

NEXUS

A radio play

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

Listed in Order of Appearance

FIRST MOTHER	Leader of an entire world, she is a strong, decisive, intelligent woman who has lived through a great deal, and has learned to balance empathy and practicality. Her world is one where the principle of causality is considered secondary to the future attractors they call Beacons, which guide people on the paths they have chosen for themselves.
MESSENGER	A young woman who is working her way up through the ranks.
MIKE	A nice enough fellow, but that's about it.
VALERIE	A fiery, independent woman, unknowingly descended from a family chosen to save the world nearly six thousand years later. Born too late in history to be a proper rogue, she has survived her whole life on luck and circumstance. She is a female embodiment of the Yang principle.
AMELIA	Best friend to Valerie, Amelia is everything that Valerie is not, yet those differences have allowed them to bond in a very close friendship over nearly two decades. She likes the fluffy things in life, follows a strong and effective intuition, and feigns at being dumber than she really is.
WAITRESS	An overworked waitress who has already concluded that she is not getting much of a tip from the two young women at her table.
GABRIEL	Kind, gentle, yet determined, Gabriel is a male embodiment on the Yin principle. He is modest, disciplined, intuitive, and true to his principles. Like most people of his world, he maintains an inner calm that keeps him open to hear when his future calls.
HOST	An Icelander who tries, without success, to get Valerie and Amelia to pay for a meal gone horribly wrong.

CHAKRAVA	A group of world leaders that also includes the First Mother and Second Mother. There should be an odd number, i.e. one, three, or five additional voices.
SECOND MOTHER	The right hand of the First Mother, she is strong, intelligent, and practical. She is responsible for the logistics of running an entire world.
RECEPTIONIST	Agda works at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. She is bright and effective.
NAVEEN	Naveen Havasharatham is a scholar at the Árni Magnússon Institute, with a focus on ancient languages and local geology. He is kind and helpful, with an inquisitive mind. His accent can be either traditional Indian or British.
BARTENDER	Your typical Icelandic bartender (whatever that may be), with a bit of a sense of humor and a moderate knowledge of the local tourist attractions.
POLICEMAN	Your typical Icelandic policeman (also whatever that may be).

SETTING

The play takes place in a variety of unspecified locations that are not Iceland (and that can depend on the background of the actors), as well as several locations in Iceland.

TIME

Modern day.

ACT I

Scene 1	Ancient Temple in the Syntrodome
Scene 2	Near and in Valerie's grandmother's house
Scene 3	A small café near the Amelia's apartment
Scene 4	Several chambers within the Syntrodome
Scene 5	In and near a restaurant outside of Reykjavík
Scene 6	Audience chamber in the Syntrodome
Scene 7	Chambers in the Institute for Icelandic Studies
Scene 8	A small inn and tavern near Herðubreið
Scene 9	Along the shores of Öskjuvatn
Scene 10	In holding cells at a small police station
Scene 11	Rocky desert, midway from Öskjuvatn to Herðubreið
Scene 12	Audience chamber in the Syntrodome

SCENE 1

(It is a large chamber in an ancient temple. We can hear chimes echoing softly in the vastness. We hear the footsteps of feet clad in leather boots grow louder as they approach, then stop. Someone puts down a sheaf of paper and speaks.)

FIRST MOTHER

What calls you here?

MESSENGER

The Champion has arrived, First Mother.

FIRST MOTHER

Now? The Nexus will not arrive for months to come. What summons her here now?

MESSENGER

Only the calling. And your—

FIRST MOTHER

So soon? Is the calling that strong in her? This is a good omen indeed.

MESSENGER

Yes, your Holiness. It is very strong. But...

(We hear the messenger shifting about, clearly uncomfortable.)

...but there is a thing you should know.

(There is the sound of a chair sliding back, and we hear the First Mother approaching the messenger.)

FIRST MOTHER

Come, my daughter. Why do you hesitate? You may speak openly in all matters. You know that.

(There are now two sets of footsteps as the First Mother leads the messenger towards a seat.)

MESSENGER

Yes, First Mother. You should know that the Champion... is...

FIRST MOTHER

Is? Is what?

MESSENGER

Is not a woman.

