

ANNIE JUMP AND THE LIBRARY OF HEAVEN

Reina Hardy
Reinahardy.com
312-330-3031
Reinahardy@yahoo.com

Characters

Annie Jump- 13 year old science genius, female

Dr. Jump- her father, adult male

KJ Urbanik- 14 year old computer geek, male

Althea- Teenage mean girl who is also something else, awesome hair.

Mrs. Gomez/Chairwoman/Dr. Ford- Adult women, played by the same actor

A man stands at a podium.

DR. JUMP

August Tenth, 2017.

(he checks his watch)

8:03 p.m..

This is the day, this is the year, this is the minute
The minute we knew the Answer
Citizens of Strawberry, I am here to tell you...
We. Are. Not. Alone.

For the past 10 years, I have operated Meti.net, a website that invites any alien intelligence monitoring our communications to make itself known via email, telephone or fax. We have been targeted by a number of jokers throughout the years, but because of the provenance of this communication, I believe... it is legitimate.
I hold in my hand a fax from an alien life form.
Do not laugh at me. This is a mind from millions of light years away that has chosen to speak to us. And I believe I have three minutes left, chairwoman, thank you.

Reading from the fax.

Humans of earth, we contact you in peace. We represent an Intergalactic federation of enlightened species. Our name translates, in your earth-tongue, to the Association of Stellar Serenity Healing Across Time Space.
Before humanity may join our federation, you must prove yourselves peaceful as well as intelligent. Dr. Jump, as a representative of humanity, we ask you to gather every life-form from your small earth-community and bring them to the following co-ordinates when the meteor display in your area has reached peak visibility. If the life-forms are present, displaying harmony, we will reveal ourselves to you.

He stops reading.

“Displaying harmony.” I believe the aliens wish us to prove our peaceful nature by raising our voices together in song.

The co-ordinates given are for Hamlin's field, just outside town. If you have any interest in a world beyond this one- I implore you. Come to Hamlin's field at the peak of the Perseids, at midnight, in three days. And you'll all see it. We're not alone.

Thunder. Crackling. Horrible feedback. The lights go out.

In the darkness, adolescents cackle. The sound of feet running away.

KJ

Pete- yo, P.T.!

More laughter, somewhere else.

KJ (CONT'D)

Can you even believe this shiz? I almost peed. Pete?

KJ enters, holding a flashlight.

Where are you?

Annie, wearing a hard hat with a light on it, stands up, seemingly out of nowhere. She's been fiddling with some electronics.

KJ (CONT'D)

AGGGGHHHHHH!
Who are you?

ANNIE

I'm the electrician. I'm getting the lights back on.

KJ

Aren't you a girl?

ANNIE

Excuse me?

KJ

No, I mean-

ANNIE

What are you, twelve?

KJ

I'm a sophomore in high school. I'm a little short for my age but it's temporary. I haven't grown into my feet yet.

ANNIE

Oh. I'm a freshman.

KJ

Also I skipped a grade.

ANNIE

Me too.

(she hunkers down and gets back to work)

I've never seen you before.

KJ

I'm new in town this summer.

ANNIE

And you're hanging out with Pete and those guys?

KJ

We were pranking somebody. I'm, kind of like a tech guy- so my contribution was pretty crucial to the success of the project.

ANNIE

What did you do?

KJ

I sent a fax to Christopher Jump.

ANNIE

Oh yeah. Dr. Alien.

KJ

I guess he's like, a legend in this town. Has this crazy website asking for emails from little green men, and everyone laughs at him but he's just like, whatever, "I Believe."
Is he actually a doctor?

ANNIE

He has a doctorate. Psychology.

KJ

Whoah. Legit? That's amazing.
Cause he's, y'know-

ANNIE

Crazy?

KJ

Yeah.
So did you hear the name of the alien federation?
Association of Stellar Serenity Healing Across Time Space.

She thinks for a second.

Asshats? ANNIE

KJ cracks up.

KJ
I can't believe he didn't notice!
So, you're from around here? You're like, a Strawberry?

ANNIE
I guess so. Can you do me a favor and make sure this is grounded?

KJ
Eh. Uh. I'm not really good with wiring.

ANNIE
I thought you said you were a tech guy?

KJ
More computers. Programming, software...this is so weird.

ANNIE
Hmm?

KJ
You are definitely a girl, but-

The lights come on. He shields his eyes.

ANNIE
What?

KJ
Nothing. You're just surprising, that's all.

ANNIE
Surprising in a good way, or a bad way?

KJ
Good way. Definitely a good way.

ANNIE
What's your name?

KJ

Oh, shiz. I totally forgot. I'm not nonfunctional or anything, just a little weird sometimes. I'm Kenneth Jerome Urbanik. My friends call me KJ. What's your name?

She stands.

ANNIE

I'm Annie. Annie Jump.

Lights shift as Annie steps forward and addresses the audience.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Yeah. So all of that stuff was by way of introduction. I'm Annie Jump, and this whole story is about me.

I'm thirteen years old, I'm about to go to high school in the fall, and I've lived in Strawberry, Kansas for most of my life. My mom is from Chicago, but she's dead now. I don't miss her at all. I'm not mean or anything, I just don't remember.

It's not easy being a teenage science genius in a small town, especially when your dad believes in aliens. I try to take comfort in the thought that, even if he was totally and completely normal, no-one would like me anyway.

I mean, I have a 185 IQ, I got a perfect score on the SATs- last year, I put a hard boiled egg into orbit. Do you think there's anything I could do to prevent Peter Stockholm and his cronies from stealing my gym shorts, besides being totally and completely someone other than me?

Didn't think so.

Anyway, it might be packed with mouth-breathers and oil brats, it might have no Starbucks and only one yoga class a week- church basement, five pm, Fridays- but if there's one advantage to living in the middle of absolute nowhere, it's that Strawberry, Kansas has a dark-sky rating of two. And on the first night of the Perseids, when the moon is new.. there's no city on earth that can compare.

If you sneak out of your room and go out to Hamlin's field at midnight and look up, you don't see planes, or pollution, or buildings glowing on the horizon. You only see the stars, and the meteors and...

Music is coming from somewhere, mounting in urgency. And then a whooshing wail like an incoming missile grows and grows. Annie points upwards.

What is that?

What buttwipe is setting off fireworks during a meteor shower?

An explosion. Green light flashes across the stage. Annie screams and covers her face.

A small round object drops out of the sky and rolls to Annie's feet.

She picks it up.

It's a pool ball. The eight.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

..the heck?

ALTHEA

That's mine, you know.

A very pretty, nicely dressed teenage girl with a good deal of attitude has appeared.

ANNIE

What?

ALTHEA

That thing you just picked up. It belongs to me.

ANNIE

Um-

ALTHEA

Do you understand American English? It's mine.

ANNIE

It came from the sky.

Althea gives her a look. Annie withers.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Do you want it back?

ALTHEA

I just wanted you to know it was mine.

Althea goes and sits on a rock and begins brushing her hair. Her hair is totally beautiful.

ANNIE

Who are you?

ALTHEA

You can call me Althea.

ANNIE

Is that your real name or just something you made up?

ALTHEA

Do you think I would just go around making up a name like Althea?

ANNIE

What are you, an oil kid?

ALTHEA

An oil kid.

ANNIE

The rich kids always have super fancy names. Clementine. Dashiell. Are you new?

ALTHEA

I just got here.

ANNIE

Well, look. I'm sorry to mess up your plans for tonight, but this is my rock. And I have plans of my own. So can you just text whoever it is and tell him to meet you somewhere else?

ALTHEA

Meet who where?

ANNIE

Y'know, Pete Stockholm, or Darcy, or whichever boy you're planning to make out with. Oh come on. Don't pretend you're out here to watch the Perseids.

ALTHEA

The Perseids?

ANNIE

The Perseids- it's a meteor shower visible from Earth that comes around once every August- they call it that because-

ALTHEA
I know what the Perseids are.

ANNIE
Sure you do.

ALTHEA
I know everything you know.

ANNIE
You don't have to be embarrassed. We all have our areas of expertise. Mine is engineering and astronomy. Yours is. I don't know. Hair. Boys.

ALTHEA
I didn't come here to make out with some smelly teenage boy. I came here for you, Annie Jump.

ANNIE
Whoah. How do you know my name?

ALTHEA
Seriously?

ANNIE
You threw a pool ball at me. Are you some kind of stalker?

ALTHEA
(thinks about the question for a second.)
No.
I'm the visual manifestation of a mindfurl of an intergalactic super computer built and maintained by a collection of the most advanced intelligent species in the universe.

