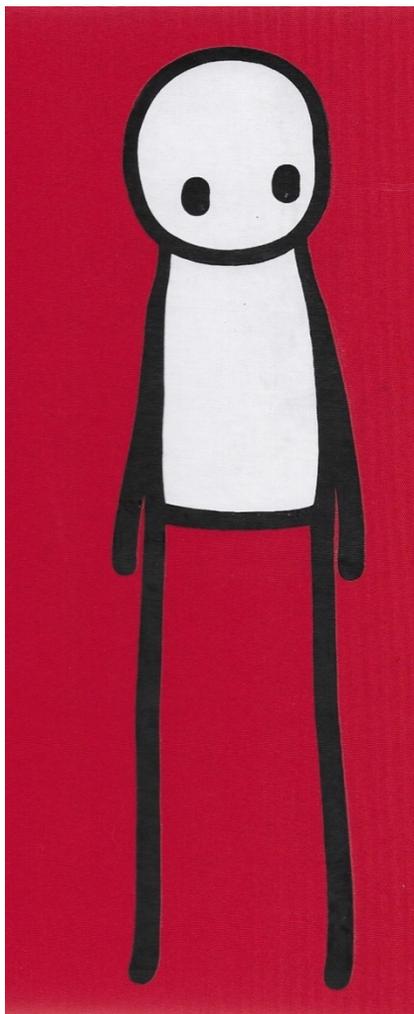


Nicholas Raithe



1/2 hr. surreal serial SciFi black comedy TV series

based on the short story collection *Geometric Cemetery* by Robert Lawson

developed for television
by
Robert Lawson & Sam Huntington

James Roday and Julianna Guill, producers

**Aliens always seem to come to Earth to conquer it.
But what if there were aliens who just wanted to vacation here?**

Logline

A coming of age story about a lowly alien product tester who – after falling in love with a human woman – decides he wants to fundamentally change his life, but finds it's not so easy to escape who he is, the system he's bought into... and the aliens he's working for.

1st Day on Planet Earth

We begin in outer space, hovering over the Earth, in a slow, imperceptible orbit. The blue planet looms below, dotted with white, puffy clouds. Suddenly, what looks like a communications satellite spins across our field of vision and –

– *FLASH* –

We're in a bathroom in an apartment in Bushwick, Brooklyn where we find Nicholas Raithe, standing atop the toilet, a bit perplexed by where he finds himself. Not just the fact that he's *standing* on the toilet, more like, "*why am I in this bathroom?*"

Everything seems to be a novelty to him. He looks at the shower, nods in recognition – but it's as if someone has described showers, but Nick hasn't actually ever seen one. As he explores the rest of the apartment, it's the same with everything – the furniture, the objects, the light. Even his own body seems novel : the way his hands work, the way his voice sounds, what he looks like in a mirror.

There's a knock at the door. Even turning the doorknob seems to be a novelty for Nick. He's greeted by the woman from across the hall : Betiste Kuhikuhi. She's kind of awkward, and weird, and awesome. An interesting, wonderful person. Nick is immediately taken with her. We also meet her chihuahua, Scharfy, who not only likes Nick (the feeling's mutual), but also finds Nick's bathroom something out of the ordinary...

With seemingly nothing else to do, Nick follows Betiste out onto the street. This is Nick's first taste of the diversity and intensity of New York City, and it's glorious. He loves every second. They head over to the local coffee shop – Jack's Joint.

Betiste has recently broken up with her boyfriend, and as the morning progresses, she opens up more about the break up.

"We just drifted apart..."

Then a strange sound fills the air – a kind of electrical hum. And the light FLARES, causing Nick and Betiste to squint momentarily.

Neither of them knows what it is. Betiste checks her phone on the table - nope, not that.

Then we hear a sound like paper tearing... A crack has appeared in the table top. Weird.

But it's more weird than that : the crack has also sliced into a nearby book... and the book hasn't budged. It's like the crack has taken a bite out of the book – consumed part of it. Betiste is about to say something when – as they watch – the crack expands a bit more, nibbling another bite out of the book.

If such a thing can be said to have a character, then this is a polite crack, apologetic even, as if it's saying *"Sorry. Nothing personal."* As they watch, the little fissure expands again, taking another bite out of the book.

