

DREAMWORLD

By

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(First 30 pages: complete  
script available upon request)

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FADE IN

EXT. A GIANT CHESSBOARD -- DUSK

An thirteen-year-old girl, JULIE FRAY, stands bewildered in the center of a massive checkered game board, surrounded by rows of giant chess pieces that are even bigger than she is. Above her, a stormy sky roils.

A horse WHINNIES. These aren't just giant chess pieces -- they're living, moving ones!

Suddenly the WHITE QUEEN speaks, in a clear and authoritative voice.

WHITE QUEEN  
Pawn to queen's rook five!

Julie does a double-take. She seems to recognize the face of the queen.

JULIE  
Mom?

WHITE QUEEN  
I said, pawn to queen's rook five!

But Julie is confused. Where the heck is queen's rook five?

JULIE  
But I don't know where --

From the opposite side of the chess board, the BLACK KING speaks.

BLACK KING  
Pawn to king's knight four!

JULIE  
Dad?

BLACK KING  
Pawn to king's knight four!

JULIE  
Are you guys talking to me?

WHITE QUEEN  
Pawn to queen's knight five!

BLACK KING  
Pawn to king's knight four!

JULIE  
 Stop it! I can't be in two places  
 at once.

WHITE QUEEN  
 (matter-of-factly)  
 Well, you can't stay where you are.

BLACK KING  
 Oh, no, whatever you do, you  
 definitely can't stay there.

JULIE  
 (uneasily)  
 Why not?

But before either of her parents can answer, the other chess pieces spring into action, raising pikes, drawing swords and daggers, and nocking arrows.

There is a moment's hesitation. Then the soldiers all bear down on her.

As the weapons come at her, Julie SCREAMS. Just before the moment of impact...

CUT TO:

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

With a jolt, she wakes up. It's all been a dream.

But even though she's awake now, she doesn't look very relieved.

INT. JULIE'S KITCHEN -- FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Julie shambles into the room, exhausted from a terrible night's sleep. The floor has a black-and-white checkered pattern, like a chess board, and she hesitates to step on it.

JULIE'S MOTHER  
 Good morning, Julie! Have a seat.

JULIE'S MOTHER, clearly a morning person, is busy cooking an elaborate breakfast; he even cooks cheerfully. But she works as a product demonstrator in a supermarket, which gives a forced, practiced quality to everything she says and does, even away from her job.

## JULIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

The secret to making orange juice taste more like fresh-squeezed is to mix the juice of a real orange into each glass of frozen concentrate.

Julie mumbles a reply, but before she can sit, her father, dressed for work as a TV executive, sticks his head in the doorway. He is as intense as Julie's mother is cheerful.

## JULIE'S FATHER

Morning, Julie! Oh, hey, ready for that screening on Saturday? It's a rough cut, but I hear the rushes were terrific.

## JULIE'S MOTHER

(to Julie's dad,  
insincerely)

Oh, I'm sorry! On Saturday, I made plans for Julie to go with me to a blender convention.

## JULIE'S FATHER

You can't do that. Julie's busy with me on Saturday.

## JULIE'S MOTHER

Well, it's a very popular convention -- I bought our tickets weeks ago.

She drops a dollop of pancake batter on the skillet where it SIZZLES loudly.

## JULIE'S FATHER

You did not! You only did it when you found out Julie and I had plans for Saturday.

He defiantly CLICKS his briefcase closed.

## JULIE'S MOTHER

Don't be ridiculous! I just know how interested Julie is in ... frappeing.

## JULIE

(finally)

Well, I can't do either of those things. I was going to spend the night with Lisa and --

JULIE'S MOTHER  
You are not!

JULIE'S FATHER  
You are not!

JULIE'S MOTHER  
She's coming with me to the blender  
convention!

JULIE'S FATHER  
She's coming with me to the rough-  
cut screening!

Julie is standing in the middle of the checkerboard floor.  
She glances down at it again and SIGHS wearily.

