

Agua y Fuego
(Water and Fire)

Naomi

Ignacio

Scene I: *A human-sized Habitrail module lined with low couches. Outside is deep winter and a dark sky, with a planet hanging dead center. At first, it looks like Earth's moon, but or even Earth itself, but as the lights come up, the image gains definition also, and it becomes obvious the planet in question is Jupiter.*

Ignacio is seated on one of the couches, waiting. Naomi comes rushing in, carrying an iPad or other tablet.

Naomi: Hola, hello. Sorry I'm late. You're Ignacio, yes?

Ignacio: *(standing up)* I am. *(he extends his hand to her, they shake)* Most people call me 'Nacho' though.

Naomi: Alright, Nacho. I'm Naomi, your intake guide. You warmed up enough? The trip here can be pretty chilly.

Ignacio: I had some tea from the replicator, thanks. And you're underestimating with "chilly." The last hour of the trip, I couldn't feel my fingers... or my chin.

Naomi: I guess I'm just acclimated. Well, don't worry; you won't have to visit the surface anytime soon, and once you've passed quarantine, you'll have access to the hot springs.

Ignacio: Hot springs? I didn't think Europa had geothermal heat?

Naomi: Europa doesn't. Nuevo Madrid does. We cycle our waste energy through a couple of the springs within the complex, filter out any traces of radiation – don't worry, there's nothing harmful. Well, there was that one person who grew gills...

Ignacio: Gills! *(beat)* Oh, you're teasing me.

Naomi: *(somewhat contrite)* Only a little. Sorry, we do it to all our newbies.

Ignacio: So, about this quarantine?

Naomi: It's not long. We only keep you isolated from the general population for a year.

Ignacio: A year – wait – I'm guessing you mean a European year.

Naomi: See, you're getting it! Yes, a European year, which is also a European day, though we operate on a dual clock – Earth time doesn't match the light and dark cycles here, but it's easier for scheduling.

Ignacio: So, I'm in isolation for the next 85 hours?

Naomi: 'Fraid so. But... your accommodations are much nicer than this intake lounge, Let me take you.

They exit stage right as the lights fade to black.

Scene II: *Another Habitrail-type room, but this one is set up like a posh hotel room. Bed, dresser, desk, entertainment console. The view here is not of the sky, but appears to be under water. Alien fish flit by outside (think: projection screen).*

Naomi and Ignacio enter stage left, descending a set of stairs.

Naomi: Here we are, your home on Europa for the next three years.

Ignacio: That's Earth-years, right?

Naomi: (laughing) Yes, Nacho, that's Earth years. (beat) So, you have an undersea view here. The computer can illuminate the outside if you want a better view of the native lifeforms.

Ignacio: Well, studying the local life is why I'm here. I'm a marine biologist with a subspecialty in xeno-biology.

Naomi: I heard you did your internship on Mars, identifying three distinct lifeforms from the underground seas.

Ignacio: You know my CV... and yet you don't call me 'Doctor Gomez'

Naomi: (teasing a little) Sorry, Doctor Nacho. Everyone here has a doctorate in some field. And we're a small community; we don't use titles. Except with Doc Ibarra.

Ignacio: Why does he rate?

Naomi: *She* is our medic. And somehow, it's easier to maintain professional distance with someone in charge of poking and prodding you. You'll meet her in the morning – Earth time – and she'll go over the details of your quarantine period.

Ignacio: And until then?

Naomi: Eat. Rest. Explore your suite. If you need anything, you can call me.

Ignacio: Doesn't that break my quarantine.

Naomi: (embarrassed) I'm sorry, I guess I forgot to tell you. Most people know... I was born here. The first native of Nuevo Madrid. I'm immune to most Earth diseases, and most of the bugs from Mars and Luna Colony, too. .

Ignacio: Impressive.

Naomi: I guess. (beat) So, is there anything else I can answer?

Ignacio: Not right now, except... maybe come have dinner with me tomorrow?

Naomi: I can do that.

Blackout.

Scene III: *Ignacio's room, but there's a small table set for two, at which he and Naomi are already sitting.*

Naomi: Nacho, I can't believe it. You really named a bug after your wi-fi hotspot.

Ignacio: In my defense, those bugs could relay wi-fi signals. And possibly subspace as well.

Naomi: Subspace... really? We could use that tech here. It takes forever to communicate with Earth.

Ignacio: It was long on Mars, too. Not as long... but still long. We used text more than live communication. More efficient.

Naomi: Here, too. *(she looks around, sees that he's added photos to some of the surfaces, and replaced the provided bedding with his own.)* You seem to be settling in.

Ignacio: I didn't really bring a lot. Used to travelling light. I did master the replicator, though.

Naomi: Oh, you definitely did that. This shrimp pad thai is to die for. *(She eats some while he speaks)*

Ignacio: I wanted to offer you a local beer I brought the code for...

Naomi: ... but alcohol is restricted while you're in quarantine. Sorry about that.

Ignacio: I'll survive.

Naomi: Oh, you'll do more than that. There's a welcome party every time a newbie joins us at the Agua y Fuego.

Ignacio: Water and Fire?

Naomi: It's sort of our pub. We're a small community, but a festive one. You'll see.

Ignacio: One thing... why is the colony called Nuevo Madrid? Was the founder from Spain?

Naomi: Actually no. She was just very fond of the old city. And also... there's the motto.

Ignacio: Motto?

Naomi: The motto of Madrid? "Fui sobre agua edificada, mis muros de fuego son."

Ignacio: *(translating)* "I was built on water, my walls are made of fire." I don't get it.

Naomi: Well, Madrid on Earth was originally a Moorish city – Mayrit – built on top of many, many freshwater springs. Even today, the tap water there is the best on Earth. Guide books even tell you how to ask for it.

Ignacio: And the fire?

Naomi: It was a fortified city... the walls were made of flint. When arrowheads struck the walls during battles, they would spark, and it would seem like the walls were made of fire.

Ignacio: Wow! I imagine it was quite the spectacle. Except for the war part.

Naomi: I know what you mean.

Ignacio: But how does that apply here? We're *under* water.

Naomi: The residential quarters are under water, yes, but the labs and workspaces, an even the pub, are built on the ice – frozen water.

Ignacio: But not out of flint.

Naomi: Hardly. But the transparent aluminum of the modules catches the light reflecting off the ice and it can look like flame.

Ignacio: So, you named the colony Nuevo Madrid because the motto fit.

Naomi: Yes.

Ignacio: You'll show me this fire effect sometime?

Naomi: It's a promise.

Ignacio: I think I'm going to settle in just fine.

Naomi: (*teasing*) I think you already have.

Lights fade to black as they continue a murmured conversation.