



c o r d y c e p s

a f i l m b y l i z a n d e r s o n



WHAT ARE CORDYCEPS?

A group of parasitic fungi that engage in mind control by hijacking the nervous system of insect hosts.

As the fungi consume their hosts from the inside, it compels the insects to travel to a location that is most advantageous to the reproductive cycle of the fungi.

There are over 400 different species of Cordyceps, each specializing in a different kind of insect.

LOGLINE

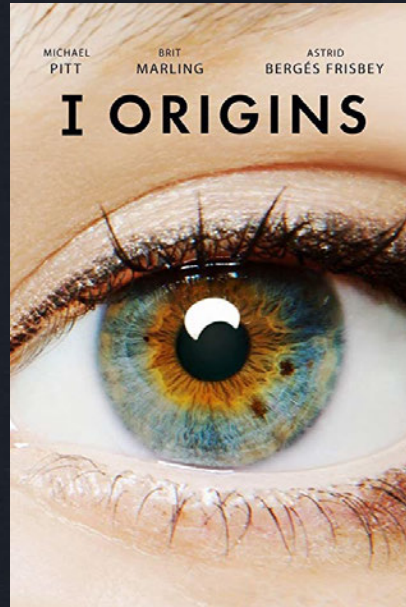
As humanity races to colonize Mars, Sola, a reclusive astrobiology student, wonders whether Mars should be “ours” for the taking. When her search for alien life inadvertently reveals that the human brain has been tampered with by an extraterrestrial intelligence, her work is elevated by power-hungry religious zealots.

Horrified, Sola must race to understand the meaning of her discovery before it’s used to drag the world back into the dark ages.



Comps

Well Researched Hard-Science Fiction



Comps

Dystopian and Absurd



SYNOPSIS

As humanity races towards colonizing Mars, doctoral candidate Sola Nes is troubled by the hubris of assuming a new world is ours for the taking. How do we know that Mars is lifeless if we can only recognize life that looks like what is found on earth?

Sola's dissidence fuels her Ph.D. thesis designing tests for the hypothetical genetic materials that might exist elsewhere in the cosmos. Not only do her tests work, but she inadvertently finds a chemical "Signal" indicating that she has detected "alien" genetic materials right here on earth, rewriting the established tree of life.

But when she discovers that this Signal is found exclusively in the human brain, and worse - it shares features with Cordyceps, a "zombifying" fungus known for puppeteering insects and leading them to their deaths, her Ph.D. advisor fires her, and promotes her work as his own. The revelation that we are not alone in our own heads stokes fear in the public and unsettles secular and theological circles alike.

When Sola discovers unambiguous evidence that the Signal is not a pathogen, but a neurological tool that has been designed by intelligent beings, she goes public in a shortsighted attempt to discredit her old mentor and avert a worldwide panic. The religious community latches on to her discovery as unequivocal evidence of god, and emboldened, unites to assert theocratic rule. Now untethered in a hypercapitalist world, Sola is vulnerable to exploitation, and a predatory religious group masking its true intentions steps in to support her work. It is not until they have her former mentor killed, that she realizes that she has been manipulated again.

Sola decides that the only way to mitigate the damage her discovery has done to the world is to publicly claim that her work was faked. Although her lie quells the violence, it comes at the cost of everything Sola has left. With nothing left to sustain her but the question "Why did they put the signal in us?" she decides to cure herself of the alien sequence by administering a painful and dangerous self-injection in hopes of curing herself of the alien sequence finding the truth, and revealing why this anomaly was hidden within us.

THE WORLD





THE WORLD

LATE STAGE CAPITALISM

Greed, extreme wealth disparity, academic freedom yields way to corporate sponsorship, abandoning Earth to set up a new colony on mars.