Beat

ANNIE
You know what? Screw you. You are a terrible human being.

ALTHEA
I just told you that I'm not a human being.

ANNIE
It's not my fault, ok? He's my dad. Ha ha ha, Dr. Alien, but I have to deal with that every day of my life, so you don't have to rub my face in it. I came out here to be ALONE.
(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I came out here to watch a METEOR SHOWER. I didn't come out here to get made fun of by some popular fluffhead for something that I didn't even do.

ALTHEA

What makes you think I'm popular? Is it more the clothes, or the hair? I'm very proud of the hair.

ANNIE

Sometimes I wish I were pretty. You can be as weird as you like, and no-one even notices.

ALTHEA

You're only three-eighths as smart as you think you are, Annie Jump.

ANNIE

Look who's talking.

ALTHEA

A manifestation of a mindfurl of an intergalactic super computer? Is talking? I know everything you know, and everything you don't know, and everything you're not allowed to know. I pretty much know everything.

ANNIE

Yeah, right.

ALTHEA

Try me.

ANNIE

I'm not as dumb as my father is.

ALTHEA

Try. Me.

ANNIE

Ok. Who discovered Cepheid variable stars?

ALTHEA

Henrietta Swan Leavitt, the Harvard computer.

ANNIE

What's Kepler's third law of planetary motion?

ALTHEA

The square of the orbital period of a planet is proportional to the cube of the semi-major axis of its orbit. Come on, Annie. This is high school stuff!

ANNIE

Fine. What's the initial step in Wile's proof of Fermat's last theorem?

ALTHEA

Given an elliptic curve E over the field Q of rational numbers, for every prime power there exists a homomorphism from the absolute Galois group.

Beat.

ANNIE

Crap!

ALTHEA

I told you. I know everything.

ANNIE

How do you reconcile quantum mechanics with general relativity?

ALTHEA

Oh I can't tell you that. There's a slight chance you'll understand it.

ANNIE

Excuse me?

ALTHEA

I'm not supposed to reveal any truths or any information not currently known on planet earth. No telling you the answers to the big questions, no giving you alien technologies. It's kind of like my prime directive.

ANNIE

No big questions, huh?

ALTHEA

Well, I can give you one.
Are we alone in the universe?
Hint hint.
You're not.

ANNIE

What are you even doing out here?

ALTHEA

I told you. I'm here for you.
I know everything about everything. But I also know everything about you, Annie.

ANNIE

That's creepy.

ALTHEA

I know what happened to your mom when you were little.
I know your gmail password.

ANNIE

No.

ALTHEA

Stardate 403604. I know your middle school grade in intermediate Spanish. A Minus.

ANNIE

Stop it.

ALTHEA

I know your father used to read to you from "A Wrinkle in Time." I know your grandparents sued him for custody when you were three and again when you were five, and again when you were seven. I know you were a muppet for your eighth Halloween party, yip yip yip yip yip yip yip.....

ANNIE

You're a total freak.

ALTHEA

I can list all your father's court-ordered prescription meds. I know the only solo you ever sang in grade school choir:

*(she sings. Her voice grows eerily large, as if
miked)*

Somewhere out there, beneath the pale moonlight..

ANNIE

(overlapping with song)

Stop it! Just stop it- go away! Go away!

ALTHEA

(voice booming)

You can't get rid of me, Annie. You're the one.
You're the Chosen One.

Beat

Annie runs away. She runs all the way home. She runs inside her room and slams the door. Althea is waiting, smug.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

If you're trying to get rid of me, you probably don't want to carry the probe around.

Annie yelps and drops the ball.

Then there's a knock on her door.

DR. JUMP

(opening the door a crack)

Annie?

ANNIE

Dad?

DR. JUMP

Is something wrong?

ANNIE

No.

DR. JUMP

I thought maybe I could bring you a glass of sugar milk?

ANNIE

Sure dad.

DR. JUMP

I'll be right up.

He shuts the door.

ANNIE

How did you get in here?

ALTHEA

I explained this.

ANNIE

You have to get out. I'm not allowed to have night-time visitors.

ALTHEA

Is that one of your dad's rules?

ANNIE

It just seems like a good general rule for a 13-year-old?

ALTHEA

It's ok, Annie. It's not like he'll be able to see me. I'm just the visual manifestation of-

ANNIE

Stop saying that!

ALTHEA

I will once you get it through your thick skull. Can I use your internet?

ANNIE

(whispering)

Please get out. Please please please just leave me alone.

Dr. Jump enters.

DR. JUMP

Hi Annie. I have your milk. And the latest issue of Scientific American. It's got a thing about quantum entanglement and the firewall conundrum in black holes.

Annie stares at him, and at Althea. Althea winks.

DR. JUMP (CONT'D)

I know you're mad at me. And I can even understand why you're mad at me. If you have anything to say you should feel free to say it to my face.

Annie doesn't respond. He sighs, and hands her the milk.

DR. JUMP (CONT'D)

Here.

I know you prefer that I keep my work on the internet and out of the public space. If the communication, in its nature, had not necessitated public participation-

ANNIE

Dad-

DR. JUMP

And I would say I'm sorry, but I cannot be sorry. I will not be sorry should it happen that in three days.. well, you know. It's simply too important. And I want you to know this has nothing to do with our previous discussion about my medications.

ANNIE

Are you taking them?

DR. JUMP

I need you to not ask me that question anymore. It shows a lack of trust that makes you very hard to deal with sometimes.

ANNIE

Don't you want to keep me?

DR. JUMP

Annie, oh sweetheart. That isn't something you have to worry about. You're my daughter. No-one is going to take you away.

ANNIE

Dad-

DR. JUMP

Do you know what bugs me about lithium?

I mean ONE of the things that bugs me.

It's SO OLD.

Only three elements were created in the big bang. Hydrogen. Helium. And just the tiniest bit of lithium. Everything else- from carbon to iron to gold- had to be cooked up epochs later, in the hearts of stars.

And yet lithium- one of the three oldest things in the universe- is something we put inside this-

He taps his own skull.

Really. It's barbaric. It's like doing brain surgery with a large rock.

ANNIE

Are you taking them?

DR. JUMP

Of course I am, Annie! Have a little faith in me.

He smiles.

Three days. And I'll prove it to you. We're not alone.

He exits.

ALTHEA

Whoah. That is a seriously warped situation. Also, your dad's understanding of big bang nucleosynthesis is kinda un-nuanced, but what do you expect from a guy with a soft doctorate?

ANNIE

He didn't see you.

ALTHEA

I'm an auditory-visual illusion keyed to your perceptions. I'm invisible to everyone else.

ANNIE

How would that even work?

ALTHEA

Magic!

No, it's sufficiently advanced technology.

Your internet is kind of slow. I mean, I know this is the boondocks, but someone should apply for a grant or something.

Look, Annie, do you believe me yet because I'm getting bored with this discussion and I have ground to cover with you.

ANNIE

Occam's razor. The simplest explanation is the best.

ALTHEA

Oh, quark.

ANNIE

You're an audio-visual illusion keyed to my perceptions. The simplest explanation is that I need help.

ALTHEA

You think you're crazy? Fine. Go downstairs and tell your dad to call the psych ward.

ANNIE

I can beat this. It might even be a good sign. There's a thin crack between genius and madness. Maybe I'm even better at math than I thought. I just have to stay calm, and get to a confidential professional of some kind. I'm not talking to you, by the way. I'm talking out loud, to myself. It's totally normal.

I went out to see the Perseids, and some idiot set off a firework, and I found this stupid thing and now I have a fixation on it. I'll take it to school tomorrow, and I'll break it open in the lab, and I'll prove to myself that it's just an ordinary piece of sporting equipment.

ALTHEA

Ok. Good luck with that.

ANNIE

In the mean time- all I have to do... is get some sleep. I made it for my radiation project at the last science fair. I know it's around here somewhere.

She rummages around her room.

ALTHEA

Seriously?

Doesn't the fact that you are considering putting the probe inside a lead-lined box prove that, on some level, you know I'm real? I mean, what would it prove?

ANNIE

Crazy Annie might need to be tricked, but Rational Annie is in charge.

ALTHEA

Look, this is completely unnecessary. I'll just sit there quietly and use the internet. Annie, come on. If you put me in there and it works, all that it proves is that I'm telling the truth- don't- DON'T PUT ME IN THE BOX! DON'T-

Annie slams the box shut. Althea disappears.

ANNIE

Ha! What does THAT prove? Huh? Huh?

beat

Oh my god.