When they get to the street, things rapidly worsen. Fissures appear in the roads, in buildings and sidewalks, with more perking into life by the moment.

And like the book, instead of everything tumbling down earthquake-style - - the metal of automobiles, the blacktop, the glass in shop windows – everything is simply, by degrees, ceasing to be, digested by an ever growing network of fissures in the fabric of the world.

All around, people are standing in mute horror as buildings, streets, cars, signs, windows – as everything in the physical world is, by fits and starts, devoured by an ever multiplying spiderweb of fissures. Then the panic sets in. People run, but they can't escape the phenomenon. Nick also panics, but has even less of a clue what to do, how to act. Even when Betiste teeters on the edge of a fissure, Nick seems at odds as to what to do : run to her? run away? do nothing? He looks around to get a sense of what to do, but there's no clear answer : some people help others, some save their own skins, some just scream.

Then, for a few moments, **we shift to what looks like a drone POV**, looking down at Nick from above. So in addition to the ongoing apocalypse, who the hell is doing *that??*

Then we're back with Nick, as a shearing sound draws his attention to the ground, where a crack is nosing its way up the sidewalk.

As Nick watches, the crack pauses - - but after what seems like a momentary hesitation, the crack glides clear through Nicholas's shoe, separating toes from the foot proper.

Nicholas doesn't cry out. Apparently it's a painless process, these world gobbling fissures. Amazed and on the verge of losing his sanity, Nick manages to tug at Betiste's sleeve. When she sees what's happened, she screams!

Then there's Another Electric Hum. The world is bathed in a blinding white light...

NICK'S EYES SNAP OPEN. And when he realizes where he is, he's really discombobulated : he's right back where he was before the earthquakes, sitting with Betiste in Jack's Joint. And Betiste is acting like nothing weird happened.

In fact, the whole world has been reset, and is once again right as rain.

What's Really Happening (to be teased out over Seasons 1 & 2)

Nicholas Raithe is from the planet Pachinko 4 in the Sombrero galaxy in the constellation Virgo. More precisely, he's an alien consciousness that's been implanted in a brand new, untested, greenhouse-grown, replicated human form complete with all the basics : brain, organs, senses, emotions (Nick's real body is in "Proxy Box" mini-storage). Now, since everything is brand new, Nick's kind of like a newborn baby... but in an adult body, and with an alien mind.

Nick is a Product Tester – and the product he's testing is the human shell his consciousness has been placed in. He's being monitored every step of the way by alien product developers who are stationed in a spaceship disguised as a communications satellite orbiting Earth. They all work for **Extra-Planetary Travels** headed by an alien version of Rick Steves. The stated goal is to perfect human shells as a vessel for other alien consciousnesses, as a way for tourists to visit Earth as a destination vacation.

Nick's job is the backbone of the series. And this is not Nick's first pony ride – he's done it before on different planets with different species (in later seasons, we'll see some of that in flashbacks). So Nick is used to the basic system of the gig : he's put in a shell, placed on a planet where his job is to experience what it's like on that world.

Stress Tests

He's also subjected to a series of "stress tests" (1 each episode) by the alien product developers to see how the replicated shell responds, all with an eye to product improvement. These tests take the form of a very real feeling hallucination. They might be

illusions of extreme weather or other natural phenomena (like the fissures in the pilot); or sensory & emotional alterations (like Nick thinks he's blind, or completely alone in the world).

When Nick or someone around him falls prey to the pitfalls of being human, there's an electromagnetic pulse and strange things start to happen. What's going on is that the aliens are actualizing that human experience into a physical phenomenon. For instance, in the pilot, the language of relationship break ups is transformed into literal earthquakes. The possibilities are endless.

But not only do these tests put Nick's physical & mental shell through its paces, they test (and shape) his ethical being. Just as in the pilot, when Nick was at odds with what to do – should he help? run away? do nothing? – Nick is always puzzling out what the Human thing would be to do, and he encounters a wide array of what being “human” is, from bad behavior to self sacrifice.

So the formation of Nick as a unique human being is an important lynchpin of the series.

