listening.

ALLISON

I just didn't want you to think I
was stealing your...

MEL

(interrupting)

You're not.

You're planting seeds. I'm trying
to grow a forest. It'll take
generations. But go ahead. Do your
thing.

She nods slowly.

ALLISON

Well. Thanks.

MEL

Sure.

A quiet settles between them. Allison takes a last sip of her coffee and stands up.

ALLISON

I'll let you get back to your forest then.

She smiles, looks back at him as she heads for the door.

INTERIOR. DENNIS'S APARTMENT. THE NEXT MORNING

Dennis sits at the kitchen table, nursing a mug of coffee. Allison paces, papers spread across the table.

DENNIS

So... how do you even get people to show up?

She keeps pacing, doesn't immediately respond.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Don't you need to make sure the people there represent the diversity of the neighborhood?

Allison pauses. Looks at him.

ALLISON

I don't know if we can. Not right away.

If we wait for perfect, we never start.

She stops, rests her hands on the back of a chair.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

We work with whoever comes. That's how it starts.

She sits, absently smoothing one of the papers.

DENNIS

You realize this is impossible, right?

ALLISON

(shrugs)
Maybe so.

Dennis raises an eyebrow. Then taps something into his phone. Silence while he calculates.

DENNIS

Eight million people in this city.
If you want twelve per group, that
means you're looking at six hundred
thousand Gatherings.

Allison doesn't react.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

How do you wrap your head around
that?

ALLISON

We don't. We aim for the 3.5% rule.

Dennis stares at her. Then, more to himself.

DENNIS

3.5 percent of eight million...
That's... two hundred eighty
thousand people...Divided by 12...

Just twenty-three thousand
Gatherings.

No big deal.

ALLISON

Exactly.

A pause. She begins to gather the papers into a neater stack. Dennis watches her.

DENNIS

(incredulous)
You're actually serious about this.

ALLISON

Yeah. I am.

Dennis shakes his head.

DENNIS

You're such a dreamer.

Allison glances up at him. Says nothing. He reaches across and starts organizing the papers with her.

INTERIOR. COFFEE SHOP. ANOTHER MORNING

Allison drafts an email on her laptop. Subject: "A Vision for Facilitation". Types "Hi Ximena, can I talk to you about an idea?"

She takes a breath, clicks 'send,' and leans back, nervous. Seconds later, her cell phone rings. It's a number she doesn't recognize.

ALLISON
(whispering)
What? No way...

She answers, trying to sound casual.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
Hello?

XIMENA (O.S.)
Is this Allison Silver?

ALLISON
(stunned)
Yes! Is this Ximena?

XIMENA (O.S.)
I just saw your email. I thought I'd call you right away. What's this idea you mentioned?

ALLISON
Wow. That was fast. Thank you!

Okay, here's the thing. I believe your work with Facilitation can literally save the world. And I have an idea for how to make that happen.

XIMENA (O.S.)
Well, that's an ambitious claim. But I'm listening.

ALLISON
I've been thinking a lot about this. I think I can gather twelve people from my neighborhood to come together for an event.

XIMENA
Go on.

ALLISON

We'll call it a Gathering. A Friday night and all day Saturday. The topic will be "How to improve the quality of life for everyone in our community".

XIMENA

That's an important topic.

Allison pauses momentarily, takes a big breath.

ALLISON

And I want to ask you to facilitate it.

I don't have any money to offer, and I know that's not ideal. But this matters to me. I honestly think something like this, starting small, could ripple out and really make a difference.

She lets a breath out.

XIMENA (O.S.)

It sounds like you're planning to take on a big challenge. And you have some big expectations.

ALLISON

I know it sounds crazy.

XIMENA (O.S.)

It's a tall order.

(Pauses)

Alright. I'll do it. But I'll need to bring a co-facilitator. It always works better with two.

ALLISON

Who would you bring?

XIMENA

I know a young man named LENNY. He is learning Facilitation. I'll ask him...Let's see where this goes.

EXTERIOR. RESIDENTIAL STREET. BROOKLYN. MORNING OF NOV 6TH, 2024

The day after Donald Trump is elected President. Dennis and Allison walk side by side, carrying fabric bags of groceries. Dennis keeps his gaze on the ground.

Ahead of them, a man in his mid 50s, ERIC, sweeps the sidewalk, curly hair spilling out from under his baseball cap. He smiles from ear to ear and steps aside as Allison and Dennis pass by.

Allison pauses, turns back to face him.

ALLISON
Nice day, huh?

ERIC
Sure is. We're safer now, with Trump. He'll protect us.

ALLISON
Uh. Protect us from what exactly?

ERIC
From all the violence on the subway, of course. He talks too much. But, he'll keep us safe. That's what matters.

Allison tries to stay calm. Weighs her words.

ALLISON
Well, I hope you're right.

ERIC
Yeah, me too. We'll see.

ALLISON
I'll maybe swing by later on and check in with you once we see how it turns out. Have a nice day.

ERIC
(cheerfully)
You too!

Allison catches up with Dennis. Dennis stops and stares at her.

DENNIS
I don't get it. Why did you stop and talk to that guy?

ALLISON

People are scared, Dennis. He wants to be protected, to be safe. Who doesn't want that?

You know what? I could see him at a Gathering. With all the things he's worried about... I get it.

(she leans in slightly)

And honestly? I'm feeling hopeful. There's more to his concerns than just politics.

Dennis shakes his head and keeps walking.

OWL'S HEAD PARK. THE NEXT AFTERNOON.

Dennis and Allison sit on a blanket, sharing a quiet lunch.

DENNIS

We can use my video camera to record the first Gathering. Might be cool to have something on record, right?

ALLISON

I guess so. Can you come and do it? ...but don't focus on me. It's about the process.

DENNIS

Of course.

INTERIOR. DENNIS'S APARTMENT. THE NEXT MORNING.

At the kitchen table, Allison takes a deep breath and picks up her phone. She dials, waiting as the phone rings.

LIBRARY VOICE (O.S.)

Bay Ridge Library, how can I help you?

ALLISON

Hi, I'm looking to book a meeting room for 12 people on Friday evening, November 22nd, and all day Saturday, November 23rd.

LIBRARY VOICE (O.S.)

I'm sorry, but the library closes at 6 p.m. on Fridays.

(MORE)

LIBRARY VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We also only allow two-hour
bookings for our meeting rooms.

ALLISON
Oh... Okay... Well, thanks anyway.

Allison hangs up, shuts her laptop, frowning, staring ahead for a moment. Then, her eyes light up.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
(to herself)
The Brooklyn Army Terminal! They've
got that whole artist floor.

She grabs her phone and scrolls through her contacts.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
Who do I know... Wait. JAMAL! He
has a studio there.

She taps on Jamal's contact.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
(recording her message)
Hey Jamal, any chance we could use
your studio for a community event
on November 22nd evening and all
day Saturday the 23rd? Do you think
you could come?

She stares at the screen, re-reading her message, and then presses "send." She leans back, tapping her fingers on the table.

BROOKLYN STREET. AFTERNOON.

MARION, 30s, approaches with a small fluffy dog. Allison takes a deep breath and steps forward.

ALLISON
Hey! Hi Marion! How's it going?

Marion smiles, distracted by her dog.

MARION
Hi Allison! Pretty good, just out
for a walk. You?

ALLISON

I'm inviting some neighbors to an event about improving life in our community. Thought you might be interested.

Marion nods, still focused on her dog. Allison takes a small step closer.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

It's a Friday evening, and then all day Saturday... Do you think you could come?

Marion turns, pulling the dog away from the tree. She stoops down with a bag to pick up the dog's deposit. Finally she rises to meet Allison's gaze.

MARION

Gosh, Allison, I'd like to say yes... but weekends are really busy for me lately.

She offers a warm smile.

MARION (CONT'D)

Thanks so much for thinking of me, though. Really.

Marion tugs her dog's leash, walks away with a polite wave.

INT. BAY RIDGE LIBRARY

JASON (40's), well dressed, nods hello and Allison approaches to chat.

ALLISON

Jason! Hey. Good to see you. Listen, I've been troubled by the news lately... I'm pulling together a small gathering with some neighbors on the 22nd and 23rd. We'll have someone guiding the conversation. See what kind of ideas can emerge when everyone's truly heard. Do you think you could come?

JASON

That's really cool, Allison. I'd love to help you out. Weekends are tough for me with all the showings I have lined up.

Jason's voice shifts from apologetic to energized.

JASON (CONT'D)

But you know what, I'll see if I
can free up that weekend!

INTERIOR. DENNIS AND ALLISON'S APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM

Allison reclines on the couch, phone in hand, scrolling
through her contacts. Her brow furrows.

ALLISON

(muttering to herself)
SUZANNE, maybe?

She dials, waits. The phone rings.

SUZANNE O.S.

Hey Allison!

ALLISON

Hi Suzanne! I know you're still
settling in, but I've got an event
I'd love to invite you to on the
weekend of the 22nd at the Brooklyn
Army Terminal. Would you be able to
come?

SUZANNE

Oh, I'd love to, but not unless I
can find a sitter for my little
one. She's two and a half now. Full
of energy. Sorry about that!

ALLISON

Totally get it. I'll send you the
info, and if you can work something
out, just let me know!

SUZANNE

Fat chance of that! But wait. Could
I bring my friend, NADIA? Maybe her
sister would watch our kids.

ALLISON

That would be terrific!

SUZANNE

Okay, I'll ask her.

EXT. BUSY BROOKLYN STREET

Allison walks past nail salons, cafes, pharmacies. She stops to wait for a walk light and overhears two young women chatting in front of the coffee shop on the corner.

WOMAN 1

(looking at newspaper)
Did you see this notice in the
Brooklyn paper? Something about
"Gatherings" for civic engagement?

WOMAN 2

What are they?

WOMAN 1

I dunno, but what a stupid idea.
They think that 12 people can do
stuff that oughta be left up to
City Hall. I don't have time for
this crap!

She tosses the paper in the garbage can on the corner, and heads up the street. The light changes and Allison crosses.

INTERIOR. ART STUDIO IN BROOKLYN ARMY TERMINAL. FRIDAY
EVENING. NOVEMBER 22, 2024

Twelve mismatched chairs are arranged in a semicircle. Lenny (20's, attractive, quirky) tapes blank flip chart papers on the walls at the front of the room. Jamal (40's, Black, skinny) stacks paintings and art materials up against the back wall. Dennis sets up a video camera on a tripod off to the side of the room.

Ximena and Allison talk quietly to each other near the door, and greet participants as they arrive. In addition to Allison and Jamal: Eric, Suzanne, NADIA, Jason, LEAH, DAMIAN, PETER, CAROL, and Sonia.

ALLISON

Looks like Maynard isn't coming.