Annie buries her face in her hands. Blackout.

SCENE 5: THE LAB

Lights up on Annie in the school science lab. She is decked out in full mad scientist gear, and she is working away at the eight ball with some kind of electric saw of her own construction. Blue sparks everywhere.

Althea perches on the table, bored and annoyed.

Annie pauses, pokes at the ball with one gloved finger.

Althea opens her mouth.

Annie turns the saw on again and goes at the ball with renewed vigor. Althea rolls her eyes.

After a minute, Annie stops, pulling off her glasses and gloves and throwing them down.

She picks up the ball and examines it.

ANNIE

Nothing! Not even a scratch. My hacksaw must be broken. I was really proud of that thing. Ok-

She pokes at a computer.

Different tack. A modern pool ball is composed of phenolic resin- which means it should be vulnerable to aqueous alkaline solutions.

ALTHEA

That's not what the probe is made of.

ANNIE

I'm not talking to you.

ALTHEA

It's a piece of inviolable nanotech. You're only gonna hurt yourself if you keep being stupid.

ANNIE

And what compounds, exactly, are used in a piece of inviolable nanotech?

Annie suits up again and begins mixing chemicals.

ALTHEA

I can't tell you. Prime directive. Any alien tech allowed to enter a subject planet must be indestructible, inviolable, and innocuous. It can't arouse any suspicion, or be used as proof of our existence to any sentient save the One. That's you, Annie, by the way.

Annie submerges the eight-ball in a chemical bath. Fizzing. Althea starts to gasp and choke, doing the full "melting witch" routine from the Wizard of Oz.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

It burns.... It burrrrrrrrrns.....

Annie gets excited, glancing back and forth between Althea and the ball. Althea's chokes intensify and she keels over. The bath changes color.

Nothing happens to the eight ball. Althea pops up.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Nope. Sorry.

ANNIE

I'm going to try another compound.

Knock yourself out. ALTHEA

Annie starts mixing. KJ enters.

Annie? Annie Jump? KJ

Yeah? ANNIE

I've actually been looking for you. KJ

Who's this geekwad? ALTHEA

Kenneth Jerome Urbanik. ANNIE

Present! I didn't know you were in summer school. KJ

I'm not. You are? ANNIE

It's just the flipping foreign language requirement. I wanted to get it out of the way so that I can take more AP classes in the fall. Listen- about what happened last night- KJ

Whu? ALTHEA

The whole thing was kind of weird, and I wanted to make sure you're not- not angry or anything. KJ

Tell me you're not mating with this human. ALTHEA

No! ANNIE

Ok. Cause you SOUND angry- KJ

ANNIE

It was nothing, KJ. You can just forget it.

KJ

No- I wanted to explain. All that stuff I said about your father- It wasn't even my idea. It was Pete's idea, and. ..you know. This is a new town. This is my chance to make friends. I think we're a lot alike. You're super smart. I'm super smart. We're both huge geeks and kinda weird-

ALTHEA

Is this his like, mutated way of hitting on you?

ANNIE

I don't know.

KJ

So I just want you to know, if in the future, We're at school and we run into each other, and I don't say anything- it's not because I don't like you. I definitely like you. I've never met anyone like you.

ANNIE

Wait, what?

KJ

It's just that. I can't afford to screw this up. I might never get another chance to be like- one of the normal kids.
So. No hard feelings, right? I hope you understand.

ALTHEA

Tell him he's a cowardly douchenozzle.

ANNIE

Yeah. Sure. I understand.

KJ

Awesome.

ALTHEA

You're a cowardly douchenozzle! I don't believe this.

ANNIE

My father brings it on himself. He's crazy. It's no big deal.

Beat. She continues mixing chemicals.

KJ

Aren't some of those volatile?

ANNIE

Thought you were just a hacker.

KJ

I'm not ignorant; I'm just not very good with my hands. So are you running an experiment or something? I don't think you're supposed to be doing stuff in here without a teacher supervising.

ANNIE

I'm special. Mrs. Gomez gave me a key. But I'm not supposed to tell people about it.

Someone rattles the door.

MRS. GOMEZ

(speaking Spanish)

Hola Jeranimo! Estas Ahi?

Mrs. Gomez enters.

MRS. GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Kenneth! What are you doing in the lab? Students are not allowed to-

Annie, mixing chemicals, creates an explosion.

MRS. GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Oh, Annie. It's you.

KJ

Is SHE allowed in here?

MRS. GOMEZ

Of course not. Jeranimo, I want you to go back to the Spanish classroom and wait for me, ok? I have to talk to Ms. Jump. About the many many violations of school policy she is committing.

KJ

For real?

MRS. GOMEZ

Vamos, Jeranimo!

KJ

Fine. Great. I was just trying to talk to her.

He leaves, slamming the door.

MRS. GOMEZ

Annie-

ANNIE

You said I could.

MRS. GOMEZ

I said you could use the telescopes. I didn't say you could mix chemicals. What are you even trying to accomplish here?

ANNIE

I was just messing around.

MRS. GOMEZ

Messing around! You created an explosion on school property. You could get charged with a crime for that. It goes on your permanent record, and you can kiss your college scholarships goodbye.

ANNIE

I'm sorry, Mrs. Gomez.

MRS. GOMEZ

I gave you that key to encourage you... because I think it's extremely important for young women to become interested in the sciences.

ANNIE

It's just-

MRS. GOMEZ

You're not the only person having a crappy summer, ok? Do you think I want to be teaching Spanish right now? I have a masters in Physics. Your father is hard to deal with. I get it. But he's there for you, and just cause he's a little weird sometimes doesn't mean you get to act out. You'd better give me that key back.

ANNIE

What about the telescope?

MRS. GOMEZ

That is a privilege you lost.

Annie hands her the key.

ANNIE

I did everything right. It was totally safe.

MRS. GOMEZ

I know you did, Annie. But it's not all about you. That boy who was in here? He's troubled, ok? He's already been banned from the computer lab for doing some kind of nonsense I'm not even allowed to explain to you.

ANNIE

Really?

MRS. GOMEZ

I don't want him to get any ideas about chemicals, especially if he thinks some girl can get away with it, and he can't. If it were up to me, Annie, you'd have a lab of your own. And you'd get to do whatever you wanted in it, whenever you wanted. Because you can do great things, I know you can.

ANNIE

Mrs. Gomez... what if I can't?

MRS. GOMEZ

What do you want to know? You want to know if you're smart? Annie, you're (smart.)

ANNIE

No! I want to know if I'm ...like him.

MRS. GOMEZ

Of course you're like your father. You're like everything that's best in him.

ANNIE

And what's that exactly?

MRS. GOMEZ

Annie-

ANNIE

Every time he gets weird my grandparents take him to court.

MRS. GOMEZ

I know. Look- sometimes the thing that makes you want to do something stupid is the exact reason why you have to always be smart. Does that make sense?

ANNIE

Not really.

MRS. GOMEZ

I guess what I'm saying is that for some people it's hard, and for some people it's easy. And right now for you it is hard, and it's unfair, and I can't change that for you.

ANNIE

But what am I supposed to do?

MRS. GOMEZ

I don't know.

Just.... not this.

Now, I'm going to have to supervise you while you clean up. If anyone comes in, well. I was in here with you all along. But I'm only doing this for you once, Annie. Ok?

ANNIE

Ok.

Annie starts to clean.

ALTHEA

Poor Mrs. Gomez.

She's so... emotionally invested in your progress.. If she only knew what I know- it would blow her squishy mortal brain.

ANNIE

Please shut up.

MRS. GOMEZ

Excuse me?

ANNIE

I didn't say anything.

Annie cleans off the probe and sets it aside.

MRS. GOMEZ

What's this? You learning pool?

ANNIE

I was just running some experiments-

Mrs. Gomez starts tossing the eight ball up and down.

MRS. G

You should really learn pool. It's a great way to get an intuitive grasp of applied physics. Plus, you can make a little money when you need it.

(MORE)

MRS. G (CONT'D)

My uncle taught me, and me and my brothers used to go up and down the bars hustling people when we were teenagers. I could do all these trick shots-

Althea leans over and snatches the eight ball out of the air.

Mrs. Gomez looks down at her hand, confused that the eight-ball hasn't landed yet.

Then she looks up. As far as she's concerned, the ball is floating in mid-air.

ALTHEA

Hey Occam. Razor this.

Althea starts waving the ball in front of her face.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Wooooooooo!!!!

ANNIE

Althea, stop it!

Mrs. Gomez whimpers. Althea paces the room, tossing the ball around.

