

TIERRA DEL FUEGO

by

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FADE IN:

Black screen. We PULL BACK to reveal the black is a dark patch of space, surrounded by stars. Soon the entire screen is a STARRY SKYSCAPE. We hear a VOICE:

VOICE V.O.

In the beginning, the world was a fiery place. Volcanic activity constantly changed the landscape and composition of the planet....

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A roomful of sleepy STUDENTS listen to the voice of JULIAN CRISP, a young man with shoulder-length brown hair tied back in a ponytail. He stands behind a podium, wearing a white shirt without a tie, black pants, and a tan sportcoat.

JULIAN

....Gases swirled and settled to form an atmosphere: thin, yet tenuous enough to sustain life....

EXT. LAWN - NIGHT

Julian's speech continues as he is shown silently lying on his back, staring up at the stars. The camera does a SLOW DOLLY toward him, and eventually we are looking directly down upon him as he stretches out on the lawn.

JULIAN V.O.

....Life, which emerged billions of years later, was instantly forced to adapt to the poisons in the atmosphere. Oxygen proved deadly to the earliest forms of life, but the smarter ones - the stronger ones - evolved to accept the ever present gas and built their lives around it. What was once a poison became a necessity....

As we come to a stop on top of Julian, his eyes close.

INT. CLASSROOM – DAY

Julian steps out from behind the podium and walks out towards the students. A few perk up as he approaches them.

JULIAN (Cont.)

....Oxygen blended with hydrogen to create water, and with carbon to form breathable air. As the oceans receded and this air was exposed to life, the first generations of creation were killed off by the poison but others adapted to it, proving themselves superior to the aquatic life it left behind on the beaches.

EXT. LAWN – NIGHT

Julian's eyes open as the sounds of New Years REVELRIES slowly FADE IN, o.s. He appears annoyed but cannot seem to shake the distraction from him.

MAN O.S.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six,
five, four, three, two, one!
Happy new year!

HORNS and other traditional New Years sounds, including a GUNSHOT, fill the soundtrack. Julian closes his eyes again, but the sounds only get LOUDER. Finally, he rises from the lawn, brushes his clothing smooth, and walks back inside.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE – KITCHEN – NIGHT

Julian enters from the back patio door to his impeccably clean house. Nearly everything is white in the minimalist-decorated living room. Julian passes through the kitchen and the living room to a hallway.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE – HALLWAY – NIGHT

Julian enters a bathroom and closes the door behind him. A streak of light is seen under the door.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Julian lies asleep in his king sized bed. A digital alarm clock changes from 9:59 to 10:00 AM, and a PERSISTENT BEEP goes off.

Julian groggily sits up, rubs his eyes, and finally turns off the alarm clock. He then gets out of bed and heads to the bathroom.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Julian's master bathroom is nearly the size of the bedroom it is connected to. There is a deluxe glass-enclosed shower stall, an opulent large bathtub that could seat six, and other trappings of modern luxury. Julian is in the shower.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - DEN - MORNING

Julian, his wet hair slicked back behind his ears, sits at his desk, typing at his computer.

JULIAN

(as he types)

In the beginning, the world was a fiery place. Volcanic activity constantly changed....

He is interrupted by a RINGING TELEPHONE. He answers it immediately after the first ring.

JULIAN (into phone)

Hello? Yes. (a beat) How are you doing? (a beat) Oh, I'm fine, I suppose - Happy New Year to you, too. (a beat) Oh yes, certainly. How about (scans calendar on desk) tomorrow, three p.m.? (a beat) Great, I'll see you then.

Julian hangs up and gets back to typing his speech.

INT. COLLEGE – PROFESSOR QUINN'S OFFICE – DAY

PROFESSOR JAMES QUINN's office is a typical academic rat's nest. Old, dusty, leather-bound philosophy works spill over from the bookshelf onto teetering piles on the floor. Some have old, not-quite empty, coffee mugs on them, begging to be tipped over. Quinn is sitting behind his desk, reviewing the syllabus for the coming term. There is a KNOCK on the door.

QUINN

(looking up from paper)
Yes, come in.

The door opens and Julian enters. Quinn rises from his desk to greet his friend. They shake hands and Quinn motions for Julian to sit down.

QUINN

Julian, sit down, please. You don't know how glad I am to see you.

Julian sits.

JULIAN

Yes, it has been too long. What? Three years now?

QUINN

Well, you can't blame me, you're the one who's never in town. I'm still surprised you weren't celebrating New Years at the Pyramids or somewhere exotic like that.

JULIAN

I decided to stay at home this year. Keep quiet, to myself, but unfortunately my neighbors foiled that plan.

