

**Elizabeth Watson**

*Ecotopia*

**Based on Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*  
Adapted by Elizabeth Watson**

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SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST EPISODE

The story takes place in the mid-2040s, twenty years after Washington State, Oregon and Northern California have seceded from the USA and founded an independent republic based on steady-state ecological principles (striving for equilibrium rather than growth), and recycling sewage waste as fertilizer, replacing car traffic with light-rail and creating a bioregional pattern of interconnected towns of various sizes (including San Francisco, where the action takes place). The densification of town centers has emptied the suburbs and left large swathes of pasture, farmland and wilderness in between. Energy in Ecotopia is largely solar and wind-based, renewable materials have largely replaced non-biodegradable plastics, the work week has been reduced to twenty hours, and businesses allow workers to join as investors. There have been no diplomatic relations or trade between the two countries but now for the first time, the USA is sending a journalist to Ecotopia, William Weston from the New York Times. The primary goal of the first episode is to introduce Weston, since his perspective is the lens through which we, the spectators, will discover Ecotopia.

We open on a satellite view of the United States' East coast—significant portions of it have changed shape due to rising sea levels. There are floating trash islands in the sea, dead farmlands, and large sea walls surrounding Manhattan. Skyscrapers stick out through a thick layer of smog. Below, the sidewalks are full of people on their way to work. They are wearing masks, each with a screen on the mouth. Younger commuters have emojis or videos playing on their screens.

In Weston's New York, people wear carbon fiber smart masks designed to protect from dangerous air pollution and all buildings have sophisticated

air filtration and air locks. When I wrote these episodes in 2017–18, I could not have anticipated the importance masks would later come to have. However, in my episodes, they show how separate the American people have become from the natural world. It also shows the level of intrusion people are willing to put up with rather than challenge the status quo. The citizens would rather permanently wear masks and invest in air locks than address the air quality problems. Weston continues to wear his mask into Ecotopia, where it is not necessary to do so, and there the mask represents his resistance to joining in the Ecotopian way of life. Therefore the moment he decides to take off his mask becomes a significant turning point in his assignment and his willingness to adapt to another way of living.

What the first episode shows us is a US which is certainly dystopian, but not unbelievable so. I wanted it to seem like a likely (albeit undesirable) near future. Manhattan is partly underwater. Air quality has deteriorated. Beggars have increased and now beg for things like clean water or better face masks. Children wear bullet proof vests to school, personalizing but also normalizing them with stickers and badges. Restaurants advertise clean and fresh greens—rare and expensive!—to accompany portions of ration. Climate refugees number in the millions and come from other countries and other parts of the US, especially the South and Southwest.

If this project were to be produced into a full series, I would include storylines from Weston's loved ones who remain in the US such as his ex-wife, kids, and editor. Thus, the first episode also has the dual purpose of introducing these characters and their world to the viewer. By developing these storylines, it would give the viewer a chance to "live" in both versions of the future. Further as a storytelling device, it provides opportunity for conflict and drawing interesting parallels between the two countries.

Throughout the first episode, there are scenes from Ecotopia spliced throughout. These scenes are short, without dialogue and almost-too vivid. The scenes show a man of Weston's age and build leaving his home near the forest's edge and joining with his hunting group. The group while in pursuit of its prey encounters a wild boar and manages to kill it. They celebrate the kill, and their near miss with death, with a bonfire party. While Weston's world is one of existing in the world but endeavoring to remain apart from it, the scenes from the Ecotopian hunting party are about physical connection and living as part of an eco-system.

The stark visual contrast between these scenes and the rest of the episode set in New York should be jarring and even a bit frightening. These scenes serve to add to the apprehension and fear Weston feels about this unknown country and his assignment in it. But they should also build the viewers' anticipation to see inside and to know more about Ecotopia.

After Weston celebrates gaining permission to enter Ecotopia, as the first American to do so since the regions' secession from the US, he informs his family of his imminent departure and makes the journey to the border which is located just outside of Reno, Nevada. The first episode closes on a rather bleak shot of the border. This is also the opening shot of the second episode.