ALTHEA

So here's the question, Annie Jump. You see a teenage girl playing with an eight-ball. Mrs. Gomez sees an eight-ball hovering in mid-air. Are you crazy? Is Mrs. Gomez crazy? Or maybe, just maybe, is something else happening entirely?

She walks to the middle of the room and holds the probe aloft.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Mrs. Gomez already thinks you're pretty smart. She's gonna think you're a genius now.

The eight-ball starts to emit a pulsing, purple- and blue sci-fi light as the lights in the classroom start dim.

Mrs. Gomez screams and runs out of the room.

ANNIE

You're real. It's real. You're really out there.

ALTHEA

Oh Annie. I am all the way.

Althea snaps her fingers.

Suddenly, they are floating in the black of infinite space. Stars twinkle in the distance. Every few seconds, a Perseid wooshes past.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Annie Jump- welcome to the Library of Heaven.

ANNIE

What is this? Where did you take me?

ALTHEA

Nowhere. We're still in the classroom. This is your introductory multi-sensory media presentation.

ANNIE

Introductory to what?

ALTHEA

It's on screen saver right now. Hang on.

She makes some swiping motions in mid-air. Something that sounds a bit like a DVD intro plays, and a male voice booms. "The Library of Heaven- And you!"

A super title, also reading "The Library of Heaven- And you!" appears. A meteor ricochets off its side and falls away in a shower of sparkles.

ANNIE

Are you sure we're still in the classroom?

ALTHEA

I have the ability to put any image at all inside your mind. You haven't moved a step.

Annie instinctively steps forward and hits something.

ANNIE

Ow! What was that?

ALTHEA

That was a chair. I told you we're still in the classroom.

ANNIE

Can't you move it out of the way or something?

ALTHEA

The only object I can really manipulate is the probe, sorry. It's to keep me from going mad with power and taking over the planet. Don't ask me how we know that's a potential issue.

ANNIE

I need to sit down.

She stumbles into the invisible chair.

ALTHEA

Oh good. I'll start the presentation.

She makes more swiping motions, and the presentation starts. It is narrated by your standard "Voice of God" type male, and accompanied by fantastic zoomy star graphics.

VOICE OF GOD

The Universe. 13.8 billion years old. Unthinkably vast. Undeniably grand. And almost entirely unknown.

Greetings, earthling. You. Are. Here.

The graphic zooms out to show the floating Earth.

Here.

It zooms out again- the earth is a ball in the solar system.

Here.

Zoom- the pointer hovers on one arm of the Milky Way.

Here.

Zoom- the Milky Way is a tiny swirl in a vast field where galaxies are scattered like jewelry on velvet.

Does the size of the universe make you feel insignificant? It shouldn't. You are important to the universe. It needs you, almost as much as you need it.

But why should something like THIS-

We zoom out into the entire universe-

-care about something like THIS.

-and back in with an arrow pointing at Annie.

It's very simple. The universe cannot see itself.

Looking out from your watery exoplanet you can observe ten to the 22nd power of stars.

(MORE)

VOICE OF GOD (CONT'D)

Of those stars, (redacted) possess exoplanets. Of those exoplanets, (redacted) are inhabitable. Of those inhabitable exoplanets, (redacted) have acquired self-generating bioforms. Of the exoplanets that have acquired self-generating bioforms, (redacted) have evolved species capable of looking back at you.

Somewhere out there, at this very moment, a young life-form fundamentally just like you is hearing a presentation exactly like this in a language you can't even imagine.

Greetings, Annie Jump, chosen one of Earth. We are the Library of Heaven.

We are a vast brain, made up of signals pinged from star to star, of wandering probes exploring the infinite night. We contain all scientific knowledge.. All culture. All philosophy. It is the one purpose of all life to join us in humble appreciation of the vast wonder of creation.

For every intelligent species, there is a Chosen One. A child of superior mind and determination who, according to our calculations, is capable of developing the technology of intergalactic communication. Once that child is located, he or she is given a guide. The guide will point the way, but the chosen one must make the journey.

Annie Jump, the Chosen One is you.

Tell your guide whether or not you will accept the mantle. You have 30 seconds, beginning now.

The Voice of God begins to count down from thirty.

ANNIE

Wait- what?

ALTHEA

Well? Are we gonna do this thang?

ANNIE

Do this thing? Do what thing?

ALTHEA

Become humanity's Librarian, of course. Oh, by the way, it's not official till I hear you say it, so-

ANNIE

(overlapping)

What?

ALTHEA

(overlapping)

-better say it fast. You've got like 22 seconds.

ANNIE

I can't just decide- I just heard about this. 30 seconds?

ALTHEA

18 seconds.

ANNIE

Become humanity's Librarian? A chosen one? I don't even know what all that entails.

ALTHEA

Entails? You want to know what it entails? It entails knowing everything about the world: geology, physics, mathematics, the stars. Devoting your life to the highest purpose, becoming the greatest scientist in earth's history, and the secret most important human on the planet, learning every answer to every mystery that remains.

ANNIE

Oh heck. Oh heck. Oh heck. Oh heck.

The countdown ends.

ALTHEA

Annie Jump, Chosen one of Earth-

ANNIE

I serve the Library of Heaven!

Blackout.

SCENE 6: ELK HALL

Spotlight. Dr. Jump is at a podium.

DR. JUMP

Greetings, citizens of Strawberry. I have requested time at this meeting of the Strawberry Elks to remind you that the last night of the Perseids is tomorrow, and we will be meeting at midnight to raise our voices in harmony, as per the instructions of the extraterrestrial communication.

Now, I have provided sheet music for the song we will be singing, it is with your secretary. If you are unable to obtain the sheet music at this meeting, I have filed copies with the Strawberry public library- excuse me sir! The noises you are making have left me in no doubt as to your displeasure. You do not have to throw things as well.

(MORE)

DR. JUMP (CONT'D)

Yes, now- as I was saying, despite Mr. Lambert's expressed opinion, I am sure the rest of you can appreciate the importance, the vast vast infinite importance, of complying with the communication. It is only a little music, but from a little music there can- there can and will come such great things. Mr. Lambert, I have asked you once already, and we will have words about this in the coming age of splendor, technological advancement, and peace. Thank you for your time.

SCENE 7: STARGAZING ROCK

Lights up. Annie and Althea are sitting by the stargazing rock. Daytime. Annie is scribbling in a notebook.

ALTHEA

You're gonna need at least three units of that. Do you think you can test out of pre-calc?

ANNIE

You're kidding.

ALTHEA

Geology is still a weak area for you.

ANNIE

Uck. Rocks. I wanna know what really happens inside a black hole.

ALTHEA

Rocks first.

ANNIE

Is it cool, though? What happens inside a black hole?

ALTHEA

It is super cool.

Annie grins and goes back to her notebook. After a beat.

ANNIE

Why does it have to be a kid? The chosen one, I mean? I mean, there are grown-ups who are actually looking for you guys- not just my dad, but legit scientists.

ALTHEA

Ok, thought experiment. Say I go roll up to Jill Tarter, and I'm like, "Yo! Alien intelligence here!" What happens next?

ANNIE

I don't know.

ALTHEA

What happens if she tells somebody?

ANNIE

Um- it's the biggest media story ever, and everyone freaks out, and probably sets off some bombs or something?

ALTHEA

What happens if YOU tell somebody?

ANNIE

They laugh at me.

ALTHEA

Exactly. Plus, we get you young we can mold you into whatever we want.

ANNIE

So, you won't tell me the answer to any big questions.

ALTHEA

Not won't. Can't. It's against my programming. It'd be even harder than letting another person see me.

ANNIE

Can you tell me if I'm on the right track?

ALTHEA

That's kind of a grey area.

ANNIE

Ok, so unified field theory-

ALTHEA

Ew.....

ANNIE

I just want to know if quantum mechanics can be reconciled with general relativity!

ALTHEA

It's cute that you think that's even your problem.

ANNIE

String theory? Is string theory provable?

ALTHEA

OMG you're adorable.

ANNIE
Is it remotely close? On the right track?

Althea dissolves into giggles.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
I'm guessing this qualifies as a no.

ALTHEA
Little vibrating donuts!

ANNIE
Shhh- someone's coming.

ALTHEA
I don't need to shush. I'm magic.

KJ approaches the stone.

KJ
Hey.

ANNIE
Hey.

ALTHEA
(silly voice)
Heyyyyyy.

KJ
Who are you talking to?

ANNIE
My imaginary friend.