QUINN

Ahh, how is life over at the Batcave? Has Palm Beach's richest orphan been solving any crimes, rescuing any fair ladies in distress lately?

JULIAN

Not quite, James, but I do try.
I've been rather busy lately,
however.

QUINN

With what? I haven't heard any
reports of any labs being broken
into -

JULIAN

(painstakingly)

- Liberated, James, we liberate
the animals. But, no, lately I've
been working at home, writing,
planning my next attack, if you
will.

QUINN

I see. (long pause) Well, you may
know that I have a new semester
starting this week.

JULIAN

Still teaching Intro.?

QUINN

Yes, that and three other
courses. Quite a workload. But
anyway, one of them I'd like you
to come in and give a talk to,
just fifteen minutes, and then a
half-hour of badgering. Up for
it?

Julian mulls it over.

QUINN (Cont.)

No, it's not Intro. Heaven forbid
you have to face an eager
freshman like I did when I first
faced you. No, this is for a
graduate course. (reading title
off syllabus) "Theories of
Evolutionary Thought and
Environmental Consequence." Right
up your alley, eh, Julian?

Julian nods, slowly warming to the idea.

QUINN (Cont.)

The class meets on Thursdays,
nine a.m. sharp. Mind popping in
at nine-thirty next week?

Julian rises from his seat.

JULIAN

No problem. I look forward to it.

Quinn rises as well, and the two men shake hands.

QUINN

Next Thursday it is. Thank you
again, Julian.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Julian is back at his computer, typing the speech he is
to give for Quinn's class.

JULIAN

(as he types)

The past three hundred years have
been disastrous to the planet....

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Once again, Julian is giving his speech for Quinn's
class. He is standing out in the audience, pacing back
and forth between the students.

JULIAN

....Species after species have
been wiped away, gone, forever,
as the tides of the Industrial
Revolution turn over and over on
the landscape.

Julian pauses, having met the eye of ELLIE DONALDS, an
attractive student. She smiles at him, not blinking.
Julian loses his concentration, and is forced to retreat
back to the podium to finish his speech.

JULIAN (Cont.)

Umm ... The Industrial Revolution was a direct descendent of the ascension of science. Science taught mankind to believe itself superior to other species. This mentality caused mankind to abuse its position at the top of the evolutionary chain.

VARIOUS INSERTS WITH JULIAN'S V.O.:

Cows, sheep, and pigs herded on a farm into tiny pens.

A rabbit in a laboratory has its eyelids peeled back to expose its eyeball to chemical drops.

A lion lounges tiredly at a zoo exhibit.

A chimpanzee in a cage is injected by a needle-bearing TECHNICIAN in a white lab coat.

JULIAN V.O.

Some call this science, others call it disgusting. What do you call it? As you think about it, consider this as well. What has evolution become? Is this what mankind should do at the top of the world?

BACK TO SCENE:

The students look horrified, but Julian's words don't seem to reach them. Only the pictures have any affect on them.

EXT. COLLEGE - PARKING LOT - DAY

Julian exits the college hall and walks to his WHITE BMW. He presses a button on his keychain, and a series of BEEPS emanate from the BMW. Julian opens the door and enters the car.

INT. JULIAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Julian is alone in his BMW, driving on the slick streets of West Palm Beach, Florida, at night. His windows are up, the air conditioning is on, and ROCK MUSIC is heard at a low volume from the car stereo.

INT. CHASER'S NIGHTCLUB - LOBBY - NIGHT

Julian walks in, shows his driver's license to the BOUNCER, and receives a BLUE STAMP on the back of his right hand, authorizing that he's able to drink there. He shakes his hand to dry the ink and moves on to the main floor.

INT. CHASER'S NIGHTCLUB - FLOOR - NIGHT

A dirge-playing ROCK BAND is on stage, mid-tune, as Julian enters the TEEMING MASS. He seems completely at ease in the crowd and makes his way over to the bar. A bald BARTENDER finishes with another PATRON and nods at Julian.

JULIAN
Guinness.

The bartender pours a pint for Julian from the tap.

BARTENDER
Four-fifty.

Julian takes a five dollar bill out of his wallet and hands it to the bartender as he is given the stout. He walks away.

On stage, the band finishes a song and is acknowledged by APPLAUSE and WHISTLES. Immediately, they launch into a HEAVIER NUMBER.

Julian takes a sip from his beer, taking it all in. The lights THROB in shades of red, green, and purple. The music PULSES throughout the club, and Julian smiles, feeling at home in the club.