INT. CLASSROOM -- MID-MORNING

CLOSE ON a withered lima bean sprout in a Styrofoam cup.

It's a class project. Julie and her best friend LISA are  
staring at the dead sprout.

LISA  
It looks bloated and withered. How  
did we do that?

JULIE  
Too much water and too much sun.  
Too much of everything, I guess.

Lisa looks at Julie.

LISA  
You know, you don't look so hot  
either.

JULIE  
No, I'm okay.

LISA  
You had another nightmare, didn't  
you?

Beat.

JULIE  
It was terrible.

LISA  
And your parents?

JULIE  
They're terrible too.

LISA

No, I mean they were in the dream again, right?

JULIE

Yeah. I could almost handle them if I didn't also have to deal with them in my dreams. They fight over me day and night. It's all too much.

LISA

Why are your parents even together anyway?

JULIE

(fully aware of the irony)  
For my sake. I've heard them say it when they don't know I'm listening.

The TEACHER appears, takes note of the dead lima bean.

TEACHER

This doesn't look good.

JULIE

I think we got a bad bean.

TEACHER

I think you should've listened closer to my instructions.

INT. DINING ROOM -- EVENING

It's a sumptuous spread with flickering candelabras and a crisp white tablecloth.

But rather than food atop that table, Julie herself is splayed out on a large silver tray: she is the main course, surrounded by pineapple rings with an apple in her mouth.

She tries to move, but her hands and legs are tightly trussed.

Julie's mother appears on one side of the table, speaking as if to an audience.

JULIE'S MOTHER

The secret to the perfect glaze is a little something called maple bourbon.

Julie's father appears, as if directing a movie camera.

JULIE'S FATHER  
Closer. Closer.

Julie struggles again, trying unsuccessfully to speak, but her parents both ignore her.

JULIE'S MOTHER  
(to Julie's father)  
Do you mind? I'm right in the middle of a demonstration here!

JULIE'S FATHER  
(to Julie's mother)  
Do you mind? I'm right in the middle of a pick-up.  
(to someone off-screen)  
Okay, we'll start with a dolly zoom and then get a dutch angle.

Julie's mother SIGHS and continues her instruction. She lifts a large knife and fork as if to cut Julie open.

JULIE'S MOTHER  
(to an audience)  
Now as we cut into it, notice just how tender and juicy the meat is.

Julie's eyes widen in horror.

JULIE'S FATHER  
What are you doing? You can't do that!

Julie is momentarily relieved.

JULIE'S MOTHER  
Why not?

JULIE'S FATHER  
Because that's not the shot I'm going for.

Her father lifts a large electric knife. He turns it on, and it BUZZES loudly. Now both Julie's mother and father converge on her with the utensils extended.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Julie! Wake up!

CUT TO:

INT. JULIE'S FATHER'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

It's a bungalow at the television studio where Julie's father works.

She's fallen asleep on the couch and wakes with a start.

Her father stares at her, concern in his eyes.

JULIE'S FATHER

You okay?

JULIE

No.

JULIE'S FATHER

Hey, you wanna hear this great idea  
I have for a new television show?

The concern is already gone from his eyes.

JULIE

Sure.

As they continue to talk, Julie looks forlornly out the window.

In the TV studio grounds beyond the window, there are warehouses and trailers and set-pieces. Technicians in blue jump-suits scurry everywhere, sometimes driving little golf-carts. And towering above the bustle is a big water-tower.

JULIE'S FATHER

It's a family sitcom about, well, a family. But it won't be actors playing the parts -- it'll be members of a real family!

JULIE

That's not a new idea. That's been done lots of times. The Jonas Brothers? Ozzie and Harriet?

JULIE'S FATHER

And you should see the actress we cast as the daughter!

JULIE

Actress? I thought you said you were using a real family?



JULIE'S FATHER

Oh, it's not a real real family. They'll be actors, but they're playing a real family playing a sitcom family.

JULIE

Oh.

