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# The Truth About Eternity

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# The Truth About Eternity



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## Introduction

When the quality of life after death is determined by how much your descendants are willing to pay, how far will you go to earn a place in their hearts?

In the not too distant future of East Asia, the long-standing tradition of ancestor worship has culminated in one of the modern era's greatest achievements: the digital tomb. The use of digital tombs has spread across the world and given people the miraculous opportunity to hold onto digitized versions of their ancestors so that they may visit them to receive both guidance and comfort.

However, the digital tomb industry has given rise to many new ethical questions society has not had to deal with before. What do we do with ancestors whom nobody visits anymore? What happens when descendants can no longer pay for space on a server for their ancestors? Should ancestors only be awake and functional part of the time, or should they continue to live full lives of their own?

In this scenario, players will wrestle with the challenges that come with aging and caring for the aging, the inevitability of profound loss, and the battle between personal freedom and familial responsibility.

### Scenario Info

**Number of Players:** 5

**Number of Facilitators:** 1

**Time:** 4-5 hours

**Genre:** Semi-live, near-future sci-fi

### Space & Materials

This scenario should be played in a room that has some furniture that can be moved around as set decoration. A few chairs should do. Character sheets should be printed and writing utensils provided.



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## Suggested Timeline

- **Introduction to Setting and Overview of Cultural Notes** (15 Minutes)

- **Casting** (5 Minutes)

- **Ancestors Vs. Descendants Workshop** (10 Minutes)

- **Flashback/Flashforward Repetition Workshop** (10 Minutes)

- **Relationship Building Workshop** (18 Minutes)

- **Safety Mechanics** (5 Minutes)

- **Break** (5 Minutes)

- **Act I** (40 Minutes)

**Opening Scene**

**Jungwoo's Scene**

**Minji's Scene**

**Esther's Scene**

**Helen's Scene**

**Sam's Scene**

- **Act II** (20 Minutes)

**Jungwoo's Scene**

**Minji's Scene**

- **Act III** (60 Minutes)

**Jungwoo's Scene** (Played Twice)

**Minji's Scene** (Played Twice)

**Esther's Scene** (Played Twice)

**Helen's Scene** (Played Twice)

**Sam's Scene** (Played Twice)

- **Act IV** (30 Minutes)

**Esther's Scene**

**Helen's Scene**

**Sam's Scene**

- **Act V** (35 Minutes)

**Opening Scene**

**Jungwoo's Scene**

**Minji's Scene**

**Helen's Scene**

- **Epilogues** (12 Minutes)

- **Break** (5 Minutes)

- **Debrief** (15 Minutes)



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## Game Structure Overview

***Note: This is an overview to aid the facilitator. Players do not need to worry about memorizing this.***

The Truth About Eternity is composed of three workshops, five acts, and an epilogue. Each act, with the exception of the third, has two to six short scenes. The third act has exactly ten scenes.

At the beginning of the first and final acts, a predetermined opening scene is played. The descriptions of those scenes should be read by the facilitator. After that, certain players have the opportunity to choose one of their character's two potential scenes from that act, starting with Jungwoo, the eldest, and ending with Sam, the youngest. In no single playthrough of the scenario will all scenes be played. Once a player has chosen their scene, they should read the description out loud before playing it out.

Scenes should generally be kept short. It's perfectly reasonable for a scene to only be a couple of minutes long.

In **Act I** we are introduced to the world, and relationships between each of the characters are established.

In **Act II** the ancestors try to figure out what they want and discover challenges in their bonds with their descendants.

In **Act III** each character plays out a flashback or flashforward twice. The first time, they depict a scene from their family life as they wish it would have unfolded or would unfold. The second time, they replay the same scene so that it is more grounded in a disappointing reality.

In **Act IV** the characters debate whether Esther should be digitized or not.

In **Act V**, the characters deal with new revelations and the consequences of their decision from the previous act.

In the **Epilogues**, each player narrates what has become of their character ten years in the future.



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# Facilitator's Responsibilities

In this scenario, the facilitator has the following responsibilities:

- I. Distributing character sheets and scenes.
2. Reading the setting and cultural information to the players.
3. Casting.
4. Running the workshops.
5. Going over safety mechanics.
6. Reading the opening scene descriptions for Acts I and V.
7. Keeping track of time and making sure the game keeps moving.
8. Ending scenes by calling "Scene" when the tension is still high.
9. Playing a digital servant when called for.
10. Pausing the game to course-correct if a boundary set by the scenario document or a player is crossed.
- II. Running the debrief.

## Silent Servant

In scenes that take place inside Jungwoo's tomb, it may make sense at certain times for the facilitator to step in as a silent, almost invisible servant to do things like bring in an additional seat, fetch something that the ancestors or descendants ask for, or make adjustments to the environment. As the tombs are digital, any objects brought by the servant are also purely digital, though everyone will interact with them as if they were physical. Players, especially Jungwoo, should also feel free to complain to the servant about something ("It's too bright in here!" or "Where's that photo album I had on the table?") even if the servant is not currently in the scene.

Nobody should pay much attention to the servant, as it is just a simple program without any real personality other than that it must obey any uncomplicated commands given to it. If a command is given that goes beyond the basics, such as "Hack into the Eternatech servers," then the servant should just reply "I am sorry, I cannot."

The servant should never make eye contact with any of the players. Likewise, if the players want to call for the servant, they should just call out in the general direction of the facilitator without making eye contact.



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# Setting Information

***Note to facilitator: Read the entire setting information section out loud to the players.***

*“On the day of the sacrifice, he enters the room [of the ancestral temple where the rites will take place], and it seems to him that he sees the deceased. After the ceremony is over and he is ready to leave, he is still absorbed in what he thought was the voice of the deceased. And after he has exited the door, he can still hear faintly the sound of the deceased sighing. Thus the filiality taught by the former kings requires that the eyes of the son should never forget his parents’ looks, nor his ears their voices; and that his heart should never forget what they were inclined toward and what they liked. Because he loves them completely, they continue to exist. And because he is true to his devotion, they could still appear to him.”*

- “The Meaning of the Sacrifice” from Confucius’s Book of Rites, a collection of texts from the Zhou dynasty.

For thousands of years, ancestor worship has been an important part of religious practices in East Asia. Temples were built and dedicated to the ancestors of royal families, and sacrifices were made to keep ancestors, both royal and otherwise, content.

Over the past fifty years, the practice of uploading the memories and personalities of deceased family members to digital tombs has grown rapidly, starting in East Asia and spreading across the world. Whereas once descendants could only preserve their beloved ancestors in videos, photographs, and personal memories, now they can visit a virtual world in which they still live on.

While some Asian families still make trips to visit gravesites, leave offerings of food, and perform traditional funerary rites, many forego these rituals in favor of celebrating the digitization of their loved ones now. Those who adhere to these new customs of the digital age sometimes find themselves in contention with those who follow the old rites, as both groups believe they are doing what is best for their families.

The company responsible for this innovation is Eternatech Corporation. Based in Korea and China but providing services all over the globe, Eternatech has taken ancestor veneration to the next level by immortalizing entire families, one generation after another. “Family is Everything,” is their slogan, and everyone has seen their advertisements featuring grand virtual mansions, family reunions, and children first getting to meet their great-great-grandparents.

The truth is a little more complicated. Money determines everything when it comes to the quality of an ancestor’s digital afterlife, and grand digital tombs have become status symbols among the elite. It costs only slightly less to take care of an ancestor than it would to take care of a living person. While it’s common for ancestors to save money for their own tomb, after a time it falls on the living family members to pay for space on a server for them. Wealthy families can afford to keep their ancestors in



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those fabulous mansions as advertised, but ancestors whose families can only manage the minimum payments find themselves in a limited and sparse environment.

Though it's illegal for Eternatech to simply erase an ancestor from one of its servers, they can make the afterlife fairly miserable for someone who's family hasn't kept up with payments. Aesthetic pleasures are erased, access to media and news sources removed, the ability to visit other ancestors or receive visitors, living or dead, is taken away, and eventually even the hours they are allowed to be "awake" or conscious are greatly limited.