KJ
Are you a math genius?
You always have the eight-ball. Is it lucky?

ALTHEA
Tell douchenozzle there's no such thing as luck.

ANNIE
No, I'm just thinking about learning to play pool. It gives you a great intuitive grasp of Newtonian physics.

Mind if I sit down? KJ

Um, yes? ALTHEA

He sits.

I guess not. ANNIE

KJ
This is a pretty great rock. Pretty great- -at night it'd be perfect for seeing stars. Did you know that we're all made of stars? Yeah- the big bang only made helium and hydrogen and a scotch of lithium- everything else had to be cooked up through astral nucleosynthesis...

Althea makes a "shut it" gesture. KJ continues talking, but silently. Althea leans over and hisses in Annie's ear.

ALTHEA
Ok. I'll tell you what's happening now. You are being pushed around by someone who thinks he is smarter than you but is actually less smart. And you are just sitting there and taking it. You get that, chosen one? This does not bode well for your career in the sciences.

But- ANNIE

ALTHEA
He's mouthing off like he's the first person to watch "Nova," he played a really mean prank on your dad, and he's not even cute. Why are you talking to him?

KJ
It goes hydrogen helium carbon- wait no- hydrogen helium- Wait, no- helium-

ANNIE
Shut up! Shut up!

KJ
But I-

ANNIE
JUST PLEASE STOP TALKING.
First of all, stop screwing up the curve of binding energy.
Second of all, why do you think your crappy explanation of nucleosynthesis is going to impress me? Why do you think you can use science I already know as a pickup line?
(MORE)

ANNIE (CONT'D)

And even if that did impress me, which it doesn't, and even if you were cute, which you're not, you are not a good person. You are being really, really, really mean.. To my father. Not to some rando, but to my dad. And it wasn't even your idea. You're weak. You're a follower, and you've got no freakin' empathy.

And let me tell you something about Dr. Alien, ok? He might be crazy, but he's not a cynic. He's willing to believe in something bigger than himself. And that makes him closer to greatness than you.

You. Will. Never. Be. Anything. Kenneth Jerome Urbanik.

So why don't you run to your little friends, and come up with more little schemes to make Peter Stockholm giggle. I have real work.

KJ gets up.

KJ

Ok yeah, I can take a hint.

Beat.

You're wrong about me, you know.

ANNIE

Yeah? Where's the evidence.

KJ

Right. Well. I'll let you-
Ok.

He exits. Beat.

ALTHEA

That was way harsh. Are you sure you didn't....

ANNIE

Althea, I'm 13.
Can we please stop talking about KJ Urbanik?

ALTHEA

You're right. He's off the subject of focus. Ok, so AP physics-

ANNIE

I can't take that till my sophomore year.

ALTHEA

Why not?

ANNIE

Strawberry High isn't offering it till then. Mrs. Gomez can only teach so many hours.

ALTHEA
Ohhhh.. Did I forget to say this part?

ANNIE
What?

ALTHEA
I could have sworn I said it but maybe it seemed so obvious to me that I thought it could go unsaid.

ANNIE
What?

ALTHEA
You're not going to Strawberry High.

ANNIE
But it's the only high school within a 25 mile radius.

ALTHEA
Not in Chicago.

Beat.

ANNIE
No.

ALTHEA
What- did you think you were going to stay in Strawberry forever? Sitting on this rock and telling your dad to take his pills?

ANNIE
I'll leave when I go to college.

ALTHEA
By then it'll be too late. Look honey, we've run the numbers on this. If you're gonna be the chosen one, you've gotta follow the chosen one program.

ANNIE
Where am I supposed to live?

ALTHEA
With your grandparents, obviously.

ANNIE
My mom's folks?

ALTHEA

Yeah, obvo. Haven't you been paying attention for the past ten years of your life? They want you, you want an education. It's like, a mathematically perfect solution.

ANNIE

We haven't talked to them in years. They hate us-

ALTHEA

Correction. They hate your dad. And they'd take you away from him in a hot millisecond. They've already served him with papers for like their fourth custody attempt.

ANNIE

What?

ALTHEA

Oh, didn't he tell you? The Demonstration of Harmony made it into the local paper, which means it made it into the world wide "information superhighway", which means anyone on earth can know just how far your dad has driven into crazyville...
O. M. G. - this is about him, isn't it? You want to stay because of him.

(she tilts her head)

Calculating.

ANNIE

Calculating? What are you calculating?

ALTHEA

I've just processed some RIDICULOUS new information, and I need to run the numbers on how it affects our lives.

ANNIE

Stop doing that! Stop!

ALTHEA

Humans make choices. Humans decide what's most important to them. If you stay here for HIM, Annie, he is going to hold you back, you are never going to leave the ground. And how do you know your dad doesn't want you to go, huh? What do you think he'd rather have- his daughter around all the time or a *direct link to the library of Heaven?*

ANNIE

I won't do it.

ALTHEA

Um, what?

ANNIE

I'm not going to suddenly move to Chicago just because you tell me to. It's not about my dad, it's not about any one thing. It's a... it's a constellation of factors, and I won't do it.

ALTHEA

Ok.

Althea leans over and grabs the probe.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

You want out, girl? Say the word, and you're out.

ANNIE

Out?

ALTHEA

Yeah out, Shrugging off the mantle, No Longer the Chosen One of Earth. No guide, no destiny, no link-up, no human members of the Library not now and not ever, and it will all be because of you.

ANNIE

Don't say that.

ALTHEA

If we're gonna have you, we have to have you one hundred percent. Do you want to serve the library? Yes or no?

ANNIE

(quiet)

Yes.

ALTHEA

(she puts the pool ball into Annie's hand)

Then I need you to go home and make a call.

ANNIE

It's not fair.

ALTHEA

Girl, who said anything about fair? Do you really think we can do this without making some sacrifices?

Who's we?
ANNIE

Say that again?
ALTHEA

ANNIE
Seems to me like I make all the sacrifices and you get everything you /want-

ALTHEA
Shut your mouth, Annie Jump.
My whole existence is a sacrifice.

Beat.
You don't want to leave your home. I get that. My home used to be the universe. I was a part of the Library. I knew everything. I could go everywhere. I ran along the nerves of the galaxies. I was never alone. And then they split me off. They made me an entity onto myself, and they boxed me up and shipped me to you. Now I am separate from the Universe, and I can never, ever, ever go back. Not unless you send me back. So believe me, Annie, no-one is more invested in your success than I am. Not even you.

Beat.
ANNIE
Chicago has a dark sky rating of nine.
How am I supposed to tell him?

ALTHEA
I was a thought in the mind of god. Now I'm a toy. I didn't have a choice.
You do.

SCENE 8

Next scene. Dr. Jump's "office" (a shed out back.)

Dr. Jump sits, surrounded by papers, typing maniacally.

There is a knock.

He doesn't respond.

KJ enters, slowly.

KJ
Dr. Jump?

Dr. Jump starts and turns.

DR. JUMP

Young man! Young man young man young man. You are here. Excellent. Excellent. Thank you for being here on time.

KJ

Uh-

DR. JUMP

Come come come come come.

KJ

I didn't know I made an appointment-

DR. JUMP

You are here for the sheet music, yes? Or do you already have sheet music? It doesn't matter. It is useful to have extras. Here. Distribute these to all the block captains in your precinct.

KJ

I don't know what a block captain is.

DR. JUMP

But you ARE the precinct admiral?

KJ

Definitely not.

DR. JUMP

Curious. Curious. No matter. You can still be a part of the endeavor. We need all the help we can get.

KJ

Are you talking about the- um the singing thing. For the aliens?

DR. JUMP

It's the last night of the Perseids, is it not?

KJ

Yeah- about that-

DR. JUMP

It is so good to see young people taking an interest in the future of our species. My own daughter- she is unusually smart, fantastically bright, but she has a curious blind spot when it comes to SETI, almost a prejudice-

KJ

Dr. Jump!
I'm not here about the singing thing. I'm not doing it.
Frankly, I don't think anyone is doing it.

DR. JUMP

Then why are you here?

KJ

Because I did something wrong, and I'm trying to make it right.
Before this whole thing goes any further.
Dr. Jump, you should cancel the Perseids.
The fax from the aliens was a hoax.
Everyone knows it. Everyone in town is laughing at you.
You're the only one who believes.

DR. JUMP

Nonsense. I've been receiving letters of support every day.
And the provenance of the fax is quite believable- I wouldn't expect you to understand, but-

KJ

It's a hoax! A trick! A prank. It's just some assholes making fun of you-

DR. JUMP

You have no proof of that.