JULIE'S FATHER

Now your mother distinctly said not to spoil our dinners tonight. So what say we stop somewhere for a little snack on the way home?

INT. JULIE'S HOUSE-- EVENING

Julie is home at last, on her way to her bedroom. As she passes the den, her mother stops her:

JULIE'S MOTHER

Hello there! Would you like to watch some television with me? There's a new reality show where a CEO trades places with a housewife. Apparently he doesn't know the difference between delicates and permanent press!

At this, her father sticks his head out of his nearby office.

JULIE'S FATHER

I bet Julie would like to watch something with me -- our new show with the animated dust-mites! The above-the-line is almost nothing and the back-end is unbelievable.

JULIE

I'm going to bed.

JULIE'S FATHER

So early?

JULIE

I'm tired.

JULIE'S MOTHER

Oh? Haven't you been sleeping well?

Not bothering to answer such a clueless question, Julie turns to go.

JULIE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

A simple hot-water bottle can warm  
the coldest of beds!

JULIE'S FATHER

I bet she wants an electric  
blanket.

JULIE'S MOTHER

And unlike an electric blanket, a  
hot-water bottle won't dry your  
skin!

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM -- EVENING

Julie enters and pauses to look at the diary atop her desk. But tonight, she's too tired to write -- and she's written the same things so many times anyway.

She stops at the picture window, which looks out at a star-filled sky. A partial moon hangs in the sky like a delicate pendant.

Finally, she sits on the bed and SIGHS: she's exhausted, but the last thing in the world she wants right now is more nightmares.

She lies back on the bed and stares up at the ceiling, lost in thought.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JULIE'S LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Julie has somehow been miniaturized: she's now so small that she's lost in the strands of carpet in her living room. In her reduced size, the granules of dirt around her look like black, jagged boulders.

Julie hears VOICES. She looks up.

One voice comes from a towering giant in white tennis shoes -- her mother, pushing a vacuum cleaner.

JULIE'S MOTHER

I'll do this room.

But Julie's father is right next to her mother with a smaller, hand-held vacuum of his own.

JULIE'S FATHER

No, I'll do this room. You do the bedroom.

JULIE'S MOTHER

I said I'll do it!

She turns on her vacuum, which WHINES loudly.

JULIE'S FATHER

(shouting)

No, I'll do it!

He turns on his vacuum. Now their shouting is completely drowned out by the loud SOUNDS.

JULIE

No, wait!

But her parents can't hear her, not as small as she is and not over the ROAR of their vacuums.

Both vacuums are coming right for her.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Stop! You'll vacuum me up!

But her parents continue to ignore her.

Now Julie can see the bottoms of both the vacuums -- wheels and grinding brushes on her mother's, and a suction tube on her fathers. They both seem to be fighting over vacuuming the exact spot where Julie is standing.

Julie's hair and clothes flutter in the suction. All around her, the boulder-like dirt granules begin to shift.

As the vacuums pulls at her, she is lifted up into the air.

Julie SCREAMS, grabbing ahold of the closest of the carpet strands, but she's being buffeted by the "boulders" as they get sucked up into the vacuums.

She holds fast to the carpet strand, but the suction is too strong: she can't hold on.

Suddenly, she's flying through the air toward both WHIRRING, GRINDING vacuum cleaners, and even now both are sucking furiously at her, threatening to rip her apart in mid-air.

But just before she gets torn apart and sucked away forever...

CUT TO:

EXT. ATOP A WATER TOWER -- NIGHT

Julie SLAMS against something hard.

The annoying sound of the vacuum cleaners is gone now, and the sudden SILENCE is jarring.

With a GROAN, Julie looks up and glances around.

She's in a completely different place: clutching the metal rivets at the very top of some kind of metal tank.

It's night. A half-moon hangs in the sky above her, but there are no stars.

Julie pushes herself upright and crawls to the edge of the tank.

She's on top of some kind of water tower. Down below her is a cluster of buildings arranged in rows.