Even with full account privileges, there are certain things a digitized ancestor cannot do. Though they may be fully capable, they are not allowed to work jobs or earn money as there are laws in place that outlaw AIs replacing human workers, and technically the ancestors are a form of AI. They cannot experience the physical world by being downloaded to a mechanical body. There are rumors that there are certain emotional depths they are incapable of experiencing for their own safety and the safety of others, but Eternatech has never confirmed this.

Eternatech has done their best at simulating real life within the tombs, and living relatives can bring digital gifts that look and feel like real objects such as books or furniture within the virtual reality. The only sense that cannot be experienced in a tomb is taste. The dead have no need to eat, after all.

Eternatech centers can be found in almost every major city in the world, and all of their tombs can be accessed from any one of them.

## Cultural Notes

The characters in this scenario are Korean and Korean American, but players do not need any prior knowledge of Korean culture before playing. Everything you need to know is written in the character sheets and setting information. Players should not worry about conveying that their characters are Korean, and please don't attempt any accent other than your own or any Korean vocabulary!

Additionally, please do not incorporate bowing as a greeting or a sign of respect, as this is a gesture that is commonly overdone when "playing Korean" and can come off as a parody. When descendants greet and leave ancestors, they can nod their heads in respect as a subtle gesture. This will be covered in one of the workshops.



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# Characters

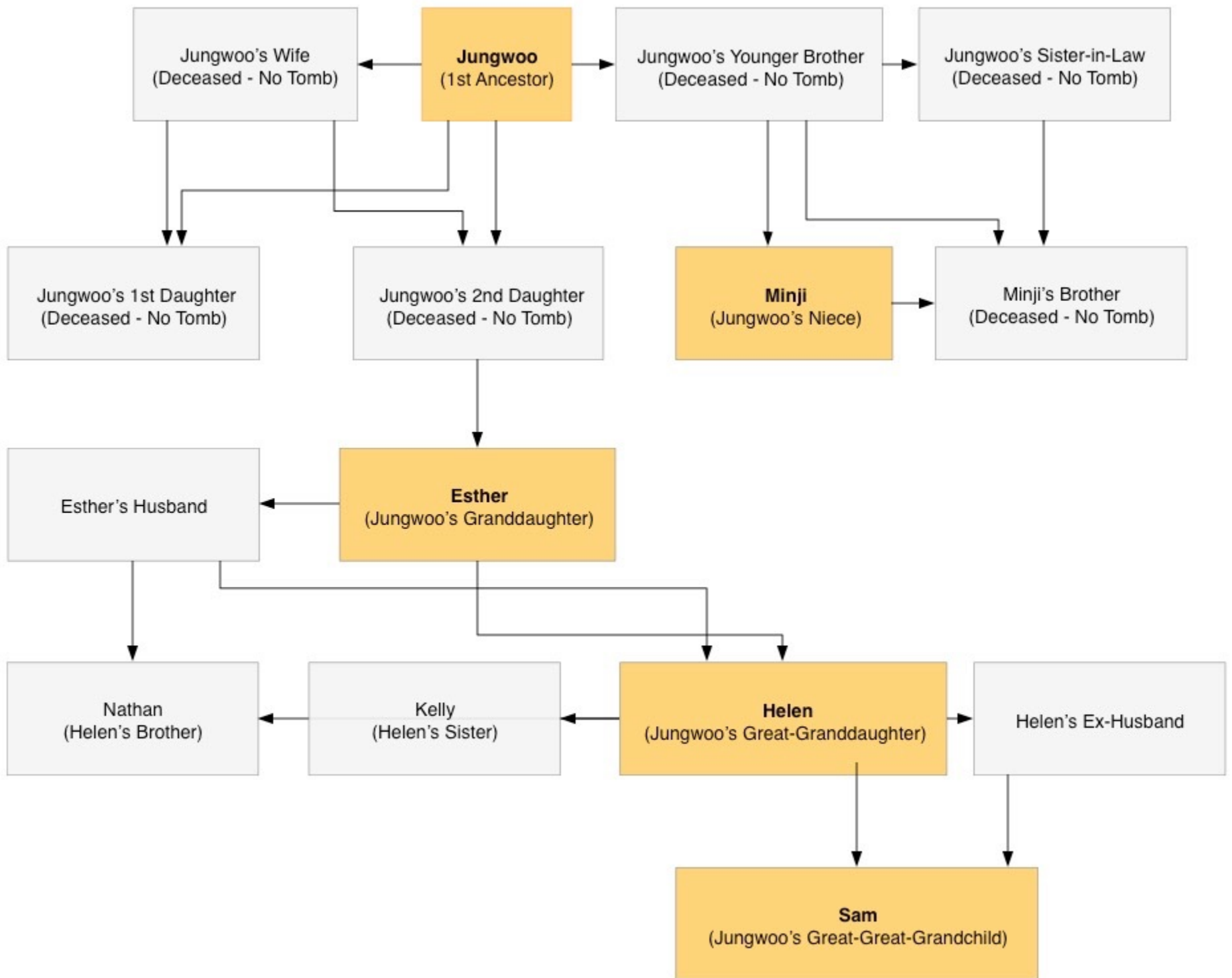
## Casting

Instead of having players choose their own characters, ask them about the kind of experience they would like to have and assign them a character appropriate to their desired experience. Once characters have been assigned, players should read their “To read aloud” sections to each other, but keep their “To keep to yourself” sections secret until the contents come up naturally in play. Some things to keep in mind:

- If a player has a strong desire to specifically play an ancestor or a descendant, the ancestor characters are **Jungwoo** and **Minji** and the descendant characters are Esther, Helen, and Sam. Ancestors get to play heavily on themes of loneliness, while descendants play heavily on guilt.
- If a player prefers to play a character of a specific gender, **Jungwoo** is a man, **Minji**, **Esther**, and **Helen** are women, and **Sam** can be of any or no gender.
- Ancestors and descendants both roughly get the same number of scenes.
- **Jungwoo** should be played by someone who enjoys subtle manipulation and being at the top of a hierarchy. The player should be able to pull off an air of confidence. If there is someone who isn't as comfortable expressing intense emotions, Jungwoo should go to them.
- **Minji** should be played by someone who enjoys playing melancholy characters and exploring themes of existential dread. The player should be okay with exploring themes of abandonment and suicidal ideation.
- **Esther** should be played by someone who enjoys playing a loving character who worries about being a burden to her family. The player should be able to project genuine kindness and unconditional love. They should also be okay with their character dying and taking on a semi-directorial role by using the bird-in-the-ear meta-technique in the final act.
- **Helen** should be played by someone who enjoys suffering and feeling the weight of the world on their shoulders. The player should be capable of both restraint and potential emotional explosions, as well as both deep love and deep resentment. This is probably the most difficult character to play, so she should go to a confident player.
- **Sam** should be played by someone who enjoys playing a character who starts out naïve and optimistic and progressively becomes more depressed and hopeless. If there is someone who would like their role to help drive the story and set up many of the conflicts, this is the character for them.



# Family Tree





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## Jungwoo / “Grandfather”

### Relationships

Uncle to Minji

Grandfather to Esther

Great Grandfather to Helen

Great-Great-Grandfather to Sam

### To read aloud:

In life, Jungwoo was an accomplished businessman who traveled the world and secured a life of affluence and recognition for his family in Korea. As a senior vice president for a consumer electronics company, Jungwoo was often busy. Though at the start of his career he was good about making sure he spent time with his family, as his career grew he missed out on more and more special occasions as well as daily life with his wife, children, and parents.

At the end of his long life, Jungwoo thought that by getting a digital tomb, he would be buying more time to spend with his family. To his surprise, his wife and two daughters chose not to be digitized, as the technology was still young back then and not as well-trusted as it is today.

With no immediate family to spend time with in his afterlife, Jungwoo has long been seen as the head of his extended family. Both the living and deceased seek him out for advice that he is eager to give. Because he was so wealthy in life, he has paid the expenses for his own extravagant tomb. However, everyone knows or at least suspects that he is lonely and desperate for attention and praise.

Regardless of their relationship to Jungwoo, everyone calls him “Grandfather.” He appears as he did at the prime of his career when he was in his fifties.