XIMENA

No problem, we can go ahead with
eleven.

As stragglers take their seats, Ximena heads to the front of the room.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Welcome, everyone. My name's
Ximena. This is Lenny.

(MORE)

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Thanks so much for joining us tonight. The question we'll be addressing is "What is one meaningful step we might take to improve the quality of life for everyone in our community."

Lenny writes the question on one of the papers. Ximena gestures towards it.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

I'll be asking you to direct your comments to me rather than to each other. It might seem odd at first.

Let's start by introducing ourselves. Tell us who you are, and share any hopes or concerns you have for our time together.

She gestures toward the participants.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Who would like to go first?

Eric, mid 50s, casual in jeans, baseball cap, and plaid shirt, is seated at Ximena's far left. He looks over at the other participants, and then speaks.

ERIC

(gruff; scans room)

Yeah, I'll start. I'm Eric. Born and raised in Bay Ridge.

(gestures toward Allison)

This one said I should come. See what all the fuss is about. You know. Crime, safety, all that.

My pops ran a hardware shop down on 86th. That corner deli we used to hit after school? Gone. Now it's... I dunno. A place I can't even pronounce.

Feels like I woke up in a foreign country. And I've never left.

Next to Eric, Suzanne, early 20's, tattoos, dark goth style.

SUZANNE

(bristling)

I'm Suzanne. Live off 4th. Moved here a few months ago from Staten Island.

(MORE)

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

(glances at Eric)

So yeah, maybe I'm part of the invasion.

Honestly? I came here hoping to meet some people who don't assume I'm a threat because I've got piercings and black eyeliner. And maybe, you know...figure out how to pay rent without selling a kidney.

NADIA

(gently, measured)

I can go next.

NADIA (early 30's) wears a long robe and a hijab. All eyes turn to her. Her voice is gentle but steady.

NADIA (CONT'D)

(quietly commanding the room)

I'm NADIA. I live near 78th. With my parents, my sister, my husband, and our four kids. It's loud. And full of love.

I was born here. Brooklyn's the only place I've ever known. My parents came from Syria with suitcases full of hope.

NADIA glances briefly at Eric.

NADIA (CONT'D)

All I want is to walk my daughter to the bodega without gripping her hand like a lifeline.

That's it. That's the hope.

Silence. People shift in their seats. Then DAMIAN (45), thick accent, animated. Speaks up.

DAMIAN

I'm Damian. Got a restaurant on 3rd. Try keeping that open, the way rent is going up these days.

You all talk nice, but I don't see how chit-chat fixes broken pipes or pays my cook.

ALLISON

(upbeat)

Hey, I'm Allison. I'm really glad we're all here. I don't know exactly what'll come of this. But I want it to be something that makes a difference.

JASON

(leans forward)

I'm Jason. Two kids. Almost teens, so pray for me.

(a few chuckles)

We've been in Bay Ridge nine years now. I sell houses, which used to be exciting. Lately, I'm more like a crisis counselor with a clipboard.

My kids want independence. I want to keep them safe. The gap's getting wider.

CAROL

(72, cheerful, round)

I'm Carol. I came with Peter. We're from Ohio. Been in Brooklyn for ten years. I used to work in the office at the same school as Allison.

She looks around at the others, taking them in.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I've voted, marched, signed petitions. I'm here because I think maybe real change starts with groups like this...Honestly I don't think politics is gonna fix anything.

PETER

(75, white beard, well-groomed, relaxed)

Peter, Retired. Carol's husband. My job here is to carry bags and nod at the right moments.

(group chuckles)

SAME GATHERING: AFTER THE OTHER INTRODUCTIONS. Lenny stands with a marker near the flip chart papers taped to the wall. Ximena addresses the group.

XIMENA

Thank you, all of you. We've heard fear. Frustration. But also care. Let's dig into all of that. Eric, would it be all right if we stay with you for a bit?

ERIC

(shrugs; guarded)
Sure. Fire away.

XIMENA

You said that the neighborhood feels unfamiliar...like a foreign country. Can you say more about that?

ERIC

(picking at his sleeve)
Look, I'm not tryin' to be the bad guy here. It's just... Used to be everyone said good morning. You'd leave your keys with your neighbor if you had to. Now? Different shops, different faces, different rules. I'm the stranger now- on my own block.

XIMENA

"How to not feel like a stranger in my own neighborhood"

Lenny writes it on a page entitled "Problem Statements".

XIMENA (CONT'D)

And if it were up to you, what would help?

ERIC

(snickers dryly)
I mean... you're not gonna write "ship 'em out" on the papers, are you?

XIMENA

Lenny will write whatever's offered. No judgment. Just clarity.

ERIC

Fine. Go ahead then. "Send 'em back where they came from."

Lenny writes "Send them back" on the page titled "Solutions".
Eric stares at the words, processing.

ERIC (CONT'D)

It's not gonna happen, is it. And
yeah. Some of these people have
been here forever. Like this lady
said.

(nods towards NADIA)

She was born here.

I don't actually want to kick
people out of here. I just... I
want to feel at home in my own
neighborhood.

Lenny writes "How to feel at home in my own neighborhood"
under "Problem Statements".

XIMENA

What might make it feel more like
home?

ERIC

(slower now)

Maybe... I don't know. You'd
probably say get to know them. Make
friends with them.

(awkward pause)

Don't see how that's gonna happen.

Lenny writes under "Solutions": "Get to know them" and "Make
friends with them".

XIMENA

Make friends with them, get to know
them. Anything else?

ERIC

(sighs)

Nope.

XIMENA

Thank you, Eric.

She takes a breath, then scans the room.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Who's next?

SUZANNE

(blurts out)

Yeah, me.

(turns toward Eric, angry)

(MORE)

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

You say "send them back"? What about people like me? Maybe someone should ship you back to the Stone Age. Or Staten Island. Whatever comes first.

XIMENA

(tapping her chest)
Right here, Suzanne. Talk to me.

SUZANNE

(grits teeth; sighs)
Sorry. It's just...exhausting... I know I don't look like everyone else. I get it. But I don't want to have to lose myself to feel safe.

And it scares me that someone could look at NADIA and think she doesn't belong. When she's more Brooklyn than half of us.

XIMENA

Sounds like you're saying... you're tired of having to make yourself invisible just to stay safe. And that it's not just about you. It's about how people look at someone like NADIA and decide she doesn't belong... even when this is her home.

Did I get that right?

SUZANNE

You got it.

Lenny writes under "Problem Statements": "How can I be safe without making myself invisible".

XIMENA

What's something you'd change, if you could?

SUZANNE

We need to stop making each other the enemy.

More face-to-face stuff. Real talk, not memes. A meal, a mural, something. Maybe actually talk. Not online. In real life.

(MORE)

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

Like...where you meet folks who aren't already in your circle of friends.

Lenny writes under "Solutions": "Meet people outside your circle."

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

Like here...Even if it's awkward at first.

XIMENA

"More Gatherings? Meals and murals"

Suzanne nods. Lenny writes "More Gatherings" and "Meals and murals".

XIMENA (CONT'D)

(to Suzanne)

Is there anything else before we move on?

SUZANNE

(glancing at Eric)

Sometimes the best stuff grows out of weird beginnings.

XIMENA

Thank you, Suzanne.

(she turns to the group)

Who's next? Our question remains: "What is one meaningful step we might take to improve the quality of life for everyone in our community?"

NADIA raises her hand. Ximena nods.

NADIA

(slowly)

I just want to feel safe.

Lenny writes "How can I feel safe" under "Problem Statements"

NADIA (CONT'D)

There was this day -two years ago on the N train.

(she gathers herself)

My daughter was on my lap. Three years old. The train fills with smoke. People scream. Then that pop pop noise...I didn't even realize it was a gun until I saw the panic in someone's eyes.

The room stills. Everyone's attention is riveted on her.

NADIA (CONT'D)

My daughter kept asking, "Mama, why are they screaming."

I couldn't answer.

Just held her so tight I thought I'd break both of us.

When the doors opened, a man held them for us. He had an American flag tattooed on his forearm. I don't know his name. But I remember the ink.

(small smile; fading)

That moment broke something. And built something. At the same time.

Silence. No one interrupts.

XIMENA

(softly)

You're bringing that experience with you every time you go out.

Lenny writes "How can we be safe on the subway" under "Problem Statements". Eric glance at Nadia, looks back down.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

NADIA, have you thought about any ways to address that need for safety?

NADIA

Yeah...Maybe we need to actually notice each other. Look out for each other. Not just look past each other like shadows. Then we would all feel less alone.

Lenny writes "Notice each other" and "Look out for each other" under "Solutions".

XIMENA

Sounds like you're saying that really seeing each other, not just passing by, could be what helps us feel safer.

NADIA nods.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

(gently)

Is there anything else you want to add?

NADIA

Yes.

When I was little, I used to think "Brooklyn" meant everybody. Didn't matter what you wore, or where your parents came from. It was noisy, and chaotic, and beautiful. Now?...Now it feels like everyone's drawing lines. And I don't know which side I'm on anymore.

(long pause)

But I want it to mean everybody again.

Silence. Even Dennis, filming from the corner, lowers his camera for a moment. Eric stares at the floor, then slowly lifts his gaze towards NADIA.

XIMENA

(nods; voice soft)

Thank you, NADIA.

She glances at the group, then back to the flip chart.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

All right...who's ready to go next?

INTERIOR. ART STUDIO IN BROOKLYN ARMY TERMINAL. THE NEXT AFTERNOON.

Flip chart sheets wrap the walls, full of scribbled notes in thick marker: "How to feel at home in my neighborhood". "How can we feel safe on the subway?". "How to feel we're part of something". "Get to know each other." "More Gatherings". Etcetera.

Mismatched chairs are now in a loose circle. Less formal. There are empty coffee cups, a crumpled snack wrapper or two, and visible fatigue. Ximena stands near the charts, holding a marker. Lenny steps forward.

LENNY

We've covered a lot in these charts...When you look at everything we've written, what stands out?

Everyone looks toward the flip charts.

JAMAL

I don't know what this is exactly.
But something in it feels ancient.
Like we're remembering, not
inventing. It all comes down to
the same thing, doesn't
it?...Connection. Feeling seen.
Feeling safe. Feeling part of
something.

LENNY

Go on.

JAMAL

People just want to know they
matter. That they aren't just
passing through each other's lives
like ghosts.

JASON

Yeah, not just safe from danger.
Safe with each other.

DAMIAN

(sits up, energized)
What if we actually did one of
those meals someone mentioned
yesterday?

CAROL

Like a potluck?

DAMIAN

Yeah. Public. Open. Something
different groups could actually
share. My place is closed Mondays.
We could use the space.

Heads turn. Eyebrows lift. Murmurs of excitement.