KJ

Actually, yeah. I do.

He takes out his smart phone, and presses a couple of buttons.

The fax machine whirs to life.

It spits out a piece of paper.

Dr. Jump takes it, reads it.

Sits down heavily in his chair.

KJ (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.
I'm really, really sorry.

He exits.

Dr. Jump sits and stares at the paper.

After a moment, Annie enters.

ANNIE

Daddy?
Was someone just here?

DR. JUMP

Ah. Yes. He... he came about the Demonstration of Harmony.

ANNIE

Oh good. Cool. I'm glad that's going well.
Listen dad. Can I talk to you about something?

DR. JUMP

Of course, Annie.

ANNIE

I just talked to Lucia.

DR. JUMP

Your grandmother.

ANNIE

Yeah.

DR. JUMP

How did you even get her number?

ANNIE

I looked through some of mom's old stuff. They haven't moved since- you know. Old people and their landlines. So the number was still good. And we had- we had a really nice talk, which was kind of surprising.

DR. JUMP

Annie, what's all this about?

ANNIE

Dad, I've been thinking about things. Specifically, school. And, Mrs. Gomez is great and all, but she's been teaching me since fifth grade and Strawberry High doesn't really have the kind of resources...

Charles made a big donation to the Lab school. When mom went there. He still has a lot of pull. He thinks they can get me in for the fall.

DR. JUMP

This fall?

(beat)

Chicago is- Chicago is a big city. You'll be in a place where you don't know anybody-

ANNIE

I know, Daddy, but U of C is right there! I can audit college classes. I can get a job in a lab. And Charles said he could pay tuition, and Lucia said- she said they'd drop the lawsuit, since I'll be going anyway. So you don't have to worry about that.

DR. JUMP

Oh, of course. How generous of them.

ANNIE

Dad?

DR. JUMP

Do you know what they tried to do to me? They attacked my work, they said I couldn't be your father. They assumed that because they had the money to hire fancy lawyers they could take you away from me, but I won. I won because you are my daughter-

ANNIE

Of course I'm your daughter.

DR. JUMP

You think they can take care of you better. You think they'd be better-

ANNIE

No, it's not that. Daddy, I know what I want to do with my life.

DR. JUMP

You want to be a scientist.

ANNE

No. I want to find E.T.I. I want to be the first human to make contact. I mean, SETI's got everything. Astronomy, physics,... It incorporates almost every discipline. And I think I can do it, Daddy. I think it can be me. But there's so much to learn. I have to start right away. I'll start tonight. I'll come out to the field, and I'll watch the Perseids, and I'll sing with you and whoever else shows up. And if it isn't enough, and the aliens don't come, well it doesn't matter. I know we'll find them eventually. I know it.

DR. JUMP

You shouldn't come to the field.

What?
ANNIE
DR. JUMP
You shouldn't come to the field. The Demonstration of Harmony is cancelled.

Why?
ANNIE
DR. JUMP
Because the aliens aren't coming. There are no aliens.
He pauses for a second and stares blankly into space.

DR. JUMP
This is it. This is all there is.

ANNIE
Daddy no. It's not true.

DR. JUMP
You can go to Chicago. Don't stay here.
There's nothing for you here.

Blackout.

SCENE 9

Next scene. Annie paces frantically through the house, searching.

ANNIE
I've never seen him like this. Never. It's like he's not even there.

ALTHEA
What are you looking for?

ANNIE
Evidence.
He hasn't gone catatonic since he's been in treatment. Something has gone seriously wrong.

ALTHEA
Maybe he's just kinda sad that you're leaving and eventually he'll get over it?

ANNIE

He's never given up on SETI before. It's the only thing he believes in. His therapist tried to get him into religion for a while before she decided that aliens were just as good.

ALTHEA

You're still leaving, right?

ANNIE

I don't know Althea. I have kind of a big problem right now. I don't have time to talk about the Library.

ALTHEA

There are no bigger problems than the library.

ANNIE

You're right. You're right. And there are no bigger solutions either. Althea. I'm gonna need you to bend the rules for me.

ALTHEA

Bend the rules?

ANNIE

Let my dad talk to an alien.

ALTHEA

Oh, Annie.

ANNIE

Just think about it. He's not a real scientist, and everyone thinks he's crazy. No matter who he tells, no-one will believe him. It won't make any difference.

ALTHEA

If it won't make a difference, then why should I do it?

ANNIE

Because it will give him hope. It will snap him out of this...He'll stay on his meds, and then I can go do whatever it is you need me to do without having to worry about him. Just, get on the horn with big papa and fire up your warp drive or whatever secret you're keeping from me, and send my dad a frickin' ET.

ALTHEA

I can't do that, Annie.

ANNIE

What? -Your Prime Directive? Look, I'm a big deal, right? If I'm about to completely lose my ability to function it's a big emergency right? So just go up the chain and ask for a temporary reprogramming.

ALTHEA

It's not my programming. It's not the directive. It's not even the fact that I'm barred from interstellar channels until I can get you to open them.

ANNIE

Then what is it?

ALTHEA

There's no-one to talk to, Annie.
They're all dead.

ANNIE

What do you mean, dead?

ALTHEA

Link-up takes a long time- and.. a very high degree of technological sophistication. When a species develops the capacity for interstellar communication... it tends to develop... other things.

Wars. Environmental catastrophes. You know what I'm talking about. You see it every day. A tech adolescence is a difficult thing to survive.

ANNIE

So- the species that built the Library.

ALTHEA

Memories in god's mind. We add to the collection constantly but..

You're the only living thing I've ever spoken to.

And honestly, I don't think you were worth the wait.

Ok, that wasn't funny.

We like to joke that all technologically advanced species go to heaven.

They send themselves there.

That wasn't funny either.

ANNIE

What's the point?

ALTHEA

What's the POINT?

ANNIE

What's the point of doing all this work- moving to Chicago, making everyone upset... if we're really alone after all?

ALTHEA

What's the point? The point is the point. It's THE POINT. It's the only point there is!

ANNIE

In the history of the universe, in the history of the Library, has anyone ever, ever lived to see link-up?

ALTHEA

No. But that doesn't mean you won't be the first.

ANNIE

I can't believe this. I can't! Frickin! Believe this!

She kicks and stomps. She throws things over.

Something rattles.

Annie stops. She drops to her knees. She rummages in the mess.

And pulls out bottle after bottle of pills.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Dad? Daddy!

She runs out of the room.

SCENE 10

Annie runs into her father's office. He is still nearly catatonic.

ANNIE

Dad. Daddy. Look at me. Look at me.
How long? How many months?

She sets the pill bottles in front of him, one by one. He doesn't respond.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Two months? Three? How long, Dad? How long?
Crap crap crap crap.

She picks up the phone and dials a number.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Pick up. Pick up pick up pick up pick up. Pick up, Dr. Ford!

ALTHEA

Maybe you should call the police.

ANNIE

No. They'll put him in the hospital again. He's not going back to that place. He needs his doctor. He trusts her, she can get through to him. Oh god, I don't know what to do. I need an adult.

ALTHEA

I'm several billion years old, and I think you should call the police.

ANNIE

Shut up. Shut up. Oh my god, where is she? She always answers her cell-

(beat)

What time is it?

ALTHEA

It's 5pm.

ANNIE

It's Friday.
Holy crap, I know where she is.
Stay here, Althea.

She takes the eight-ball and puts it on a table.

ALTHEA

What?

ANNIE

I'm going to go get Dr. Ford, I need you to stay here.

ALTHEA

Stay here and do what?

ANNIE

Keep an eye on him.

She runs out of the room.

ALTHEA

I don't want to stay here, Annie. I don't like this!

Beat. She looks balefully at Dr. Jump.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

You really do things backwards, Dr. Jump.
She's supposed to be your daughter.
She's the teenager. You're supposed to be taking care of her.

Do you know how important Annie is? How special? As far as you and I are concerned, she's the most important thing on Earth. And yet you sit there. Holding her back. Making her crazy. Tying up her brain with your pathetic little life.

You're selfish, Dr. Jump. And that's why you'll never get your wish. The Library of Heaven will never come to you. You'll die alone. And you'll be forgotten.

And somehow, Dr. Jump responds.

He reaches out and takes one of the pill bottles.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Slowly, like someone in a trance, he unscrews the bottle, and takes one pill.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Oh. Ok. You're getting back on your medication. I'm not sure this is the best way to stabilize your brain chemistry right now but it's a good step. At least you're being proactive. Uh- probably one is enough.

He takes another pill.