FIRST MOTHER

A girl? A child? This is unexpected indeed. How old is she?

MESSENGER

N-no, your Holiness. The Champion is... is a... a man.

(The footsteps stop abruptly. The silence is painful.)

FIRST MOTHER

(In anguished disappointment bordering on fear and despair...)

I see.

ACT I

SCENE 2

(Valerie and Mike are turning off a sidewalk onto a cobbled path that leads up to an abandoned house. We hear crickets in the background, and the sounds of their feet. As they walk, they stumble awkwardly, trying to get a headstart on the intimacy that they have in mind. Amid the dialog there are occasional giggles and similar excited sounds from the couple.)

This one?

MIKE

Yes, this one.

VALERIE

It's a dump!

MIKE

Don't talk that way about my grandma's house!

VALERIE

Okay, it's not a dump.

MIKE

Of course it's a dump! You just shouldn't say it.

VALERIE

(They laugh. He reaches for her again...)

Hey, mister, you can wait thirty seconds!

MIKE

Me?! Who had her hands all over my—

(Valerie shuts him up with a passionate kiss.)

Keys...

VALERIE

(We hear her fumbling for them, then found...)

Keys!

MIKE

Keys.

(She's trying to unlock the door, and then...)

Let me...

VALERIE

I've got it.

MIKE

You're drunk.

VALERIE

And you're not!?! Besides, I'm not drunk. I'm pleasantly softened.

(They finally have the door opened, and step inside as...)

MIKE

You are that.

(There are the sounds of disrobing)

VALERIE

Door.

MIKE

What?

VALERIE

Door. Door.

(We hear the door close, then...)

MIKE

Door.

VALERIE
(Seductively...)

Buttons.

MIKE

Mmm. Buttons...

(There is more disrobing, and the sounds of passionate kissing.)

Where's the, uh...

VALERIE

Through there.

(They are stumbling, then we hear a thud as they kiss up against the bedroom door.)

MIKE

Door.

(They laugh, and we hear a door open as...)

VALERIE

Door.

MIKE

After you...

(We hear them stumble in, and then the sounds of them falling onto a bed. There's more passion amidst the following lines. Also, starting imperceptively low, there is a throbbing humming sound that steadily grows in volume.)

VALERIE

Oh! Oh! God yes!

MIKE

Oh, Valerie!

VALERIE

Oh, Mitch!

MIKE
Mike.

VALERIE
Whatever.

(There is more sounds of passion, and the humming has finally gotten loud enough that it can be clearly heard.)

VALERIE
You hear that?

MIKE
No. Come here—

VALERIE
Stop for a— I said stop!

(The humming sound cannot be ignored, and they listen for a moment.)

What is that?

MIKE
I dunno. A generator or something, maybe.

VALERIE
It sounds like it's coming from below us.

MIKE
Maybe there's a generator in the basement.

VALERIE
There isn't a basement. And I've never heard that sound here before.

MIKE
(Beat)
So just how many guys have you taken back here?

VALERIE
So not the right moment, Mitch.

MIKE

(Softly and a touch offended, but not really expecting her to hear...)

Mike.

(She has gotten up, and is walking around the room.)

VALERIE

It's definitely coming from below the bed. Help me move it.

MIKE

I didn't come here to rearrange the furni—

VALERIE

Yeah. Plans change. Man up, and help me move the goddamn bed.

(We hear a bed being slid across the floor. She kneels down, and then...)

Gimme my phone. *(Beat...)* In my pants. Over there.

(There's a delay as she uses the light from the phone to study the floor, then in a fascinated "I just found the coolest thing" voice...)

Holy shit.

MIKE

So it's a trapdoor. Lots of places have them.

VALERIE

Not here. They told me there isn't any basement.

MIKE

Maybe they didn't know when they bought the place.

VALERIE

They didn't. They didn't buy it, I mean. My grandma grew up in this house. It's been in the family for generations.

MIKE

Like a family estate?

VALERIE
(Laughs a little...)

Yeah, I guess.

MIKE

So it's yours now?

VALERIE

Yeah.

MIKE

Then why do you rent an apartment with a flock of roommates?

VALERIE

In case you didn't notice, the place is a dump. And it's way too far out of the city.

