

## Dualexia – Treatment

By Joseph Scotti

### Act 1

It's December, 1999. But a thermometer reads 95F. Outside a window, rain. Lightning. THUNDER.

Nick Mirachek, 31 and his new wife, Sabrina, 35, hang a mirror as part of their move into a large new beach home purchased six months ago. About to celebrate their 1<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary. They talk of their good fortune of the past year: Nick's surprise inheritance from a billionaire whom Nick once saved from a deadly fire. An inheritance to the tune of twenty-eight million dollars.

Nick expresses his gratefulness to Sabrina, in sharing the windfall with someone to perfectly trust. Sabrina confesses her uneasiness at first, marrying into such a sudden bonanza, but reassures Nick she'll always be there to keep alive their happiness. Embracing, Sabrina smooths over Nick's beard, covering the chin scar Nick received years ago during the fire. He leads them into a kiss.

Nick gets a sudden call from his assistant at work. Shocking news. He's on his way.

It's morning. Sabrina awakens. She looks drawn out. She snarls Nick's name, sleeping next to her. He doesn't. She shoves him. Nothing. Slaps him hard in anger, then punches him. He rolls over and delivers a punch in her back. She pulls his hair, till he smacks her across her jaw. She spits on him.

Nick commutes to work by train with friend, Brian, in a security guard's uniform. Nick's tense as Brian reads the morning paper. Brian asks why Nick hasn't retired yet, he's rich now. Brian tears out a page of newspaper and hands it to Nick, who reads, then folds it up.

Nick bounds into a museum, where his assistant, Kelly, holds a strange object: Basketball sized, game-dice shaped, mirrored edges, now gleaming with light. As the museum conservator, Nick's adamant they keep this new development of the shining object quiet.

Sabrina, as instructor, rehearses ballet with a young cast. Her refined grace demonstrates her talents.

In a lab filled with screens of data detailing the current weather conditions, an old man watches. With slumped shoulders, he's white haired, and coughs hard and raw. Very sick. Before him is a photo with his wife, long ago on their wedding day. He whispers a promise-- He will soon find her again.

At night, Nick sits in a female strip club. Now shaved, his chin scar, ragged. On stage is Sabrina or Rini as she's now called. Hair teased, garish makeup and a snake tattoo coiled around her naval. She reveals her sensual dancing skills, as proficient now as in ballet. A tanked-up spectator gropes Rini's leg. She smashes her spiked heel into his mouth. Nick then pummels the drunk, silly. Patrons ask, where are the bouncers? But Rini and Nick are the club's owners.

At home, Rini's beaten on by Nick, accusing her of leading the groper on. Rini unloads a throwing knife at Nick, then draws another blade to Nick's throat. He hurls her into a wine-rack, turns and leaves.

Next morning, Sabrina finishes up a workout in their home gym. Nick, bearded again, watches her. They have breakfast he's made with champagne for their anniversary. Nick asks her if the meal's as good as military food where Sabrina reveals she's an ex-combat marine. They toast their happiness.

That afternoon, Rini teases her hair, applies her makeup. She's grabbed from behind— by Brian. He kisses her. Tells her Nick's making a drug purchase to celebrate their anniversary. They fall into bed.

In the mysterious lab, the old man runs surveillance scans, listing names. From the readouts are Nick and Rini, with a lengthy resume of past criminal activity.

In their bedroom, bearded Nick combs Sabrina's hair. Another storm rages outside. Sabrina asks why Nick has to rush back to work. From a vicious gust of wind, their bedroom window shatters open.

Clean shaven Nic enters their beach house with a brown bag. At the bedroom stairs he finds Brian. Nic glares in suspicion. Pulls a gun from the bag. Tells Brian when he's done with her, he's coming for him.

Out on the beach, under the crashing and flashing thunder and lightning, Nick and Sabrina nail down plywood over their home's shattered window. The blinding sand and rain swirl round them.

Nic enters the bedroom, finding Rini in only a nightshirt. Nic tries to shoot her, as the same window crashes apart from the storm. Rini stumbles out through the window. Nic leaps after her.

On the beach, wind rips away a piece of wood Nick and Sabrina are nailing down. Nick rushes after it through the storm. Sabrina looks up—as a bolt of lightning strikes Nick head on. He collapses---

As Nic, a moment later, overtakes Rini on the stormy beach. Nic arches his gun at her head. Just as the thunder and lightning, now from the opposite direction blasts into him. Nic, again, falls senseless.