Resetting the World

At the conclusion of each episode, a reverse electromagnetic pulse terminates the hallucination. We reset to the moment right before the pulse that kicked off the phenomenon, and everyone's memory of the event has been wiped clean... Everyone except Nick. Because his job is to relay his findings to the product developers, he has total recall of what transpired in the hallucination. And even though he knows the events weren't real, he remembers everything – including every emotion.

But Nick's Gig on Earth is Different

In past gigs, it was just Nick's personal shell that was being tested. Here on Earth, everyone around him is being tested as well. It turns out that there's a good reason for that (which gets revealed in Season 2). And even though the world is reset at the end of every test, and no one (but Nick) remembers what happened, this change in the normal paradigm piques Nick's curiosity.

The other thing that happens, much to his surprise, is that Nick gradually becomes more & more human, ceasing to be just a guy doing a gig for a paycheck. A big reason for this is that Nick falls in love with Betiste – and this changes everything.

Sensory Overload

Since Nick is new to planet Earth, everything hits him with great vigor. Emotions are undiluted, and all the five senses are hyper acute. So one thing **the series explores is the full range of the human experience** – how strange it is, how beautiful and horrific, confusing, unsettling, heartbreaking and exhilarating.

Nick also has a turbocharged curiosity, so **another aspect of the series is social satire** as Nick burrows into the craziness of contemporary life, pop culture, devices, the constant barrage of news, social media, Instagram and Snapchat, politics, religion – – you name it.

The Series Dissects What It Means To Be Human

And that in essence we're all beta testing our own lives... and there is no 2.0. So in its deep heart, *Nicholas Raithe* is about the **fragility of the things we rely on**, be it ourselves, others, or the world. About how things can change or disappear without warning, logic or intention.

That said, **the series is infused with a deadpan sense of humor and irony**. Nick replicating (or trying to replicate) social rituals alone will be a constant source of fun. But comedy will infuse every episode, whether or not the overall vibe of the day is frightening, farcical, bizarre, joyful, playful, sublime, cataclysmic or bewildering.

The World

This is a **TECHNICOLOR** world.

Since Nick's senses are all brand new, we want to create a world as if it was being experienced through Nick's eyes, ears, nerve endings. Colors are sharp, faces more expressive, smells are pungent – – everything in high relief like the volume has been turned up. Imagine Nick's first cup of coffee, his first subway ride, his first sadness. Imagine New York City squeezed through a Las Vegas lens. We introduce this idea in the pilot, when Nicholas walks out of his black & white bathroom into his brilliantly colored Ikea living room...



Then when he and Betiste walk out onto the street, we realize that this isn't just a "Nick's Apartment" anomaly. All of Brooklyn is an overstimulating wonderland —



Graffiti particularly astonishes Nick



The Sountrack of Nicholas Raithe

The music of the series should reflect the city where Nick finds himself. That is to say, the soundtrack should be super eclectic and always tasty — everything from techno to Latin to jazz, Broadway, Gospel, hip hop, trance, Tex-Mex, country, R&B, classical, Reggae, Punk, J'pop, lounge cabaret, indie rock, EDM, muzak... Start with *Show Me Love* by Aya A.K.A. Panda or *Mysth* by Feathered Sun and move on out.

Cast of Characters

Nicholas Raithe is a mid-30s white male, handsome but unassuming (think Sam Huntington).



It will be revealed that the aliens chose that body/image because research indicated that this type of human experiences the highest level of privilege and inherent ease when interacting with others on this particular planet.

When we first meet him, Nick is like Chance in *Being There*. He's open, un-self-conscious, curious, unburdened by social barriers, endearing. Something like a Berlitz primer on languages, customs and history has been downloaded into his brain, but these basic tools are only the rudiments. He's got a lot to learn, and **one of the pleasures of the series is watching Nicholas learn how to act human**. Add to it that sometimes, parts of his 'shell' comically malfunction...

Nick bears a resemblance to Andy Warhol. The reason is that, over the years, the Pachinko Scientists have sent probes to Earth to do reconnaissance, and along the way collected DNA for ease of cloning in order to facilitate their experiments. Nick's job description entails not drawing attention to himself, but looking like Andy Warhol doesn't help. And what with his brand new body, brain and senses – and the fact that he's unschooled in the strange rituals of human civilization – Nick can't help but stick out. People tend to find him eccentric, or assume he's on the spectrum.