Frankly, it looks a lot like her dad's TV studio: massive warehouses and bungalows and white trailers. A high concrete wall surrounds it all.

But the whole area seems deserted.

Julie is dazed. Where is she, and how the hell did she get here?

JULIE  
(to herself)  
It's another dream. I'm still  
dreaming.

She sees a flashing red light coming from one of the buildings down below.

Curious about the light, Julie spots a ladder that leads down the side of the water-tower. Careful to keep her balance, she heads toward it and starts to climb down.

As she does, something flies by in the dark just over her head. It SQUEAKS -- not like a bat, but like a rusted metal hinge.

She ducks, then stares after the creature as it flies under a nearby light: it looks like a tern or gull made entirely of metal. There's some kind of leather pouch attached to its underside.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
This is a very strange dream.

At the bottom of the ladder, Julie searches for the red flashing red light: it's coming from a silent siren-like device attached to the side of a nearby warehouse.

Julie approaches the light, but just before she gets there, a BUZZER sounds, and the light goes out.

A moment later, a garage-like door ROLLS open in the side of the warehouse, and a boy in a blue jump-suit steps out with a coil of thick cord wrapped around his shoulder.

His name is ROMAN, and he's sixteen or so, handsome, with olive skin, dark hair, and soft brown eyes.

He's surprised to see Julie, even as he seems to recognize her as well.

ROMAN

Ms. Leed? What are you doing here?

JULIE

What?

ROMAN

We won't be ready for you for at least another hour. Why don't you go back in your trailer?

JULIE

My what?

ROMAN

Look, Ms. Leed --

JULIE

Why do you keep calling me that? My name's Julie. Julie Fray.

But now Julie looks through the large open doorway behind him.

It's an elaborate TV soundstage of some kind made up to look like a hospital operating room.

There are lots of "people" on the set, most also in blue jump-suits. A few are human, like Roman, but most seem to be freakishly tall and skinny creatures, with massive perfectly round heads without hair.

Confused, Julie steps forward to take a closer look at both the set itself and these strange creatures.

Suddenly, several these creatures follow Roman out of the warehouse.

Julie stares as they pass. The surface of their "heads" is yellowish and pockmarked, like the moon, with no features -- not even vague indentions where the eyes, nose, and mouth might be.

Julie backs away, frightened, even as these curious beings disappear in different directions down the alleyways.

ROMAN

What's wrong?

JULIE

Those ... creatures!

ROMAN

You mean the Moon People? They're under contract to do all the manual labor in the dream studio. You know that, Ms. Leed.

JULIE

Look, if this is just another nightmare--

ROMAN

Of course it's another nightmare. That's all we do at the dream studio these days.

He gestures back at the soundstage.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Julie goes in for heart surgery. Her parents are both doctors, and they argue over who gets to do the surgery. They can't decide, so they end up both tearing her heart out.

Beat. Julie doesn't know what to make of all this.

JULIE

Something is very wrong here.

ROMAN

(looking around)

Why? Did someone forget to order the fish-guts?

JULIE

You're not making any sense!

ROMAN

Look, Ms. Leed --

JULIE  
Why do you keep calling me that? My  
name's Julie!

ROMAN  
Julie Fray.

JULIE  
Yes!

ROMAN  
But she's not real. Look, Ms. Leed,  
if this is some kind of acting  
exercise, I really don't have time  
right now ....

He turns to go.

JULIE  
Wait!

He stops.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
Please don't go! I ... need your  
help.

He stares at her, seeing her as if for the first time.

ROMAN  
You're really not Lorna Leed, are  
you?

JULIE  
I don't even know who Lorna Leed  
is! I'm lost, and I don't know  
where I am.

ROMAN  
Well, Slumberia, of course.

JULIE  
Slum-whatia?

ROMAN  
The land of Slumberia. And this is  
the dream studio, the place where  
they film the dreams.

JULIE  
But where is Slumberia? And --  
wait. They "film" dreams?

