

Dualexia – Treatment

By Joseph Scotti

Act 1

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

Nick Mirachek, 31 and his new wife, Sabrina, 35, unpack boxes from their move into a large new home purchased six months ago. They're about to celebrate their 1st wedding anniversary. They talk of their good fortune of the past year: Nick's surprise inheritance from a billionaire whom Nick once saved as a teen from a deadly fire. To the tune of twenty-eight million dollars.

Nick expresses his gratefulness to Sabrina, for clarifying what sharing the inheritance is with someone to perfectly trust. Sabrina confesses her pangs of uneasiness at first, marrying into such a huge sudden windfall, but reassures Nick she'll always be there to keep alive their happiness. Embracing her husband, Sabrina smooths over Nick's beard covering the old chin burns Nick received years ago during the fire. Nick leads them into a tender kiss.

Nick gets a sudden call from his assistant at work. With shocking news. He tells her he's on his way.

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

Later that morning, 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 what's wrong, No answer. Brian then asks why Nick hasn't retired as a museum conservator yet, he's rich now. Brian tears out page of newspaper and hands it to Nick, who reads, then folds it up. Nick asks if Brian could ever see him leave the museum life. Brian admits Nick's obsessed with it all, like the weird stone he's studied for years now.

Nick bounds into the museum, where his assistant, Kelly, who called him, holds a basketball-sized object with mirrored edges gleaming with light. Nick has long tried to research this thing, so far keeping it secret from the public, never even knowing where it came from. Now that it's come alive, Nick believes he's at last about to find out what it really is.

That afternoon, Sabrina, as a dance instructor, rehearses ballet and dance choreography on stage with a young cast. Her refined musculature and grace demonstrate her talents of performance.

In a lab filled with screens of data readouts of the current weather conditions, an old man watches. With slumped shoulders, he's white haired, bent and coughs hard and raw. Very sick. He makes a promise to at last find someone in a photo before him. A photo of him and his wife, long ago on his wedding day.

At night, Nick sits in a female strip club. He's now shaved, his chin scar, ragged. On stage is Sabrina or Rini as she's now called. Hair now teased out, with garish makeup and a snake tattoo coiled around her naval. She demonstrates her sensual dancing skills, proficient now as she was in ballet. A tanked-up spectator gropes Sabrina's leg. Sabrina smashes her spiked heel into his mouth. Nick then pummels the drunk, silly. Patrons ask about 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 to Nick's throat. He throws 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 Sabrina, with a lengthy resume of past criminal activity.

In their bedroom, bearded Nick combs Sabrina's hair. Rain and wind howls outside. Lightning and thunder flash and explode. Sabrina asks why Nick has to rush back to work. The walls rumble and shake, before their bedroom window crashes open from a vicious gust of wind.

Clean shaven Nick enters their beach house with a brown bag. At the bedroom stairs he finds Brian coming down. Nick glares in suspicion. Smells his wife's scent on Brian. Nick pulls a gun from the bag. Tells Brian when he's done with her, he's coming for him.

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

Nick enters the bedroom. Rini is in only a nightshirt. Nick tries to shoot her, as the same window crashes apart from the storm. Rini's knocked out through the window. Nick leaps after her.

On the beach, wind rips away a piece of wood Nick and Sabrina are nailing down. Nick rushes through the storm. Sabrina looks up just in time to see-- a bolt of lightning strike Nick head on. He collapses---

As Nick, a moment later, overtakes Rini outside in the storm. Nick arches his gun at her head. Just as the same thunder and lightning, now from the opposite direction blasts into him. Nick, again, falls senseless.

Act 2

Nick wakes in a hospital bed. A doctor tells him he's been unconscious for a week. Nick sees a policeman outside his door, who enters and declares Nick under arrest, for the attempted murder of his wife. Nick is dumbstruck, and now nauseous. In the bathroom, he's attacked by Rini, wielding a knife. She slashes his neck—till Rini's hit with the door by a large patient, outside. Nick scrambles out, holding his throat.

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

Later, Nick's back in bed, his throat wound being sewn up. The police ask repeatedly who attacked him, and how did they get away? Nick has no idea.