As the series progresses, Nick acquires depth, discovers emotions, becomes more engaged, more human – – and as he discovers the pleasures & pains of love. He even comes to understand what humor is, and why people find him funny.

Betiste Kuhikuhi

The sometimes awkward computer programmer and tech geek who lives across the hall from Nick. Think Alia Shawkat.



In her 30s, Betiste works for CS▪4▪All, a company that manufactures communication satellites (CS). She's friendly, finds Nicholas quirky, charming – and a bit mysterious, but in a good way. She broke up with her boyfriend not too long ago, and he keeps texting her. But she's destined to fall in love with Nicholas, and he with her.

She also starts having strange dreams, that are actually remnant fragments of the mass hallucinations. The truth is that the dreams Betiste is having are being "infused" by the alien product designers to see how Nick will respond. *(Nick not knowing what's real and what's an infusion will be a fertile series element)*

Scharfy — Betiste's chihuahua.



Scharfy has a 6th sense about Nicholas – and finds something curious about Nick's bathroom. Scharfy goes in there any chance he gets. What Scharfy doesn't know is that the bathroom is actually Nick's communication hub, where he makes contact with his alien bosses via the mirror.

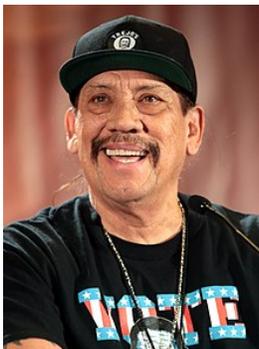
The series also relies on **A Variety of Other Characters** — some of whom recur, like Jack, the proprietor of Jack's Joint, best coffee in town and finger on the pulse of the neighborhood.

Then there are the inhabitants of Nick’s apartment building & the neighborhood. Other characters make one-off appearances, both in Nick’s “home” turf and in other more distant locations, depending on the scenario at hand – all of which will provide ample opportunities for guest stars.

Diversity

We want the technicolor vibe of the world to carry through into casting.

This should be a super diverse world with a strikingly vast range of skin colors, clothing, styles, shapes, sizes, personalities — a glorious diversity of human beings - - New York City on steroids. This isn’t an add-on, but part of the basic fabric of the series...



This diversity will be one of the things that really strikes the aliens – in part because, whatever they look like, the aliens are homogenous. Betiste will be Nick’s first experience of the diversity he is about to experience.

Then there are the dogs. Nick is ever astonished by the diversity of dogs...



On a variety of occasions, Nick finds himself confiding to various dogs – who always listen in rapt attention.

Continuing Episodes

EPISODE 2: Shiny New Toys

In this episode, we get a taste of Betiste at work at CS▪4▪All. Turns out they’re tracking a satellite that’s not theirs, and seems to be in an odd orbit... Meanwhile, as Nick continues to explore NYC, he witnesses a young couple obsessively BUYING THINGS – his first taste of rampant consumerism.



At Macy's, Nick finds out how seductive buying stuff is, and ends up purchasing 20 bottles of perfume. He even discovers he has a flat aluminum rectangle (issued from Galactic Bank & Trust) that – much to both Nick and the salesperson's surprise – turns out to be a credit card. Nick finds this magic money absolutely delightful.

But then a flash sale turns nasty as people vie for product. Another electromagnetic hum kicks off a new phenomenon, and **people are transformed into animals...** At the end of the episode, the world is reset, though the dark side of consumerism has unsettled Nick.

Before we go out, Nick rolls up his sleeve and we see that just below the surface of the skin on his wrist is a faintly pulsing red rectangle. Okay, that's weird enough. But when he starts talking to it, we're really wondering who the hell this guy is.

EPISODE 3 : Cupid Overdrive

We find Nick at his bathroom mirror, naked. It's like he's seeing his body for the first time. And what's that thing dangling down there? Then Nick looks up at the mirror, like he just heard something. After a beat, he says "Okay" and heads out. We're thinking Nick's maybe got a screw loose .