MIKE

Then sell it.

VALERIE

I will. Here. Hold this. So it shines here.

MIKE

What are you waiting for? Is that a lockpick?!

VALERIE

I can't sell it yet. Part of the inheritance legal mumbo jumbo. The house can't be sold until this August.

MIKE

Dare I ask why you have a set of lock picks?

VALERIE
(Spoken like a family mantra...)

Like grandma always said, if you don't dare, you won't get anywhere.

MIKE

Okay. Why do you—

VALERIE

None of your damn business. Ah, there we go.

(We hear the trapdoor open, and the humming instantly gets louder.)

Well, what do ya know.

MIKE

So much for not having a basement.

VALERIE

Come on. *(Beat.)* What are you doing?

MIKE

Maybe you like wandering around naked in the dark, but I'll take shoes and pants, thank you very much.

VALERIE

Oh. Yeah. Probably a good idea.

ACT I

SCENE 3

(We hear the sound of a café – cups being cleared from tables, incoherent dialog in the background, perhaps a radio playing, etc. There is a bell sound as the door opens against chimes, and we hear Valerie approaching her friend Amelia.)

AMELIA

You're late, even for you. I was just about to leave.

VALERIE

Sorry, Mel. I had to make a stop first.

AMELIA

Uh huh. Not at the flat, I see. Aren't those the same clothes you were—

VALERIE

Yeah.

AMELIA

So how did it go?

VALERIE

What, you mean Mitch?

AMELIA

I thought his name was Mike.

VALERIE

Whatever.

AMELIA

So you two...

VALERIE

Neh.

AMELIA

That was quick. Even for you. Didn't... uh... have what it takes?

(They giggle at the implication.)

VALERIE

Right, but not the way you're thinking.

AMELIA

Oh? Do tell.

VALERIE

I mean, what kind of guy is scared of confined spaces?

AMELIA

Beats me. The guys I date always seem fixated on getting into confined spaces.

(They laugh a little again.)

VALERIE

Ha! I should've said that to him. Anyway, we went to the house after the competition...

AMELIA

Oh, right! That was last night. How did it go?

VALERIE

I came in last.

AMELIA

You did not! You've never lost anything in your life. How did you... You won? That's so great! One of these days I have to come see you do your Tae Chi.

VALERIE

(Tiredly, because she corrects her on this all the time)

Krav Maga.

AMELIA

Whatever.

VALERIE

And no, you don't. I don't need a repeat of the last time, where you kept making little "oh my god" noises and wincing. It's distracting.

AMELIA

I was twelve.

VALERIE
You'd still do it.

AMELIA
(After a moment of reflection, then resigned to reality...)
Yeah. I would.

(A waitress has walked up.)

WAITRESS
Refill?

AMELIA
Sure.

(She pours more coffee for Amelia.)

WAITRESS
Anything for you?

VALERIE
Can I get a cheeseburger?

AMELIA
At ten am?!

VALERIE
Fine. A cheeseburger with a side of hashbrowns.

WAITRESS
We don't serve burgers until after eleven. Do you want me to bring you a breakfast menu?

VALERIE
Nah. I'll just take some eggs over easy. And a couple of pancakes, a side of bacon, and some toast. Oh, and a side of sausage too.

WAITRESS
That it?

VALERIE
Yeah. Oh, wait, no. Also one of those big bran muffins.

WAITRESS

Right. Anything to drink? Coffee, tea, a vat of juice? All of the above?

VALERIE

No. I'll just steal hers. But can you put the judgmental look in a to-go bag for me? I want to enjoy it all day long.

(We hear the waitress walk off.)

AMELIA

You're awful.

VALERIE

I'm not the one with the attitude.

AMELIA

In the past eighteen years I don't think I've ever seen you without an attitude. You wear it like normal girls wear lipstick.

VALERIE

Why you waste your time—

AMELIA

Anyway, so last night...

VALERIE

Right. We're in the bedroom, and things are getting... uh...

AMELIA

Sweaty?

VALERIE

Something like that. And I start to hear this humming.

AMELIA

I *hate* that. You remember Jeremy? He used to hum when—

VALERIE

No, it wasn't Mitch. It was this weird droning sound coming from under the bed. So we move the bed out of the way and I find a trapdoor that leads into a little room.