SUZANNE

Could we add music? Get a local
band. Or just a playlist that
doesn't suck?

NADIA

And include kids. Let them feel
like it's their space too. Games,
books, something with crayons.

ERIC
 (quietly)
 Like block parties. Only inside.

Everyone looks towards Eric, a little surprised.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 My grandmother used to make soda
 cakes for the whole block.

It was the only time neighbors
 stopped arguing with each other!

LEAH
 Do you know how to make them?

ERIC
 (small shrug)
 I think I can find the recipe.

Laughter. Soft, surprised, genuine.

SUZANNE
 What if nobody shows?

JAMAL
 Or worse, what if it just blows up?
 One wrong look and it turns into a
 mess.

NADIA
 It might.

But so did this. And look at us
 now.

Ximena writes on the "Concerns" chart: "Turnout." "Mess."

JASON
 We don't need to fix everything
 today. We just need to keep
 gathering.

CAROL
 Well, if we're gonna spiral, we
 might as well spiral over dinner.

LEAH
 How about the Monday after next?

DAMIAN
 I'll prep the space.

SUZANNE

I can do a flyer. Something bold.
Catch people's eye.

JASON

I'll look into permits. Just in
case somebody gets fussy.

PETER

Will we need extra folding chairs?

ERIC

I've got some folding chairs in my
garage.

CAROL

Look at us. We're starting
something.

ALLISON

(whispers to Dennis)
It's not perfect. But something
real is happening here.

Lenny steps back and watches. Someone starts a group chat on
their phone. Sonia snaps photos of the flip charts.

Lenny tapes up a clean flip chart paper. Ximena writes:
COMMUNITY DINNER: Monday, December second, six pm, at
Damian's Restaurant. Food. Music. Kids welcome. Bring
something to share.

EXTERIOR, DAMIAN'S RESTAURANT. MONDAY EVENING. DECEMBER 2ND,
2024

A light drizzle falls as people trickle into the small corner
restaurant. The windows are fogged with warmth and activity
inside.

A hand-lettered sign is taped to the door: COMMUNITY DINNER
TONIGHT. Food. Music. All are welcome. Kids too.

INTERIOR DAMIAN'S RESTAURANT. SAME NIGHT

Inside is friendly chaos. Folding chairs along the walls are
filling up. People line up for food as steam rises from crock
pots and aluminum trays. Homemade dishes are labeled in
marker: "Tamales." "Falafel." "Perogies." "Plantains." "Mac &
Cheese (vegan)."

KIDS run around with paper plates, navigating the crowd. In the corner a low table has crayons, markers, puzzles. A GUITARIST plays softly in the corner.

Damian stands behind the counter, apron on, dishing out food.

DAMIAN

(to Leah)

I think this event will be good for my business!

Suzanne tapes a flyer to the window. Eric passes out soda cakes.

NADIA speaks quietly with Jason. She gestures to her daughter, who's giggling with another kid.

Allison and Dennis chat with a younger couple. Allison shows them a clipboard with a sheet titled: "Interested in Gatherings". They add their names and emails next to the numbers 22 and 23.

ALLISON

(shows it to Dennis)

Wow. With the people who want to come back, we have almost enough for two more Gatherings!

DENNIS

We can add those Gatherings to the website...But who's gonna facilitate them? Do you think Ximena and Lenny will do them all?

People continue talking, lingering, even as dishes empty and music gets quiet.

NADIA looks around the room. She catches Eric's eye. He gives a slight nod.

She nods back.

INTERIOR CAROL AND PETER'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT. A WEEK LATER. MORNING

Carol looks out her window at the view of Manhattan as she talks on her cell phone.

CAROL

I swear, I've never seen anything like it! I didn't think anything would change. But something shifted in me.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

I witnessed strangers coming together and saying things we don't usually say. Then we created something together that really impacted the community. For the better! Even Peter is totally fired up about these Gatherings!

A voice, distant and muffled, comes through the phone.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Well, sure, you could do this in Cleveland! You'd just need a Facilitator.

The voice responds, unintelligible.

CAROL (CONT'D)

As a matter of fact, Peter and I want to become Facilitators. Then we could come out to Ohio and lead a Gathering there!

So, um, have you cleared out the guest room yet, or is it still full of Kevin's stuff? We'll need a place to stay!

Carol ends the call, and scrunches her brow. She looks over at Peter in the recliner. He's reading the news on his i-phone.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Peter, we'd better get on it and call Allison to find out what we need to do!

She searches her contacts, and presses Allison's name.

RING!

INTERIOR DENNIS AND ALLISON'S APARTMENT

Allison's ring tone.

ALLISON

Hey Carol! Good to hear from you!

CAROL (O.S.)

You too. Look, Peter and I want to talk to you about learning how to facilitate Gatherings. We think it's right up our alley.

ALLISON

Wow, that's great Carol. It looks like we're going to need more Facilitators!

CAROL (O.S.)

So what do we do?

ALLISON

I'll give Ximena a call and see what needs to happen next. I'll let you know what I find out.

CAROL (O.S.)

We'll be waiting! Thanks, Allison!

COFFEE SHOP. THE NEXT MORNING.

Allison and Dennis greet Ximena outside the coffee shop entrance. They enter and line up at the counter to order their drinks.

DENNIS

(to Allison)

Just get me a dark roast, black.

I'll get a table.

Dennis finds a table with two chairs and asks someone seated alone if he can take an empty chair from their table. Allison and Ximena join him.

ALLISON

Glad it works for you to meet today Ximena. We can't wait to hear your thoughts about the first Gathering. And we have some questions for you.

XIMENA

I thought it was lovely. I heard the community meal was a success.

ALLISON

It was, and there is already interest in having more Gatherings.

DENNIS

So we're going to need more Facilitators.

XIMENA

I figured.

ALLISON

Carol and Peter are interested.
What would they need to do to
become Facilitators?

XIMENA

Hmm. We do need to develop a
program for Gathering Facilitators.
And we also need a way to support
people after they've been to a
Gathering. When they are back in
the "real world" implementing their
projects.

DENNIS

They need a virtual support
network. And a way to stay in
touch. I can help with that.

XIMENA

Great! That will be important. We
really need a way for people to
keep participating.

ALLISON

When I follow up with people, I can
let them know how to stay
connected.

XIMENA

And let's put together a course for
people like Carol and Peter so they
can start developing mastery in
facilitating Gatherings.

INTERIOR CHURCH BASEMENT. FACILITATOR DEVELOPMENT. BROOKLYN.
SPRING 2025

Lenny and Ximena tape papers to the wall. Ximena steps
forward.

XIMENA

We're so glad you're here, because
it sure looks like we're going to
need a lot of Facilitators!

She looks around at the six faces focused on her. Peter,
Carol, Jason, Suzanne, Jamal, Leah.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Welcome to this deep dive into
Co-Creating Desired Futures!

(MORE)

XIMENA (CONT'D)

After this weekend facilitation intensive, we'll be staying in touch regularly, so we can support one another and keep developing our skills.

As you know, Gatherings are offered freely, from the heart, and that includes this program. But we all need to pay our bills.

Ximena gestures to the hat on the end of the table by the door.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

So at each event, including this one, we pass the hat and ask that you contribute what feels right to you.

Ximena steps forward, and looks at every person as she speaks.

XIMENA (CONT'D)

Every Gathering is different. But they all explore the same basic question: "What is one meaningful step we might take together to improve the quality of life for everyone in our community?"

Suzanne interrupts.

SUZANNE

Like when we did the community dinner at Damian's.

XIMENA

Yes, that was definitely a meaningful step!

The best way to learn facilitation is to experience it, and also to take turns practicing.

So here, we will be exploring some actual issues. Things that we care about. And the more controversial, the better.

We'll choose a challenge we face in our own communities, and explore possible creative responses to it.

(MORE)

XIMENA (CONT'D)

That's how we co-create desired futures.

CAROL

(musing out loud)

Hmm, co-creating desired futures.
I like that.

XIMENA

Who would like to start?

INTERIOR. ART STUDIO IN BROOKLYN ARMY TERMINAL. FRIDAY
EVENING. SUMMER 2025

Gathering is in full swing with twelve new participants.
Carol co-facilitates with Lenny.

Russ (in his 50's, wiry, intense) raises his hand.

RUSS

Well my quality of life is
definitely going downhill. And I
can't believe that people are
letting it happen.

CAROL

This question about quality of life
angers you.

RUSS

I wake up every morning and see
Project 2025 unfolding before my
eyes. Democracy is dead. We're all
doomed to live in fear - of each
other, if not the government
itself. I can't even fathom it.

CAROL

It seems unthinkable to you that
this can be happening. Here. In
America.

RUSS

Never thought it could. Who knows,
maybe they'll come and arrest us
for doing one of these Gatherings.

CAROL

You're wondering if you can even
feel safe here. You've been
thinking a lot about this, haven't
you.

Russ nods slowly.

CAROL (CONT'D)

If there was something you could do about it, what would that be?

RUSS

I'd want to shout from the rooftops, "Wake up everyone!" I'd gather so many people together that we'd change the whole constitution.

JIMMY

(Sarcastically)
Good luck with that.

CAROL

(to Russ)
Change the constitution. To what?

RUSS

Amend it to say that everyone has a right to housing, food, water, electricity. Healthcare. That anytime we use a resource we need a plan for regenerating it.

(excitement fades)
Fat chance of that, though.

CAROL

You can see a way forward, but sounds like you don't have much hope that it could actually happen.

RUSS

I'm not seeing it. We're not ready yet.

He looks around the room at the others. Sighs.

CAROL

Anything else you want to say, Russ?

RUSS

That's about it for now.

Carol steps back and nods to Lenny. IRIS (20's; ripped jeans) jumps up, raising her hand. Excited.

LENNY

Iris, let's hear from you.

IRIS
 (addressing Russ)
 I'm in! Let's change the
 constitution then.
 (turns back to Lenny)
 Could we do that?

Carol writes "How can we change the constitution" under
 problem statements.

IRIS (CONT'D)
 I mean, if it's too hard to change
 it for the whole country, maybe we
 could come up with a constitution
 for our community!

INTERIOR. DENNIS & ALLISON'S APARTMENT. EVENING. FALL. 2025

Allison enters with a basket of laundry and dumps it on the
 couch. Dennis is focused on his laptop at the kitchen table.
 He leans forward, squinting at The Gatherings website
 spreadsheet.

DENNIS
 (to himself)
 Holy Moley, that can't be right.

ALLISON
 What?

DENNIS
 Look at this. So many people are
 signing up for Gatherings. They've
 got locations, they've confirmed
 participants. They're just waiting
 on Facilitators!

ALLISON
 We need way more Facilitator
 development.