Nick runs into Betiste, and she tells him she's been having these super vivid crazy dreams. She recounts sketchy memories of earthquakes and animals. This piques Nick's curiosity, so they go back to Jack's Joint. While they're having coffee, Betiste notices the red glow on Nick's wrist. Nick tells her that since he needs to take notes while he's product testing, he had a mini-SD chip recorder implanted under the skin. Then he's able to download the files via Bluetooth – bio-hacking. It's a completely convincing explanation.

Betiste's reaction is unexpected : she tells him it's amazingly cool, didn't realize he was a tech geek too! They bond. There's even a little romantic spark. Then there's another electromagnetic hum... Another phenomenon boots up in which **love spreads everywhere**, so much so that there's finally world peace. When the world is RESET, and things go back to normal, an argument out on the street reminds Nick that love alone *doesn't* make the world go 'round.

EPISODE 4 : Floradora

This episode starts off with Nick talking to Scharfy. They're in Nick's bathroom, Scharfy sitting on the closed toilet lid. Betiste has run out of dog food, and Nick's Scharfy-sitting until she gets back. Scharfy listens as Nick tells him that he finds being human confusing, both compelling and disturbing; that where he comes from, emotions aren't nearly so intense... and that he thinks he's falling in love with Betiste.

Then Scharfy's ears prick up, and he yips at the mirror. Once again, Nick listens, then talks to the mirror – – unaware that Betiste has returned and is standing outside the bathroom, listening. When she asks Nick who he was talking to, he says he was talking to Scharfy – who barks back in denial. This puts Betiste off : Nick's not a very good liar.



As Nick continues to lie his way out of the situation, there's another electromagnetic hum... and **vegetation starts to grow unnaturally**. At first it's cool – Central Park is amazing. But then the out of control vegetation starts to block out the sun, brings the world to a standstill, and strangles all living things.

After the RESET, Nick apologizes to Betiste for not telling the truth before, tells her he can't tell her everything because of his work – which isn't really a lie. Betiste forgives him. Then tells him she has this strange urge to get rid of all her house plants. Nick helps, and now we really sense that there's a blooming romance between the two of them.

EPISODE 5 : Babel

Next morning, Nick knocks on Betiste's door, head over heels in love. Actually he's kind of obsessed – like an adolescent's first love. He overwhelms Betiste, wants to spend every moment with her. She likes him, but she's not there yet, and she asks him for some space. Nick is crushed, and like any adolescent, and he storms off to (sarcastically) "give her some space."

There's another electromagnetic hum... and as Nick fumes his way through the neighborhood, we notice on billboards and posters that **the spaces between words are disappearing** – the words sliding over, turning the language into nonsense. The

phenomenon expands to books, text messages, e-mails, online. Then spaces disappear in spoken language as well, making communication impossible. All of this has dire consequences – –

Then the world is RESET, back to the moment Nick was fuming on the sidewalk, after the misunderstanding with Betiste. He realizes he overreacted, and decides to go back and play it differently, give Betiste the “space” he now understands she needs. — **But she’s gone.** Nick’s disappointment is acute, and we can see that Nick is becoming more and more human by the day.



EPISODE 6 : Remembrance of Nothing Past, part 1 – Betiste

At first seen in what looks like drone footage, Betiste leaves by the back door to the apartment house, in order to avoid running into Nick (*we don't know it, but it's the aliens who have expanded their surveillance*).

A moment later, Betiste – like Nick – decides she wants to fix the misunderstanding they had. But when she knocks on Nick’s door, there’s no answer. She wonders if she was too hard on him; after all, he is like a child sometimes. She goes to Jack’s Joint, but Jack hasn’t seen Nick. Then Betiste berates herself : this is what it’s always like. She gets involved with the oddballs, then blames herself. Her heart aches. She wishes they’d never met, would be happy to forget Nick.

There’s an electromagnetic hum... and on the TV, it’s announced that there’s been a solar flare of enormous proportions. In short order, a massive electrical storm arrives. At first, it produces amazing northern lights. But quickly, there are more extreme repercussions as computer hard drives get erased, phones blank out, Wall Street crashes. Then **a plague of amnesia hits the city** – an erasure of the human hard drive – and soon Betiste has indeed forgotten about Nick... along with everything else.