## EPISODE 2: THE NEW WORLD

*For purposes of brevity, several short scenes at the beginning of this episode have been omitted, including a scene in which the protagonist, William Weston, arrives at the Ecotopian border and another when he buys his train ticket to San Francisco at the Ecotopian train station at Lake Tahoe. The whole episode has been shortened and several sections omitted or reduced.*

### **EXT<sup>1</sup> LAKE TAHOE TRAIN STATION PLATFORM; AFTERNOON**

*Weston reaches the platform as the last passengers are just ambling off, happily chatting. Weston jumps on the train rather awkwardly with all of his luggage. The train looks like "a wingless airplane."*

### **INT TRAIN; AFTERNOON**

*Inside the train is much more like a cozy lounge than public transportation. There are no seats. People are seated on leather poofs on the ground. The floor is a warm wood with thick spongy carpets placed in the center of the compartments which are separated by knee-high partitions. There are houseplants hanging from the ceilings. Passengers quietly chat, snack, and play card games in little circles. An old man is taking a nap. Weston looks around awkwardly for a place to put his suitcases. Another passenger breaks away from a seated group and approaches him.*

**PAULLETTE:** Hey, you look like you could use some help.

*She takes one of the suitcases and lifts it up.*

**PAULLETTE:** Whoa, what do you have in here? Rocks?

**WESTON:** Cameras and video equipment mostly.

**PAULLETTE:** *(Looks over her shoulder as she approaches a side panel next to the door)* Really? Are you a filmmaker?

**WESTON:** A journalist, actually.

**PAULLETTE:** Cool *(pushes a sleek button and the panel slides up with a whoosh and there is a large storage compartment. She places the heavy suitcase inside with ease)*

**WESTON:** For the New York Times.

**PAULLETTE:** *(Pauses as she reaches for the other bag)* Oh really? So you're the American? *(She looks him up and down)*

<sup>1</sup> "EXT" and "INT" stand for "exterior" and "interior" shots, respectively.

**WESTON:** You know me?

**PAULLETTE:** Oh your visit was a big debate on the public airwaves. (*She puts his second suitcase in and the panel closes*) I'm Paulette. It's a pleasure to meet you. (*They shake hands*)

**WESTON:** William Weston. The pleasure is mine.

**PAULLETTE:** Come join us and regale us of stories from the mothership. *They approach a seated group. There are three other people all seated in various postures of ease. Paulette lithely folds to the ground while Weston stiffly plops. His clothes aren't suited, and he's not used to sitting on the ground.*

**JEB:** What stray have you picked up this time?

**PAULLETTE:** Guys, this is William Weston, the New York Times reporter. *Jeb and the others immediately show keen interest.*

**PAULLETTE:** William, this is Jeb, Rowan, and Denise.

**WESTON:** Nice to meet you.

*Jeb takes a drag on a joint and offers it.*

**WESTON:** Thanks but . . . (*he indicates his face mask*)

**JEB:** Oh. You could take it off?

**WESTON:** I'd rather not. (*eyes the windows*)

**JEB:** Not that it matters, but the train is basically hermetically sealed, since we are traveling so fast.

**WESTON:** I'm comfortable like this. Thanks.

**ROWAN:** You don't look it. (*as he takes a hit*)

**PAULLETTE:** Leave him alone.

*Beat, Weston takes in his surroundings as does the camera, while the others quietly chat and smoke*

**WESTON:** It's so quiet.

**PAULLETTE:** Yeah, it's operated on magnetic suspension. Check it out. (*She holds up her glass of water and it doesn't move or shake at all*) Smooth as buttah!

**ROWAN:** Turns out those white coats over at Boeing had more than airplanes in their imagination. It's just they had never needed to try anything different until Independence.

**WESTON:** Boeing still exists?

**JEB:** Of course, just not in the same way as before. The Survivalists demanded not only diversification but decentralisation of company ownership as well. The brain power and facilities were there, so they used it to build this train system.

**WESTON:** But who foots the bill? It must've cost a fortune.

*Laughter. Weston looks a bit annoyed and confused.*

**ROWAN:** Honestly. The cost of constructing one road bed for a highway from San Francisco to Seattle is equal to just one of these babies for the same distance.

**PAULETTE:** Not to mention the total social cost per person per mile is significantly less than any air travel under a 1,000 miles.