DENNIS
 Ximena thinks we might need to
 bring in A.I. soon. To help with
 writing on the charts, and to teach
 empathy and listening online. She
 says A.I. is pretty good at
 empathy.

ALLISON
 (frowns)
 I get it.
 (MORE)

ALLISON (CONT'D)

But people already feel like A.I. is creeping in everywhere. They're suspicious of it.

EAST COAST BEACH. FUTURE. 2149

Waves gently lap at the sand. Small cottages line the beach, the sound of cheerful chatter rises from the porch of Pietro's house.

Micah bursts out the door, wearing a swimsuit, his towel flying behind him. His friend Pietro trails right after, laughing as they pass all four of their parents sitting around the porch table.

Together, they race, shouting, and dive into the waves, swimming and splashing, the sun shining on their backs.

As Micah floats, laughing, he glances up towards the houses on the shore. His expression becomes serious.

MICAH

Pietro. Look! The water's going right up to your porch!

Pietro's laughter fades as he turns, squinting in the direction of his house.

PIETRO

Yeah, the tide's coming in. It keeps getting higher and higher. My parents have been getting worried about that lately.

He swims over to Micah, motioning for him to follow.

PIETRO (CONT'D)

C'mon, I'll show you.

They make their way toward Pietro's house. Pietro gestures to a water line etched into the corner post of the porch.

PIETRO (CONT'D)

See this? It's still going up. It will be up to here soon, and then tomorrow when the tide comes in again, it will probably be up to here.

He points to another spot, half an inch higher.

PIETRO (CONT'D)

It's the sea level rising. Because of climate change.

MICAH

But if it keeps going up like that, the water will get right up on your porch! Won't it get inside your house, too?

Pietro hesitates for a moment, looking at the rising water.

PIETRO

Yeah... my parents say we'll have to leave. Not just us, either. Everybody along the beach will need to move.

MICAH

But where will you go? Where will everyone go?

PIETRO

My parents have been going to Gatherings to talk about this. Let's ask them.

You probably don't have to worry about stuff like this, huh?

Pietro and Micah scramble up onto the porch. Sky and Danny are sitting around the table chatting with Pietro's parents Felicia(37)and Gabriel(38).

MICAH

(to the grownups, alarmed)
Are you seeing how high the water is getting? It's almost up here on the porch!

The adults stop their conversation and turn to Micah. Gabriel speaks directly and calmly.

GABRIEL

We've been watching it rise for awhile now. We knew this was going to happen.

MICAH

What are you gonna do?

GABRIEL

We've been talking about it at the Gatherings for many months.

DANNY

Will you be wanting to come to the City?

FELICIA

No city for me! My parents moved to this old cabin before I was born. I've loved being next to the ocean!

DANNY

There must be others like you.

FELICIA

There's probably hundreds of beach people like us.

GABRIEL

At the Gatherings we created a project to construct a small Seastead 15 miles out at sea.

He points out to the horizon.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

We've been working with engineers and biologists to help with the plan.

SKY

Why do you need biologists?

GABRIEL

Part of the plan includes a wide breakwater made with sargassum seaweed and kelp to protect us from heavy waves. Biologists can help with that.

FELICIA

The Seastead will start small, maybe 50 people or so. It will be made up of floating modules made with 3D extrusion. Then we can add more as we go along.

MICAH

(looks out at the water)

Is this Seastead going to be built in time?

GABRIEL

Yeah, well, you see, that's the problem.

PIETRO

The sea level is rising a lot faster than we thought.

DANNY

So, in the meantime?

FELICIA

We may need to be City folks for awhile. If there's room.

PIETRO

This is depressing. Come on Micah, let's get the binoculars and go up on the roof to see if we can see anything from up there.

Pietro and Micah dash inside and head up the narrow stairs to the attic. They crawl out the window onto the roof, and take turns peering through the binoculars as waves crash against the houses.

INTERIOR. DENNIS'S AND ALLISON'S APARTMENT. TWO YEARS LATER. MORNING 2027

Dennis is frying eggs and buttering toast. Allison is at her laptop at the kitchen table.

ALLISON

Hmm, Mel sent a link to a podcast he said we should listen to. Here.

Allison turns up the volume.

PODCASTER

Today I want to talk to you about these meetings that seem to be popping up all over the place. Have you heard about them? Maybe your neighbor or uncle or sister has been to one, and has come home raving about it. Well, watch out, folks. There is conspiracy afoot. These people are woke lefties who want to take all our hard earned tax money for handouts to immigrants and criminals. They're starting to take over. Have you seen some of these projects they've been posting? Here's one, "Let's make sure every neighborhood in Kansas City has a Gathering".

(MORE)

PODCASTER (CONT'D)

This is an invasion. Who are these people?

Allison stops the podcast.

ALLISON

Where does this guy come off talking this way? Has he ever even been to a Gathering?

DENNIS

Honestly? I'm surprised this didn't happen sooner. People are afraid of everything these days.

ALLISON

But I didn't expect such strong objections.

DENNIS

Well, now everybody knows somebody who's been to a Gathering. It's because of you, Allison. You started a movement.

ALLISON

(brushing it off)

Maybe somebody should get this guy to actually come to a Gathering.

DENNIS

Good luck with that.

INTERIOR MEETING ROOM. UNKNOWN LOCATION IN OHIO. A MONTH LATER. 2027

Twelve participants are sitting in a semicircle. Peter writes "How can we make child care more affordable" on a sheet titled "Problem Statements".

CAROL

(to a participant)

Do you have more to say about that?

BANG!

The door suddenly bursts open. A blonde, bearded GUNMAN (age 19 or 20) barges in wielding a semi-automatic rifle. He appears nervous, impulsive, inexperienced.

Participants scream and run toward the far wall. Peter positions himself in front of them, arms spread wide, protectively. Carol pauses for a moment, and then takes a step towards the gunman.

CAROL (CONT'D)
 (staring at the gun)
 Wow. Looks like you're dead serious. About something.

GUNMAN
 (eyes narrow)
 Damn right. This is one of those conspiracy meetings. You woke lefties are trying to take over.

CAROL
 Are you planning to shoot us?
 Because we're here to listen. If you shoot us we can't do that.

Gunman looks at Carol, then at the others. Shifts uncomfortably. Beads of sweat appear on his face. He wags the weapon as he speaks.

GUNMAN
 You're ruining America. Look at you. Sitting around talking while awful things go on in the world. And...

He nods roughly towards a person of color in the group.

GUNMAN (CONT'D)
 You're mixing with everybody, those people don't belong in our country.

CAROL
 You are saying those people don't belong in America. Go on.

GUNMAN
 You're letting all these criminals come across our borders, they take our jobs and they don't even speak English.

CAROL
 They cross our borders, take our jobs, and they don't speak English. What else?

GUNMAN
(impatiently)
Quit talking to me like a parrot.
You heard me.

CAROL
I did.

Gunman jerks his weapon and waves it towards participants, and then looks back at Carol.

CAROL (CONT'D)
What do you think should be done
about these things?

GUNMAN
Maybe I should just shoot all of
you.

He waves the gun, in the general direction of the group.

GUNMAN (CONT'D)
You gotta send them back.

Take back our country.

One of the participants slowly attempts to ease his cell phone out of his back pocket, glances back at it, pushes "emergency". A voice responds.

VOICE FROM PHONE
What is your emergency?

Gunman's eyes flash, he grips the gun and aims toward the sound. The man drops his phone.

CRASH.

VOICE FROM PHONE (CONT'D)
What is your emergency?

Peter looks intently at Carol.

Gunman freezes. Carol steps between him and the group. He shifts his focus to her.

GUNMAN
(to Carol)
See, we have to get rid of these
people. They're troublemakers.
They're gonna ruin everything.

CAROL
They'll ruin everything.

And if you shoot them your life
will be ruined.

GUNMAN
(eyes closing)
My life is already ruined.

He puts the gun under his chin. Participants gasp.

CAROL
(softly)
We are here to listen to what you
have to say.

About your life being ruined.

Gunman's hands are shaking. Face reddens. Drops to his knees
and rifle clatters onto the floor.

GUNMAN
(barely audible)
No one listens.

Gunman sobs. Carol bends down and carefully pushes the gun
away, keeping her attention on the gunman as she stands back
up.

CAROL
Take your time. You may not think
so, but what you have to say is
important to us.

A Black male participant moves slowly toward the gun, picks
it up and skillfully ejects the cartridges.

GUNMAN
I lost my job, 'n if I can't pay my
rent, I'm gonna get kicked out onto
the streets. Where the fuck am I
supposed to live? Those damn
shelters are full of stupid fucking
immigrants who can't speak English.
They're taking all the jobs.

CAROL
You have no job, nowhere to live,
and the shelters are full of people
you can't relate to, who are making
things worse for you.

GUNMAN

What the fuck do I do? Kill myself?
My girlfriend cheated on me and now
she won't talk to me.

BANG!

Door swings open. A police officer bursts in, reaches for his gun.

OFFICER

Everyone, hands up.

Everyone's hands go up. The gunman, still kneeling on the floor, turns and raises his hands too.

The officer glances at the rifle laying near the wall next to the Black participant who disarmed it. Points his gun towards this participant.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

What's going on here?

CAROL

Uh..We appreciate your checking in,
Officer. There was a
misunderstanding, but I think we
are okay now. If you can remove
the gun, with no questions asked,
then we will all feel safer here.

The Black participant shows his hands. The officer picks up the weapon, and checks to make sure it's not loaded. A voice comes over the Officer's radio.

RADIO VOICE

(distorted)

Police dispatch to 75th and Vine,
Robbery in progress, shots fired.

The officer looks at the gun he picked up, looks at the people in the meeting room, shakes his head, and strides heavily back out the door, taking the weapon with him. Gunman stares after him.

CAROL

(pauses; turns to the
gunman)

I don't know your name, sir.

GUNMAN

Jake. Name's Jake.

CAROL

Are we okay, Jake? Can I tell these people that they are safe?

Jake looks down. Carol glances towards Peter and the others who are still standing over by the wall. She looks back at Jake. He nods, avoiding eye contact.

CAROL (CONT'D)

(quietly, to Jake)

What we are considering here at this Gathering is "What is one meaningful step we might take to improve the quality of life for everyone in our community".

Everyone includes you, Jake.

As far as I am concerned, you are welcome to stay. Anyone object?

No one objects.

Carol pulls up a chair for the gunman to join the group. She nods towards Peter, who gestures for other participants to come back to their seats. They hesitate briefly, then slowly return. The gunman looks at them, looks at Carol, and then takes the seat.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Okay.

(looks at Jake)

You were saying some things that are important to you. Having a job, having a place to live, being around people who understand you. I think we can all relate.

INTERIOR DENNIS AND ALLISON'S APARTMENT. A WEEK LATER.