AMELIA

No way! A secret room? I knew it! Didn't I always say there was something cool about that house?

VALERIE

You said it was creepy.

AMELIA

That's because it's old. But I always liked it.

VALERIE

You never liked it. You said it smelled like rotten turnips inside a dirty sock.

AMELIA

In a good way!

VALERIE

Anyway. So we go down these stairs...

AMELIA

Is this the confined space?

VALERIE

Yeah. And he wouldn't even go into the room. Just stood on the stairs. Can you believe it? Anyway, in the room at the bottom there was a glass case on a pedestal. And inside the case... were these.

(We hear Valerie slide a piece of paper and small stone across the table.)

AMELIA

A rock and a piece of paper.

VALERIE

And the rock's humming. Like a throbbing kind of hum. Loud.

AMELIA

I don't hear anything.

VALERIE

No. It stopped as soon as I picked it up. But it was definitely the rock. You could almost see it vibrating. And please skip the crude jokes for once.

AMELIA

I didn't say anything!

VALERIE

You were about to. I know you.

(Amelia has picked up the rock, and then puts it back down.)

AMELIA

Seems like an ordinary rock to me. Did *you* break it?

VALERIE

No. It was like that. Smooth on just the one side.

AMELIA

(Picking up the paper and unfolding it...)

But this is cool. It's a map. Of an island.

VALERIE

Iceland.

AMELIA

How do you know?

VALERIE

(Valerie unlocks her phone and puts it on the table during the next line.)

Look on my phone... The shape's identical.

AMELIA

What made you think of comparing it to Iceland of all places?

VALERIE

I didn't. The librarian thought of it.

AMELIA

You went to a library?

VALERIE

You don't need to sound so surprised. I have been to libraries before.

AMELIA

Name one time.

(There is a long pause.)

VALERIE

Whatever. Anyway, I asked the guy if he could decipher the writing, and he asked why I had a map of Iceland. Turns out he's actually from Iceland.

AMELIA

I don't believe it. He asked you out, didn't he? That's why you were late. How do you *do* that?!

(Valerie snaps her fingers.)

VALERIE

Focus, Mel. Focus. *(She taps the map.)* The map.

AMELIA

So what's the writing? What does it say?

VALERIE

No clue. We tried looking it up in like a billion references, but couldn't find anything. Jack thinks—

AMELIA

Jack? The librarian?

VALERIE

He thinks the script's old. Really old.

AMELIA

The paper doesn't seem that old.

VALERIE

No. But I think maybe someone transcribed the map and writing onto it.

AMELIA

You mean Jack thinks that.

VALERIE

Amelia, you can be a very nasty person somet—

AMELIA

So I'm right.

VALERIE

Yes. Fine. You're right. *Jack* thinks it's really old, and that someone transcribed it onto this paper, maybe about a hundred years ago based on the type of paper.

AMELIA

This is *so* cool! So what are you going to do?

VALERIE

Only one thing to do.

AMELIA

(As she realizes...)

Oh yeah – we’re going to Iceland, girl! I’ve always want to go to there!

VALERIE

I’ve known you since you were seven, and I’ve never heard you once say a peep about Iceland. Honestly, I’m surprised you even know it exists.

AMELIA

I know all about Iceland.

(There is a pause, as Valerie stares at her.)

Fine. I don’t. But I’ve heard of it, and I’m so going with you.

VALERIE

Yeah, I know. That’s why I bought two tickets. Here.

(She pulls out some kind of paper and shows it to Amelia.)

AMELIA

IcelandAir. Tomorrow night. Wow. Not wasting any time. Don’t you believe in preparing? Hah. Who am I talking to? I guess I should be glad the tickets aren’t for tonight. Actually, why aren’t they?

VALERIE

Can’t go tonight, I’ve got a date.

AMELIA

I thought you said it was over with Mike.

VALERIE

Not Mitch. Jack.

AMELIA

I bet that’s not even his right name.

VALERIE

It might have been Jacques. Or Mack, or something like that.

AMELIA

Have you ever gotten a man's name right? Even once?

VALERIE

Not that I remember.