**WESTON:** Social cost?

*Laughter*

**JEB:** You've got a lot to learn.

**ROWAN:** It's a shift in the way of thinking about things.

**JEB:** Less of a shift and more of an excavation

**ROWAN:** Don't be pedantic. Will,—

**WESTON:** William.

**ROWAN:** In the US, you're taught and you learn the price of something is connected to its worth, right?

**WESTON:** The worth being what people are willing to pay for it.

**ROWAN:** Right and the cost is how much money and resources the company used to produce this thing.

**WESTON:** Yeah, definitely.

**ROWAN:** Well what elements are factored into the cost?

**WESTON:** The price of materials, labor, shipping and transportation, etc.

**ROWAN:** What about disposal?

**WESTON:** Disposal of what?

**ROWAN:** The product itself, and the by-products created during production.

**WESTON:** I suppose the cost of disposal of the by-products would be factored into the cost of the product, but the disposal of the actual product is on the individual? The society?

**ROWAN:** Well that's what social costs are. In fact in the pre-independence economy, the one under which you still operate, the costs of disposal of both byproducts and individual products, not to mention packaging, both fall on the state which of course is financed by the individuals.

**WESTON:** I guess that's true.

**ROWAN:** Many of these products won't recycle themselves. Barely anything we create, except our shit and ourselves will disappear on its own. Money and resources and energy have to be allocated to safely and effectively vanish waste and pollution.

**JEB:** So when you factor all of these costs, suddenly your system isn't so affordable.

*The scene continues with the passengers explaining things to Weston and pointing things out.*

**EXT TRAIN JOURNEY; AFTERNOON**

*Camera exits the train through the window and follows along beside it before going over the Donner Pass, pass a train stop with skiers waiting on the platform. Down the slopes to the valley floor which approaches San Francisco. The valley is full of fields, forests, a few dilapidated farm houses, lush farmland,*

*orchards. There are barely discernible roads glimpsed through overgrown trees and brush. There are no streetlights, no power lines.*

*An overwhelming abundance of nature and little to no signs of the human industry which normally surrounds a large urban center.*

**INT TRAIN; AFTERNOON**

**PAULETTE:** Social costs also include things like infrastructure utilisation, waste management, emission remuneration. You'll hear that term a lot—

**TRAIN ANNOUNCEMENT:** We are approaching San Francisco. This is our final stop. Please gather your belongings and make your way off the train. We thank you for travelling with Ecotopian Railways. Enjoy your visit and have a nice day.

**THE TRAIN STOPS. THE PASSENGERS GATHER THEIR THINGS. WESTON AND THE PASSENGERS SAY THEIR GOODBYES.**

**PAULETTE:** Here. This is for you. *(She hands him an envelope)*

**WESTON:** Thank you.

**PAULETTE:** *(Gives him a hug)* Go with the goddess.

Weston watches her walk away, she looks back with a gleam in her eye. He opens the envelope. It reads.

Welcome to Ecotopia, William. I hope your journey here has been smooth and pleasant. I've enclosed a map for you to find your way to your hotel where I'll meet you at 3:00.

Your personal tour guide,

Alan Miner

Ecotopia Foreign Minister

**INT TRAIN STATION SAN FRANCISCO / INT GOVERNMENT OFFICE**

*The screen is split, half is Weston examining the map, arranging his bags and taking out his camera to walk through the bustling train station. The train arrives underground and the occupants make their way up to the surface. The atmosphere is dimly lit by sky lights above. He moves toward the exit. There is the sound of crowds speaking, laughter, running water, on one side is a waterfall, vegetation grows up the walls.*

**EXT STREETS OF SAN FRAN; AFTERNOON**

*The whiteout clears and the camera shows market street. The once wide and traffic packed street which sweeps down to the harbour has been narrowed to just two lanes. The rest of the considerable space is filled with trees, gardens, a bubbling creek with delightful waterfalls (brought up from the culverts below), children and their parents, street artists, workers, food trucks, and kiosks.*

*The first sounds we hear while Weston takes in his surroundings are laughter, classical music, and birdsong.*

*We see a trio of strings playing classical music with a small group who have gathered to listen. Children playing tag and adults joining in as well. People*

reading on benches while waiting for the electric bus. Women chatting and harvesting some herbs from a small raised garden bed near the bus stop.

The clothing is much more bizarre than anything we've seen thus far. Full of colours, natural fabrics and unusual silhouettes including full body wetsuit-like outfits in bright colours.

Weston walks toward the bus stop.

