

Echoes of Morantia

Episode 1: "The Curtain Rises"

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Synopsis

In a small, timeworn theater, a group of strangers gathers to read a curious script. Their names are temporary. Their purpose unclear. Questions surface. Tensions flicker. No one quite listens. Except for The Child—a wooden figure with a painted face and a spark of joy. And Embrace, sitting quietly at the edge, hoping to be noticed.

In the wings, The Director watches, saying little, sketching meaning with his hands. Nearby, an empty chair faces the group. No one explains it. But glances drift toward it, like leaves toward light.

The script speaks of a mysterious island. Eyes close. Breath deepens. The air begins to shimmer. The stage dissolves—and Audience is already watching.

Act Two finds them aboard a ferry, crossing toward an island shaped like a dream. It recalls Böcklin's Isle of the Dead, yet it breathes with its own presence. The island seems to recognize them. And as they arrive, something stirs: aches vanish, old eyes see clearly, forgotten ease returns.

The Elder renames herself The Actress. The others begin to wonder—are they being healed... or rewritten?

The Mystic voices what no one dares: What if we're not alive?

The Director calls it a beginning.

The Child calls it a story.

And in the final moment, Embrace is seen. Not fully—not yet. But her time is coming.

The Ensemble

The Scientist seeks certainty where none is promised.

The Bully masks fear with mockery—and hits first with a joke.

The Elder sheds her label, stepping forward as The Actress, fierce and luminous.

The Artist looks for truth in beauty, and beauty in chaos.

The Historian listens for echoes, patterns, forgotten clues.

The Mystic feels what others overlook—between words, beneath time.

Embrace longs to belong. She speaks gently, but the room does not hear.

The Child is carved from wood, painted with joy, and holds the story like a secret.

The Director moves in shadow, guiding with silence—and the lift of a hand.

INT. SMALL THEATER - DAY

A modest theater space. Weathered red velvet curtains. Dim overhead lights. Creaking wooden floors. The seats are empty, save for a single spotlight illuminating the stage.

The group stands in a loose circle. Each holds a script, flipping through pages with varying degrees of curiosity and irritation.

THE SCIENTIST squints at his script, frowning. THE BULLY leans against a prop tree, arms crossed. THE ELDER adjusts her glasses, muttering.

THE HISTORIAN sits slightly apart, script open in her lap. She studies it intently, searching for meaning between the lines.

THE ARTIST paces, script in hand. EMBRACE stands quietly among them, unnoticed—confused, but hopeful.

At the edge of the stage sits THE CHILD—a one-meter-tall wooden figure, somewhere between Pinocchio and Tintin. Cross-legged, a large notebook on its small knees, its painted face radiates warm, eager joy. Unbothered by the tension, it simply watches.

In the wings, THE DIRECTOR observes with quiet intensity. He remains outside the action, allowing their confusion to unfold. When he does speak, it's measured—though his hands often betray him, sketching shapes in the air, part conductor, part conjurer.

THE SCIENTIST

(annoyed)

Why am I just "The Scientist"?
 Couldn't I have a name? Something
 with... gravitas?

THE BULLY

(smirking)

How about "The Professor of
 Pretentiousness"?

THE SCIENTIST

(to The Director,
 exasperated)

And what does it mean I have to
 "project curiosity and skepticism
 equally"? That's contradictory.

THE CHILD

(cheerfully cutting
in)

It's not. It's balance. You're here
to question and clarify—while still
pushing us forward.

THE SCIENTIST

(eyeing The Child)

Wait—who even are you?

THE CHILD

(unbothered,
smiling)

I'm the scriptwriter.

THE SCIENTIST

(flatly)

You're a puppet.

THE CHILD

(nods)

A puppet with a pen.

EMBRACE

(quietly, trying to
join)

I thought that was the point... to
question together?

No one reacts. The conversation moves on without her.

THE ELDER

(squinting at her
pages)

This light isn't doing me any favors.
Can we shift the spotlight?

THE CHILD

(turning to The
Director)

Should we?

THE DIRECTOR

(left hand waves
dismissively)

No. The light stays.

The group exchanges glances—confused.

EMBRACE
 (trying again,
 louder)
 Maybe it's not the light.
 Maybe... we're just not looking in the
 right place?

She's cut off as THE ARTIST steps forward with theatrical flourish.