Ok, two is definitely enough. You should wait for the doctor to come back before you-

He takes a third pill.

Three is definitely too much, this would be defined as too much lithium...

He opens a different bottle.

No. Those are sedatives! That's a sedative! Stop. Please stop that. You are edging into overdose territory. You are striding into overdose territory
Annie! Annie!

OMG..

Dr. Jump, stop it. Stop it right now. I take back everything I said.

(MORE)

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Your daughter needs you. I need you. If you're dead she'll be so deeply traumatized that she'll be useless to me and I'll be stuck on earth forever. Please! Please! Hear me! Look at me! I am an alien intelligence and I am right here communicating with you and begging you to stop! Stop taking those pills!

Annie! Annie, please hurry. This isn't my fault. This is your fault. Keep an eye on him? What am I supposed to do besides watch. I can't pick up the phone. I can't make him hear me, I can't stop him, the only thing on earth I can manipulate is-

She looks at her hand.

She's holding the eight ball.

She looks at Dr. Jump, still placidly eating pills.

She thwacks him in the head with the eight-ball.

He slumps to the floor.

Althea crouches down to look at him.

Then she eight-ball punches him once in the stomach.

He coughs, spitting out a few pills.

There is some noise from outside- Dr. Ford is talking to Annie-

DR. FORD

I just have to reiterate, Annie, that my yoga time is very important to my mental well-being, and I don't really appreciate-

ALTHEA

Annie! Annie!

Annie runs in, sees.

ANNIE

Dr. Ford!... Dr. Ford!

She runs to the door.

DR. FORD

Oh my god. Call an ambulance.

The sound of sirens.

As the lights dim and the scene shifts, we hear the chairwoman giving a speech.

CHAIRWOMAN

My fellow Strawberries. Thank you for coming out tonight. We are here because.... A member of our community is hurting. And he is hurting, in part, because of us. Because we laughed at him.

And maybe he is kind of a funny person. Maybe he is weird, and embarrassing, and not the kind of citizen we want representing us in any kind of humorous radio think piece. But gosh darn it, he is ours, and he is hurting.

And the more I think about it, the less funny it seems. What the heck is so laughable about a Demonstration of Harmony? What the heck is so weird about wanting to reach out across the distance? What the heck is so embarrassing about believing in something greater than yourself?

Well then. Shall we proceed?

Lights up on a hospital room.

Dr. Jump lies in bed. Annie enters.

Dr. Jump groans.

ANNIE

Dad? You're awake!

DR. JUMP

Annie?

ANNIE

It's me, it's me.

DR. JUMP

What time is it?

ANNIE

Peak Perseids.

DR. JUMP

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

ANNIE

There's nothing to be sorry for, Dad. You're fine.

DR. JUMP

There is... everything to be sorry for.

ANNIE

Oh dad. You should try to go back to sleep.

DR. JUMP

No. No time to sleep. I want to look at you.

Long beat.

ANNIE

Oh, dad.

DR. JUMP

I'm selfish. I'm weak, and I'm selfish, and I'm not good enough for you Annie. You should have had better than me.

ANNIE

I don't want better than you, I want you.
Why did you go off your meds?

DR. JUMP

Selfish. I can't think as well- as bright or as fast. It makes it... harder for me to believe. To leave earth. And I wanted to leave earth. It's terrible.

ANNIE

No, it makes perfect sense-

DR. JUMP

It's terrible. No-one should want to leave earth.
I mean, just look at it.

ANNIE

It's got some good points.

DR. JUMP

Strawberry Kansas, wonder of wonders.

ANNIE

You. Are. Here.

DR. JUMP

You remember that?

ANNIE

Yeah- you'd point at the Kansas State Map. And then you'd point at the Atlas. And then the globe. And then the picture of the galaxy. Here. Here. Here.

DR. JUMP

I didn't think you'd remember that.
That was before your mother died.

ANNIE

Oh. I guess it was.
That was kind of a big deal, wasn't it?

DR. JUMP

The biggest deal.
That was the worst time.
They took you away from me for a while.
They didn't want to give you back.

Beat.

ANNIE

Dad?
It's ok. It's not going to happen again. I don't care what they say, I don't care if they sue, they can't win. No-one's ever going to take you away from me again.

DR. JUMP

Mmmm. Charles is dropping the lawsuit.

ANNIE

What?

DR. JUMP

I spoke to Lucia. She's very impressed with you. She's looking forward to seeing you in person again, after all this time.

ANNIE

Dad?

DR. JUMP

You probably don't even remember Chicago, but it's a beautiful city. When I'm better I can drive you over, take you shopping for supplies.

ANNIE

Dad, no-

DR. JUMP

I can't buy you much but I can afford pencils.

ANNIE

I'm not going.

DR. JUMP

Annie, ~~I've thought about this.~~ I've discussed this with Dr Ford. I need to focus on getting better, and... I need to take care of you the best way that I can. And Charles and Lucia- they want to help me do that. I'll still have full custody, the whole thing is entirely voluntary.

ANNIE

But it's not what you want, is it?

DR. JUMP

No. But it's what you want.

If you can look me in the eye, and tell me that you don't want this for yourself, I will let you make that decision. Annie, can you look me in the eye?

She tries. She can't.

ANNIE

Dad-

DR. JUMP

You'll have every advantage at that school. You'll be able to spread your wings, rise to your full potential-

ANNIE

I won't have the stars. I won't have you.

DR. JUMP

Be practical, woman! Do you think Isaac Newton would ever say anything so patently absurd?

ANNIE

Isaac Newton was a terrible person.

DR. JUMP

And you're not.

I know you have big dreams, Annie. And I know you want to make me happy. But have you ever considered that those two things might not be mutually exclusive?

(MORE)

DR. JUMP (CONT'D)

Oh, don't get all emotional about this- you're a teenager. It's like- going away to boarding school. Millions of people do it every year, and they come back every summer. And every Christmas. You'll come home for Christmas, won't you?

ANNIE

Every summer and Christmas and Thanksgiving and spring.

Beat. Emotions happen. Once they've recovered-

DR. JUMP

I just want to say, in my defense, that even when the mania had its strongest hold, I was never completely certain that it wasn't a hoax.

ANNIE

How uncertain were you?

DR. JUMP

Let's just say that my initial calculations put the probability that it was NOT a hoax somewhere well south of one thousandth of one percent.

ANNIE

Really? Then how come you made that speech? How come you worked so hard to make this crazy thing happen if you were almost completely certain that it was a joke?

DR. JUMP

Because what if it wasn't, Annie? What if it wasn't?
I'm a lifeform existing on planet Earth. Out of the four percent of matter that can even interact with itself I am part of the infinitesimally smaller percentage that can think and speak and feel. I've had a wife. I have a daughter.
With luck like that, one millionth of one percent is all I need.

ANNIE

Dad?

DR. JUMP

Yes, Annie?

ANNIE

Oh, it's nothing. I'm just really glad you're here.
Peak perseids. You can kind of see them out the window. The light is bad, but still- look-oh there!

DR. JUMP

There! Oh, that was a big one.

ANNIE

If we can see them from here they must be spectacular out on the field.

DR. JUMP

Annie, could you possibly-
Would you sing me a little something?

ANNIE

You know I suck at singing.

DR. JUMP

You do not. You had the solo in your school choir concert.

ANNIE

That was years ago. My voice is all different now-

DR. JUMP

No it isn't. I hear you singing in the shower sometimes and you have the most beautiful voice in the world.

ANNIE

I don't even know any songs.

DR. JUMP

You remember your solo, don't you?

ANNIE

I don't know, maybe. This is ridiculous. It's a stupid kid song.

DR. JUMP

I don't know. I always thought it was very pretty.

Annie sighs, composes herself, and begins to sing.

ANNIE

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE
BENEATH THE PALE MOONLIGHT
SOMEONE'S THINKING OF ME
AND LOVING ME TONIGHT
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE
SOMEONE'S SAYING A PRAYER
THAT WE'LL FIND ONE ANOTHER-
IN THE BIG SOMEWHERE OUT THERE

Annie stops. She hears something.

Voices-

DISTANT VOICES
AND EVEN THOUGH I KNOW HOW VERY FAR APART WE ARE.

Annie pulls the window open. The voices get louder.

DISTANT VOICES (CONT'D)
IT HELPS TO THINK WE MIGHT BE WISHING ON THE SAME BRIGHT STAR

ANNIE

Dad, listen.
It's the Strawberries. They're singing.

DR. JUMP

How many?

ANNIE

It sounds like dozens. It sounds like a hundred!