## Act 2

Nick wakes in a hospital bed. A doctor tells him he's been unconscious for a week. A policeman declares Nick under arrest, for the attempted murder of his wife. Nick is dumbstruck, and now nauseous. Just minutes later, in the bathroom he's attacked by Rini. Her knife slashes at his neck. She then escapes.

Nic awakens again. Hospital bed. Was it a dream? His mind races. The doctor again tells him he's been out of it a week. He looks around, expecting to see the police, but there's none present. Sabrina charges in—now crying in joy. Nic recoils as she hugs him, so glad to see him alive. Nic's at a total loss.

Later, Nick's throat wound is sewn. The police ask who attacked him? Nick has no answers.

Outside Nick's room, an old slumped man arrives. White bearded. The figure from the lab. He's Raynor Mifflin, Nick's state appointed counsel. Mifflin asks for the room alone. Doctor and police wait outside.

Mifflin reveals he's no state counsel. He explains: Struck by lightning, Nick's crossed over within a random merging of the "Dualixis" phenomena-- Exchanging places with an "echo" variation of himself.

He's been transposed into a reality where everything looks the same, but is a reverse echo of our universe. Mifflin affirms both Nicks are consciously linked now, able to see, learn what the other can.

Mifflin goes on: They are now in the fifth of a six-day temporary merge with the "echo realm", accounting for the bizarre weather. The merge has opened passages, one of which Nick was caught in-- all conjured up by the Ekoris Stone's spell-- The same artifact in Nick's keeping within his museum.

Mifflin theorizes the possibility of reopening the passage Nick entered and return him, along with his echo self. That is, before Nick is preyed upon by Rini, the criminally deranged echo of his wife, who wants revenge on a Nick who *she thinks* tried to kill her. Alternatively, in the opposite realm, criminally deranged echo Nic will certainly resume his intent of murdering Nick's Sabrina. Can they survive it? There's some hope: The passages between realms sustain life force and self-heal physical trauma.

Rini regroups with her cohorts-- echo Kelly and Pete, another thug. They're met by echo Brian. Rini knows Nick's now in police custody. So, she'll try something else. Poison Nick. Slowly.

That afternoon, federal agents who owe Mifflin a few favors, release Nick and take him to Mifflin's lab.

Time is crucial. They have twenty hours while the dualixis remains open. Nick asks how Mifflin even knows about the ekoris stone, which he's kept so secret. Thirty-six years prior, Mifflin was a victim of the dualixis merge, exchanged to where he is now. For long years, he's been working to return back to his wife, Jennie, who Mifflin can speak to—in dreams. He knows Nick can now also do so with Sabrina.

To switch Nick back, they'll need to harness the same spell in both locations where he and his echo last stood. What they'll need: the *second* ekoris stone that also exists in the opposite reality. Nick must speak to his Sabrina via their dreams, and *get her to work with the criminal Nic* she's now with: to break into his museum and take the stone! While he and Mifflin here, will apprehend the stone with them.

That night, Nick indeed dream speaks with Sabrina, telling her what's happened-- And what now needs to be done. She wakes, in utter disbelief. What?

The next morning, a very nervous Sabrina arrives at the hospital to visit echo Nic. He says he's being released today. Turning to her, she sees Nic's scar is on the wrong side of his face. Sabrina fights to remain calm with Nic trying to embrace her. They go home.

That night Sabrina cooks dinner, Nic reminisces about past crimes they committed, deeply unsettling her. Her breaking point comes-- In a panic she rushes into the bathroom. Sobbing, she struggles to calm herself, certain it was all just a bad dream, till she recalls Nick's earlier words of trust between them.

They sit down to dinner. She calmly explains: How Nic is not her husband, and she's not his wife. Nic smirks, amused, but Sabrina reveals it all: the weather, the stones, two worlds with two of them each. Nic nods, grinning, pacifying her. Sabrina explains that her Nick has asked for his help here, to get the stone and use it to return him back home. She then reveals her stomach, with no trace of any tattoo.

With less than twelve hours till the merge closes, Mifflin advises a few hours' sleep. But Nick's thoughts race, fearing what may happen to Sabrina with the criminal Nic. He flees, taking Mifflin's truck.

Returning to his house, he finds Rini asleep, till she attacks him, her knife to his throat again. He begs to talk. Rini agrees, poisoning Nick's coffee mug. He tries to convince her how her Nic and he have been switched. He shows the scar on his face. Nick then pleads with Rini for two things: To tell Nic in her dreams please not to hurt Sabrina, then to help him here break into the museum to steal the stone, worth far more than his own 28 million. Twenty-eight million? Rini pauses, pushes his mug away.