Coming from seemingly out of nowhere, a DANCER comes CRASHING into Julian, causing him to spill his Guinness all over her. She doesn't even notice the spill as she pulls herself off him.

DANCER

Whoa! Sorry 'bout that. You okay?

JULIAN

Yeah, I'll be fine. No prob.

The dancer exits, back into the pit. Julian licks a few drops of the spilled Guinness off his hand and looks into the cup he is still holding. Not enough for a sip. He walks back to the bar.

BARTENDER

Finished so soon?

Shrugging, Julian hands the cup to the bartender.

JULIAN

Guinness.

The bartender nods and pours him another pint. Julian goes to hand him another five dollar bill, but the bartender shakes his head.

BARTENDER

This one's on the house.

Julian instead puts the bill in a glass labeled TIPS and walks away. We stay at the bar with the bartender, watching Julian leave. A moment later, Ellie and her FRIENDS walk on in. She recognizes Julian and points at him for her friends, who prod her to approach him. She takes a deep breath and walks on over to him.

Julian doesn't notice Ellie at all until she taps him on the shoulder. He turns and faces her.

JULIAN

Oh, hello.

ELLIE

Hi, I was in your class the other day. Theories of Evolutionary Thought, with Dr. Quinn?
(after Julian's acknowledgment)
Okay ... I just saw you here and I wanted to say hi. I liked your speech.

JULIAN

Thank you.

The band ends their set on stage and the HOUSE LIGHTS go back up. Both Julian's and Ellie's faces are awash in white light. RECORDED MUSIC is played on the p.a., louder than the band's set. As ROADIES prepare the stage for the next band, a CROWD rushes the stage in their own preparation. Julian and Ellie nearly get trounced in the chaos.

Julian leads Ellie to a quieter, more secluded part of the club.

JULIAN

My name's Julian.

ELLIE

Oh, yes, I knew that. Mine's Ellie. I'm studying philosophy.

JULIAN

Really? I did too. I graduated five years ago, though.

ELLIE

I was still in high school then.

She shrugs.

JULIAN

It's too noisy here, do you want to go for a drive?

Ellie nods.

EXT. CHASER'S NIGHTCLUB - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Julian and Ellie exit the club and he leads her to his car.

ELLIE

Nice car.

JULIAN

Thanks.

Julian unlocks the passenger door and lets Ellie in.

ELLIE

Where are we going?

JULIAN

My place.

He closes her door.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

We hear a key unlock the door outside and the door open. Julian leads Ellie in and they step into the foyer.

JULIAN

You know, you distracted me the other day.

ELLIE

How's that?

JULIAN

You stared at me.

ELLIE

You stared back.

JULIAN

I know, I couldn't help it.

ELLIE

Neither could I.

They kiss.

They kiss some more. Julian starts to run his hands over her. Her blouse is undone, it comes fluttering down towards the floor. He paws at her bra, undoing that as well.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian and Ellie stumble into his bedroom, LAUGHING. They are still intertwined, and nearly trip as they enter the darkened room.

A light is turned on as Julian reaches behind her and finds the light switch. They are both naked to the waist, and their pants are both unbuttoned and starting to slide down their legs. They each pull down the other's pants and tumble onto the bed.

Julian rolls Ellie onto him and slowly pushes her down his body. Her head rests on his belly, and her hands pull down his jockey shorts.

JULIAN

Yes. Oh, yes.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The first rays of sunlight enter a large picture window and throw themselves onto the bed. Julian is sitting up in bed, back propped up by pillows. Ellie is asleep beside him. Julian is writing furiously on a notepad, stopping occasionally to consider a word or scratch out one that he doesn't like. Ellie starts to stir.

Julian stops writing and regards her sleeping form. Unable to resist the temptation, he reaches down and runs his fingers lightly along her nude back. She reacts to the slight touch and sits up beside him in bed.

ELLIE

Good morning.

They kiss.

JULIAN

Yes, good morning to you.

He rises from the bed and heads into the bathroom.

Ellie waits a minute, thinks about it, and goes to join him too.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Julian and Ellie sit on a couch, reading separate parts of the Sunday paper. Light CLASSICAL MUSIC is on, playing from an unseen stereo system. Ellie is reading the Living/Entertainment section and Julian is reading from the front section.

JULIAN

(shaking his head)

Another oil spill in Alaska....

Ellie folds up her section and puts it down in the pile between them.

ELLIE

Another one? Damn.

JULIAN

(reading)

Sixteen million gallons washed up
early Saturday morning in
Kuskokwim Bay in western
Alaska....