Now we see at the kiosk, a colorful assortment of fruit, candy, nuts, cigarettes, hookahs, cannabis, newspapers. The trolley comes and people step off and a few step on, it is completely open on all sides with bench seats which are facing out so people can just step off. It seems to have some sort of covering that can be lowered in case of bad weather.

Weston walks past the trolley stop and passes a long wooden table full of people eating and talking.

There's a person napping in a hammock strung between two trees.

There's a school, where children are outside building a wooden structure. A teacher comes out with a large pitcher of iced tea. She raises it up and calls to the students and they run toward her unfolding collapsible cups from their back pockets.

Weston stops next to a creek which flows through all of this. He stoops down to see the silver reflection of fish through the shadow and leaf speckled water. He turns his head and sees a woman splashing water on her face. They lock eyes, and it becomes somewhat sexual. She playfully splashes water in his direction.

Weston jumps away as if he's been burned. Confused the woman walks away, we can see a bit of disappointment in her eyes. Weston frantically wipes the droplets of water from his coat.

Next, he walks toward a street corner, but since it is so lush, it's hard to distinguish it as such. He's looking at his map and searching for a street sign when the hunting group, and the hunter, Bert, and his son, from the first episode arrive in a boisterous group. Weston looks up at them, taking in their hunting clothes and the slung up remainder of the boar held on a stick between them. He stares. The hunter walks up to him and points behind him at the almost concealed street sign. Weston turns, sees it, turns back to say thank you, and the hunter smears blood from the kill in two parallel lines down his face. Weston is shocked and glares as they walk away. He frantically wipes the blood from his face.

Once he's composed himself he consults his map and then continues down the intersecting street. He walks past two jugglers amusing another group of children and a man pushing a food cart selling ice cream and sorbet.

There is a clearing in the tree canopy, and he looks up. The skyscrapers are linked together by lace-like walkways 15–20 stories up in the air. People are crossing them in various degrees of hurry.

The camera lingers behind him, and we can see him as a lone vessel dressed in a dark grey suit jacket and pants, pulling his hard-shell black suitcases behind



*him. He looks like a spot of black in a vibrant patchwork of life and color surrounding him.*

*He gets smaller until the song (which will start partway through the scene) finishes.*

**INT HOTEL LOBBY: AFTERNOON**

*A CLOSE UP ON ALAN'S FACE.*

**ALAN:** Howdy! Didya find it alright? It's a bit difficult for foreigners sometimes. Not quite as you expected it, huh? I'm Alan and you are right on time. (*Weston looks befuddled*) Sorry, Alan Miner, foreign minister for the Country of Ecotopia, at your service. (*shakes his hand and does a funny salute*) I have to say it's quite exciting to be speaking with an American here at home. It's about time we reopened communication in my opinion. Plenty of us disagree, but the sins of the father and all that, plus it just makes sense. We share a continent after all. A border even.

*During the above paragraph he has walked to the front desk, Weston follows, and he signals to the receptionist to hand him a key, Weston signs for it after showing his passport.*

**ALAN (CONT):** Sorry, I didn't meet you at the train station. I had a video call with India, and anyway I thought you'd might like to take in some of the city on your own. Unfiltered by the likes of me. (*Laughs heartily*) Let's drop off your stuff so we can go for a stroll.

*Alan hands Weston the key, Weston starts to head off toward the elevators, Alan follows him, Weston looks surprised. Alan keeps chattering.*

**INT ELEVATOR; AFTERNOON**

*In the elevator, we hear the elevator music, from Weston's perspective we see the animated face of Alan chattering away, we hear the ding of the elevator arriving and the doors opening.*

**ALAN:** You know you don't have to wear that here. (*Nodding at his face mask*) We closely monitor the air quality and depending on the wind speed and direction, most of the time we don't need those. We've got standard air filters in all of our buildings and some strategic farming and plant fixtures throughout the city and harbour. There were only one or two days last year that citizens were advised to have one of those. It's amazing how fast the earth heals herself, you just gotta stop hurting her. (*Alan gently touches his arm and Weston jumps*) Why don't you leave that here?