Nick drives them to the museum. On Rini's orders, they're covertly followed by echo Brian, Kelly and Pete. Waiting in the parking lot for a guard change, Rini fakes falling asleep. Nick's eyes soon close.

Criminal Nic and Sabrina also arrive at the museum in daylight, met by the security guards, Brian, and his partner, Eddie. They wrangle with a suspicious Eddie to permit echo Nic inside with Sabrina.

In Mifflin's truck, Nick wakes, arms tied. Rini straddles him, with her knife. He reiterates what's inside the museum is real. She asks what he'd be willing to give for it? A finger? Hand? An arm? Nick tells her to cut away, if it would bring back his Sabrina. Rini's loves his passion. She kisses him. Nick fights. Rini then she dry shaves Nick's beard with her knife. The guard-change arrives. Rini cuts Nick's bonds.

Echo Nic enters the museum working Nick's fingerprint ID scan. He and Sabrina search for the stone. Nothing. A knock at the door reveals a familiar face: It's *Echo* Mifflin, holding the 2<sup>nd</sup> ekoris stone.

In the museum parking lot, Rini dispatches the new guard. Nick takes his uniform. Entering, Rini takes out two more sentries, snatching their guns and a taser. Nick leads them to find the 1<sup>st</sup> stone. Rini gazes at the shining gem. She wants it. They quickly exit. Reaching the parking lot, they're met by echo Brian, Kelly and Pete-- who now also hold Professor Mifflin, who came in search of Nick.

In the parallel reality, echo Mifflin's a hard-time convict. He's come for the stone and means to use it. He's also waited thirty-six years for revenge on prime Mifflin for exiling him in this echo world. He also wants to return home to exact more revenge on his wife, for her past attempts to murder him.

Nic and Sabrina exit the museum at echo Mifflin's gunpoint, who shoots the guard, Eddie. Nic grabs Eddie, takes his gun. Echo Mifflin retreats to his vehicle with the stone. Opening a door, a banged-up *echo* Kelly rushes out-- Mifflin's captive. She tackles Mifflin, grabbing the stone from him. Running off, Mifflin guns her down. Kelly dies dropping the stone before Sabrina. Mifflin finishes off Eddie ...

Seeing Nic murder his work partner and confronting Brian of his echo's affair with Rini, Brian runs off in confusion. Mifflin turns his gun on Nic, who explains from his mental link, that everyone's headed back to his home, where it began. Brian races up in his car, for Sabrina, now with the stone. They speed off.

As Brian drives, Sabrina explains to him all that's happened. As Brian tries to process it, he's reminded of his late fiancée—how he's been unable to move on since her passing. Nic calls Sabrina's cell phone. Tells her she can't run, she needs him with her to pull off the exchange. Knowing he's right, she hangs up.

Now in the early morning hours, Rini, echo Brian, echo Kelly and Pete sit holding Mifflin in a diner. Where is Nick? Under an hour left. Mifflin asks if they should check on the stone, along with Nick tied up in the car trunk? Rini, enjoying her newfound superiority, admits to Kelly of her affair with Brian. Kelly unexpectedly laughs. Brian and Rini look on, confused. Mifflin drops a bomb—this Kelly here, has also been exchanged during the dualixis merge. Just a little while ago, she unbound Nick in the trunk, allowing him to escape with the stone.

Pete checks the parking lot. He confirms Nick's gone but finds his dropped keys and wallet. In it, Rini finds the folded news page prime Brian gave him earlier on the train. An article citing Nick's inherited twenty-eight million. Rini realizes the Nick here is rich. She draws her knives, moving off along with Pete.

Pete tries to shoot Kelly, but echo Brian tackles him. He stabbed by Rini's throwing knives. Pete and Rini race off. Echo, criminal Brian dies, a hero. Mifflin and Kelly head off after Rini. Forty minutes left.

### Act 3

Nick arrives at the beach house, carrying the ekoris stone he took. Lightning, thunder, rain and wind build. He unwraps the stone in the living room, overlooking the beach.

In the echo reality, Sabrina and Brian arrive at the beach house. Thunder--KA-BOOM. They also place the stone in the living room. Twenty minutes left—Echo Nic along with echo Mifflin show up now too.

Opposite reality: Kelly drives Mifflin, now bleeding, shot by one of Pete's bullets for Kelly. Less than fifteen minutes now. Already weak and sick, he doesn't think he'll make it.

Rini tears into the road, driving 100 damn the disastrous weather. Beside her, Pete turns green.