EPISODE 7 : Remembrance of Nothing Past, part 2 – Nick

Nick's in pain. Back on the street, a stray starts to follow Nick, and he picks up some treats, feeds the hungry mutt and tells her his troubles. This provides a little solace. But the pain and confusions of love have Nick wishing he'd never met Betiste – just as she did with him.

There's an electromagnetic hum... and when he returns home, Betiste is gone. Not moved : **it's as if Betiste never existed**. Someone else lives in her apartment. Scharfy is gone. Jack has no memory of her. Nick is frantic.

This RESET takes us to the moment Nick & Betiste parted ways. This time, they both return to the apartment hallway at the same time. Like any new couple, they bumble their way through apologies and excuses, but thankfully end up rebooting their relationship.

EPISODE 8 : Boundary Markers

Since people keep remarking on how Nick reminds them of Andy Warhol, he buys a bunch of prints and puts them up in his apartment, stares at them. Nick wonders what makes art Art...



Then his phone pings a notification. It's Betiste, posting about her & Nick on social media, another new thing for Nick. Curious about the need to make things so public, he starts to notice everyone does it, unspooling their lives in public. Nick tries his hand with a few postings that strike Betiste as eccentric. They argue about the value of social media.

Then there's an electromagnetic hum... and just as the boundaries of the private & public have become uncertain, **the boundaries between things in the physical world start to dissolve**. It becomes hard to know where your hand ends and the cup you're holding begins. People start to blur into their surroundings.



After the RESET, Betiste closes her Facebook account. But now her feelings about odd goings-on has gotten more acute. And it's not just dreams – she's getting the feelings in broad daylight. She has the distinct feeling that Nick knows something. She presses Nick on his past, where he comes from. And what he really does : like exactly what products does Nicholas test, and how?

Then Betiste gets a notification from work : CS-4-All is sending up a robot capsule to check on that rogue satellite they detected, and they need her help. *Uh oh*. Betiste has to run, asks Nick to feed Scharfy and take him for a walk; they'll talk later.

The episode ends with Nick & Scharfy in the bathroom staring at the mirror.

EPISODE 9 : Such Sweet Sorrow

There's a lot going on, and Nick is in a tizzy. He takes Scharfy out for a walk. Down the block across the street, the mutt Nick was feeding earlier spots Nick and runs across the street. A moment later, she's hit by a car. Nick cries out — A moment later, there's another electromagnetic hum...

Nick carries the poor mutt to a vacant lot, and Nick & Scharfy bury her. In short order, **the neighborhood is overtaken with all kinds of grief**. What with all this sadness, a bleak fog rolls

in, isolating everyone in their pain. The fog fills with sorrowful wails. Then Betiste appears through the fog, finds Nick who weeps in her arms.

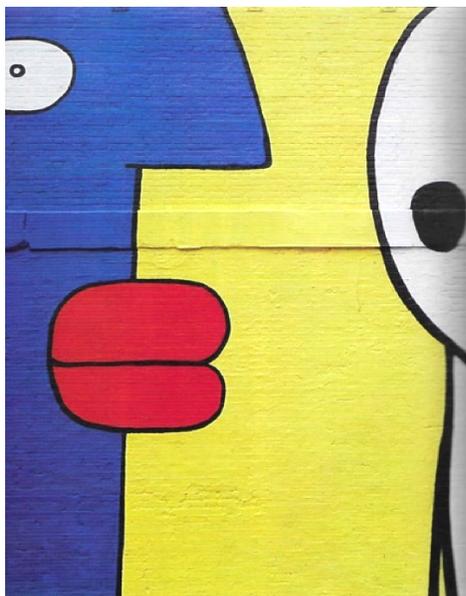
When the world is RESET, Nick looks for the mutt, certain that her death was part of the hallucination. But it wasn't : she died before the electromagnetic hum, so there's no resetting it. Nick's heart is broken.

EPISODE 10, season finale : A Matter of Gravity

Betiste, Scharfy & Nick make a sidewalk shrine for the mutt. Nick's grief draws him & Betiste closer together. They really are in love. They go out on the town, feeling that weightless feeling of new love.