THE ARTIST
 (mocking)
 Oh, but of course. The Director has
 spoken.
 The light must stay—for artistic
 integrity.

THE ELDER
 (grumbling)
 Artistic integrity won't help me read
 this script.

EMBRACE
 (half-shouting)
 What? Am I invisible?

A beat. The group stills. They glance around, puzzled.

THE BULLY
 (looking past her)
 Did someone say something?

THE MYSTIC
 (tilting her head)
 A voice... faint. Like it's almost
 here.

EMBRACE
 (breathing hard,
 stepping forward)
 I'm right here. Standing beside you!

They look toward her—but don't truly see her.

THE CHILD
 (softly, to himself)
 Not everyone is visible all at once.

THE DIRECTOR
(cutting through)
Enough. Focus.

The group hesitates, then returns to their scripts.
EMBRACE remains still. Hurt flickers across her face.
She steps back, arms folding in.

They now form a semicircle, scripts in hand.
Just beyond them: an empty chair, facing the group.
Its purpose unclear—but somehow central.

THE CHILD
(enthusiastic)
Welcome.
This is the first step of your
journey—
A story that unfolds with every
choice you make.

THE DIRECTOR
(stepping forward,
calm but firm)
Face forward.
Audience is watching.

The group turns, some skeptically, toward the empty chair.

THE SCIENTIST
(doubtful)
Audience? You mean... this chair?

THE CHILD
(nodding)
Exactly. Not empty—occupied.
Imagine someone sitting there,
immersed, observing.
They are as much part of this story
as we are.

THE ARTIST
(tilting his head,
playful)
A ghost in the theater.
Delightfully on theme.

THE BULLY

(snorting)

Sounds like a cheap gimmick to me.

THE DIRECTOR

(firmly, but
searching)

It's more than that. The Meta Theater
experience...

THE CHILD

(cutting in, eager)

...places Audience within our story.
Through their eyes—we become.

THE ELDER

(thoughtful, raising
her script)

And us?

Are we merely players... or do we have
something to say as well?

THE CHILD

(smiling)

A little of both.

The group exchanges uncertain glances.

Embrace takes a step forward, voice tentative.

EMBRACE

(hesitant)

Excuse me, but I—

No one reacts. Her voice disappears beneath rising murmur.
A flicker of hurt—but she holds steady. Watching. Still
unseen.

THE HISTORIAN

(pointing to their
script)

This mentions a mysterious island?

THE BULLY

(looking around,
dry)

Not much of an island here.
Are we supposed to imagine it?

THE CHILD
 (grinning, eager)
 Exactly. But not just imagine—feel
 it.

THE DIRECTOR
 (quietly, with a
 small gesture)
 Hands behind your back.
 Close your eyes.

The group hesitates. The Bully raises an eyebrow.

THE BULLY
 (sotto, muttering)
 Trust exercises, really?

THE ACTRESS
 (sarcastic)
 Try not to break the spell.

One by one, they comply. Eyes close. Stillness settles.

The Director inhales, hands carving the air. The group
 mirrors him—slowly.

THE DIRECTOR
 Inhale...
 (beat)
 Exhale...

The Child stands before him, painted face expectant.
 Everyone's eyes are closed—except The Director and The
 Child.
 They lock eyes.

The Director nods, conspiratorial.
 The Child's face brightens with mischief and joy.

THE CHILD
 Let the curtain rise!

The backdrop shimmers.
 Edges ripple, dissolve.
 Light shifts. Sound deepens.

A change is coming.
 The theater blurs.
 The journey begins.

EXT. FERRY - NIGHT

At the bow, THE CHILD stands proudly, face to the wind. The others gather behind—disoriented, but drawn forward. Ahead, an island flickers into view: ghostlike, radiant, strange.

THE CHILD
Welcome to Morantia.

THE SCIENTIST
(skeptical)
Auroras don't behave like this.
There must be a projection
mechanism—some kind of holographic
emitter.

THE BULLY
(rolling his eyes)
Or maybe it's just cool.
Try not to dissect the stars for
once.

They drift toward the railing, faces lit by the shimmering sky.
Behind them: open sea.
Ahead: a darkening silhouette.