### To keep to yourself until it comes up in play:

Jungwoo’s tomb is only paid for through the next two years, so all these nice things won’t last forever. He should try to make himself as useful as possible to his living family so they will find it in their hearts to pay for his tomb, or else he might end up like Minji.



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## **Minji / “Auntie”**

### **Relationships**

Niece to Jungwoo

Aunt to Esther

Great-Aunt to Helen

Great-Great-Aunt to Sam

### **To read aloud:**

In life, Minji was a gifted cellist who played in one of Korea’s symphony orchestras, though in her personal life she was shy and introverted. She never married or had children, so when she became terminally ill in her late thirties there was some debate as to whether she should be placed in a digital tomb. After all, what descendants would come to see her?

In the end, Minji decided it would be worth it to enter a digital tomb because then she would be given more time to discover new art, read the books she never got around to, perfect her cello-playing, and maybe even compose new works herself. However, several years after she passed away, her brother lost the family savings after a series of bad investments. This left them with no way to continue to pay for Minji’s tomb, let alone pay to get tombs of their own. Minji’s tomb was downgraded to a space that resembles a sparse room, and over the years she watched as her parents and brother passed away and were unable to afford to be digitized.

These days Minji receives no visitors, in part because her account remains unpaid for so it is not allowed, and in part because there are few living relatives who remember her. She is permitted twelve hours of “awake time” a week while her account is suspended. Once a year she is allowed to attend a celebration of Jungwoo’s birthday in his tomb. Everyone except Jungwoo calls her “Auntie.”

### **To keep to yourself until it comes up in play:**

Minji chose to get a digital tomb in large part because she wanted to compose music, but since she’s been here her mind hasn’t worked the same way as it used to and she is unable to compose anything. She is unsure if this is just because of how the tombs work, or if she is simply uninspired because she is no longer living. The answer to this is the key to whether she will want to continue existing digitally or not.



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## **Esther**

### **Relationships**

Granddaughter to Jungwoo

Niece to Minji

Mother to Helen

Grandmother to Sam

### **To read aloud:**

When Esther was very small, her family was well-off because of the money Jungwoo made, but when her uncle lost the family fortune, life quickly became difficult. Esther's parents' savings went into rescuing her uncle and his family from utter ruin, and Esther found herself working as a delivery person as a teenager to help support her family.

Esther became a nurse and got married at a young age. She married a journalist, and soon after they had their third child he got a job offer in New York City, so they moved to the United States. She eventually got work as a nurse again to help save up for her children to go to college, but her job kept her for long hours so quality time with them was infrequent for some years. Two of those children grew up to resent her for it and moved far away after graduating. The other – Helen – was more understanding and stayed close to home so her parents could have a hand in raising her child.

Esther prioritizes taking care of her family over all else. After her husband broke his hip, Helen and Sam moved in to help out. Having retired many years ago now, Esther spends her days preparing meals, cleaning, reading, and taking care of her husband who has slowed down a lot even after recovering from his injury. She dotes on Sam the same way now as she did twenty years ago, and wants very badly for her children and grandchildren to be happy and successful. She visits Jungwoo once a month to pay respects and bring him a new book.

### **To keep to yourself until it comes into play:**

Esther doesn't think she wants a digital tomb because she doesn't believe the digital personalities really house their original souls. As she grows closer to the end of her own life, however, she is finding that her fear of death is strong enough that she may reconsider the possibility. Esther decides for certain whether she wants to be digitized at the beginning of Act V.



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## Helen

### Relationships

Great-Granddaughter to Jungwoo

Great-Niece to Minji

Daughter to Esther

Mother to Sam

### To read aloud:

Helen was born in Korea but grew up in New York. A hard worker ever since she was young, Helen spent much of her youth taking care of her younger brother and sister while her parents were working. A gifted and responsible student with great potential as a violinist as well, teachers, friends, and family all knew she was destined for success in her life.

While it is true that her career as an executive news producer has been a successful one, her personal life has been a bit bumpy. She married an emotionally abusive college professor who left her and Sam for his former teaching assistant when Sam was ten years old. In the years after, she found herself emotionally and financially supporting everyone in her immediate family at one or several points. Her troublemaker brother's first startup failed badly, and then his second, leaving him in serious debt - a family tradition, apparently. Her father's hip broke, and insurance didn't cover all the resulting expenses. It was one thing after another until almost all of her retirement savings were gone, and every time she considered saying no, someone would remind her that it's a family's responsibility to take care of one another.

Now Helen dreams of traveling the world with Sam, picking up old hobbies like the violin, and having a life of her own without a family member knocking on her door with a new problem every day. If she could save up some money, those things would be possible, but as things are she doesn't even know if she'll ever be able to retire.

Once or twice a year, Esther is able to convince Helen to visit Jungwoo with her. Digital tombs unsettle her and make her sad though, so she tries to stay away.

### To keep to yourself until it comes into play:

Helen doesn't know if she believes that the personalities in the digital tombs really have the same souls as they did when they were alive, but she knows Sam deeply wants it to be true. If she could convince Sam that those digital spirits aren't their real ancestors, Sam might not push her to spend money to maintain the tombs.



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## Sam

Note: Sam's gender is up to the player but placeholder pronouns are he/him.

### Relationships

Great-Great-Grandchild to Jungwoo

Great-Great-Grandnephew to Minji

Grandchild to Esther

Child to Helen

### To read aloud:

Sam grew up idolizing his family because they all adored him and made sure he knew he was loved and cared for, especially when his dad left the picture when he was ten. The other kids he grew up with mostly didn't understand why he liked to spend so much time with his family, but that never deterred him from passing up on parties occasionally just to hang out at home with his mom and grandparents. Besides, it makes his grandmother happy when he's around, and as far as he's concerned that's the most important thing.

Growing up, Sam always wished he knew more about his extended family, but the subject seemed to be an uncomfortable one so he eventually learned to stop asking. Now on the verge of starting graduate school in another state, he is anxious about not being able to spend as much time with his family and is struggling with separation anxiety.

Sam often finds himself torn between science and spirituality. He is about to get a degree in artificial intelligence, but also fiercely wants to believe that his family can live forever by being digitized. He has never learned how to process or cope with death. Family and school are everything to Sam. He's never had a romantic partner mostly because he never had the time, but also because he doesn't trust romantic partnerships after what his father did.

Sam is curious about digital tombs, but Helen has discouraged him from visiting more than once or twice a year because she is worried about him forming unhealthy attachments to something they don't fully understand.

### To keep to yourself until it comes up in play:

Sam is terrified of losing anyone in his family and doesn't know how he'd ever be able to recover from such a loss. Even if the digital personalities are only copies of their real-life selves, maybe being able to hold onto them would be better than not being able to hold onto anything. Besides, if he watches his family die off one by one, he is fairly confident he will be completely alone in the world and without a spouse or children.



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## Safety and Settings Boundaries

There are four safety practices for this scenario that the facilitator should go over with the players:

1. **The door is always open.** If a player would like to leave, they can leave without any questions being asked. This will change the course of the game and make it a bit shorter, but it is still playable. The facilitator and players can come up with a narrative reason for the character's absence and tweak scenes as necessary.
2. **X arms.** This is a variation on John Stavropoulos's X card mechanic, except the player forms an X shape with their arms when content comes up that they do not want to play on. If the X arms gesture is made, players backtrack and continue the scene excluding the content that prompted the gesture. No questions asked, and no pushback.
3. **Cut.** If a player or the facilitator needs the scene to stop for emotional or physical safety, they should say "Cut" loudly enough that the group can hear them. Play stops immediately so that adjustments can be made or a player can excuse themselves. If you feel you are about to have a panic attack, please call cut. If you drop your glasses or a contact lens, please call cut. If your hearing aid needs adjusting and loud sounds will interfere, please call cut.
4. **Look down.** A player can raise their hand to partially cover their eyes, look down, and walk away in order to opt out of a scene. The player is allowed to leave without any questions asked in or out of character. If possible, play should continue for the other players if someone steps away using the look down mechanic.

