

SYNC WHOLE

(A CEREUS & LIMNIC STORY)

Screenplay

By

Keith Hayden

Based upon the novella

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**EXT. RURAL VIRGINIA ROAD - DAY**

A rusty blue van navigates a serpentine, unpaved road flanked by dense woods. It pulls over and parks on the narrow shoulder.

**INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS**

JINHUA MA (19, Chinese American, long dark hair) sits in the back, her intelligent eyes tinged with worry as she peers out at the looming trees. NOELANI "NOE" ACOSTA (35, Mexican American, confident, weathered) and VAN TRAN (31, Vietnamese American, bookish) occupy the front seats.

**NOE**

(scrutinizing surroundings)

This the spot?

**JINHUA (V.O.)**

The odd structure looked like a child's haphazard creation, built with only the most intriguing bits and pieces.

Normally, I'd dismiss such tackiness, but desperation for the person inside to cure my worsening condition overrode any aesthetic objections.

Despite the balmy spring weather, Jinhua shivers noticeably. Noe's keen eyes catch this.

**NOE**

(concerned)

Jinhua, you alright? You're trembling.

**JINHUA**

(mustering a grin)

I'm okay, honestly. Shall we?

**EXT. OUTSIDE THE LAB - MOMENTS LATER**

The trio approach the peculiar building. Abruptly, FOUR HOODED FIGURES materialize from the treeline, clad in soiled, ill-fitting garments reeking of vinegar and sweat.

YAMATO (30s, Asian, scar on left cheek) steps forward, his stance menacing.

**YAMATO**

(sneering)

Well, well. The Cereus scum who offed Janus. We've been hunting you.

Noe stiffens, fists clenching.

**NOE**

We did what we had to. Janus was insane.

A fleeting thought from Noe infiltrates Jinhua's mind: "and also my biological father I never knew." Yamato LAUGHS, a grating sound.

**YAMATO**

You've robbed me of my peaceful existence!

**JINHUA**

(strongly)

That was a lie! Janus controlled you. You're free now!

**YAMATO**

(dismissive)

Free? To be taxed to death, to see machines steal human jobs? That's freedom to you?

Jinhua's shoulders slump slightly. Noe and Van step defensively in front of her, weapons drawn. Noe's rifle and Van's pistol glint under the sun.

**NOE**

(to Jinhua, eyes forward)

Reasoning with his type is useless. He only understands one thing.

**YAMATO**

(steel in his voice)

You'll perish, like my dreams have!

At Yamato's signal, the hooded figures STRIKE! Two brandishing glowing blades rush forward as a hulking MECH powers up and advances with heavy, clanking steps.

Noe FIRES at the attackers, but they dodge with uncanny speed. In a FLASH of magenta, Noe splits into her Quantum form, engaging in a dizzying whirlwind of blows and gunshots.

Van SHOOTS at the mech, but the bullets ricochet off its armored shell. He grits his teeth.

**VAN**

It's not working! Jinhua, help!

**JINHUA**

On it!

Jinhua concentrates, summoning her inner power. Blinding yellow light erupts from her hands, engulfing the mech. It staggers, circuits sizzling. As the energy dissipates, Jinhua tastes blood on her trembling lip.

**VAN**

(cheering)

Holy hell, YES!

But the victory is fleeting. The blade-wielding woman SLASHES at Van, barely missing as he leaps back. The grass smolders where her weapon kissed it.

Meanwhile, Noe grapples hand-to-hand with the male fighter, both disarmed. He lands a brutal punch to her ribs. Jinhua hears the CRACK echo in her skull. Noe, enraged and undaunted, retaliates with a fierce blow to his jaw. He stumbles but maintains his agile footing.

**JINHUA**

Noe, I'm coming!

Jinhua readies another energy blast, but her vision distorts, the world turning into a maze of trailing colors and sounds. Noe's strikes leave electric blue echoes; Van's gunshots burst in throbbing purple. The stench of scorched metal and blood fills Jinhua's nostrils as she sways on her feet.

**JINHUA (CONT'D)**

(weakly)

Noe, hold on... I'm coming.

In her mind she's running, but in truth, she only manages two strained steps.

Yamato spots Jinhua's vulnerability.

**YAMATO**

(incredulous)

You? You killed our leader? Pathetic!

He whips out a crackling GREEN ENERGY WHIP and LASHES it at Jinhua. Time slows as the weapon cuts through the air, leaving an emerald trail.

At the last second, Noe's Quantum selves merge as she intercepts the whip. It coils around her arm, searing flesh, but she stands strong.

**NOE**

(yelling)

Van, SHOOT HIM!

Van takes aim, but Yamato is faster. He frees Noe's arm and sends the whip SNAKING around Van's throat. Van's eyes bulge, the whip choking and burning him. Sickly green energy leeches his life force.

**JINHUA**

(screaming)

Van!

Noe ROARS with fury and TACKLES Yamato to the ground, pummeling his face with increasingly bloodied fists until he stops moving.

Jinhua staggers to Van's side and drops to her knees, cradling his head as her vision tunnels. His eyes are shut, neck ringed with red. Tears stream down Jinhua's face.

Noe and a tall, brown-haired WOMAN wearing a clanking blazer and glasses rush over, helping Jinhua up.

Jinhua's last glimpse is of Van's crumpled form, mirroring the grim image she witnessed in Yamato's mind. Then, everything goes black.

**FADE OUT**