Dennis scrutinizes his laptop screen at the kitchen table.

DENNIS

Allison! You need to see this!

Allison steps over to him. She leans in as he pulls her beside him, pointing to the screen where the headline reads: "Gatherings Facilitator Talks Down Gunman in Ohio."

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Look. It's Carol on Good Morning USA.

He presses 'Play'. The screen shifts to a well-lit interview with SAMANTHA REEVE.

SAMANTHA REEVE

You're being hailed as a hero Carol. What gave you the strength to step up when a gunman barged into the Gathering you were facilitating?

The camera cuts to Carol sitting calmly in a chair. She speaks directly to Samantha.

CAROL

I don't see myself as a hero, Samantha. When I became a Gathering Facilitator, I felt like I'd found my purpose. My true calling. I've been blessed with so much in life, and I just wanted to give something back.

She pauses, glancing toward the camera.

CAROL (CONT'D)

When I saw that gun pointed at me, I don't even remember thinking about it. I just stepped forward towards him. I suppose in that moment, my instinct was to protect the space we'd created for people to speak, to be heard. Even him. Even the man with the gun. I knew if I had to, I would give my life to protect that.

SAMANTHA REEVE

And despite everything, he ended up staying at the Gathering?

CAROL

That's right. It was the most extraordinary thing I've ever witnessed. The other participants were somehow able to set aside their fear and their judgement, and welcome him.

SAMANTHA REEVE

And, as I understand, the police didn't arrest him? How did that happen?

CAROL

They removed the weapon. But right at that moment, they were called away to another emergency. I think they sensed we were no longer in danger.

Dennis and Allison exchange a look. Allison places her hand on her chest. Dennis reaches to touch her face.

She closes her eyes as he gently and passionately kisses her lips for the first time.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

THREE YEARS LATER. INTERIOR ALLISON AND DENNIS'S NEW APARTMENT. DAYTIME. 2030.

Dennis sits at his computer. Infant BENJAMIN is cradled in one arm, and LUCY (age 2) is in a booster seat nearby, eating her cereal.

DENNIS

Hey, Allison! The Gatherings are multiplying so fast. Look at this. We just hit the 5,000 mark!

The screen displays a graph, showing an exponential rise in both Gatherings and projects.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

The numbers keep going up.

Dennis taps the touch pad and the screen changes to a map of the world. He scrolls through a timeline showing dots multiplying at an accelerating rate.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

The map is lighting up all over the place!

He taps again, and a network of project categories emerge.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Wow. Take a look at the scope of projects from the Gatherings!

Allison stops to give Lucy more cheerios, and steps closer to take a look at the images of the projects as he scrolls through his screen.

ALLISON

Wow! Look at how all the small projects are falling into so many different categories...there's safety, housing, transportation, energy...

She points to the screen, reading, as Dennis continues scrolling through the images.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Recreation, food systems, elder care, childcare, education.

DENNIS

And the different Gatherings are building on each other's ideas!

ALLISON

This group made a request to City Council and got zoning changed so they could close their street and turn it into gardens and parks.

DENNIS

Look here, they've set up "made-in-place small scale manufacturing" projects to build up their community's wealth! This is incredible!

INTERIOR LIBRARY MEETING ROOM. OHIO. MORNING 2032

The room is quiet. Carol finishes taping up papers on the walls. Twelve participants sit in a semi circle. Jake (cleaned up) takes a deep breath and stands before the group. He looks at each participant with softness in his eyes.

JAKE

I'm here today... because these Gatherings... they saved me.

A few years ago, I walked into a room like this... angry... lost. I was desperate.

He glances over at Carol.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I didn't know what it felt like to belong.

He looks around the room, making eye contact with each person.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm here because I want to be the person who listens, who sees you. Because that's what made all the difference for me.

Carol smiles. Jake steps back slightly. The participants settle more deeply in their chairs.

RE-PURPOSED BROOKLYN BLOCK. EARLY AFTERNOON. FALL. 2034

Dennis and Allison emerge from the subway with their two kids, LUCY(6) and BENJAMIN (4). They walk two blocks east. The sounds of voices and children playing grow louder as they approach the re-purposed block.

ALLISON

Wow, it's like a whole new world here.

Their kids rush ahead to a grassy area where children are running with streamers. Dennis slows, spots a man tending a raised garden bed near a small orchard of fig trees.

DENNIS

Hey there! We came to take a look at what you've done with the place. I'm Dennis, and this is Allison... and our kids, Lucy and Benjamin.

ELIJAH

Sure thing. Nice to meet you! I'm Elijah.

(gestures to the garden)

This is one of our raised garden beds. Just weeding the carrots. We've got quite a few gardeners on the block, so our gardens are really thriving.

Elijah gestures broadly to the block: lush grass, flowers blooming, people lounging in lawn chairs reading, and kids laughing and playing.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

It started as a Gathering project. We closed the street to cars about three or four years ago. Ripped up the pavement and turned it into a shared park. Now it's a place for everyone. No traffic, just open space for all kinds of activities.

DENNIS

Don't people miss having cars? How do people get around?

ELIJAH

We set up a car share at the other end of the block. Five cars people can use, and we built an app for booking them. Works pretty well.

(gestures toward a shed)

(MORE)

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

And over there, we've got a tool-sharing shed. Everything from hammers to lawnmowers. Plus a maker space for anyone who wants to invent or fix things... Even the kids get involved.

Elijah waves to someone a few houses down.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

Hey, Rachel! Can you come over here for a sec?

Rachel, mid 30s, walks over with a friendly smile.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)

This is Dennis and Allison. They're curious about the block. Rachel's the one to tell you about the cool stuff we're doing here.

RACHEL

Hey there! Glad to meet you.

Looks like Elijah already showed you part of our garden.

ALLISON

You're sure making great use of this outdoor space!

RACHEL

We have some indoor spaces we share too. Come with me.

Rachel takes them to a brownstone halfway down the block, then heads down the stairs to a lower-level unit.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Check this out! This is our new Sewing and Fabric Arts center.

A man and a woman look up from their work at two of the four sewing machines. They wave hello.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

We've been collecting fabrics from all over and making quilts.

She gestures to the colorful and artistic quilts hanging on the walls.

ALLISON

They're beautiful! What happens to them?

RACHEL

We sell them online and at the farmers market. All the proceeds go back into our neighborhood projects.

DENNIS

Using local talent to build community wealth! That's brilliant.

RACHEL

I've got another place to show you! Let's go see.

As they cross to the other side Dennis pauses, takes a breath.

DENNIS

Something smells really good. Is someone cooking?

RACHEL

Ah, yes! I'm taking you to our Kitchen Cafe. This is where people who love to cook come to experiment and share recipes. You can drop by anytime and find something delicious.

They enter another lower-level apartment. Inside, tables with fresh flowers are set up throughout the room. The kitchen at the back has tureens of soup and a basket of fresh biscuits on the counter.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Want to call the kids over for some soup?

DENNIS

Sure! This looks delicious!

ALLISON

(touching Dennis's arm)
Dennis... I can see our family living here.

RACHEL

It's funny, the property values have gone way up.

(MORE)

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Seems like everyone wants to live
this way... but no one here wants
to sell.

DENNIS

Maybe we could do something like
this on our block.

Dennis dashes up the stairs to call the kids.

EXTERIOR UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. ONE YEAR LATER. NOVEMBER 7, 2035

Sign says "Columbia University".

INTERIOR. CLASSROOM NUMBER 309.

The noisy crowd of about 200 people quiets as Professor
Esther Manning, (57, Black) enters from the left wing followed
by Allison (42). Both sit down on stools in front of the
class, each holding a portable microphone.

ESTHER MANNING

Welcome. Welcome and thank you for
coming this evening. Tonight we are
here to talk about the phenomenon
of the Gatherings. Who here has
attended a Gathering in your
neighborhood?

Video camera pans to reveal over half of the audience raising
a hand.

ESTHER MANNING (CONT'D)

Ok. Wow. That's quite a lot of you.
So most of you know what these
Gatherings can do. How many of you
know who started the Gatherings?

Camera pans again, audience members are glancing at each
other. There are no hands raised.

ESTHER MANNING (CONT'D)

Well that person sits in front of
you and is our special guest today.
Allison Silver Clarkson.

INTERIOR DENNIS AND ALLISON'S APARTMENT. 5 YEARS LATER. LATE
MORNING. 2040

Dennis (46) sits at his desk, his fingers shuffling through a
pile of papers. He finds the pages he is looking for.

DENNIS

Here they are..

Glancing furtively over his shoulder, he rises, places the pages on the dining room table. Goes over to reach into the back of the closet, and gets out a worn shopping bag. He looks around once again and pulls a shiny cylindrical object out of the bag. He examines the inscription on the bottom: "OPEN May 3,2149. Dennis E. Clarkson, born 1994".

DENNIS (CONT'D)

(to himself)

2149, that should do it. It's even more than a hundred years!

He places the cylinder carefully on the dining room table. He picks up the papers and pulls off the stickers that say "acid-free archival paper," then rolls up the printed messages and places them inside the capsule.

He crosses to the sideboard, opens the drawer, retrieves a box of carefully organized memory cards and DVDs and brings it to the table.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

I hope somebody in the future knows how to read this data...

With reverence, he gently wraps the items in a piece of fabric, and places them into the capsule. His movements are slow and deliberate.

He stares at the closed time capsule for a long moment. Then, with one final glance towards the door, he reaches into a sideboard drawer, finds a screwdriver, carefully tightens the four screws to fasten the lid onto the capsule, and covers each screw with a folding plastic cap.

He grabs his backpack from a hook on the wall, and places the time capsule inside. Then zips it up.

EXTERIOR DENNIS & ALLISON'S APARTMENT. MOMENTS LATER

Standing just outside the door of the apartment Dennis pauses to take in the street in front of him. No asphalt. No cars. Instead, flowers, play equipment, lawn chairs, raised garden beds. He takes a deep breath, smiles, puts on his backpack and rides off on his bicycle.

EXTERIOR. WALKWAY IN FUTURE. AFTERNOON. 2149

Eliana and Micah walk together along the canal.

ELIANA

That was pretty upsetting at the museum, seeing how people lived back in 2025, wasn't it.

MICAH

Sure was. I wish I could go back in time and change things.

ELIANA

What would you do to change things?

MICAH

I don't know, maybe let them know it can be different?

ELIANA

How so?

Eliana stops next to the flower stand, and turns to Micah.

MICAH

Well, more like what we have now.

ELIANA

What would you want them to know about?

As Micah answers, Eliana pulls different colored flowers out of their bins to create a bouquet, and reaches up to the dispenser to pull down a fabricated vase for carrying them.

MICAH

Well, what school is like now. And how Coming of Age means we can start going to Gatherings.

