

MINIMALLY CONSCIOUS STATE

Laboratory 901B.

AMANDA, JUN and ELISA in a meeting. ELISA hands out coffee. On the screen, images from INESSA's life are projected, from childhood to the present.

AMANDA: Inessa Kuznetsoy. An only child, from a rich, Russian family. She spent her childhood in Moscow, in this impressive house on Ostozhenka Street. Until she turned thirteen and her father sent her to New York. During her teens she attended the prestigious Shattuck-St Mary's girls' school. You don't know it? It's a beautiful spot, right in the middle of the Million Trees Forest, surrounded by lakes. Worth a visit. She majored in Landscape Design at Columbia, and at the same time she studied piano with the famous John Herbert. During that time she lived at the Founders Hall ladies' residence. She graduated two years ago with excellent qualifications and it seems she's built up a career with surprising skill. *(Pause.)* This is her best friend from Shattuck-St Mary's, Nasha. They lost contact shortly after this picture was taken. She doesn't like going out, or social gatherings. Although she does often attend events, they're all work-related. An introverted young woman. *(Pause.)* Her mother died in childbirth... And her father lives in Moscow. He's sick. He has cancer. It seems he can't come here, at least not for now. We'll ask him to send us recordings... *(Pause.)* Inessa and Leon met four years ago at a benefit gala and ever since then they've been inseparable. This picture is from that night... And this is from their wedding.

ELISA: Her mother died in childbirth?

AMANDA: She was just sixteen... It was a complex pregnancy, she was hospitalized several times. But she insisted on having the baby. It was a long, difficult birth. She had an attack of eclampsia and didn't survive it.

JUN: That's a sad story.

AMANDA: Inessa is a self-made woman. We have a patient with a lot of willpower. So that should help us with the process.

JUN: So, really, she only has him.

AMANDA: Their relationship is very strong. She's lost contact with almost all of her friends and acquaintances since meeting Leon. In spite of that, we're tracking them down and asking them to collaborate. We have to gather as many recordings as we can to create a virtual environment.

JUN: By the way, it's a long time since I've seen anyone so in love... Or maybe I should say obsessed.

AMANDA: You mean Leon?

JUN: Of course.

ELISA: A lot of couples lose touch with their friends. They're happy just being together, or they don't feel like hanging out with anyone else.

JUN: But haven't you seen the way he looks at her? He's obviously totally in love.

Pause.

AMANDA: Inessa appears to be in a minimally conscious state... We're at a point of ambiguity where we still cannot determine whether her responses are voluntary or simply reflexes. Our task is

to shed light onto the shadows that lie between those two states. Our mission is to place ourselves at that blurred border. Any minute detail, however insignificant it may seem today, could prove to be a vital truth tomorrow.

ELISA: I bet Inessa is more awake than we think... You know my opinion on this. The human race has let people die who've been completely conscious. Or who would have woken up in the future.

JUN: That's the dilemma: deciding when it's worth the effort.

Pause.

AMANDA: The first step is to establish whether there's someone on the other side. Detecting the areas of the cortex which are active, if there are any. Based on the results, we can create a map of the brain, activating it through emotional stimuli. And finally, we'll establish a route to trigger a flash of consciousness. (*Pause.*) If we succeed in communicating with her, we'll have taken a very important step. Because it's not possible to communicate unconsciously. It's simply not possible.

JUN: Is she as in love with him as he is with her?

AMANDA: That's not the issue.

JUN: I'm just kidding.

AMANDA: I'd like some concentration, please.

JUN: I'm sorry.

Pause.

ELISA: You said some equipment had been ordered. What is that?

AMANDA: We'll have it here soon. The main lab's being set up to install it.

JUN: We're working in the main lab?

AMANDA: Exactly.

ELISA: Are you being serious?

AMANDA: I was waiting for Leon to arrive before telling you the news.

ELISA: What news?

AMANDA: The investment is much larger than we'd ever imagined.

JUN: And?

AMANDA: Leon Bradley has invested in the procurement of the recently designed *Safire Perspective*.

ELISA: The *Safire Perspective*?

AMANDA: We'll be the first to use it.

ELISA: This is a miracle.