THE HISTORIAN
(leaning forward,
narrowing eyes)
That shape... it's familiar.
Wait—isn't that—

THE ARTIST
(cutting in, alight)
Böcklin's Isle of the Dead! That's
it, right?

THE DIRECTOR
(smoothly)
Inspired by it, perhaps.

The island sharpens:

Cliffs rise sheer from the water, forming a circular cove. Stone portals line the rock—silent, monumental. At the center: a lone oak, its branches twisted skyward like reaching hands.

THE MYSTIC
 (gazing, entranced)
 Its branches... they pulse.
 Like veins carrying light.

THE HISTORIAN
 (leaning in,
 intrigued)
 Uncanny. A dream of Böcklin's vision.
 But incomplete.
 (then, quietly)
 Is this Charon's crossing?
 To the underworld of Hades?

The Mystic tilts her head, gaze inward.

THE MYSTIC
 (softly)
 It doesn't feel like a beginning.
 More like... something we've returned
 to.

The ferry slows as it nears the rocky shore.

THE CHILD
 (to The Director)
 Shall we?

The Director nods—and snaps his fingers.

The oak tree shimmers. Branches multiply, lengthen—
 forming a grove of cypress trees, casting deep shadows.

THE HISTORIAN
 (breath catching)
 Now it's perfect.
 This is the island.

THE MYSTIC
 (tense, whispering)
 Then what does that make us?

A silence. The question lingers—unanswered.

THE ARTIST
 (dryly)
 I liked it better the first way.

THE BULLY

(snickering)

Yeah. Less funeral-home chic.

Murmurs ripple. The Director raises his hand.

The cypress trees dissolve.

The single oak returns.

The island exhales—lighter, less haunted.

EXT. ISLAND SHORE - GANGWAY - NIGHT

The ferry nudges the rocky shore. A wooden gangway unfurls with a soft creak, beckoning them to cross.

THE ARTIST

(pausing at the edge)

Does anyone else feel... smaller?

Like the island is watching us, not the other way around?

THE MYSTIC

(nodding, quietly)

It feels familiar.

(murmurs)

Like the island remembers us.

THE DIRECTOR

(firmly, gesturing forward)

Then let's not disappoint it.

They exchange glances—uncertain, intrigued—then begin to disembark.

The camera lingers on their faces: curiosity, awe, and the edge of unease.

EXT. THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD - PIAZZA - NIGHT

The central piazza is still.

The oak tree rises in the center, branches whispering softly overhead.

Cliffs encircle the space, forming a quiet amphitheater.

Dark portals yawn in the rock-forgotten thresholds,
watching.

Their footsteps echo faintly as they gather.

THE HISTORIAN

(almost reverent)

This place feels... ancient.
As if it holds more memory than a
single lifetime could carry.

THE SCIENTIST

(raising an eyebrow)

Or it's designed to feel that way.
We fill in the myth.

THE ELDER

(resting her hand on
the oak's bark)

Whatever it is, it's speaking to us.

THE ARTIST

(dramatically)

And it says: "Write me a love
letter-or leave me alone."

A ripple of laughter. The air loosens.

THE MYSTIC

(quietly, to
herself)

But why were we brought here?
What's the purpose?

The Child steps forward, script in hand.

THE CHILD

(clear, unwavering)

To find out.

EXT. THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD - PIAZZA - CONTINUOUS

They stand in a loose semicircle, scripts in hand.
Above them: the aurora.
Beside them: the empty Audience chair.

Embrace sits alone on a rock, near the chair—unnoticed, as always.

The Elder flips through her pages, frowning.

THE ELDER
(pausing, firm)
No. I refuse this.

The others look up, puzzled.

THE BULLY
(smirking)
Refuse what? Dinner?

THE ELDER
This name. "The Elder"?
Sounds like I wandered out of a
fantasy novel.
I'm not a trope—I'm an actress.

THE HISTORIAN
(half-joking)
Isn't that the point?
You're meant to be wise and, uh...
elder-ly.

THE ELDER
(haughtily)
Well, I'm not. I'm an actress—a
storyteller.
If I'm going to embody a role, let it
reflect that.
From now on, I shall be called... The
Actress.

She turns to The Director, daring him to challenge her.

THE DIRECTOR
(raising an eyebrow)
"The Actress," huh?

He glances to The Child, who nods—just once.