## Touch Boundaries

Typically, there shouldn't be too much physical contact in this scenario - a hug perhaps, or a hand on the shoulder, but not much more. The facilitator should ask the players if they are comfortable with this level of physical contact, and if not, then that's completely fine. This is a scenario that does not rely on physical contact whatsoever. On a narrative level, touch should especially be limited between ancestors and descendants, both because of the surrealness of the digital tombs and because there is some emotional distance between them.



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# Workshops

## Ancestors Vs. Descendants

In this workshop, the players will be playing ancestors and descendants of a different but similar family in order to warm up and learn how these characters should generally interact with each other. Each player is a character of the same generation here as their actual character, so Jungwoo is the eldest and Sam is the youngest.

Have the players run through a brief scene (described below) following these rules:

- When the descendants arrive, they should face the ancestors and nod politely, turning their gaze to the floor as they do so. Ancestors should nod back in return. This should be a subtle and brief gesture, and is only performed when entering or leaving a tomb.
- When the descendants enter, both ancestors must give something up to make their living family more comfortable, like their seat or a book they were just reading. Descendants should try to refuse at first, but accept when the ancestors insist.
- The amount of respect owed to someone is determined by their age, so people should go out of their way the most to please the eldest character, slightly less to please the second eldest, etc. It's not so much that the youngest is disrespected as that they are not prioritized.
- Descendants should strive to never have their back towards their ancestors if they can help it. This may mean walking backwards sometimes.
- Descendants nod to their ancestors just before leaving the tomb.
- Feel free to refuse to nod or face your ancestors if you are actively trying to show disrespect!

## The Scene

The descendants are making their monthly visit to their ancestors and have brought pictures from their recent vacation. The ancestors try to find out from their descendants just how nice their friends' ancestors' tombs are by asking subtle and indirect questions. This evolves into trying to subtly guilt the descendants into getting them a nicer tomb. Since the atmosphere is now uncomfortable, the descendants make excuses for why they have to leave.



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## Flashback/Flashforward Repetition

In Act III, everybody plays out a flashback or a flashforward twice. The first time, it is a depiction of the scene as the character wishes it had unfolded or would unfold. The second time, it is a depiction of the scene that is more grounded in a regret-filled reality. When a scene is repeated, players should aim to make it different in a meaningful way that highlights a regret their character has. Maybe their character fails to confess their real feelings as they did in the idealized scene, or perhaps they snap and blame someone for their misfortune.

Each scene in Act III has one description, and it is up to the players to determine how to interpret it so that it is either idealized or full of regret. Some players may be called upon to play different roles.

Have the players run through this flashback twice, playing the idealized version first and the regretful version second. Each time, the description should be read aloud at the start. The players do not need to decide if either version is close to what actually happened. Perhaps neither portray what really transpired accurately, or maybe the truth is somewhere in between. Memories, fantasies, and anxieties get warped the more we play through them over and over again in our minds, just like an old cassette tape. That is the effect we are trying to achieve.

### **The Flashback**

Minji is very sick and knows she will pass away soon, though she is only in her late thirties. While she sits with ten year-old Esther, she tries to entertain her and answer questions about what she expects existence in her digital tomb to be like. Minji's siblings (played by Helen and Sam) enter with their father (played by Jungwoo) to discuss what kind of tomb they can afford for Minji and what her needs are.



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## Relationship Building

For this workshop, have everyone sit in a circle to answer the following questions briefly. Players should start out discussing these in third person, then as the details are worked out, transition to first person to begin taking on the roles of their characters. Each question should only take a couple of minutes.

**For Jungwoo and Minji:** When Minji was little and both she and Jungwoo were alive, he bought her a present to win her affection but it didn't work. What was it?

**For Minji and Esther:** Once when Esther was a child, her mother made Minji babysit her for a day in hopes it would make her want a child of her own. How did they spend the day, and what were Minji's conclusions?

**For Esther and Helen:** Esther and Helen show affection to each other by exchanging books. What genre does Esther pretend to like so that she can connect with her daughter?

**For Helen and Sam:** What new fun rituals did Helen and Sam establish to recover after Sam's dad left?

**For Sam and Esther:** There is a long-standing tradition of Esther relaying tragic stories about acquaintances to Sam while he's doing homework and she's cooking dinner. What is the saddest story Esther has ever told him?

**For Jungwoo and Helen:** Jungwoo's tomb is fairly extravagant. What is the one piece of digital furniture, artwork, or feature of the environment that he loves but Helen hates?

**For Minji and Helen:** There's a whispered rumor about Minji in the family that Helen has always wondered about. What is it, and is it true?

**For Esther and Jungwoo:** There is one matter that Esther seeks guidance from Jungwoo about that she doesn't share with anyone else. What is it, and how has it affected their relationship?

**For Sam and Jungwoo:** When Sam's father left, Esther brought him to visit Jungwoo for the first time. What advice did Jungwoo give Sam, and did Sam follow it?



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# Playing the Game

The following scenes are listed in chronological order for reference. At the end of this document there is a version that divides scenes up according to character that should be used for player handouts.

## Act I

### Opening Scene

Location: Esther's house

Characters: Esther, Helen, and Sam

Esther, Helen, and Sam sit down for a dinner that Sam and Esther prepared together while Sam's grandfather sleeps. He hasn't been feeling well recently. Sam has something to tell the family; after doing a DNA test for fun to see if he could expand on the family tree, he was contacted by Eternatech. They have a family member – his great-great-aunt Minji – whose digital tomb account has been suspended due to lack of funds. They want him or someone else in the family to take responsibility for the account so that Minji can be “awake” for more than twelve hours a week and have visitation rights restored. Sam tries to convince his family they should do it. Esther warns him not to talk about this too much with his grandfather who takes offense to the digital tomb phenomenon.

### Jungwoo's Scene

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 1

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Esther, Helen, and Sam go to Jungwoo's tomb to ask for his advice regarding whether they should reactivate Minji's account. Esther and Helen explain they don't know her well and are worried about the cost. Jungwoo admits he thought she might be happier being awake less frequently since nobody visited her. Sam is horrified at the idea of abandoning her, but Jungwoo encourages Sam to listen to his family, then insists that they stay to keep him company for a while.

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 2

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Sam

Sam goes to Jungwoo's tomb to ask for his advice regarding whether they should pay for Minji's account. Sam is insistent that they can't let Minji be alone forever, but knows Helen and Esther are worried about the cost. Jungwoo sees Sam's passion for his family as something that should be nurtured and encourages him to see that Minji is taken care of.



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## **Minji's Scene**

### **Minji's Scene Option 1**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Sam

Sam goes to visit Minji by himself after her account is reactivated so as not to overwhelm her with a crowd of people. Minji doesn't quite know how to be around others anymore. Eternatech made it impossible for unpaid for tombs to receive visitors two decades ago. She questions Sam about why he would care enough to make sure her account was reactivated. After all, they've never met.

### **Minji's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Esther

Esther has volunteered to be the one to visit Minji because she used to know her when she was little. Minji is disoriented at seeing Esther so old. It's been two decades since Eternatech made it so unpaid for tombs could not receive visitors. Esther tries to catch Minji up on how the family is doing and learn about what Minji has been doing all this time.

## **Esther's Scene**

### **Esther's Scene Option 1**

Location: Esther's Garden

Characters: Esther and Sam

Esther is gardening while Sam pulls out weeds. She tells him he shouldn't hesitate to come home if he needs to while he's away at school. Though she lists reasons why it would be helpful for her – he can help with the gardening, for instance – they both know she's just giving him an excuse to come home if he gets homesick.

### **Esther's Scene Option 2**

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Esther and Helen

Esther and Helen go through old family photos so they can choose some to bring to Minji. Esther feels sorry for the long-abandoned ancestor, but Helen is a little creeped out by the whole digital tomb thing. Helen asks her mother whether she thinks she'll want a digital tomb, but Esther isn't sure yet.



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## **Helen's Scene**

### **Helen's Scene Option 1**

Location: Helen's Car

Characters: Helen and Esther

Helen is driving Esther to the doctor's office for a check-up and talks about possible future vacations the family could go on. It's been a long time since they've gone anywhere. Helen hasn't been this excited about anything for years, but Esther doesn't know how it's possible to go anywhere when her husband still isn't well. Besides, vacations cost a lot of money.