TERRA CORP

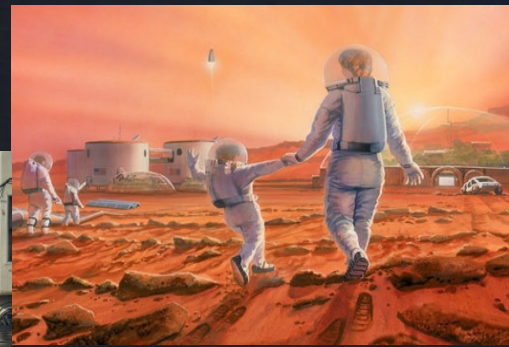
Same companies that hasten climate change are selling the "solution" – migration to Mars (if you're rich enough.) Worst offender: TerraCorp.

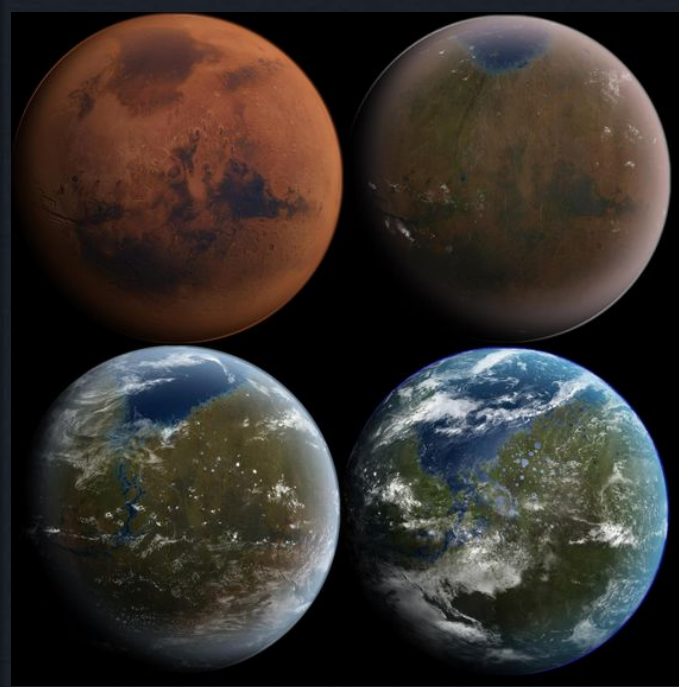
THE CHURCH OF PROSPERITY

An extremist sect of Christian fundamentalists who are working quietly under the radar to wage a well-funded war on reason, facts and rational thought.

They believe wealth and poverty are God-ordained. They function like a sleeper-cell cult, embedding members in powerful organizations. They aspire to theocratic rule.

Once they reveal themselves, they seize power quickly through violence

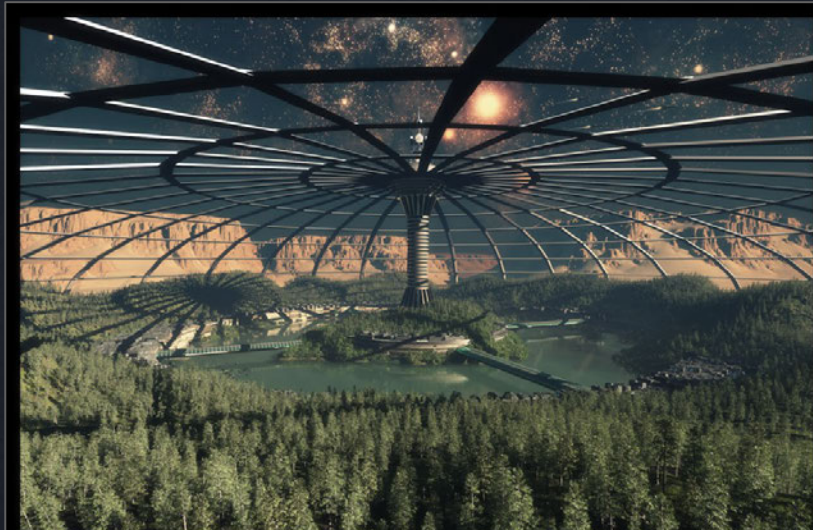




TerraCorp.

TerraCorp is an omnipresent force throughout the world, most visibly through their advertisements for luxury Martian colonies.

TerraCorp funded the first scientific colonies on Mars, paving the way for terraforming. Scientists don't dare publish work that impedes TerraCorp, lest they lose their funders.