*They've reached Weston's room. Weston looks around, looks in the mirror, his hand moves to his face mask and hovers for a second, then he loses courage and drops his hand.*

**WESTON:** Alright, where are we off to?



**EXT SAN FRANCISCO STREETS: LATE AFTERNOON**

*Alan and Weston are back on the streets, slowly walking while Alan talks, and they observe the surroundings.*

**ALAN:** How was your trip?

**WESTON:** How long after independence did the administration begin disassembling the highways and roads?

**ALAN:** Whoa, right down to business I see. Let's just relax a bit. Get to know each other, take in the sights. There's no rush.

**WESTON:** Sorry, hazard of the job. *(They walk a bit, Weston's attention is caught by two people walking by in bird suits)* Have you always lived in San Francisco?

**ALAN:** No, I'm from Bolinas, originally, but I moved here after independence, there was so much work to do. It was better to be near it all. I still have a room at my old place in Bolinas, nice retreat outside of the city.

**WESTON:** It's not really the kind of place you need to retreat from, it's so quiet and green.

**ALAN:** You really are a city boy. Noise pollution is a hot topic at local council meetings here.

**WESTON:** Were you part of the revolution?

**ALAN:** Proud card carrying survivalist. Bolinas was ground zero for a lot of the early head-to-heads of the independence effort.

**WESTON:** I remember. What was that like?

**ALAN:** Is this your first time in San Francisco?

**WESTON:** I visited once before secession.

**ALAN:** Before independence. You're in Ecotopia now, you should call it Independence.

**WESTON:** Independence. *(Beat)* It's changed a lot.

**ALAN:** We all have. I love this city now. I love living here.

*They pause to let a group of school children who are playing football make a play in the middle of the street.*

**WESTON:** Where's your place?

**ALAN:** Just over there *(points to the Transamerica Pyramid)*

**WESTON:** *(looks but doesn't immediately understand)* Where?

**ALAN:** The Transamerica Pyramid building.

**WESTON:** You live there?

**ALAN:** Well yes.

**WESTON:** But that's an office building.

**ALAN:** They've been repurposed.

**WESTON:** They?

**ALAN:** Yes, all these metal monsters. Now they house families, communities, and work cooperatives. It makes sense. Why would all the best real-estate go

to offices anyway? Before independence, these behemoths were empty more than half of the time. Think about it. Nights, weekends, holidays, we paid to keep the lights on and the doors guarded. These glowing beacons on the altar of work and profit. And why? So a handful of wealthy men could show off to each other while thousands upon thousands of people gave their lives behind a desk working a job which most of the time held no significance. Plus you've gotta calculate the hours spent in traffic to get those workers far enough away from these altars that they could afford to live and still eat in the few hours they had before they went to sleep and woke up to do it all again. *(He pauses)* These buildings, this city, is alive now. It's built for the people who live here, not the money that's made here. Or the cars that drive here. *(Pause)* Sorry, I get carried away sometimes.

**WESTON:** No, go on. It's interesting. You make it sound like life and death.

**ALAN:** Well, isn't it? I know it's a completely new way of thinking. It requires some adjustments, but well, *(gestures around him)* it seems to work.

*A big peal of laughter from a group of adults sitting in a circle, talking and snacking*

**WESTON:** Speaking of work, why isn't anyone at work?

**ALAN:** How do you know they're not?

*Weston gestures to the game of tag being played by a group of adults*

**ALAN:** *(chuckles)* The work week is much more loosely structured than what you are accustomed to. All Ecotopian businesses are cooperatively owned, so the employees decide their schedule.

**WESTON:** But how do these cooperative-run businesses manage? I mean don't the employees lack experience, isn't it difficult to keep everyone on task?

**ALAN:** You're acting like they're a bunch of imbeciles. What we've found is the hierarchy of most big businesses pre-independence was all smoke and mirrors. Those managers were mostly puffed up puppets being controlled by the CEO or executive board. They were all pretty useless. Once you give the workers your trust and a stake in the company, they rise to the task and usually far exceed expectations.

**WESTON:** But how do they keep productivity up?

**ALAN:** Well, productivity changes when you aren't working to make one person as rich as possible. In our stable state economy, everyone is working to keep the standard of living they already have. On average, an employed Ecotopian adult works 20 hours a week. Of course, if your company has a big deadline, then you might work as much as 50 hours in a week, but then everyone in your team would. Everyone pulls together to get the job done. *(Gesturing to the game of tag)* Many places found frequent and stimulating

work breaks have improved employee productivity by so much the work week could easily be shortened to as little as 15 hours.