### **Helen's Scene Option 2**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Helen and Jungwoo

Jungwoo has called Helen over for something urgent, though he hasn't said what. When Helen arrives, he informs her that he has discovered through cyberstalking that her ex-husband is getting a divorce. He encourages her to get back in touch in case he wants to take her back, because he seems to have a lot of money now. Helen is mortified and offended and tells him never to mention this to Sam because it would make him hate Jungwoo.

## **Sam's Scene**

### **Sam's Scene Option 1**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Sam and Jungwoo

Sam goes to Jungwoo to learn more about the family's history, but is treated to a lecture about how important it is to take care of the older people in your family because they took care of you. Sam humors him because he knows Jungwoo doesn't have many people to talk to.

### **Sam's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Sam, Jungwoo, and Minji

Sam asks Jungwoo to visit Minji's tomb with him because he's worried she's lonely. Sam tries to make plans for the future with them, but gets stumped because they are unable to leave their tombs except to visit other tombs. Minji reminds him that the point of ancestors isn't that they have a future, it's so they can help shape his. Jungwoo suggests if there were more money, he could get a nicer tomb and that would help.



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## Act II

### Jungwoo's Scene

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 1

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Esther

Esther comes to visit Jungwoo to bring a new book and update him on how the family is doing. Jungwoo reminisces about his time as a senior vice president and boasts about how proud his family was of him. Esther is distracted and worn out, but Jungwoo carries on about how he wishes he could have purpose again. He thinks they should have a big party soon in his tomb for the entire family, just like in the old days.

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 2

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Minji, and Helen

Jungwoo and Helen go to visit Minji's tomb to see if there is anything small that can be added to make it nicer for her. Jungwoo is appalled at the state of her tomb and recommends additions – maybe windows and a scenic view. Helen is dubious about what they can afford, but is willing to pitch in. Minji starts to get excited about the potential additions, but then declines after seeing Helen's worried face.

### Minji's Scene

#### Minji's Scene Option 1

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Esther

Esther goes to visit Minji and is surprised to find that Minji wants to have a very frank discussion about the cost of her tomb. Minji feels guilty that money is being spent on her at all and isn't sure if she's worth it. Esther is torn between comforting her and sharing her own concerns. It's unclear who is truly the elder in this situation.

#### Minji's Scene Option 2

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji, Helen, and Sam

Sam drags Helen to visit Minji and tries to push them to bond over their shared interest in music. Sam tries to stay enthusiastic and optimistic, but both Minji and Helen have some disheartening things to say about their relationships with their instruments.



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## Act III

Reminder: All scenes in Act III are played twice, once as the idealized version of what happened and once as a realistic and perhaps regretful version of what happened.

### Jungwoo's Scene

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)

Location: Jungwoo's House

Characters: Jungwoo, Jungwoo's wife (played by Esther), Jungwoo's daughters (played by Helen and Minji)

Jungwoo comes home from a successful business trip overseas and is greeted by his family. He has spent a lot of time away, but is determined to spend more quality time with his family from now on. He has even brought gifts.

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Minji, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Jungwoo is throwing a big party for his birthday and has invited everyone – family and friends both living and digital. As people begin to show up, he tries not to show that he is nervous about how many guests will actually come and how happy they really are to see him.

### Minji's Scene

#### Minji's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)

Location: Concert Hall

Characters: Minji, Minji's Father (played by Jungwoo), Minji's Mother (played by Esther), and Minji's Brother (played by Sam)

Minji meets her family in the concert hall's lobby after an important performance for her orchestra. It is her hope that they will recognize the great things she has achieved for herself rather than focusing on when she'll get married and have children.

#### Minji's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji, Jungwoo, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Minji has finally composed a piece of music for a string quartet and has invited everyone over to listen to it. This is a great act of vulnerability for her as she is uncertain if the piece is any good and is eager to hear opinions.



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## **Esther's Scene**

### **Esther's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Esther, Helen, Sam, Esther's son Nathan (played by Jungwoo), Esther's daughter Kelly (played by Minji)

It's Christmas night, and the family is in the process of getting dinner on the table. Helen and Sam are worried that Nathan is going to ask Esther for more money that he'll spend irresponsibly, and that Kelly will fight with him about it as usual because she also needs help. Esther works hard to keep things peaceful.

### **Esther's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Esther's Tomb

Characters: Esther, Helen, and Sam

Esther has just been set up in her new digital tomb, and Helen and Sam are there to help her make it feel like home. Both Helen and Sam are awkward and unsure of whether this Esther is the same as their Esther, but Esther does her best to persuade them that she is.

## **Helen's Scene**

### **Helen's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: The Beach

Characters: Helen, Esther, and Sam

Helen, Esther, and Sam are enjoying a week-long vacation at the beach during Sam's summer break from high school. She is worried that the trip will make Sam sad because it will remind him of when he was a kid and they used to go with his father, but Esther thinks he's moved on.

### **Helen's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Sam's Graduation

Characters: Helen, Esther, and Sam

Sam is graduating from grad school and Helen and Esther want to take him to a nice dinner. Jungwoo has also extended an invitation to celebrate in his digital tomb, but Helen hopes that Sam will focus on the present and the real world so he can live his own life.



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## Sam's Scene

### Sam's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Sam, Esther, and Helen

Sam is ten years old, and he and Helen are staying with his grandparents while Helen recovers from the shock of her husband leaving her for his former teaching assistant. While Helen tosses and turns in her sleep in an armchair, Esther and Sam speak quietly about whether they think his dad will come back and if his mom will be okay. He admits that he's glad his dad is gone.

### Sam's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Sam, Minji, Helen

Sam has a respectable job that pays well, and it just so happens to be with Eternatech. He has worked hard to both earn enough money and pull some strings so that Minji's Tomb can be upgraded. He's hoping that the big reveal of Minji's new tomb will renew her enthusiasm about existence and make his mother reconsider eventually getting a tomb herself.

## Act IV

### Esther's Scene

#### Esther's Scene Option 1

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Esther and Jungwoo

Esther seeks out Jungwoo for advice and makes him swear to secrecy. She has found out from her doctor that she is potentially very sick and needs to make a decision about whether to get a digital tomb. She needs to know whether Jungwoo truly believes he is the real Jungwoo and has the same soul and consciousness as when he lived. He insists that since he has all the memories, feelings, and sense of self as he did before, how could he not be Jungwoo? If Esther wants to continue existing and being there for her family, she needs to have a digital tomb as well.

#### Esther Scene Option 2

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Esther and Minji

Esther goes to Minji to ask for her help. She has learned from her doctor that she is very sick and needs to know that someone will look out for Helen and Sam when she's gone. Minji insists that she cannot do as good a job of it as Esther, but Esther is worried that if Helen has to pay for her tomb, it will ruin the rest of her life.



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## **Helen's Scene**

### **Helen's Scene Option 1**

Location: Hospital Hallway

Characters: Helen and Sam

Esther is not doing well, and Helen and Sam argue over whether they should have her digitized or not. Helen is convinced they should steer her away from it because it isn't natural and won't make anyone happy really. Sam says he isn't ready to say goodbye.

### **Helen's Scene Option 2**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Helen and Jungwoo

Helen begs Jungwoo to convince Esther not to be digitized. She claims it's because she won't be able to stand seeing someone who thinks she's her mother when she really isn't. Jungwoo claims it's because she's being cheap and selfish.

## **Sam's Scene**

### **Sam's Scene Option 1**

Location: Hospital Room

Characters: Sam and Esther

Esther lays in her hospital bed, doing her best to seem well. She frets over him, telling him to remember to eat well and not work so hard that he makes himself sick. She may not be around much longer to remind him. Esther confesses to Sam that she is terrified to die, but says not to tell Helen that because it will make her sad. She might not recover if she breaks down.

### **Sam's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Sam and Minji

Minji is surprised to find that Sam is visiting while Esther is in the hospital. He is intensely anxious and heartbroken and has come to Minji hoping she can say something that will comfort him. Maybe the process of dying and crossing over into digital form isn't so bad. What Minji has to say isn't all that comforting.