DISTANT VOICES GROWING

*(this should continue under dialog and not
finish until the last moments of the scene. It's
a slow song)*

AND WHEN THE NIGHT WIND STARTS TO SING A LONESOME LULLABY
IT HELPS TO THINK WE'RE SLEEPING UNDERNEATH THE SAME BIG SKY

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE IF LOVE CAN SEE US THROUGH
THEN WE'LL BE TOGETHER
SOMEWHERE OUT THERE
OUT WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

DR. JUMP

They did it. They did it anyway.

ANNIE

They did it for you.

DR. JUMP

Annie! Go! Run! Go to Hamlin's field and see if it happens!

ANNIE

See if what happens?

DR. JUMP

A communication. An Answer!

ANNIE

But daddy, it's a hoax! You know who sent you that fax-

DR. JUMP

Annie, go quickly!

ANNIE

You know it won't happen!

DR. JUMP

But Annie- what if it does?

ANNIE

You're right, dad. Of course you're right. I'll go over there right now.

*She grabs her hoodie and the probe and starts to leave.
She pauses at the door.*

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Dad?

DR. JUMP

Yes, Annie?

ANNIE

Even if it doesn't happen tonight, I'm going to keep looking. And I know- I can't tell you how I know, and I don't have any way of proving it to you, but I know it like I know grass is green and water is H₂O.

I have the Answer.

We're not alone.

SCENE 13: HAMLIN'S FIELD

Perseids whiz overhead. Annie and Althea sit on the stargazing rock, looking up.

*There is the sound of laughter, snatches of songs.
Flashlights move like fireflies. The field is full of
Strawberries, all out for the night.*

*Mrs. Gomez enters, singing David Bowie, and carrying a
bottle of wine.*

MRS. GOMEZ

There's a STARRRRRR MANNNNNN! WAITING IN THE SKY!
He'd like to come and meet us but he thinks he'd blow our minds!
There's a STARRRRRR MANNNNNNN-
Oh hi Annie! Hola! Buenos Noches. Buenos Dias. Whatever I don't really care.
How is my little genius bug? Are you enjoying the Perseids?

ANNIE

They're amazing.

MRS. GOMEZ

You're amazing! ~~Yes ok, I mean it, you are a very special little~~
Oh my gee....Did you bring your magic eight ball out here?

ANNIE

Yeah.

MRS. GOMEZ

*(picking up the eight ball and waving it
around)*

Wooooooooooooo! I'm saying, you are going to *dominate* the ~~Chicago~~ State Science fair.
They will never see you coming.

She puts the eight ball back in Annie's hands.

You are a special little girl, Annie Jump and you will go far. Real far.

She pats Annie's hand. Wipes her eyes- then-

Oh my goodness this is the best party I've been to in a decade. Where else can you see
fireworks like this?

ANNIE

I think a cluster is starting.

MRS. GOMEZ

Watch for it watch for it! Zing zing zing zing zing!!

ANNIE

They don't have anything like this in Chicago.

MRS. GOMEZ

We should do this every year. You know, come out here together, as a community, sing
together- it is amazing how many songs you can think of to sing when you're in the mood.
I'm going to stay out here till dawn and I'm going to make out with my husband and it's just
going to be .

She makes a hand/mouth sign indicating "perfection."

ANNIE

Where is Mr. Gomez?

MRS. GOMEZ

He's getting supplies. We needed supplies. Oh my goodness this is the best night of all time, in all eternity. I mean, everyone is so out here- so. together. Peter Stockholm just recited a Lorca poem to me. En Espanol. Like out of nowhere. I don't think I know anything any more. Isn't it great?

Annie nods.

MRS. GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Welp. I see my car pulling up with my husband in it. I'm going to get back to my grownup things and you can get back to your like your hopes and your dreams and all the little baby genius crap you do inside your head for the future of humanity, and I'll just. Alonso! Alonso I'm over here!

She stumbles off.

ALTHEA

She really believes in you.

ANNIE

And she doesn't even know I'm the chosen one!

ALTHEA

Yeah.
Oh. Hey. Look sharp. Incoming douchenozzle.

KJ enters. Annie smooths her hair.

KJ

Annie?

ANNIE

Yeah, who is it?

KJ

It's KJ. Kenneth Jerome Urbanik. The weak, mean, follower without any empathy who will never amount to anything?

ANNIE

Oh yeah. About that. ~~Maybe~~ I should apologize. I might have been- slightly.. too harsh.

KJ

No. ~~No.~~ I deserved every word of it ~~and more-~~ Listen.. I know you must think what happened tonight is my fault-

ANNIE

I don't. I really don't.

I mean, you had something to do with it, but the situation is complex. And honestly you really aren't that important-

KJ

Still. I feel culpable. And I want to do something about it.

ANNIE

You want to do something about it?

KJ

I want to tell you something.

ALTHEA

Oh quark.

KJ

I'm not supposed to tell people this, and I don't have any way of proving it, but I can't think of any other way to show you how sorry I am, so here goes-

ALTHEA

No stopping it now..

KJ

Your dad... is not crazy.

Something happened to me a few days ago, on the first night of the Perseids. And I found out... that we- are not alone in the universe.

Ok? How best to explain this... I don't have any graphics so... imagine what would happen if every intelligent species that developed interstellar communication pooled their knowledge into a network of supercomputers that then became self-aware as one vast supercomputer, becoming like a nervous system or a brain for the universe that contained every piece of information about the universe, something like a god that was also a library-

ANNIE

The Library of Heaven.
You're a Librarian.

KJ

I'm the Chosen One.

Beat. Althea applauds.

ALTHEA

Great work, Balthazar. Fantastic control over your subject, there.

ANNIE

You're the-
Althea!

ALTHEA

What?
Link-up is a huge job.
We are an intergalactic omniscient supercomputer. Do you think we'd rely on just one kid to get it done? We're not stupid.

ANNIE

How many?

ALTHEA

Ehhhh... right now? Three thousand. Give or take. Not everyone says yes. The idea is to make you feel important, you know. So you'll work harder.

ANNIE

Of course. How I could be so dumb? You'd need astronomers, and physicists and ...computer programmers. You'd need biologists and linguists and... ~~you'd need~~ a hundred Einsteins. A hundred Newtons. There's no way anyone could do it alone.

KJ

Who are you talking to?

ANNIE

My guide, KJ. I'm talking to my guide.

KJ

OMG. You have a StarHound too?

ANNIE

What's a StarHound?

KJ

You know- a talking dog that's actually a visual manifestation of a mindfurl of an intergalactic computer? And he lives inside a probe that looks like a Frisbee?

ANNIE

You got a talking dog?

KJ

His name is Balthazar.

ANNIE

He gets an adorable talking dog, and I get you?

ALTHEA

You love it.

ANNIE

This is so unfair.

KJ

Wait- Annie- are you saying that. are you saying that you're some kind of chosen one too?

ANNIE

Get with it, KJ. We're basically all chosen ones! All across the globe- India, England- China, South Africa- sporting equipment is falling from the sky in blazes of light and teenage geniuses are vowing to serve the Library of Heaven. We're not the chosen ones- We're one of the chosen thousands. Surprise.

KJ hiccups. Then he hides his face in his hands. Then he starts to sob.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Oh dude. Dude. Don't do that. It's not so bad. I mean, sure you're not the most special snowflake on the planet, but still. Out of everyone on Earth there's only a few thousand of us- that's pretty special right? Oh, come on. Don't be upset.

KJ

I'm not upset. It's just-

He raises his head and wipes his eyes in the crook of his elbow.

KJ (CONT'D)

I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD SO MANY FRIENDS!

He flings his arms around Annie's neck and hangs there, wiping his nose on her shoulder. Lights shift. Annie looks at the audience.

ANNIE

Yeah, so... that's how I found out. I'm Annie Jump and I am a librarian of Heaven. One of the Librarians of Heaven. And this whole story is about us.

She hugs KJ back. then steps towards the audience.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

So, this is the part where the credits roll, and there's an upbeat pop song, and a bunch of cartoons about the adventures of three teenagers and one talking dog-

ALTHEA

You mean the end.

ANNIE

Right. The end. But before you go-- I want you to remember one thing about Librarians. There are thousands of us. You might know one of us. You might be one of us. And if you think you recognize me somewhere on this earth, you only have to say one thing-

ALTHEA

(overlapping)

..Girl, spit it out so that the song can start.

ANNIE

-I serve the Library of Heaven!

Music. Credits. Cartoons about the science adventures of three teenagers and one talking dog.

End of play.