ELIANA

Right, you'll be 12 at the end of this month! You'll be having your own Coming of Age celebration!

MICAH

It's coming up fast! I've been thinking about what I want to do for my celebration! I think I'll write a skit where I travel back in time and talk to kids from back then. I'll ask my friends to be a part of it!

ELIANA

Wow, that sounds fun!

MICAH

Yeah! Let me think about it a bit.
You'll see!

KIDS CENTER AUDITORIUM. AFTERNOON. APRIL 30TH, 2149

Auditorium is decorated with colorful fabric streamers and flags for Micah's Coming of Age Celebration. People gather around the stage, clapping. Applause quiets.

Kids dressed in jeans, T-shirts and running shoes, come and sit in nine chairs that are set up in three rows facing the back of the stage.

A title comes up on the screen that says "Micah Time Travels to 2025". The screen becomes a whiteboard with the handwritten words "Thursday, April 30th, 2025"

There is a flash of light. Micah enters from backstage pretending to look dazed.

MICAH

Um, hello? Where am I? What year is this?

STUDENTS

(in unison)
2025

MICAH

And this class is for?

STUDENT #1

Social Studies. P.S. 130, 5th
Graders

MICAH

Perfect! That's just when I was hoping to come. I am from the future. From the year 2149.

STUDENTS

What? Really? Awesome!

MICAH

I want to show you what the future is like. Would you like to see?

STUDENTS

Sure! That's so cool! Well, yeah!
You're kidding, right?

MICAH

First, let's take a look at what school is like in 2149.

Micah brings out a small device and projects a video onto the whiteboard. In the video, a group of kids are on a beach examining some sea creatures. Other kids are in a room training dogs to navigate an obstacle course.

Another group is in a shop, building robotic devices. More kids are preparing 3D printed food in a large commercial kitchen.

STUDENT #2

Cool. Field trips. But where's their school?

MICAH

Well, in the future, school isn't a building or classroom where all the kids go. Instead, each kid has their own educational program made up of, I guess you would call them field trips. Or meet-ups. Those happen in all kinds of different places.

STUDENT #3

Woah.

STUDENT #2

Do you have video games? You Tube?

MICAH

I don't know what a U tube is. But I think we have so many things to do that we don't have a lot of time for playing your kind of games. We don't have companies anymore that design those games on purpose to keep you playing.

STUDENT #1

Aw, that's not fair.

STUDENT #4

So how do you know when you graduate? Do you get a high school diploma? Do kids go to college?

MICAH

Good questions! Learning is a life-long thing, and kids and adults make portfolios of their work and develop masterships in their areas of interest.

Video shows young people and adults working with food, animals, robots, fashion, visual effects, vehicles, electricity, construction, waterworks, etc.

MICAH (CONT'D)

Anyone can develop a mastership in an area of interest. Our personal portfolio shows what skill levels we have achieved. That portfolio functions as our "diploma".

As Micah speaks, the video shows a young person at a computer giving their preferred items a thumbs up, and then dragging some activities to their calendar.

MICAH (CONT'D)

Companion A.I. provides a readout of skills that will be needed in the future. And people who are interested start to learn about it.

It's amazing, because all the work gets done and nobody has what you would call a "job".

STUDENT #4

Wait, what? Nobody has a job?

MICAH

Well, not in the way you think about it. We've figured out a way to automate most things that people find tedious, like cleaning bathrooms and dealing with trash.

Video of a self-cleaning bathroom, vacuum assisted trash system.

MICAH (CONT'D)

There is certainly still work to be done, but we automate the work that is boring or unpleasant.

STUDENT #4

What? So people can just lay around all day if they like?

(MORE)

STUDENT #4 (CONT'D)

How do they get money to pay for
their rent and groceries?

Micah chuckles, and gestures toward the screen:

MICAH

We don't need money any more.

An image zooms in from above the circular city to the outer
greenhouse ring surrounding the city. Inside: aquaponics,
hydroponics, vertical gardens, and orchards.

MICAH (CONT'D)

We just work together to make sure
that everyone has a place to live,
and food and fresh water and ways
to get around.

Video shows how condensation from the green house coverings
is collected for the water supply. Maglev trains circle the
city, automated people-movers transport people between rings.

MICAH (CONT'D)

People are happy to give their time
and efforts to do work that helps
the community and the environment.

Video shows people checking and tending food systems,
planting flowers in walkways, etc.

STUDENT #5

Well, what do you do about homeless
people and immigrants?

MICAH

Uh..there are no homeless people,
we make sure that there are homes
or apartments or cubicles for
everyone.

Screen shows multistory apartment buildings, dome shaped
houses, honeycomb pods.

STUDENT #5

What about people that come across
the border from another country
into your city?

Micah projects a globe of the world, and shows images of
people landing in heli-planes and heading to various
accommodations.

MICAH

(shrugs)

People can travel and live in any country they like, actually. Anywhere on the whole planet.

Companion A.I. keeps track of the where people want to go and makes sure there are places to stay and the things they'll need when they get there.

Some people like to travel a lot. Others like to stay put.

Micah shows a video of his family relaxing in the yard of their dome house.

STUDENT #6

What happens if people get sick?

MICAH

Good question. We have figured out a system that works pretty well for most everyone to stay healthy.

STUDENT #6

How so?

MICAH

Here, let me show you.

Video shows Micah walking through a whole body scanner, and inserting his arm into an opening in the wall for a painless blood draw. Everything is automated. A screen at the end provides a report along with recommendations.

MICAH (CONT'D)

If someone is sick or injured, they can go to a health center for an urgent body scan and diagnosis. Most care is automated or robotic. My father has a mastership as a doctor. He sets times for when he is available to be called on for emergencies.

A photo of Micah's father's face (Danny) appears on the screen. The audience cheers quietly in recognition.

STUDENT #6

Who pays for all these robots and scanners and things?

MICAH

The scanners are designed and built by engineers who have masterships in those fields. Companion A.I. helps us keep track of resources. The materials for building the devices are reserved ahead of time and dispatched from the warehouse when they are needed. They don't cost anything.

More videos of equipment being constructed by robots.

STUDENT #1

Do you have elections? Who is your President?

MICAH

No elections. No President. Instead we have Gatherings.

STUDENT #6

Gatherings?

MICAH

Meetings of about twelve people at a time who come together with a Facilitator and Companion A.I. to bring up issues and solve problems.

Video images show people at Gatherings generating project ideas.

MICAH (CONT'D)

When kids reach age 12, we have a Coming of Age party, and then we can go to a Gathering any time we like!

STUDENT #1

I don't get it. How do groups of twelve people solve problems for the whole city?

MICAH

It's called "continuous participatory governance". There are Gatherings happening all the time. Everywhere. Big issues that affect the whole city get addressed in the small Gatherings.

Image shows different people checking and scheduling projects on their computers.

MICAH (CONT'D)

Companion A.I. posts all the project ideas and helps keep track of things. Citizens prioritize projects that are most important to them and then experts get notified to come and make or build whatever is needed for the top priority projects. Stuff gets done pretty fast!

STUDENTS

That's awesome. Wow. Really?

Micah checks his wrist device.

MICAH

Okay, well it looks like it's time for me to head back to 2149. So, look, I heard that in 2025, people are struggling to have what they need, and there are wars and stuff. I want to let you know that if you listen carefully to each other things are going to get a lot better. Bye.

A flash of light on the screen and Micah "disappears" back stage. Applause.

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN YEARS EARLIER: MEETING ROOM. A GATHERING. BROOKLYN, 2042

Heavy rain pounds the window where the Gathering is taking place. Mid Gathering, CLAYTON, the Facilitator, is interacting with WEN-LI, a participant, Asian, early twenties.

CLAYTON

You're considering that Brooklyn might not even have a future.

Clayton turns to the whiteboard and addresses co-facilitator A.I.STEVIE (not visible).

CLAYTON (CONT'D)

A.I.Stevie, can you show a timeline for projected flooding?

A.I. STEVIE (V.O.)
 Here is a projection of flooding
 from now through 2099.

A map of Brooklyn appears on the smartboard. The red areas on the map move in to cover most of Brooklyn by 2090.

WEN-LI
 Does this map scare you as much as
 it does me? Do we not believe it?
 That Brooklyn will be covered in
 water by 2090? What will happen to
 us? Where will we go?

A.I.Stevie writes "Where will Brooklyn residents go when
 Brooklyn is flooded" on "Problem Statements" panel. Clayton
 turns to Wen-Li.

CLAYTON
 This is an important issue, isn't
 it? Do you have more you want to
 say about it?

WEN-LI
 I woke up in the middle of the
 night worrying.

CLAYTON
 Have you thought about any
 solutions?

WEN-LI
 I don't know. Do we need to build a
 new city for everyone?

Other participants chuckle.

A.I.Stevie writes under the "Solutions" panel: "Build a new
 city". Clayton waits a moment to see if WEN-LI has anything
 else to say. Then looks around at others. There is a long
 silence. Finally NATHAN raises a hand.

NATHAN
 That's actually not a bad idea, you
 know! What if we could build a
 planned city that has all the
 infrastructure already included!
 Like an efficient water and waste
 and transportation system!

A.I.Stevie writes under "Solutions": "Planned City. Water,
 waste and transportation systems".

A.I. STEVIE (V.O.)

I can show a sample of what a
Planned City might look like. Would
you like to see it?

NATHAN

Sure. Let's see it.

A.I.Stevie projects a circular city designed by Jacque Fresco
from The Venus Project. Participants begin to chime in,
raising concerns.

PARTICIPANTS

What would it cost to build that
kind of city? How would we pay for
it? Where would we find the land?

A.I.Stevie writes the questions under "Concerns".

INTERIOR. MUSEUM IN THE FUTURE. FLASHBACK TO MICAH'S SATURDAY
VISIT. 2149

Eliana and Micah walk into another exhibit in the Museum. A
large interactive map of the old New York City area appears
before them. Time-lapse projections show water creeping
inland.

Brownstones stand with water at their steps. Sidewalks
disappear under rising tides. Micah watches in stillness.

The map continues to evolve. By 2050, the city is shrinking.

MICAH

That's like what's happening to
Pietro's place.

Tide's higher every time we visit.

Micah moves the slider forward to 2065. A circle begins to
appear west of the city on the map. Eliana makes a gesture,
zooming in on it.

ELIANA

This was the first of them. Built
from scratch. Not added onto. Not
patched together.

The display morphs into a 3D fly-through of the circular
city: verdant walkways, dome homes, gentle canals.

MICAH

Wait.
 (grinning)
 This is our city.

ELIANA

The first version of it, yeah.

It was kind of radical at the time.
 Starting over. Designing the whole
 thing all at once, like a living
 system.

Micah moves the slider forward again, multiple cities appear.