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## Act V

**Reminder:** If Esther is not explicitly in a scene, she is encouraged to whisper into the ears of the other players during their scenes. She might echo her sentiments from previous conversations, plant seeds of doubts in her family members' minds, ask questions she knows they do not want to answer, and walk the line between the real Esther and the version that haunts her loved ones' guilt-ridden nightmares.

### Opening Scene

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Minji, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Esther has passed away. Jungwoo, Minji, Helen, and Sam watch a recording of Esther describing what her last wishes are. She announces whether or not she wants to be digitized. Helen and Sam are acutely aware that they are hoping for different outcomes.

### Jungwoo's Scene

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 1

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Sam

Sam is melancholy when he visits, but Jungwoo has an important matter that needs to be discussed. In a little less than two years, Jungwoo's account will be empty and somebody else will need to start paying for it. Jungwoo knows Sam cares fiercely about protecting his family and begs him for help even though the family is already financially strained.

#### Jungwoo's Scene Option 2

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Minji

Jungwoo visits Minji to ask a simple question: does she really want to keep existing? Jungwoo has learned that it's possible for an ancestor to be erased so long as both they and two family members agree to it. When Minji presses him about his reasons for inquiring, he admits that in less than two years he will have no money left in his account and he doesn't want to be abandoned. He suspects their descendants don't like him enough to pay for his account as well as Minji's.



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## Minji's Scene

### Minji's Scene Option 1

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Sam

Minji requests that Sam visit her so they can talk. She tells him that she's realized she's not fully herself because the real Minji would want to die if this was her existence now, and this Minji doesn't want to die. She wishes she did though. Minji believes Eternatech has made it impossible for her to want to die. She wonders if the real Minji is sad because her grave went unvisited while this Minji received visitors and gifts. Sam tries to convince her that either way, her existence matters.

### Minji's Scene Option 2

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Jungwoo

Minji tries to convince Jungwoo that neither of them are really who they think they are. They are nothing more than code, and Eternatech is a scam, if perhaps ones that provides comfort to people. They argue about whether they should exist or not – and whether they even truly enjoy existing or are just scared of dying.

## Helen's Scene

### Helen's Scene Option 1 (Choose if Esther is not digitized)

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Helen and Sam

Sam is depressed and unable to eat dinner. Helen promises him she'll never make him take care of a digital tomb for her. He snaps and argues that he wants her to have a tomb so he doesn't have to lose her too.

### Helen's Scene Option 2 (Choose if Esther has been digitized)

Location: Esther's Tomb

Characters: Helen and Esther

Helen interrogates the digitized Esther to determine whether it really is her. She asks her questions about their life together, but no amount of information is enough to fully convince her one way or the other.



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## Epilogues

Starting with Jungwoo and ending with Sam, each player should narrate in the third person what has become of their character five years in the future. Each epilogue should only take somewhere between thirty and ninety seconds.

## Debrief

The debrief is optional but players are encouraged to participate. There are three steps to the debrief:

1. **De-roleing Part I:** Players go around in a circle stating their character name and then their real name, and sharing a fun real life fact about themselves.
2. **Reflecting:** Players share the moment that was most meaningful to them, a piece of advice they think their character would give them, and a piece of advice they would give their character.
3. **De-roleing Part II:** Players share something they're looking forward to doing in the next few days.

## Acknowledgments

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## Jungwoo / “Grandfather”

### Relationships

Uncle to Minji

Grandfather to Esther

Great Grandfather to Helen

Great-Great-Grandfather to Sam

**To read aloud:** In life, Jungwoo was an accomplished businessman who traveled the world and secured a life of affluence and recognition for his family in Korea. As a senior vice president for a consumer electronics company, Jungwoo was often busy. Though at the start of his career he was good about making sure he spent time with his family, as his career grew he missed out on more and more special occasions as well as daily life with his wife, children, and parents.

At the end of his long life, Jungwoo thought that by getting a digital tomb, he would be buying more time to spend with his family. To his surprise, his wife and two daughters chose not to be digitized, as the technology was still young back then and not as well-trusted as it is today.

With no immediate family to spend time with in his afterlife, Jungwoo has long been seen as the head of his extended family. Both the living and deceased seek him out for advice that he is eager to give. Because he was so wealthy in life, he has paid the expenses for his own extravagant tomb. However, everyone knows or at least suspects that he is lonely and desperate for attention and praise.

Regardless of their relationship to Jungwoo, everyone calls him “Grandfather.” He appears as

he did at the prime of his career when he was in his fifties.

**To keep to yourself until it comes up in play:** Jungwoo’s tomb is only paid for through the next two years, so all these nice things won’t last forever. He should try to make himself as useful as possible to his living family so they will find it in their hearts to pay for his tomb, or else he might end up like Minji. Jungwoo’s Scenes

### Act I

#### Jungwoo’s Scene Option 1

Location: Jungwoo’s Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Esther, Helen, and Sam go to Jungwoo’s tomb to ask for his advice regarding whether they should reactivate Minji’s account. Esther and Helen explain they don’t know her well and are worried about the cost. Jungwoo admits he thought she might be happier being awake less frequently since nobody visited her. Sam is horrified at the idea of abandoning her, but Jungwoo encourages Sam to listen to his family, then insists that they stay to keep him company for a while.

#### Jungwoo’s Scene Option 2

Location: Jungwoo’s Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Sam

Sam goes to Jungwoo’s tomb to ask for his advice regarding whether they should pay for Minji’s account. Sam is insistent that they can’t let Minji be alone forever, but knows Helen and Esther are worried about the cost. Jungwoo sees Sam’s passion for his family as something that should be nurtured and encourages him to see that Minji is taken care of.

### Act II



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### **Jungwoo's Scene Option 1**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Esther

Esther comes to visit Jungwoo to bring a new book and update him on how the family is doing. Jungwoo reminisces about his time as a senior vice president and boasts about how proud his family was of him. Esther is distracted and worn out, but Jungwoo carries on about how he wishes he could have purpose again. He thinks they should have a big party soon in his tomb for the entire family, just like in the old days.

### **Jungwoo's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Minji, and Helen

Jungwoo and Helen go to visit Minji's tomb to see if there is anything small that can be added to make it nicer for her. Jungwoo is appalled at the state of her tomb and recommends additions – maybe windows and a scenic view. Helen is dubious about what they can afford, but is willing to pitch in. Minji starts to get excited about the potential additions, but then declines after seeing Helen's worried face.

### **Act III**

### **Jungwoo's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: Jungwoo's House

Characters: Jungwoo, Jungwoo's wife (played by Esther), Jungwoo's daughters (played by Helen and Minji)

Jungwoo comes home from a successful business trip overseas and is greeted by his family. He has spent a lot of time away, but is determined to spend more quality time with his family from now on. He has even brought gifts.

### **Jungwoo's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo, Minji, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Jungwoo is throwing a big party for his birthday and has invited everyone – family and friends both living and digital. As people begin to show up, he tries not to show that he is nervous about how many guests will actually come and how happy they really are to see him.

### **Act V**

### **Jungwoo's Scene Option 1**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Sam

Sam is melancholy when he visits, but Jungwoo has an important matter that needs to be discussed. In a little less than two years, Jungwoo's account will be empty and somebody else will need to start paying for it. Jungwoo knows Sam cares fiercely about protecting his family and begs him for help even though the family is already financially strained.

### **Jungwoo's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Jungwoo and Minji

Jungwoo visits Minji to ask a simple question: does she really want to keep existing? Jungwoo has learned that it's possible for an ancestor to be erased so long as both they and two family members agree to it. When Minji presses him about his reasons for inquiring, he admits that in less than two years he will have no money left in his account and he doesn't want to be abandoned. He suspects their descendants don't like him enough to pay for his account as well as Minji's.



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## Minji / “Auntie”

### Relationships

Niece to Jungwoo

Aunt to Esther

Great-Aunt to Helen

Great-Great-Aunt to Sam

**To read aloud:** In life, Minji was a gifted cellist who played in one of Korea’s symphony orchestras, though in her personal life she was shy and introverted. She never married or had children, so when she became terminally ill in her late thirties there was some debate as to whether she should be placed in a digital tomb. After all, what descendants would come to see her?