**WESTON:** *(Looks skeptical)*

**ALAN:** You'll see.

*They keep walking and turn a corner. There's a dark windowless building. Quite imposing.*

**WESTON:** Do people live there? *(Points at the ominous building)*

**ALAN:** No, that's the Pentagon.

**WESTON:** *(Eyebrows raise)*

**ALAN:** Well, that's what people call it.

**WESTON:** So what is it?

**ALAN:** That's where they coordinate the war games.

**WESTON:** War games?

**ALAN:** *(Changes the subject)* Where are you from?

**WESTON:** NYC, born and raised.

**ALAN:** What was that like?

**WESTON:** You know, the usual.

**ALAN:** No, I don't. Tell me.

*Stops walking and makes direct eye contact.*

**WESTON:** Parents divorced when I was young. My mom raised me mostly, saw my dad at Christmas, birthdays, and odd weekends in between.

**ALAN:** Who did your mom live with?

**WESTON:** Me and my sister.

**ALAN:** She had no one to help her?

**WESTON:** Her mom would come in from Pennsylvania for three week stretches when she could.

**ALAN:** That must've been difficult for her.

**WESTON:** I don't know. I guess it was.

**ALAN:** Who do you live with now?

**WESTON:** No one, I mean my kids when it's my week.

**ALAN:** Oh. Don't you get lonely?

**WESTON:** No, I like being alone.

**ALAN:** It can be nice. How many kids do you have?

**WESTON:** Two.

**ALAN:** What a gift.

*We see Weston and Alan's silhouettes against the brilliant colours of the sunset.*

**WESTON:** Oh shit, we better get back to the hotel. What time is curfew here?

**ALAN:** Curfew?

**WESTON:** When does the sun set?

**ALAN:** Oh I don't know, 45 minutes or so.

**WESTON:** Ok, so I'll head back to the hotel. *(Turns away from Alan to leave)*

**ALAN:** (*grabs his arm*) Why? You'll miss happy hour.

**WESTON:** Nightfall curfew? Don't you have nighttime travel restrictions?

**ALAN:** Nightfall, as you call it, is when the party starts. Come on, let me show you.

**WESTON:** I don't know.

**ALAN:** William, you've reported from war zones, I think you can handle this.

**WESTON:** Yeah . . . yeah. Where to?

**ALAN:** Right this way.

*The camera pans over their heads and to the sunset sky. A cool song starts that is electro and acoustic with a heavy base and drumbeat.*

### **EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK**

*Many people are lighting bonfires and candles, turning on garden string lights. Games of sports are ending and drinks and food are being prepared and passed around. Weston and Alan enter the frame.*

*The music which started during the transition becomes more complex. Close up on Weston's face who looks amazed, but his eyes keep flickering to the setting sun. He takes out his camera and begins shooting the party.*

**WESTON:** Is there a special festival on?

**ALAN:** No.

**WESTON:** It looks like they're setting up for a party.

**ALAN:** For us it's just a Tuesday evening.

**WESTON:** (*smirks*) Right.

**ALAN:** I'm going to get a drink. Do you want one?

**WESTON:** I need to get some shots while the light's good, you go ahead. *Alan leaves and approaches a group of people who are setting up a slack line and opening beers. They all greet him in a chorus of "Alan!" as he nears. Weston continues filming around him. The music (from earlier) gets louder and accelerates, and we watch him taking in and filming the action around him. He walks through groups of people who are preparing for the evening. As he walks, we notice the Ecotopians noticing him, some of them smile invitingly, some wave at his camera, some nod and then whisper behind his back. A few jocks chant: U-S-A, U-S-A, as he passes. The backing track music is joined by drumming in the park. The two complement each other. The light has become even dimmer, and the scene becomes permeated with the glow of firelight rather than the glow of the sunset.*

*Weston, whose face earlier was completely immersed in the act of capturing his unique surroundings, becomes increasingly more agitated. His eyes flick to the sky and to the people around him. He begins to put his camera up, and is hastily backing away from the crowd of people. When someone puts his hand on his back, Weston immediately jumps in fear and steps away, turning toward the person who touched him.*

**WESTON:** Get your hands off me!

**HUNTER:** Whoa, whoa. (*hands up in the air*) Didn't mean to sneak up on you. Was gonna offer you a drink.

**WESTON:** (*slowing down his breathing*) Sorry. I'm just a little jumpy.

**HUNTER:** My bad. You have to let me get you a drink.

**WESTON:** Sorry, I can't. (*starts to walk away*) Hey, you're that guy from earlier, the one who smeared blood on my face.