Breathe Easy, Invest in Mars



SOLA

PROTAGONIST

Brilliant and driven, fueled by curiosity and motivated by making science that will serve as true north for the moral compass of humanity as it becomes interstellar. While Irreverent, rebellious, impatient and stubborn, what truly alienates her from her would be mentors is her unwavering commitment to finding and telling the complete unvarnished truth.

First as an army brat, until she was 8, and then as a foster youth (after both of her parents died in action), Sola was uprooted regularly and never developed deep or lasting relationships with anyone. Because of her isolation she has a very idealize perception of humanity and other people, but she has a hard time relating to individuals, until she meets Arden and Wolé.

Subconsciously Sola believes that she is fundamentally unworthy of love, but that if she can contribute a great achievement to the world, something that will benefit all of humanity, she will become worthy and gain the love and acceptance she so deeply desires. Because of this she alienates the people who love her most, because she feels she has not yet earned the right to be loved, and suspects anyone that might love her before her goal has been achieved.





ARDEN

THE SIDEKICK

Free spirited, playful and out of touch with her own privilege, Arden falls for Sola's serious nature and focused intelligence. She wants to do good in the world and sees helping Sola as a way to contribute, as well as a way to get close to her crush.

Arden's privilege isn't economic, but rather the emotional/intellectual privilege of having been "raised outside the matrix" and being less bound by the system. She grew up in a working class slum, but in a commune of radical political dissidents and artists. As a homeless visual and performing artist, she never seems to worry about where her next meal is coming from, she is a member of a large and supportive community that always has her back. While she strives to share her good fortune as much as she can, Arden does not really understand how rare and special her situation is.

Arden sees herself as a sidekick but when she sees Sola and her research being manipulated and exploited by powerful forces, she realizes that she has the power to assemble a team capable of coming to Sola's aid, but lacks the power to make Sola accept their help.

DR. REX NASHBY

MENTOR/NEMESIS – Sola's Ph.D Advisor

Insecure, arrogant, opportunistic, self serving and self aggrandizing, Rex is a one hit former scientific Wonder Kind, but now relies on his Ph.D students to do the heavy lifting. His nonchalant attitude conceals both a fear that he might be a fraud, and desperation to be relevant again. Rex is tormented by the fame and glory his formerly bested childhood nemesis is enjoying as the CEO of the world's most influential and celebrated company. He once fancied himself a boy-genius and a rebel, but once he became a professor, he quickly adopted the culture of the institution in order to stay in it's good graces. His fragile ego and need for recognition and approval make him volatile and unpredictable.

He bet on Sola back when she had a fringe idea that nobody wanted in their lab, because he saw in her the thing he once imagined himself to be. He couldn't decide weather he wanted to be with her or weather he just wanted to be her, but the possibility that her research might have the potential to damage the work of his rival lead to him giving special treatment and autonomy in his lab. He thinks of her as his protégé, but her disinterest in him always kept him at a greater distance than he would have liked. Because he gave her an opportunity (really an opportunity for himself to put his name on her work) he feels entitled to outright steal her work when the opportunity presents itself. Sola only sees that he is not the true enemy as he dies at the hands of an angry religious mob.





DR. WOLÉ PARKS

THE PATH

Wolé was once the world's most renowned parasitologist. Among his diverse body of work was a simple cure for the aquatic parasitic worm that ravaged the immune systems of children living in the intertidal slums. With a promise that they would manufacture and distribute the drug, Wolé sold it for \$1 to a pharmaceutical subsidiary of TerraCorp. who subsequently decided not to manufacture it because it would not be sufficiently profitable.

In disgust Wolé turned his home into a lab and dedicated his life to manufacturing and distributing the cure himself. But TerraCorp sued him for patent infringement, the court awarded them his house, and him, a lifelong prison sentence. An academic pariah and a wanted man Dr. Parks operates below the radar, evading the police and continuing his work along with a small army of volunteers.

He is heartened to see Sola following in what he imagines to be his footsteps, and bands together with Arden to try and save Sola from the church.