In the end, Minji decided it would be worth it to enter a digital tomb because then she would be given more time to discover new art, read the books she never got around to, perfect her cello-playing, and maybe even compose new works herself. However, several years after she passed away, her brother lost the family savings after a series of bad investments. This left them with no way to continue to pay for Minji’s tomb, let alone pay to get tombs of their own. Minji’s tomb was downgraded to a space that resembles a sparse room, and over the years she watched as her parents and brother passed away and were unable to afford to be digitized.

These days Minji receives no visitors, in part because her account remains unpaid for so it is not allowed, and in part because there are few living relatives who remember her. She is permitted twelve hours of “awake time” a week while her account is suspended. Once a year she is allowed to attend a celebration of Jungwoo’s

birthday in his tomb. Everyone except Jungwoo calls her “Auntie.”

**To keep to yourself until it comes up in play:** Minji chose to get a digital tomb in large part because she wanted to compose music, but since she’s been here her mind hasn’t worked the same way as it used to and she is unable to compose anything. She is unsure if this is just because of how the tombs work, or if she is simply uninspired because she is no longer living. The answer to this is the key to whether she will want to continue existing digitally or not.

### Act I

#### Minji’s Scene Option 1

Location: Minji’s Tomb

Characters: Minji and Sam

Sam goes to visit Minji by himself after her account is reactivated so as not to overwhelm her with a crowd of people. Minji doesn’t quite know how to be around others anymore. Eternatech made it impossible for unpaid for tombs to receive visitors two decades ago. She questions Sam about why he would care enough to make sure her account was reactivated. After all, they’ve never met.

#### Minji’s Scene Option 2

Location: Minji’s Tomb

Characters: Minji and Esther

Esther has volunteered to be the one to visit Minji because she used to know her when she was little. Minji is disoriented at seeing Esther so old. It’s been two decades since Eternatech made it so unpaid for tombs could not receive visitors. Esther tries to catch Minji up on how



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the family is doing and learn about what Minji has been doing all this time.

## **Act II**

### **Minji's Scene Option 1**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Esther

Esther goes to visit Minji and is surprised to find that Minji wants to have a very frank discussion about the cost of her tomb. Minji feels guilty that money is being spent on her at all and isn't sure if she's worth it. Esther is torn between comforting her and sharing her own concerns. It's unclear who is truly the elder in this situation.

### **Minji's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji, Helen, and Sam

Sam drags Helen to visit Minji and tries to push them to bond over their shared interest in music. Sam tries to stay enthusiastic and optimistic, but both Minji and Helen have some disheartening things to say about their relationships with their instruments.

## **Act III**

### **Minji's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: Concert Hall

Characters: Minji, Minji's Father (played by Jungwoo), Minji's Mother (played by Esther), and Minji's Brother (played by Sam)

Minji meets her family in the concert hall's lobby after an important performance for her orchestra. It is her hope that they will recognize the great things she has achieved for herself rather than focusing on when she'll get married and have children.

### **Minji's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji, Jungwoo, Esther, Helen, and Sam

Minji has finally composed a piece of music for a string quartet and has invited everyone over to listen to it. This is a great act of vulnerability for her as she is uncertain if the piece is any good and is eager to hear opinions.

## **Act V**

### **Minji's Scene Option 1**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Sam

Minji requests that Sam visit her so they can talk. She tells him that she's realized she's not fully herself because the real Minji would want to die if this was her existence now, and this Minji doesn't want to die. She wishes she did though. Minji believes Eternatech has made it impossible for her to want to die. She wonders if the real Minji is sad because her grave went unvisited while this Minji received visitors and gifts. Sam tries to convince her that either way, her existence matters.

### **Minji's Scene Option 2**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Minji and Jungwoo

Minji tries to convince Jungwoo that neither of them are really who they think they are. They are nothing more than code, and Eternatech is a scam, if perhaps ones that provides comfort to people. They argue about whether they should exist or not – and whether they even truly enjoy existing or are just scared of dying.



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## Esther

### Relationships

Granddaughter to Jungwoo

Niece to Minji

Mother to Helen

Grandmother to Sam

**To read aloud:** When Esther was very small, her family was well-off because of the money Jungwoo made, but when her uncle lost the family fortune, life quickly became difficult. Esther's parents' savings went into rescuing her uncle and his family from utter ruin, and Esther found herself working as a delivery person as a teenager to help support her family.

Esther became a nurse and got married at a young age. She married a journalist, and soon after they had their third child he got a job offer in New York City, so they moved to the United States. She eventually got work as a nurse again to help save up for her children to go to college, but her job kept her for long hours so quality time with them was infrequent for some years. Two of those children grew up to resent her for it and moved far away after graduating. The other – Helen – was more understanding and stayed close to home so her parents could have a hand in raising her child.

Esther prioritizes taking care of her family over all else. After her husband broke his hip, Helen and Sam moved in to help out. Having retired many years ago now, Esther spends her days preparing meals, cleaning, reading, and taking care of her husband who has slowed down a lot even after recovering from his injury. She dotes on Sam the same way now as she did twenty years ago, and wants very badly for her children and grandchildren to be happy and successful.

She visits Jungwoo once a month to pay respects and bring him a new book.

**To keep to yourself until it comes into play:** Esther doesn't think she wants a digital tomb because she doesn't believe the digital personalities really house their original souls. As she grows closer to the end of her own life, however, she is finding that her fear of death is strong enough that she may reconsider the possibility. Esther decides for certain whether she wants to be digitized at the beginning of Act V.

## Act I

### Esther's Scene Option 1

Location: Esther's Garden

Characters: Esther and Sam

Esther is gardening while Sam pulls out weeds. She tells him he shouldn't hesitate to come home if he needs to while he's away at school. Though she lists reasons why it would be helpful for her – he can help with the gardening, for instance – they both know she's just giving him an excuse to come home if he gets homesick.

### Esther's Scene Option 2

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Esther and Helen

Esther and Helen go through old family photos so they can choose some to bring to Minji. Esther feels sorry for the long-abandoned ancestor, but Helen is a little creeped out by the whole digital tomb thing. Helen asks her mother whether she thinks she'll want a digital tomb, but Esther isn't sure yet.

## Act III



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### **Esther's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Esther, Helen, Sam, Esther's son Nathan (played by Jungwoo), Esther's daughter Kelly (played by Minji)

It's Christmas night, and the family is in the process of getting dinner on the table. Helen and Sam are worried that Nathan is going to ask Esther for more money that he'll spend irresponsibly, and that Kelly will fight with him about it as usual because she also needs help. Esther works hard to keep things peaceful.

### **Esther's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Esther's Tomb

Characters: Esther, Helen, and Sam

Esther has just been set up in her new digital tomb, and Helen and Sam are there to help her make it feel like home. Both Helen and Sam are awkward and unsure of whether this Esther is the same as their Esther, but Esther does her best to persuade them that she is.

## **Act IV**

### **Esther's Scene Option 1**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Esther and Jungwoo

Esther seeks out Jungwoo for advice and makes him swear to secrecy. She has found out from her doctor that she is potentially very sick and needs to make a decision about whether to get a digital tomb. She needs to know whether Jungwoo truly believes he is the real Jungwoo and has the same soul and consciousness as when he lived. He insists that since he has all the memories, feelings, and sense of self as he did before, how could he not be Jungwoo? If Esther wants to continue existing and being

there for her family, she needs to have a digital tomb as well.

### **Esther Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Esther and Minji

Esther goes to Minji to ask for her help. She has learned from her doctor that she is very sick and needs to know that someone will look out for Helen and Sam when she's gone. Minji insists that she cannot do as good a job of it as Esther, but Esther is worried that if Helen has to pay for her tomb, it will ruin the rest of her life.

## **Act V**

**Reminder:** If Esther is not explicitly in a scene, she is encouraged to whisper into the ears of the other players during their scenes. She might echo her sentiments from previous conversations, plant seeds of doubts in her family members' minds, ask questions she knows they do not want to answer, and walk the line between the real Esther and the version that haunts her loved ones' guilt-ridden nightmares.