**HUNTER:** Yeahhhhh. I am. I wanted to apologise. I didn't realise who you were. Here, that's a sign of camaraderie and good luck. It was a successful hunt and by marking another member of the community, we spread the luck, and it's a kind of invitation too. To join us on the next hunt. Anyway, I wanted to offer you a drink, like a peace offering, but maybe another time.

**WESTON:** (*looks the hunter up and down*) What's your name?

**HUNTER:** Bert.

**WESTON:** William.

**BERT:** Right this way, Will.

*Weston and Bert approach a group who are having a jam session. People are playing guitars, drums, and various other instruments. Some people sing, some people dance. It's a relaxed and convivial environment.*

...

*Cassie approaches Weston.*

**CASSIE:** Does that thing stop you from dancing? (*gestures to face mask*)

**WESTON:** It definitely does not.

**CASSIE:** Well then (*she offers her hand and does a bow, like a courtier*)

*Weston takes her hand, and she drags him to the dance area which is more like a dance pit.*

**CASSIE:** So what do Americans think of us?

**WESTON:** What?

**CASSIE:** Americans? What do they think of us, of all of this?

**WESTON:** Oh, a lot of different things.

**CASSIE:** Like what?

**WESTON:** Nothing too flattering.

**CASSIE:** What's the most ridiculous rumour?

*Weston keeps dancing and thinks.*

**CASSIE:** Come on, don't be shy.

**WESTON:** It's pretty bad. Silly, really.

**CASSIE:** Come on. I could do with a laugh.

**WESTON:** Well, when I was a teenager, we all thought Ecotopians had mutated from exposure to radiation, you know after Puget Sound.

**CASSIE:** That doesn't sound silly.

**WESTON:** All the men had one eye and oozing sores. (*Cassie laughs*) And the women were supposed to have two, you know . . . (*flicks his eyes down to her crotch*)

**CASSIE:** Two what? (*Playing dumb*)

**WESTON:** Two . . . you know . . . it's juvenile.

**CASSIE:** I don't get it.

**WESTON:** Two vaginas!

**CASSIE:** (*Cracks up and they keep dancing*)

*The two dance, and it gets more and more sexual. As we watch, the screen splits and we see the shadowy figures watching too, but they don't talk. After a bit, the Cassie grabs his hand and leads him off into the shadows. At this point the screen goes full size to Weston and the girl again. She pushes him down onto a kind of grassy mound and starts kissing his neck.*

**CASSIE:** (*between kisses*) The air is perfectly safe you know.

**WESTON:** I don't trust it.

**CASSIE:** (*Still kissing his neck*) You want to inspect me for mutations?

**WESTON:** What?

**CASSIE:** For science? And objective journalism.

**WESTON:** Abso-fucking-lutely.

**CASSIE:** (*Laughs*)

*Then Cassie takes his hands and guides them all over her body, she does so while making intense eye contact with him. We can see her and his arousal. She keeps taking tiny inhales of breath, and his pupils dilate, his breath picks up. With her hand on his hand she puts it under her shirt, she's not wearing a bra. She moans and begins kissing his ear, her hands in his hair now. Eventually, she guides his hand into her waistband, and lets him go to work. She is clearly enjoying herself.*

**CASSIE:** So, what's the conclusion?

**WESTON:** No mutations.

**CASSIE:** Satisfied?

**WESTON:** (*he smiles*) Not quite.

**CASSIE:** Well, I can't say I am either.

**WESTON:** Oh really?

**CASSIE:** Kiss me.

*Her hands were around his neck at this point, and she's moved them to the side of his face mask release. His eyes are wide with both arousal and fear.*

**WESTON:** (*Through heavy breathing*) Alright.

*Cassie releases the mask, the camera has been slowly zooming on their faces and now it is just his mouth as she lowers the mask, his breathing stops as if he's holding his breath and then the music which has been backtracking this whole scene stops, he gasps an inhale.*

**BLACK**