True to form, there's an electromagnetic hum... after which **gravity starts to lessen**. At first, the result is fun – the pleasure of things being lighter, of kids hopping around like they're on the moon. Some people start nailing things down, tying gym weights to their shoes, but actually that's fun too. A few things float up out of reach and keep going, but nothing dire.

Feeling the joy of the world, and of love, Nick comes clean about who he is, what his work is – even what the "product" is that he's testing; why the phenomena are happening. It all sounds like a wonderful fairy tale, and Betiste thinks it's just Nick being the crazy endearing Nick she's grown to love. Nick insists, kind of. To Betiste, it doesn't matter. After all, whether he's a fabulist or not, Nick is the nicest being – alien or otherwise – she's ever met. And isn't love LOVE no matter what? And aren't there all kinds of love? It's a great big world out there. Maybe it's a great big cosmos as well.



Nick & Betiste go to Nick's and make love... in mid-air. Nick is surprised by things his body does naturally, how it responds to stimuli without prodding or thought – – the instincts that are bred in the bone, *de facto* parts of his DNA, part of the same stuff that makes him look like Andy Warhol. He even tells Betiste he's thinking of taking up painting.

Then everything and everyone starts to lift off the planet. Even buildings unmoor from the Earth. Floating in the air, people give in to the joy of no gravity, discard their daily concerns,. Clouds are fun. But then, as they pass through the stratosphere and the air thins, Nick & Betiste hold onto one another. *Is this the end??*

Then there's an electrical hum... and Nick reappears in a strange, vast, spherical room.

There is an observation hatch. After a moment, the Earth comes into view.

We're in orbit.

Season 2 & beyond

It turns out that what Nick told Betiste is the truth.

We meet the Product Developers, and Nick is put through a battery of tests to check his shell for wear & tear. It also turns out that they're not just testing him, they're testing the whole species to see what it's like when groups of humans interact, especially under duress.

They inform Nicholas that his home planet of Pachinko 4 is dying. The aliens are not just travel agents, but are working for the Pachinkan government to determine a hospitable place for them to implant & stay. Permanently. Earth is looking like a good candidate, so they're expecting a massive influx of aliens who will be placed on the planet in various shells.

How many are we talking about? Billions. On account of space and resources, it will be a clean sweep with all Earthlings who will be "displaced" into permanent Proxy Boxes and placed in storage. There the aliens plan to continue the hallucinations, but make them pleasant so the Earthlings will think they're living actual lives.

The aliens see this as assimilation, not domination. But Nick, now more human than not, knows that a Proxy Box life would never be a LIFE for humans. Certainly not for someone like Betiste, not to mention Scharfy – and the aliens have determined that non-human animals are non-essential.

The aliens don't get it. They've tested the world, but not understood what it really is to BE human. In fact, after analyzing the results of Nick's product test, they plan on excising – from the human DNA pool – instincts that are detrimental to the species, in order to maintain peace for the aliens in their brand new shells.

Nick is returned to Earth, and now he has a big dilemma: he certainly doesn't want his civilization to die, but he can't let them essentially eliminate the human race.

Nick convinces Betiste that he is indeed an alien, and involves her in strategizing. It also turns out that Nick speaks Dog, and Scharfy is revealed to be smarter than he seems, and a valuable asset.

The tests continue, but now the stakes are high. Nick tries manipulating the product developers by feeding them false information, and even tries to convince them that Earth will be a bad transplant location – that perhaps Kimchi 7 in the Triangulum Galaxy would be better. Nick's been there, so he knows what he's talking about. And besides, that species are transparent, which goes with everything.

But no one's buying it, and in short order, news comes that things on Pachinko 4 are getting worse, and the Pachinko Military-Industrial complex gets involved. Now Nick & Betiste are on a mission to save humanity!

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

How we become individuals lies at the heart of the series. Is it Nature or Nurture, or more likely some ineffable hybrid? How do circumstances shape us, and do we naturally gravitate to the dark or the light? Naturally strive to a higher state of being or lower? What makes someone live a life of value to others, while others are only out for themselves?

Nick's ongoing paradox is that he is both a human and not, a participant and not really. He is destined to be an observer, even when he is intimately involved as he is with Betiste. So actually, in that way he really IS human – ever alone, ever longing for connection : a living, breathing paradox.