ROMAN

Well, it's all digital these days,  
of course.

JULIE

And whose dreams are they filming?  
Mine?

Roman thinks about this.

ROMAN

I didn't know they were anyone's  
dreams. I thought they just ...  
were. How'd you get in here anyway?

JULIE

Well, I was in the middle of a  
dream ...

She shivers at the thought of it.

JULIE (CONT'D)

... and then that dream ended, and  
this once started, and I just found  
myself at the top of this water-  
tower.

ROMAN

Water-tower?

Julie points over at it.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

You mean the creative juices tank?

JULIE

The what?

ROMAN

It doesn't matter. Wait. Look.

He points too. Hanging in the air just above the water-tower,  
something shimmers ever-so-slightly in the moonlight.

JULIE

What's that?

ROMAN

I don't know. I've never seen it  
before.



JULIE

This is the strangest dream I've ever been in. I can't tell if it's a nightmare or not.

ROMAN

Why do you keep saying that? This isn't a dream. This is real.

Julie looks over at the closest of the white trailers. There's a name in the middle of a gold star on the door: "Lorna Leed."

JULIE

Wait a minute. You just said that Julie Fray isn't real. So she's the character in these nightmares you've been filming?

ROMAN

Of course. She's the main character.

JULIE

And this Lorna Leed person is the actress who plays her?

ROMAN

Well, yes, but --

Julie starts for the trailer.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Wait! What are you doing?

JULIE

I'm going to talk to Lorna Leed.

ROMAN

But ... you can't!

But it's too late: Julie is already knocking on the door. Roman is aghast.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

What have you done?

JULIE

What do you mean?

The door to the trailer opens, and a girl who looks exactly like Julie, LORNA LEED, peers out, irritated.

Well, maybe she doesn't look exactly like Julie: Lorna's face is drawn, and her eyes have dark bags -- she obviously hasn't gone to make-up yet. And her clothes are different from Julie's too -- she's wearing a robe with a towel wrapped around her head.

Oh, and she's a complete bitch.

LORNA  
What the hell do you want?

ROMAN  
Nothing, Ms. Leed! Very sorry! Just ignore us -- we were just leaving!

Lorna completely ignores Roman, but stares at Julie with open suspicion.

LORNA  
Who the hell are you?

ROMAN  
She's no one! And we're still just leaving!

He tries to pull Julie away, but she ignores Roman too.

JULIE  
My name is Julie.

LORNA  
Julie who?

ROMAN  
Julie Merrick -- the director's niece!

Lorna hesitates, not sure how to react. Finally, she decides on a surprisingly effective version of "sweet."

LORNA  
Well, why didn't you say so? Come inside!

She ushers them in. Julie starts to step into the trailer, even as Roman tries desperately to hold her back.

ROMAN  
Julie!

JULIE  
What?

ROMAN  
This is a bad idea.

JULIE  
Just trust me, okay?

Reluctantly, Roman relents.

INT. LORNA LEED'S TRAILER -- CONTINUOUS

It's a complete disaster inside, with clothes and make-up containers everywhere.

LORNA  
Come in, come in! Sorry about the mess -- it's been crazy around here. Earlier, they actually had me being sucked up by giant vacuum cleaners. Can you imagine? I was hanging from wires for hours.

She laughs a musical LAUGH.

In other words, Lorna Leed has been utterly transformed. Suddenly, she couldn't be any more charming. Even the bags under her eyes are gone!

JULIE  
Wow, that does sound terrible. So I have a question: if these nightmares are so bad, why do you keep doing them?

LORNA  
That is a good question.

She pours herself a drink of some clear, sparkling liquid from a carafe on the make-up table and immediately begins to quaff it down.

LORNA (CONT'D)  
I'd offer you a drink, but ... I don't have any more glasses.

Both Julie and Lorna spot several glasses amid the make-up containers ... but then both simultaneously pretend to ignore them.

JULIE  
No, seriously. Why do nightmares at all?