MICAH

Now we have a lot of these kind of
 cities.

A quiet moment, as Micah takes it in.

BACK TO 2042. INTERIOR, WEN-LI'S APARTMENT. A WEEK AFTER THE
 GATHERING

Wen-Li sits in front of her laptop facing the window with a
 view of nearby Brooklyn buildings. She scrolls through the
 recent project proposals on the Gatherings website, marking
 some with a thumbs up.

WEN-LI

(to herself)
 Wow. Lots of support for the idea
 of building a new city! Maybe this
 could actually happen!

MAIN STREET IN THE FUTURE. 2149. DAYTIME

Eliana jaunts confidently down the wide car-free walkway,
 past doors that open to spaces where people make art and
 music, grow flowers, play games, train puppies, work with
 colorful fabrics, dance, drum, do stage performing. She
 enters a doorway.

INTERIOR. SOUND HEALING CENTER. SECONDS LATER.

Inside the Sound Healing Center, Eliana checks the room
 directory overhead and heads into room 3. She places the
 palm of her hand on the activation panel, then lays back in
 the armchair, closes her eyes, and relaxes to a series of
 customized tones and chords.

ELIANA
 (breathing deeply)
 Ah...

15 minutes later, Eliana gets up from the chair slowly, and smiles as she exits back to the main walkway.

MAIN STREET BY THE CANAL. SAME DAY. TWILIGHT

The soft glow of twilight settles over the canal, the sky painted in hues of purple and amber. Eliana strolls down the walkway as the nearby lanterns begin to glow softly. She heads to the canal's edge and descends a few steps into the waiting water taxi.

ELIANA
 (to water taxi operator)
 STEFAN, you aren't usually here on Fridays!

STEFAN
 Yeah, ANDY's going to a Gathering tonight. I'm happy to cover for him!

ELIANA
 Oh, I signed up for tonight's Gathering too. I guess I'll see him there.

Eliana smiles and looks ahead, the wind blowing her hair gently. She exits the water taxi at its next stop, and walks past a set of hot tubs with people laughing and chatting, past the Pleasure Center, and past an artist gallery.

She enters the Civic Hall.

INTERIOR CIVIC HALL. SAME EVENING

Eliana takes a seat in a chair in the semi-circle. She nods and smiles at Andy who is already seated. She doesn't know the others as they enter. Soon all twelve seats are full. A man walks to the front.

ZANDER
 Good evening, everyone. My name is Zander. Welcome.

COMPANION A.I. (V.O.)
 Hello everyone.

Holographic panels come to life in front of the participants, and the words "Hello everyone" appear on the screen.

ZANDER

Who would like to start?

INTERIOR ARCHIVES BUILDING. THE NEXT DAY.

DING!

Zen's head jerks up. He pushes away from the counter, rising to his feet. Without a sound, he moves down the empty hallway and slips through the second door on the right.

A wooden box emerges from an opening in the wall and moves towards him on the conveyer belt. It stops abruptly in front of him. A clear embossed stamp on the top of the box reads: "Open May 3, 2149".

INTERIOR, MICAH'S HOME, EVENING. SAME DAY

Darkness falls outside the window. Micah pulls down on a cord near the wall, hand over hand and the pulley action raises a weighted metal cube up toward the ceiling.

The gravity light turns on. The weighted cube descends almost imperceptibly. Micah sits on the stool at the musical keyboard playing silent notes that only he hears through his earbuds.

His parents Danny and Sky are seated together nearby, having an animated conversation.

DING! The notification sound rings out, grabbing their attention.

COMPANION AI (V.O.)

Danny Clarkson, you have a new message marked urgent.

DANNY

Play message.

ZEN (V.O.)

This is Zen from the Department of Archives. Please confirm if you are available to report to the Archives tomorrow at 3:15 pm regarding an important matter.

COMPANION AI (V.O.)

End of messages.

MICAH

Dad, that's the guy I saw at the Archives a couple of weeks ago. What a weird message. What do you think it's about?

DANNY

I don't know. Want to come to the Archives tomorrow to find out?

MICAH

Sure do!

DANNY

I think Mom is busy tomorrow, right Sky?

Sky nods.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(to Micah)

So it'll just be you and me.

(to Companion A.I.)

Confirm appointment, 3:15 pm tomorrow.

EXTERIOR. ARCHIVES BUILDING. THE NEXT AFTERNOON

Micah slips his bicycle into the bike rack and it lowers automatically out of sight, the sidewalk closes around the spot where it just was.

Danny approaches from the walkway.

DANNY

Hey, Micah! You all set to go in and see what this is all about?

He looks up at the word "Archives" engraved above the door.

MICAH

Sure am!

DANNY

Let's wait for your Aunt Eliana to join us. Apparently she got the same message as we did!

MICAH

She did? Why?

DANNY

Not sure, but look, there she is!

Micah turns to follow Danny's gaze. Eliana approaches.

ELIANA

Well here's a couple of my favorite people! Did you figure out what's going on here?

MICAH

Nope.

DANNY

Not yet!

Micah is the first to approach the heavy door. It swings easily open with a light touch. They all enter.

INTERIOR. ARCHIVES BUILDING. MAY 3, 2149

ZEN

Clarksons, right? Excited to meet you. Thrilled, actually!

(to Micah)

Wait a minute, haven't I seen you before? Well, all of you, please come this way.

The trio follows Zen down a long marble hall. High ceilings. Silence. Their voices echo.

ZEN (CONT'D)

Okay, let me explain. We received explicit instructions to wait until today to let descendants know about the time capsule. It's over here.

MICAH

Time capsule?

Eliana and Danny look at each other, puzzled.

Zen directs them to a wide metal table. On it is a steel cylinder, 7 inches in diameter and 12 inches long, laid on a soft dark panel of fabric.

ZEN

This capsule was apparently placed in the care of the library of Archives in the year 2040 by your ancestor, Dennis E. Clarkson.

MICAH

Wait. OUR ancestor?

Micah examines the capsule. Engraved on the bottom is "OPEN May 3, 2149. Dennis E. Clarkson, born 1994".

ZEN

Our practice is to offer descendants, if any can be found, the first chance to view the contents, before they become part of the public archive.

(warmly)

It's a rare honor, really. That's why I reached out to you.

MICAH

What? Who is Dennis Clarkson? And what's in this thing?

ZEN

(smiling gently)

Well... let's find out together.

Zen uses a portable drill to undo the 4 screws and carefully pries the lid off the capsule with a small tool.

POP! He puts the lid down and lays the cylinder on its side.

MICAH

Wow.

Zen gestures to Danny and Eliana, and then nods towards the cylinder.

ZEN

Wanna do the honors?

Danny picks up the cylinder and carefully raises the bottom end and pulls the contents out onto the fabric.

ELIANA

Whoa. Looks like there's some documents.

She pulls at a piece of cloth, revealing some memory cards and discs.

MICAH

What are those?

ZEN

Yeah, we'll have to take those to the lab to access the data on them. But the documents? You could read them now.

DANNY

I can do that. Let's see. This one says what the contents are about.

(reading)

"These memory cards and discs contain video recordings of some of the earliest Gatherings that were started in 2024 by Allison Silver Clarkson. Born May 3, 1993."

MICAH

(interrupting)

Wait. Hold on. Allison who? She started the Gatherings?

DANNY

(continues reading)

"...and an interview with her on November 7th, 2035, explaining how it all started. She was too humble to take the credit, but I wanted you to know it was her, in case her actions have made a difference to you. Signed, her loving husband, Dennis E. Clarkson. Born September 17, 1994."

ELIANA

(puzzled)

Clarkson? But I don't understand!

ZEN

Yeah. Wow. This information could change our view of history. We always thought it was the facilitator, Ximena, who started the Gatherings.

MICAH

Wait a minute. Clarkson is our name. So...

...you think we're related to these people?

ZEN

I looked into the genealogy of Dennis Clarkson, the name on the capsule.

Micah, it looks like Allison and Dennis were your great, great, great, great grandparents.

He turns toward the wall and projects the ancestry diagram. His tone softens further.

ZEN (CONT'D)

It's rare we get a line this clear.
Even rarer when it leads back to
someone whose actions changed the
course of things.

Micah and Eliana stare at the luminous family tree.

DANNY

There's another paper here, it
looks like an essay. It's called
"Context for the Gatherings"
written by Dennis Clarkson.

ZEN

Go ahead and read it.

DANNY

(reading)

"If you are reading this document
in 2149, you may have a different
kind of government by now. I sure
hope so. I hope this description of
our dilemma provides you with a
context for why and how the
Gatherings held so much importance
for Allison."

As Danny reads, Micah picks up the capsule and looks inside.

DANNY (CONT'D)

"We have a "democratic" system of
government, where we put people in
positions of power when we vote in
elections that are supposed to be
free and fair. There are two major
political parties."

MICAH

They were like sports teams trying
to win a game. I learned that at
the museum!

DANNY

(continues reading)

"Some people started thinking that
the elections were rigged. Each
Party thinks the other is corrupt.
They accuse each other of deceit
and presenting misinformation.
There is hate, anger and blame.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

People are afraid of each other and everyone takes sides.

Misinformation has exploded. Few people actually listen to the other side's point of view. If they do listen, they don't believe what they are being told."

MICAH

I think that is called "othering".

DANNY

(continues)

"People don't know what is truth and what is a lie. The country is in crisis. And people are isolated from each other. That creates more fear, anxiety and stress. There seems to be no way out.

No way out, except, as Allison would say, for the Gatherings."

Danny pauses, and looks up at Eliana, a bit stunned. She shakes her head slowly.

ELIANA

She didn't want the credit... and yet she changed everything.

ZEN

She could've gone public. But I guess she knew the idea had to be bigger than the person.

That's rare.

DANNY

(to Micah, grinning)

Hey, remember when you said you were gonna find the genius who started it all?

MICAH

(overwhelmed)

Yeah... but I didn't think I'd be related to her!

ZEN

Let's take these discs and cards over to the lab...It's getting late today, but maybe we can take a look at the videos tomorrow?

MICAH

(disappointed, becomes
agitated)

But tomorrow, that's my first
Gathering! It's at four o'clock. I
can't miss that!

ZEN

Well, we can get started at one
o'clock. Hard to say how much time
we'll need.

INTERIOR. FOUNTAIN CAFE. THE NEXT MORNING

Eliana and Rena sit at the window table.

ELIANA

We got a surprise yesterday. My
brother, and Micah and me.

RENA

What kind of surprise?

ELIANA

We got called to the Archives
Building. We had no idea why.
When we got there this guy named
Zen showed us a time capsule that
was left there by our ancestors
from the early 21st Century.

RENA

A time capsule?