Outside Nick's room, a slumped man in a suit appears. White bearded. The shadowy figure from the lab. He's Raynor Mifflin, Nick's state appointed counsel. The police let him pass. Nick doesn't want his services. Mifflin asks for the room alone to talk. The police cuff Nick's arm to the bed, then exit.

Mifflin confirms the truth for Nick: Struck by lightning, Nick has left the world he knew. By accidentally crossing over within a random merging of the "Dualixis" phenomena. In other words, exchanging places with an "echo" variation of himself.

Nick's been transposed into a reality where everything looks the same, but is a reverse echo of our universe. Where events and personalities are altered or even reversed. Mifflin affirms that both Nicks are consciously linked now, able to see learn what the other's experienced.

According to Mifflin, as he now introduces himself, they are in the fifth of a six-day temporary merge with the "echo realm", also accounting for the bizarre weather. The merge has opened up a web of passages between realms which Nick was caught in-- all which was conjured up by the Ekoris Stone-- The same artifact that's been in Nick's keeping within his museum.

Mifflin theorizes it might be possible to reopen the passage Nick entered and return him, along with his alternate self, Nic. All before Nick is preyed upon by Rini, the criminally deranged echo dual of his wife, to carry out her 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 his Sabrina.

Rini regroups with echo Kelly and Pete, another thug. They're met by echo Brian. Rini knows he's in police custody now, so she wants to try something else. She wants to poison him. Slowly.

Later that afternoon, federal agents who owe Mifflin a few favors, drive Nick to Mifflin's lab.

Time is crucial. They now have less than twenty-four hours to return Nick, while the dualixis remains open. Nick inquires how Mifflin knows so much about the ekoris stone. Thirty-six years prior, Mifflin himself was a victim of the dualixis merge, exchanged into the current realm they are in now, and has been desperately looking for a way to return back to his beloved wife, Jennie.

But Mifflin has been able to speak to his wife—in dreams. And he knows Nick can also do so with Sabrina. As the dualixis confluences happen randomly, this might be Nick's last and only chance. Still, there's hope: The passages between realms sustain life and self-heal physical trauma. Soon after, Nick has a full mental exchange with echo Nick. They're now aware of one another.

Their first task—To switch Nick back, they will need to harness the same spell in both locations where he and his echo self last stood. Mifflin drops the bomb: they'll also need the *second* ekoris stone. Yes, a duplicate stone that exists in the opposite realm. Nick must speak to his Sabrina via their dreams, and *must get her to somehow work with the criminal Nic* she's now with: to break into his museum and take the stone! While here, he and Mifflin will apprehend the stone present with them. Simple.

That night in Mifflin's home, Nick speaks with Sabrina in his dreams, telling her what's happened, and what now needs to be done. She wakes, in utter disbelief. What in the hell is going on?

The next morning, a very nervous Sabrina arrives at the hospital to visit echo Nic. He says he's being released today. When he turns to her, Sabrina 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 just a dream the night before, till she recalls Nick's 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, giggles, but Sabrina reveals it all: the weather, the stones, the spells, two worlds with two of them each. How Nic was exchanged with her own Nick. Nic nods, grinning, pacifying her. Sabrina tells him her Nick has asked for his help here, getting the stone and using it to return him home. She then reveals her stomach, with no trace of any tattoo.

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

Back to his house, he finds Rini asleep. Trying to wake her, she attacks him with a blade to his throat. He begs to sit and talk. Rini agrees, making coffee and poisoning Nick's mug. He tries to convince her how her real husband and him have been switched. She asks how he grew a beard so quick. He shows his scar on the other side of his face. She toasts to Nick's poisoned glass. About to drink, Nick tells her he can prove to show her the truth, if she helps him break into the museum to steal the stone, worth far more than his own twenty-eight million. Rini pauses at this, curiosity peaked. She pushes away his mug.

Nick drives them to the museum. They're followed by echo Brian, Kelly and Pete. Waiting in the parking lot for the late-night guard change, Rini, exhausted, falls asleep. Nick waits. Soon closes his eyes.