LORNA  
 Sorry, what did you say your name  
 was?

JULIE  
 Julie Fray.

ROMAN  
 Julie Merrick, the director's  
 niece!

Once again, Lorna Leed ignores Roman completely.

LORNA (CONT'D)  
 Fray? Julie Fray?

There is no trace of "sweet" left in Lorna Leed's voice. Now she's furious.

LORNA (CONT'D)  
 Oh, I see what's going on here.  
 (to Julie)  
 You're trying to steal my part!  
 Well, it won't work! For one thing,  
 you don't look a bit like her. And  
 those ridiculous clothes ... wait,  
 that looks like a costume. Has Joan  
 already fitted you for a costume?  
 This is outrageous! I'm calling  
 Security.

She grabs the receiver of the phone.

Meanwhile, Roman grabs Julie and pulls her to the door.

ROMAN  
 Let's get out of here!

JULIE  
 But --

ROMAN  
 No buts! Let's go!

As he yanks her from the trailer, we hear Lorna Leed talking into the phone.

LORNA  
 Operator? Give me Security!

EXT. DREAM STUDIO -- NIGHT

Roman hustles Julie away from Lorna Leed's trailer, down more alleys, past set pieces (like giant chess pieces and the massive carpet strands that Julie was holding onto in her earlier dream).

Since Julie's arrival (and the sound of that buzzer earlier), the whole studio has come alive, with Moon People now hurrying here and there, all busy with some manual task. Some even zip around in golf-carts.

Even so, they all seem weary.

JULIE

(to Roman)

Is Lorna Leed always that ... strange?

ROMAN

It's the creative juices. From the creative juices tank? She's addicted to the stuff. Everyone at the dream studio used to get a share, but now Lorna Leed gets almost all of it. Which is funny, because it sure hasn't made her very creative.

Suddenly, the ROAR of something strange and horrible rises up from the other side of the dream studio. It sounds like a cross between lion and an elephant.

Julie stops. Roman blanches.

JULIE

What was that?

ROMAN

(ominously)

Lorna called Security.

JULIE

What kind of security guards sound like that?

ROMAN

The Trull. They make sure nothing ever disrupts the dream production. We have to hide.

He glances to one side, to the doorway of a darkened bungalow.

ROMAN (CONT'D)

In here!

He throws the door open and pushes Julie inside.

INT. BUNGALOW -- CONTINUOUS

Roman and Julie crouch, breathless, in the darkness behind the closed door.

But suddenly, a voice speaks up from behind, making them both jump.

VOICE

Can I help you?

A light flickers on behind them. Julie and Roman turn to see who turned it on.

It's the DREAMWRITER, a slight young man with a stubbled, but pleasant face. He is sitting at a desk with a very old typewriter, and he's surrounded by -- in fact, the whole room is filled with -- teetering stacks of dog-eared screenplays.

The room also has an unlit cast-iron stove.

ROMAN

Sorry! I didn't think there was anyone in here.

DREAMWRITER

S'okay.

JULIE

Why were you sitting in the dark?

DREAMWRITER

Oh, I do some of my best thinking in the dark.

JULIE

What are you thinking about?

DREAMWRITER

Dreams. I'm the dreamwriter.

JULIE

The what?

DREAMWRITER

You know, the person who writes the dreams?

JULIE

Dreams have writers?

DREAMWRITER

Well, of course! Did you think they just wrote themselves?

JULIE

I guess I never really thought about it.

DREAMWRITER

Well, you should! We're the most important part of the dream, because without us there wouldn't be any dream at all.

ROMAN

Without a director, there wouldn't be any dream either. Or actors, or set-designers, or camera crew, or costumers, or a key grip, or --

DREAMWRITER

Okay, okay! Look, the writer is the most important, because he's the only one who knows the whole story.

JULIE

You know the whole story?

DREAMWRITER

(smugly)  
I do.

JULIE

What's my story?

DREAMWRITER

You're a stranger in a strange land on the run for a crime you didn't commit!