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## Helen

### Relationships

Great-Granddaughter to Jungwoo

Great-Niece to Minji

Daughter to Esther

Mother to Sam

**To read aloud:** Helen was born in Korea but grew up in New York. A hard worker ever since she was young, Helen spent much of her youth taking care of her younger brother and sister while her parents were working. A gifted and responsible student with great potential as a violinist as well, teachers, friends, and family all knew she was destined for success in her life.

While it is true that her career as an executive news producer has been a successful one, her personal life has been a bit bumpy. She married an emotionally abusive college professor who left her and Sam for his former teaching assistant when Sam was ten years old. In the years after, she found herself emotionally and financially supporting everyone in her immediate family at one or several points. Her troublemaker brother's first startup failed badly, and then his second, leaving him in serious debt - a family tradition, apparently. Her father's hip broke, and insurance didn't cover all the resulting expenses. It was one thing after another until almost all of her retirement savings were gone, and every time she considered saying no, someone would remind her that it's a family's responsibility to take care of one another.

Now Helen dreams of traveling the world with Sam, picking up old hobbies like the violin, and having a life of her own without a family member knocking on her door with a new

problem every day. If she could save up some money, those things would be possible, but as things are she doesn't even know if she'll ever be able to retire.

Once or twice a year, Esther is able to convince Helen to visit Jungwoo with her. Digital tombs unsettle her and make her sad though, so she tries to stay away.

**To keep to yourself until it comes into play:** Helen doesn't know if she believes that the personalities in the digital tombs really have the same souls as they did when they were alive, but she knows Sam deeply wants it to be true. If she could convince Sam that those digital spirits aren't their real ancestors, Sam might not push her to spend money to maintain the tombs.

## Act I

### Helen's Scene Option 1

Location: Helen's Car

Characters: Helen and Esther

Helen is driving Esther to the doctor's office for a check-up and talks about possible future vacations the family could go on. It's been a long time since they've gone anywhere. Helen hasn't been this excited about anything for years, but Esther doesn't know how it's possible to go anywhere when her husband still isn't well. Besides, vacations cost a lot of money.

### Helen's Scene Option 2

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Helen and Jungwoo

Jungwoo has called Helen over for something urgent, though he hasn't said what. When Helen arrives, he informs her that he has discovered through cyberstalking that her ex-husband is



getting a divorce. He encourages her to get back in touch in case he wants to take her back, because he seems to have a lot of money now. Helen is mortified and offended and tells him never to mention this to Sam because it would make him hate Jungwoo.

### **Act III**

#### **Helen's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: The Beach

Characters: Helen, Esther, and Sam

Helen, Esther, and Sam are enjoying a week-long vacation at the beach during Sam's summer break from high school. She is worried that the trip will make Sam sad because it will remind him of when he was a kid and they used to go with his father, but Esther thinks he's moved on.

#### **Helen's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Sam's Graduation

Characters: Helen, Esther, and Sam

Sam is graduating from grad school and Helen and Esther want to take him to a nice dinner. Jungwoo has also extended an invitation to celebrate in his digital tomb, but Helen hopes that Sam will focus on the present and the real world so he can live his own life.

### **Act IV**

#### **Helen's Scene Option 1**

Location: Hospital Hallway

Characters: Helen and Sam

Esther is not doing well, and Helen and Sam argue over whether they should have her digitized or not. Helen is convinced they should steer her away from it because it isn't natural

and won't make anyone happy really. Sam says he isn't ready to say goodbye.

#### **Helen's Scene Option 2**

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Helen and Jungwoo

Helen begs Jungwoo to convince Esther not to be digitized. She claims it's because she won't be able to stand seeing someone who thinks she's her mother when she really isn't. Jungwoo claims it's because she's being cheap and selfish.

### **Act V**

#### **Helen's Scene Option 1 (Choose if Esther is not digitized)**

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Helen and Sam

Sam is depressed and unable to eat dinner. Helen promises him she'll never make him take care of a digital tomb for her. He snaps and argues that he wants her to have a tomb so he doesn't have to lose her too.

#### **Helen's Scene Option 2 (Choose if Esther has been digitized)**

Location: Esther's Tomb

Characters: Helen and Esther

Helen interrogates the digitized Esther to determine whether it really is her. She asks her questions about their life together, but no amount of information is enough to fully convince her one way or the other.



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## Sam

Note: Sam's gender is up to the player but placeholder pronouns are he/him.

### Relationships

Great-Great-Grandchild to Jungwoo

Great-Great-Grandnephew to Minji

Grandchild to Esther

Child to Helen

**To read aloud:** Sam grew up idolizing his family because they all adored him and made sure he knew he was loved and cared for, especially when his dad left the picture when he was ten. The other kids he grew up with mostly didn't understand why he liked to spend so much time with his family, but that never deterred him from passing up on parties occasionally just to hang out at home with his mom and grandparents. Besides, it makes his grandmother happy when he's around, and as far as he's concerned that's the most important thing.

Growing up, Sam always wished he knew more about his extended family, but the subject seemed to be an uncomfortable one so he eventually learned to stop asking. Now on the verge of starting graduate school in another state, he is anxious about not being able to spend as much time with his family and is struggling with separation anxiety.

Sam often finds himself torn between science and spirituality. He is about to get a degree in artificial intelligence, but also fiercely wants to believe that his family can live forever by being digitized. He has never learned how to process or cope with death. Family and school are everything to Sam. He's never had a romantic

partner mostly because he never had the time, but also because he doesn't trust romantic partnerships after what his father did.

Sam is curious about digital tombs, but Helen has discouraged him from visiting more than once or twice a year because she is worried about him forming unhealthy attachments to something they don't fully understand.

**To keep to yourself until it comes up in play:** Sam is terrified of losing anyone in his family and doesn't know how he'd ever be able to recover from such a loss. Even if the digital personalities are only copies of their real-life selves, maybe being able to hold onto them would be better than not being able to hold onto anything. Besides, if he watches his family die off one by one, he is fairly confident he will be completely alone in the world and without a spouse or children.

## Act I

### Sam's Scene Option 1

Location: Jungwoo's Tomb

Characters: Sam and Jungwoo

Sam goes to Jungwoo to learn more about the family's history, but is treated to a lecture about how important it is to take care of the older people in your family because they took care of you. Sam humors him because he knows Jungwoo doesn't have many people to talk to.

### Sam's Scene Option 2

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Sam, Jungwoo, and Minji

Sam asks Jungwoo to visit Minji's tomb with him because he's worried she's lonely. Sam tries to make plans for the future with them, but gets



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stumped because they are unable to leave their tombs except to visit other tombs. Minji reminds him that the point of ancestors isn't that they have a future, it's so they can help shape his. Jungwoo suggests if there were more money, he could get a nicer tomb and that would help.

### **Act III**

#### **Sam's Scene Option 1 (Flashback)**

Location: Esther's House

Characters: Sam, Esther, and Helen

Sam is ten years old, and he and Helen are staying with his grandparents while Helen recovers from the shock of her husband leaving her for his former teaching assistant. While Helen tosses and turns in her sleep in an armchair, Esther and Sam speak quietly about whether they think his dad will come back and if his mom will be okay. He admits that he's glad his dad is gone.

#### **Sam's Scene Option 2 (Flashforward)**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Sam, Minji, Helen

Sam has a respectable job that pays well, and it just so happens to be with Eternatech. He has worked hard to both earn enough money and pull some strings so that Minji's Tomb can be upgraded. He's hoping that the big reveal of Minji's new tomb will renew her enthusiasm about existence and make his mother reconsider eventually getting a tomb herself.

### **Act IV**

#### **Sam's Scene Option 1**

Location: Hospital Room

Characters: Sam and Esther

Esther lays in her hospital bed, doing her best to seem well. She frets over him, telling him to remember to eat well and not work so hard that he makes himself sick. She may not be around much longer to remind him. Esther confesses to Sam that she is terrified to die, but says not to tell Helen that because it will make her sad. She might not recover if she breaks down.

#### **Sam's Scene Option 2**

Location: Minji's Tomb

Characters: Sam and Minji

Minji is surprised to find that Sam is visiting while Esther is in the hospital. He is intensely anxious and heartbroken and has come to Minji hoping she can say something that will comfort him. Maybe the process of dying and crossing over into digital form isn't so bad. What Minji has to say isn't all that comforting.