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.

Nick wakes in Mifflin's truck. His arms tied. Rini straddles him, holding her knife. She asks if he really expected her to believe his bullshit? 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? Waving her blade, Nick tells her to cut away, if it would bring back his Sabrina. Rini's loves this passion. She wants Nick to show her the love he'd give to Sabrina. She kisses Nick. Nick fights. Will not give in. Rini tells him his beard has to go. With her knife, she dry shaves Nick's face. Car lights appear. The guard-change. Rini cuts Nick's bonds. They prep to move out ...

Sabrina and echo Nic, inside the museum. Echo Nic works Nick's fingerprint ID scan. They enter the storage room. Searching for the stone. Nothing. A knock at the door reveals a familiar face: Mifflin. Echo Mifflin, that is. He's now holding the other 2nd ekoris stone ...

In the museum parking lot, Rini takes out the new guard. Nick takes his uniform. Entering, Rini takes out two more sentries, snatching their guns and a taser. Nick leads them to the storage room. They find the 1st 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.

Back in the parallel reality, echo Mifflin is a hard-time convict, who, like the prime Mifflin's waited thirty-six years for this merge. He wants revenge on his mentally unstable wife, for her attempted murders on him. And on prime Mifflin, who he blames for exiling him in this echo world, trapped all these years. He's now come for the stone, and he means to use it.

Nic and Sabrina exit the museum, pushed on by echo Mifflin at gunpoint. The guard, Eddie is shot in the arm by echo Mifflin. Nic grabs Eddie, takes his gun, holding Eddie at gunpoint. Echo Mifflin retreats with the stone to his vehicle. Opening it, a banged up haggard Kelly rushes out-- The echo Kelly, Mifflin's kept captive. She tackles Mifflin, grabbing from him the stone. Running off, Mifflin guns her down, as Kelly drops the stone before Sabrina and dies. Mifflin fires on Nic, killing Eddie, still held as a shield ...

Brian, now accused of the affair with Sabrina and seeing his best friend murder his work partner, runs off in confusion. He returns moments later driving a car. Sabrina, now with the stone, gets in. They take off. Mifflin takes Nic at gunpoint. Nic knows they're headed back home, where it all began.

As Brian drives, Sabrina tells him she'll have a breakdown if she's got to repeat it all again. Brian understands, he once had to do the same repeating what happened when his fiancé passed away. Sabrina's mobile phone rings. It's echo Nic, pointing out how she needs him present at the big moment to get her own Nick back. Sabrina, hangs up. She explains to Brian all that's happened.

Now in the early morning hours, Rini, echo Brian, echo Kelly and Pete sit with Mifflin in a diner, having breakfast. No sign of Nick. Mifflin says there's under an hour left till the dualixis closes, shouldn't they check on the stone, along with Nick tied up out in the car trunk? Rini, enjoying her newfound superiority, decides to admit to Kelly of her affair with Brian. Kelly reacts, eyeing Brian with disgust. But Mifflin perks up now. Brian admits to it all, telling Kelly he never meant to hurt her.

Kelly unexpectedly laughs. She admits Brian couldn't hurt her if he tried. Brian looks on, confused. So does Rini. Mifflin drops another 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 runs to check the parking lot. When he returns. He confirms Nick's gone. Pete tosses Nick's wallet and a set of keys to Rini, that Nick dropped. Rini ruffles through it, finding the folded news page prime Brian gave him earlier on the train. Revealing how Nick inherited twenty-eight million. Rini realizes this Nick here is rich. She draws her knives, backs away along with Pete, who makes to kill Kelly.

Echo Brian tackles Pete to the ground. Brian's then pierced in the heart by Rini's throwing knives. Rini and Pete race out of the diner. Mifflin tries to help dying Brian, but it's too late. He dies. Mifflin has the diner manager call the police. He and Kelly will go after Rini to the beach house. Forty minutes left.

Act 3

In the echo realm Nick arrives at the beach house, carrying the ekoris stone. The lightning, thunder, rain and wind build. He unwraps the stone in the living room, overlooking the beach.