Julie thinks for a second, then shrugs as if to say, "That's not half bad."

JULIE

If you're the most important part of the dreams, do you think you could stop writing all these nightmares?

DREAMWRITER

As a matter of fact, I was just thinking in the dark about going in an entirely different direction with the dreams!

JULIE

You were? Was it a happy direction?

They're interrupted by a loud THUMPING and SCRAPING in the pipe of the cast-iron stove, as if something is sliding down it.

A metal bird -- like the one Julie saw earlier -- bursts out of the pipe and lands in a big puff of ashes in the belly of the stove itself.

It looks like a suit of armor in the shape of a bird. There's definitely something inside.

It SQUEAKS and COUGHS, obviously exhausted.

JULIE (CONT'D)

(to Roman)

What is that?

ROMAN

A knightbird.

JULIE

A nightbird? Because it's night?

ROMAN

A "knightbird." With a "k." Because of the armor. They're used as couriers around here.

JULIE

Is it a real bird?

The bird's voice echoes from inside the metal. There's something inside -- but what is it? The voice is gritty, working-class all the way, but friendly.

BIRD

I beg your pardon! I'm sitting right here, ya know!

JULIE

Oh! You can talk.

DREAMWRITER

(to Julie and Roman)

Excuse me -- this'll just take a sec.

The dreamwriter crouches down to put a script in the pouch on the underside of the metal bird.

As he does, Roman steps over to the window, acting as a look-out and peering out the closed shade.



DREAMWRITER (CONT'D)

(to the bird)

You've made your pick-up. Now go on, get out of here.

BIRD

Not so fast! I wanna meet your friends.

JULIE

I'm Julie, and this is Roman. The dreamwriter was just telling us how he plans to start writing happy dreams!

BIRD

Name's Greta. And he was, was he?

DREAMWRITER

(defensively)

I said I was thinking about it.

From inside the metal bird, Greta LAUGHS -- great, hearty chuckles.

JULIE

What?

GRETA

The dreamwriter doesn't have any say about what goes on in the dreams!

JULIE

He doesn't?

GRETA

It's in his contract. He just writes whatever the dream-producer tells him to write.

DREAMWRITER

That's not true!

JULIE

Who's the dream-producer?

GRETA

The person who really controls the dreams.

JULIE

Well, the dreamwriter must have some say.

DREAMWRITER

I do!

GRETA

You'd think so, wouldn't you? But I carry notes back and forth. The dreamwriter doesn't write anything the dream-producer doesn't tell him to write.

JULIE

(to the dreamwriter)

Is that true?

Beat.

DREAMWRITER

(sheepishly)

Maybe.

GRETA

Of course it's true!

Over by the window, Roman finally speaks:

ROMAN

I think the coast is clear -- the Trull must have missed our scent. I think I can sneak you back to the top of the creative juices tank. Whatever we saw up there, that must be your way home.

Roman starts to open the door. But Julie doesn't move, just thinks.

JULIE

No, wait.

ROMAN

(surprised)

What?

JULIE

I'm not leaving.

Everyone looks at her.

JULIE (CONT'D)

Not until I stop my nightmares once and for all.

GRETA

Atta-girl!

JULIE

Where is the dream-producer?  
Somewhere here in the dream studio?

ROMAN

Uh, not exactly.

JULIE

Well, will you show me where they  
are?

Roman hesitates, then finally nods.

EXT. OUTSIDE LORNA LEED'S TRAILER -- NIGHT

Lorna Leed, now in costume (and looking exactly like Julie), peers out the open doorway of her trailer. She's listening to the vicious, angry ROAR of the still-unseen Trull, obviously in hot pursuit of Julie and Roman.

She smiles in deep satisfaction.

She's just about to turn back inside her trailer when she spots something up in the sky.

It's that little shimmer in the air above the creative juices tank.

LORNA

What in the world?

She starts toward it, to get a better look.