ELIANA

Yeah, strange, right? Apparently
Danny and I had a great, great,
great grandmother named Allison.
And, get this. It turns out that
she was the one who originally set
up the early Gatherings.

RENA

(tilting her head)

Wait a minute. There was one person
who started it all? And it was
your relative?

ELIANA

So it seems.

RENA

And none of us knew about her?

Sounds like she didn't want followers. Just more people getting involved.

(touching Eliana's hand)

That's amazing! I knew there was something special about you.

ELIANA

The time capsule has some video recordings. We're going to go back this afternoon to see them. Would you like to come?

RENA

Are you kidding? I'd love to come!

INTERIOR ARCHIVES BUILDING. THAT AFTERNOON

Micah, Danny, Sky, Eliana and Rena follow Zen to a Screening Room in the Archives building. As everyone settles into the plush seats, Zen remains near the front, quietly preparing the projection.

ZEN

Dennis left us quite a gift.

It was clearly important to him that this story be told. But not until the time was right.

DANNY

Great, I guess this is the right time! Can't wait to see it!

Zen picks up a remote and starts the recording. The screen flickers to life. A static image appears.

Two women sit on stools at the front of a university lecture hall, each holding a microphone. On the bottom of the screen: "Columbia University. Room 309. November 7th, 2035".

A hush falls over the group.

SKY

(quietly)

That's...114 years ago.

One of the women on the screen, mid 40's, thoughtful face, calm demeanor, smiles gently at the crowd. Camera zooms to a close-up of her face.

Zen slowly fades up the volume.

ALLISON

(on screen)

I'm surprised and grateful to know that so many of you have experienced a Gathering.

Honestly, I didn't expect that. It gives me hope.

In the screening room, Micah leans forward. He's never seen her before. But he knows.

MICAH

(whispers)

That's her.

Eliana watches the screen, her eyes locked. Her face is unreadable, but her hands slowly tighten around the armrests.

ALLISON

(to audience in lecture hall)

I am so happy that the Gatherings are still happening. That means you're still listening. To each other. That's all I ever hoped for.

Screen goes black. Silence.

ZEN

She spoke like someone who trusted the future. Even if she never got to see it.

MICAH

She sparked it!

ELIANA

Yeah. She did.

They continue watching footage of Allison's interview, and some of the first Gatherings. Micah stares at the screen, spellbound.

Suddenly a CHIME rings out from Micah's wrist device.

MICAH

Oh, no, I gotta go!

On the screen recording, a Gathering participant is shouting.

JOCELYN (ON SCREEN)

All of us should stop paying taxes to the government, and pay it into our community fund instead!

ABDI (ON SCREEN)

(interrupting)

Are you crazy? We can't do that! You want to end up in jail?

JAMAL (ON SCREEN)

(facilitating)

Abdi, let's finish with Jocelyn, and I'll get to your concerns next.

CHIME

Micah's device again. Louder this time. Zen pauses the video.

MICAH

I want to report about these recordings at my Gathering!

ZEN

Sure thing! I just have to push a button to make them accessible to everyone.

Micah rushes out the door and back to the main entrance, punching buttons on his device to call up his bicycle.

EXTERIOR, ARCHIVES BUILDING

Micah's bike rises up from beneath the sidewalk, he jumps on it and takes off,

WALKWAY FROM ARCHIVES TO CIVIC HALL

Micah swerves and weaves through people who are chatting and laughing on the walkway. Faster and faster until he arrives at the curve of the canal. People can be seen through the open doors of the workshops and galleries. Micah pauses outside the Civic Hall, out of breath. He positions his bicycle and it lowers automatically.

This is a momentous occasion for him. His first Gathering. He dashes in. The clock says 3:59 pm.

INTERIOR, CIVIC HALL. MICAH'S FIRST GATHERING

Micah takes a seat in the semicircle of 12 chairs.

The Facilitator, OMAR, stands at the front. Holographic panels appear in front of the participants.

COMPANION AI (V.O.)
Hello everyone. Welcome Micah!

The words appear on the panel.

OMAR
Who would like to start?

Micah hesitates, but when his hand shoots up, Omar notices.

OMAR (CONT'D)
Let's hear from Micah. Go ahead!

MICAH
I just got back from the Archives.
You aren't going to believe it!

Micah pauses and scans the room. Everyone is looking at him.

MICAH (CONT'D)
(out of breath)
There is a time capsule. At the
Archives. Zen called my dad and my
aunt Eliana and me about it.

OMAR
(trying to follow)
A time capsule.

MICAH
Yes, with recordings about the
Gatherings from 2025 and 2035. No
one knew about them.

OMAR
Go on.

MICAH
Now we know who started the
Gatherings. It was an ancestor of
mine. Her name was Allison Silver
Clarkson.

Zen said the recordings are
available for everyone now.
COMPANION A.I., is it true?

COMPANION A.I.

Checking. Yes, Time Capsule opened
May 3rd, 2149.

MICAH

Good. So you can all check it out
for yourselves.

I have something else I wanted to
talk about.

I have a friend named Pietro who
lives on the beach.

OMAR

Pietro. Okay.

MICAH

He showed me the watermarks on his
porch. The sea level is rising,
fast.

I know there's a team working on a
Seastead for people like him,
but... they say it won't be ready
soon enough. If the water keeps
rising this fast, what will happen
to all those people?

Omar nods thoughtfully. Companion A.I. writes on the panel
under "Problem Statements": "What will happen to people
displaced by sea level rise"

Omar waits, giving Micah space to say more.

MICAH (CONT'D)

Maybe... Pietro could stay at my
place for a while. But we don't
have room for his parents too. And
he said everyone who lives on the
beach has to leave...

Where will they all go? Could they
come here?... Would we have enough
space?

Under "Solutions": Companion A.I. writes "All come here?"

MICAH (CONT'D)

I wanted to raise this issue...
what do you all think?

OMAR

Anyone want to weigh in?

A young woman, CHARLENE, raises her hand quickly, eager to speak. Omar nods toward her.

CHARLENE

Well, about the time capsule. That's really big news. And I'm glad Micah brought up the sea level issue. Because the surge will affect all of us. I agree that we need a solution for temporary housing, but we also need to make sure these people feel welcome, like they belong.

Companion A.I. writes "How will we manage the surge". And "How will we make sure they feel welcome", under "Problem Statements"

WILL

(annoyed)

Well, they don't belong here. We don't have enough room. They should've planned better for this... They knew it was coming.

Under "Concerns" the words "Don't have enough room" appear.

WILL (CONT'D)

(urgently)

Is it our responsibility to find them places to stay? If they come here, we'll need to ramp up food production, and step up our waste systems.

Companion A.I. writes under "Solutions": "Increase food production; step up waste systems."

OMAR

Anything else, Will?

WILL

Not right now. I think that's plenty. Where do we even start?

Micah raises his hand again.

MICAH

I just want to say... I am worried. Because Will seems annoyed about this...

Micah pauses, looks up, thinking.

MICAH (CONT'D)

But wait. There is something about this from the time capsule.

Companion A.I. can you find where Allison talks about divergence?

COMPANION A.I. (V.O.)

Absolutely.

Omar nods, intrigued. Companion A.I. projects an image of Allison in front of the group.

ALLISON

(on screen)

Over time, I learned how important it is to have the patience to let the self-organizing process unfold...Just when the group starts to converge on ideas and solutions, someone brings in an objection that seems to derail the whole process.

The Gathering participants look at each other, nodding.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

I learned that the divergence is critically important. It's often those objections that actually hold the key to the success of a project.

Micah glances around the room and sees everyone riveted to the screen.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

I learned that we need to take in each and every perspective, no matter how uncomfortable it might be. Only then can we build something real.

Micah pauses, looks over at Will.

MICAH

So thank you, Will.

OMAR

Thanks for the idea of playing that recording, Micah, that was profound. And inspiring.

(turns to Will)

(MORE)

OMAR (CONT'D)

What solutions would you consider to address this situation, Will?

Omar gestures to the "Problem Statements" panel.

WILL

Uh. Not sure.

OMAR

Take your time. It's not about getting it right. It's about staying in the space long enough for something new to show up.

Will hesitates. Takes a breath. Gathers his energy.

WILL

Maybe I could go and help them build their Seastead faster? Companion A.I., can you find a way that I can help with that?

COMPANION A.I. (V.O.)

Yes. Your skills in 3D printing can be helpful in customizing the interior fixtures.

CHARLENE

I can work on finding temporary lodging and welcoming them here!

Others chime in with enthusiastic support.

MICAH

Awesome. I can't wait to tell Pietro about this Gathering!

EXTERIOR. MUSEUM. EARLY AFTERNOON SOME WEEKS LATER

MICAH

Hurry up, Eliana! I'm so excited to see the new display!

Micah runs up the stairs gesturing to Eliana who breaks into a run to catch up.

They enter the museum.

INTERIOR MUSEUM

Micah and Eliana rush through displays they saw previously. In the dark, they approach an arched doorway and hear Allison's recorded voice.

ALLISON (O.S.)

It was tougher than I thought it was going to be to get 12 people to come to a Gathering. I talked to everyone I knew in the neighborhood.

As they enter the chamber, they see her face from the interview projected on a large screen.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

(on screen)

It was so hard for people to take the time out of their busy schedules to come to a meeting with people they didn't know. A lot of them were working all week and had to care for their families. They were burned out on bad news, they just wanted to live their lives and be left alone.

But I never gave up on them.

EAST COAST BEACH. ONE WEEK LATER.

The fading light of dusk casts long shadows across the beach. The wind picks up. Dark clouds gather. A storm rolls in. Outlines of houses and cottages are blurred by the heavy rain.

Thunder rumbles in the distance. Lightning flashes across the sky, illuminating the crashing waves.

BOOM. The rain comes in sheets, sharp and steady, battering the cottage windows.

Scene fades to daylight. The tide is out. The beach stretches wide. Damp. And still.

Scattered across the beach are dozens of starfish, left behind by the retreating water.

Pietro emerges from his cottage. He walks carefully over the sand, crouching down to gently pick up a starfish.

He skillfully tosses it back into the ocean and looks out into the water after it. Then with deliberate movements, he bends down to pick up and toss another, and another, and another.

Residents appear from the neighboring houses. They watch Pietro on the beach with curiosity. One by one they too begin to pick up the starfish, and toss them into the ocean.

Three heli-planes silently land in the field behind the cottages. People from the planes make their way to the beach, see what is happening, and join in, tossing starfish back into the sea.

Micah, Sky, Danny, Eliana, Rena, Will and Charlene are among them.

When the starfish are cleared from the beach, Micah puts his arm around Pietro and they head to Pietro's cottage.

The visitors accompany the other beach residents into their homes to gather their important treasures and heirlooms, and then they emerge together, taking the people and their possessions to the waiting planes.