Sabrina and Brian arrive at the beach house. KA-BOOM crashes the thunder. Inside, they also place the stone down in the living room. Within it, she now sees an image—of her Nick. She knows Nick may be able to interact clearer as the merge boundary becomes thinnest. Only twenty minutes—Just as echo Nic enters the room, along with echo Mifflin. Brian rushes at him ...

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

Kelly drives Mifflin, now on his mobile phone with Nick. He's bleeding, shot by one of Pete's bullets. Less than fifteen minutes now. He tells Nick he doesn't think he'll make it.

Echo Nic clobbers Brian with a light fixture. He goes down next to Sabrina. Nic asks Mifflin to shoot Sabrina. Echo Mifflin tells them they're all going back where they belong in a few minutes. And the moment they go back, Mifflin will deal with his echo self at last.

Nic draws out the taser he's kept hidden, using it on Mifflin, snatching his gun. As Nic's about to shoot Mifflin, he's tackled by Brian. After a struggle, Nic flings him aside, then pumps three bullets in him. Sabrina leaps onto Nic's back. He fires off a shot, but not before Sabrina's legs tangle him to the floor, spinning the taser away. Nic aims at Sabrina's head, fires—JAM! Nic spins the barrel.

ONE bullet left. He empties the gun chamber to reload it. Sabrina levels a kick to his gut. Nic drops the bullet. Sabrina swipes it up. They trade blows to the head and waist, into the kitchen. Nic lands dirty chops on Sabrina, but Sabrina recovers and downs him with an uppercut and knee crack combo.

Nic stumbles as Sabrina tosses the bullet into the kitchen sink, then turns the water on. Nic grabs a sink counter rolling pin, wedging it in the trap pipe under the sink, breaking it open. Nic cracks Sabrina in the gut, doubling her over. He turns off the tap, then searches in the water under the sink. Finds nothing.

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

In the echo realm: Prime Nick stands before the stone, ready to use it-- Till a knife blade suddenly protrudes through his back. From Rini behind him. She'll take his twenty-eight million right off his hands.

She drags Nick from the stone, forcing him to crawl back to it. As he does, Pete steps on his fingers. Mifflin and Kelly arrive last. Kelly rushes to Nick as prime Mifflin shoves Rini aside, away from Nick. In her face, Mifflin 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, to place both his hands. Just in time—

The ethereal passage within the dualixis opens in many-hued layer 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 in the same time--

Kelly rushes to kneel with dying Brian. Echo Nic sees prime Nick, gasping, the knife in his back. He smashes a fireplace poker over his throat to finish him.

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

Echo Mifflin rushes prime Mifflin, drawing a hunting knife. He halts in his tracks. Someone’s in his way. An old woman, whose eyes flash with sheer madness. Echo Mifflin’s wife. She holds a long-handled axe.

Nick, nearly expired, reaches for the fallen taser, shoving it into echo Nic’s throat. Sabrina drags him off. Nearby, echo Mifflin cowers under his wife. With a scream her axe comes down hard.

Prime Mifflin smashes one ekoris stone into the other, causing a destructive energy ripple. A whine begins quickly rising. Mifflin yells out a warning that the merge is closing. Everyone must remain still.

Kelly hugs Brian. Sabrina cradles dying Nick in her arms. But Pete shakes in a panic. As the whine round them screams., Pete grabs echo Nick hard, trying to drag him away. Too late. They both are swallowed up by a folding corner of the dualixis. The whine becomes an ear-splitting screech, then blackness falls.

And then ... They’re outside on the beach at night. The storms are gone. It’s cold December weather. No thunder or lightning, but 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 yet sure who’s who. Sabrina reveals her tummy. No tattoo. She checks Nick’s beard stubble. His scar is on the correct side. Nick reminds her how the merge heals physical trauma. Wishing each other a Happy New Year, Millenia, and 1st year anniversary, they slide into a tender kiss.

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

Raynor Mifflin approaches the quiet, misty lake where he was parted from his wife, Jenny, thirty-six years before, hit by a bolt of lightning. Now 36 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.