At first he serves as a cautionary tale of what happens to those who go up against the system, but eventually we see him as a powerful guide for taking action.



COMICE RATFORD

THE CHAMPION

Comice is a true believer, ready to go all in, to reap her rewards in this life and the next. Nothing is off limits in pursuit of her goals. Her primary mission is to persuade everyone on earth to believe the same way she does.

Her grandfather was one of the early founders of the Church of Prosperity, and while it provides her with massive amounts of wealth, she is not satisfied with what she has. She pursues more wealth, power, and influence by pulling the strings from behind the scenes. Outside her circle of a few oligarchs, no one would recognize her name.

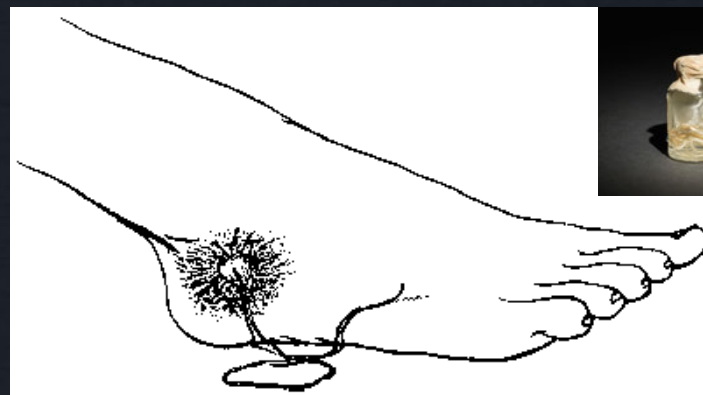
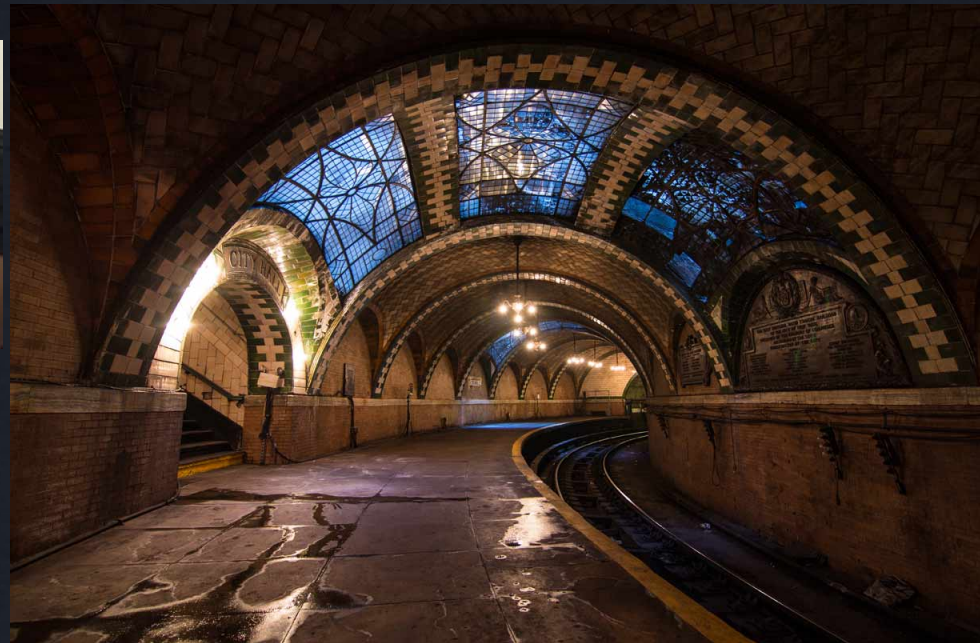
She is disciplined, focused and single-minded. Unlike her colleagues at the church who use brute force and overt threats to achieve their ends, she is precise, systematic and strategic - like a raptor testing the fences.

Cunning and manipulative Ratford is a true believer on a mission to glorify her god and legitimize the church as they make their move to invade San Francisco, the last stronghold of free and rational thought, and institute a theocratic oligarchy.

LOCATIONS









CORDYCEPS

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