Back to Brian, who attacks echo Mifflin. Echo Nic clobbers Brian with a fireplace poker. Nic asks Mifflin to shoot Sabrina. Mifflin says "no need", they're all going back where they belong in a few minutes.

Nic uses the taser he's kept hidden on Mifflin, snatching his gun. About to shoot Mifflin, he's tackled by Brian. Nic flings him aside, pumps three bullets in him. Sabrina leaps onto Nic's back, bringing him to the floor, spinning the taser away. Nic aims at Sabrina's head, fires—EMPTY chamber! Nic spins the barrel—

-- One bullet left. He reloads. Sabrina levels a kick to his gut. Nic drops the bullet. Sabrina swipes it up. They trade blows moving into the kitchen. Nic lands dirty chops, but with her skill, Sabrina downs him.

Sabrina tosses the bullet into the kitchen sink, turning on the water. With a rolling pin, Nic breaks open the trap pipe. Nic gut cracks Sabrina. He turns off the tap, searching in the water. Nothing.

He collapses in defeat under the sink. In a gush of water, the bullet flows out the shattered pipe. Nic grabs it, but he's kicked under the jaw from Sabrina, rendering him woozy.

Opposite them— Nick stands before the stone, ready to use it-- Till a knife blade suddenly protrudes through his back. It's Rini behind him. She'll take the twenty-eight million right off his hands.

She drags Nick away from the stone, forcing him to crawl back to it. Mifflin and Kelly arrive at last. Kelly rushes to Nick as Mifflin shoves Rini aside. He tells her that in spite of what she's done, her time is up in sixty-three seconds. He baits her long enough for Nick to crawl back to the stone. Just in time—

The ethereal passage within the dualixis OPENS— In many-hued layers of events occurring, overlapping at the same time. Both ekoris stones, now side by side, radiate their ancient spellcraft. Suddenly each of them and their echo selves now occupy the same space at the same time—

Kelly kneels with dying Brian. Echo Nic finds the real Nick, gasping, the knife in his back. Nic mercilessly smashes the fireplace poker over his throat to finish him.

Sabrina and Rini lock eyes— She tackles Rini. Their fight's brutal, raw, but also a trippy, disorienting affair as the dualixis flexes and bends. Sabrina catches on first: their actions follow through in reverse. A punch forward is repelled backward. Rini hurls a knife. Sabrina twists directly into its path. It misses her. After a barrage of body and head punches. Rini draws another knife. Sabrina rips the mirror off the wall. She holds it up as Rini hurls the blade—where it plows back into Rini's heart. She falls dead.

Drawing a hunting knife, Echo Mifflin rushes real Mifflin. But someone's in his way. An older woman, whose eyes flash with sheer madness. Echo Mifflin's wife. She holds a long-handled axe.

Nick, choking from the poker Nic presses down with, grabs the fallen taser, shoving it into echo Nic's face. Sabrina drags Nic off. Nearby, echo Mifflin cowers with a scream. His wife's axe comes down hard.

Real Mifflin smashes one ekoris stone into the other, causing a destructive energy ripple. A whine begins quickly rising. Mifflin yells out that the merge is closing. Everyone must remain still. Pete panics. As the whine screams, he grabs echo Nic, to drag him away. Too late. They're both swallowed up by a folding corner of the dualixis.

Kelly hugs Brian, who sees a glimpse of his fiancée smile, then fade away. Sabrina cradles dying Nick in her arms. The whine becomes an ear-splitting screech, then blackness falls.

And then ... They're outside. On the beach. Night. The storms are gone. Cold December weather. No thunder or lightning— until— fireworks explode above. The new year, the new millennium has come.

Kelly and Brian turn to each other. Brian feels his gut. No gun shot. They embrace tightly.

Nick turns to Sabrina. He also has no wounds. They're not sure who's who. Sabrina reveals her tummy. No tattoo. She checks Nick's chin. His scar is on the correct side. Nick reminds her how the merge heals physical trauma. Wishing a Happy New Year, Millenia, and 1<sup>st</sup> year anniversary, they kiss.

Nick then remembers. What happened to Professor Mifflin? Sabrina thinks she saw him running off. Like no one his age could ever move. A knowing grin forms on Nick's face ...

Raynor Mifflin approaches the quiet, misty lake. Where he was once parted from Jenny his wife, after he was hit by a bolt of lightning. Now thirty-six years older, there she is. Though he's terminal, Mifflin's final wish is granted. In profound euphoria, he and Jennie fall into each other's longing embrace.