EXT. THE CREATIVE JUICES TANK -- MOMENTS LATER

Lorna stops at the base of the ladder that leads up the side of the creative juices tank. She still can't make out what that shimmer is in the air.

She starts up the ladder to investigate.

EXT. THE TOP OF THE CREATIVE JUICES TANK -- MOMENTS LATER

At the top of the tank, Lorna stands, careful to keep her balance, to get a better look at the shimmer in the air.

The shimmer is a "tear," as if in space itself, maybe three feet or so across. It GURGLES vaguely. It sparkles only because its folds somehow catch the moonlight.

Lorna steps closer, confused. What is this anyway?

She reaches up to touch it, standing on her tip-toes to do so. It GURGLES again.

Sure enough, when she touches it, it's as if it has actual physical substance. It makes a soft BURP-like sound.

She probes her hand deeper inside -- but then it's like it suddenly sucks her in, yanking her up with a loud SLURP.

LORNA

Whhooaaaa!

Before she knows it, she's been sucked into the rip in space like a milkshake up a straw.

EXT. DESOLATE LANDSCAPE -- NIGHT

Julie and Roman are just outside the concrete walls of the dream studio now, in the rocky, barren terrain that stretches out in front of them.

Roman points: across the rolling landscape, at the top of a distant hill, is the outline of a massive castle, an assortment of crude rectangles.

ROMAN

There. That's where the dream-producer lives.

Julie can't help but be a little taken aback.

JULIE

Oh.

But she quickly finds her courage again:

JULIE (CONT'D)

Then that's where I'm headed, I guess. Thank you, I really appreciate your --

ROMAN

We should hurry.

He suddenly starts forward across the rocky desert.

JULIE

Oh. I didn't realize you were --

Another metal bird flies over them in the dark, its wings SQUEAKING with labored strokes, obviously trying hard to keep its heavy bulk aloft. It's coming from the direction of the castle, flying over the concrete wall into the dream studio.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
Another knightbird?

ROMAN  
(nodding)  
It's how the dream-producer  
communicates with the dream studio.

But with her eyes on the sky, Julie notices the moon, which is now completely full.

JULIE  
That's funny.

ROMAN  
What is?

JULIE  
I could've sworn it was a half-moon  
before. And why are there no stars?

Julie spots a light on the horizon off to one side -- sunrise, no doubt.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
(happily)  
Well, at least it looks like it'll  
be daylight soon.

ROMAN  
Daylight?

JULIE  
You know. Sunrise? When the sun  
comes up? Morning?

He continues to look at her blankly.

JULIE (CONT'D)  
The sun? The big round thing up in  
the sky? Like the moon, only  
brighter?

ROMAN  
Oh, right, I remember -- like in  
the dreams. No, we don't have a  
"sunrise" in Slumberia anymore.  
Haven't in a long time.

JULIE  
No sun? No daylight? Ever?

ROMAN  
Nope.

She shivers. But as they draw closer, the light on the horizon now looks even brighter than before.

JULIE

Well, if there's no sun, what's  
that?

But Roman doesn't know. With a shrug, he and Julie start toward the light.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Lying in bed, still wearing the clothes that she fell asleep in the night before, "Julie" opens her eyes.

We know instantly, just from her expression, that this is not Julie, but rather Lorna Leed inhabiting Julie's body.

She sits upright and looks around, confused.

She slips out of bed and begins to investigate the bedroom.

Before long, she comes to Julie's diary, still on the desk. She picks it up and begins to read.

She smiles to herself, then sits back down on the bed to read the whole thing.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE -- NIGHT

The source of the light Julie had seen on the horizon is a small lighthouse situated at the edge of a vast pool of milky white sand; the surface is untouched, like freshly fallen snow.

Julie and Roman walk up to the lighthouse, then look out over the sand.

JULIE

(re: the sand)  
What is this place?

ROMAN

I think it's called the Creative  
Desert.

END OF EXCERPT: Request Full Script: brenthartinger@gmail.com