THE DIRECTOR (cont'd)
(gesturing)
Fine. The Actress it is.

The Elder—now The Actress—draws herself taller, script in hand.
The title sits well on her.

THE ARTIST
(grinning)
All hail The Actress—bringer of
monologues, breaker of fourth walls.

Laughter ripples through the group.

THE ACTRESS
(waiting for it to
settle)
Wait...

She lifts her glasses, tilting them to the aurora's light.
Her eyes widen.

THE ACTRESS (cont'd)
I can see.
Perfectly. Without these.

The group stares.

THE HISTORIAN
(frowning)
What do you mean?

THE ACTRESS
(awestruck)
I've needed glasses for years. And
now...

She gazes around, her face open, luminous.

THE SCIENTIST
(skeptical but
intrigued)
Let me see that.

He takes the glasses, peers through them—then squints.

THE SCIENTIST (cont'd)
(flatly)
Okay, you're not imagining it. These
are prescription.

THE HISTORIAN

(quietly)

Strange...
My knee doesn't hurt.

THE MYSTIC

(rubbing her hands)

And mine—no stiffness. Gone.

One by one, they begin checking themselves.
Small, subtle revelations.

THE BULLY

I haven't felt this good since
college.
Maybe even better.

THE ARTIST

(gesturing wide)

This island... it's doing something to
us.
Like it's... waking us up.

THE MYSTIC

(softly)

It's as if time no longer clings to
us.

A quiet settles over them.
Lightness—not just of body, but of spirit.

THE CHILD

(smiling gently)

Perhaps the island sees who you truly
are.

THE DIRECTOR

(cutting in, gently)

Enough marveling. Back to the text.

They glance around at one another—changed, and still
changing—
Then return to their scripts with fresh attention.

EXT. THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD - PIAZZA - CONTINUOUS

The group remains in the piazza, scripts in hand, stillness spreading through their bodies.
 The aurora spills long shadows across the stone.
 The lone oak tree towers at the center—quiet, watching.

THE MYSTIC

(whispering,
 unsettled)

What if... we're not alive?

A silence.
 The thought lands—soft, but seismic.

THE HISTORIAN

(frowning, turning
 to her)

What are you saying?

THE MYSTIC

(quietly)

This feeling... these changes.
 It doesn't feel earthly.

THE BULLY

(smirking, covering
 discomfort)

You mean we're ghosts now? Great.

THE HISTORIAN

(skeptical, but
 unsettled)

It's not impossible.
 This place—it doesn't act like the
 world we know.

THE ARTIST

(slowly)

The air, the light...
 It's like walking through a painting.
 Curated, not lived.

THE SCIENTIST

(cutting in)

Let's not romanticize anomalies.
 Unusual doesn't mean otherworldly.

The Mystic steps toward the oak tree.
Her voice is low, almost reverent.

THE MYSTIC

But it feels like memory made
visible.
Like we've stepped inside a dream
someone left open.

The others follow her gaze.
The tree's limbs stretch above them—rooted, reaching.

THE HISTORIAN

(pointing)

Look.

The cliffs glow faintly under the aurora-etched windows,
stone portals, statues frozen in quiet vigil.

THE MYSTIC

(breathless)

A world between worlds...

THE DIRECTOR

(stepping forward,
eyes alight)

This is what happens when story and
presence converge.
When illusion becomes invitation.

THE BULLY

(flatly)

Invitation to what?

THE CHILD

(stepping forward)

To discover.
To create.

They all fall silent—feeling the weight, and promise, of
that idea.

THE DIRECTOR

(softly)

Every story begins with a leap of
faith.

(beat)

This one... is yours.

He turns toward the empty chair—Audience.
His voice shifts, opening.

THE DIRECTOR (cont'd)
(to Audience, gently
conspiratorial)
And you?
Are you ready to leap?

His gaze flicks to The Child.
A subtle nod. Agreement passed without words.

Then—he sees her.

EMBRACE, still seated near the Audience chair, part-shadow,
part-light.

Their eyes meet.

EMBRACE
(whispers, stunned)
You... see me?

THE DIRECTOR
(gently)
You've always been here.
(beat)
But your moment in the light... hasn't
come yet.

He looks back to the group.
Then to her again.

THE DIRECTOR (cont'd)
A leap of faith.
For each of us.

FADE TO BLACK