EXT. REMOTE AIRSTRIP - KWIGILLINGOK, ALASKA - DAY

A harried REPORTER, BARBARA WEST, speaks to a video camera, wielded by a CAMERAMAN as a SOUNDMAN hovers near. A frenzy of activity is going on around the reporter, but she doesn't seem to notice.

WEST

....As authorities from PacOil
refuse to confirm reports that
CAMERON DAVIDSON, the captain of
the beached ship, was well over
the legal limit for blood alcohol
testing.

In the b.g., as West continues talking, we see Davidson being led away from a shack by a fleet of U.S. SHERIFF'S OFFICERS towards their vehicles.

WEST

The tanker went aground at four-
thirty a.m. local time Saturday
morning....

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Julian and Ellie watch West's report on a news channel on his television. They are lying together on his couch, the newspapers in a pile on the floor.

WEST (Cont., on TV)

....There he is now!

The picture gets shaky as the cameraman rushes to follow West to Davidson.

ANOTHER REPORTER (on TV)
Mr. Davidson! Were you drunk?

WEST (on TV)
Mr. Davidson? Mr. Davidson?

The cameraman finally gets a steady picture, just in time to show Davidson led into the Sheriff Officer's car and driven off.

West turns back to face the camera, but Julian doesn't want to watch. He turns off the TV with his remote control and slides off the couch from next to Ellie.

JULIAN
I have a few calls to make.
Excuse me.

INT. SAVE OUR PLANET HEADQUARTERS - SANTORE'S OFFICE - DAY

JOHN SANTORE, president of Save Our Planet, Inc., a non-profit environmental organization located in Washington, DC, is leading a meeting in his spatial office with a half-dozen ASSISTANTS and other volunteers. VOICES fire back and forth as they discuss how to handle the Alaskan oil spill.

SANTORE
Shut up! I can't work with you
people yelling at me.

The phone RINGS. Santore picks it up practically before the first ring finishes.

SANTORE (into phone)
Hello? Julian! Yes, we need you.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Julian is talking into a speakerphone as he paces about the room.

JULIAN

John, listen, we've got to move fast on this one. No letting Greenpeace steal our headlines this time. I'll be there tonight, I'll call you when I get there.

He walks over and hangs up the phone. He then walks out of the office.

INT. SAVE OUR PLANET HEADQUARTERS - SANTORE'S OFFICE - DAY

Santore hangs up the phone and addresses his underlings.

SANTORE

That was Julian, he'll be here tonight. Now get to work, I want to show him something good when he gets here!

The workers quickly disperse. Two VOLUNTEERS walk out together.

VOLUNTEER #1

Julian? Who's that?

The second volunteer looks to see if anyone is listening in before she answers.

VOLUNTEER #2

Julian Crisp. He's the money behind us. An armchair environmentalist, if you ask me.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Julian walks out to find Ellie sitting bored on the couch, flipping through channels on the TV with a remote control.

JULIAN

I have to fly to Washington now. Do you want to come along?

ELLIE

Washington? Now? For how long?

JULIAN

Yes, now. Probably a few days.
Maybe onto Alaska from there.
Hopefully not, however, it is
January.

ELLIE

A few days? Damnit, I can't. I
have classes all week.

Julian considers this for a moment.

JULIAN

Okay, I'll drop you off on my way
to the airport. I'm sorry you
can't join me, it would be fun.

ELLIE

So am I.

She gets up from the couch and kisses him.

JULIAN

I'll call you when I get back in
town.

EXT. NATIONAL AIRPORT — WASHINGTON, DC — NIGHT

In front of a postcardesque background of the US Capitol
building, a plane lands and taxis to the concourse.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING — WASHINGTON, DC — NIGHT

A taxi cab pulls up on a deserted downtown street and
lets Julian out. Julian hands the CABBIE a twenty dollar
bill and heads up to the office's entrance.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING — WASHINGTON, DC — NIGHT

A half-asleep security guard, LONNIE, dozes over a
magazine as Julian enters.

JULIAN

Wake up, Lonnie.

Lonnie sits straight up.

LONNIE

Another late night, sir?

JULIAN

What's the old saying? Nature
calls?

An elevator opens and Julian steps inside.

INT. SAVE THE PLANET HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

A few VOLUNTEERS and other office workers are still
milling about, half-asleep, as the elevator bell BOINGS.

They immediately spring awake, just in time for the door
to open and Julian to exit.

JULIAN

Evening people. What's the
status?

SANTORE

We have three people ready to go
on the first flight in the
morning.

JULIAN

Good. Greenpeace?

Santore gestures to a VOLUNTEER talking on a phone. She
shakes her head.

SANTORE

Nothing yet. We think they're on
the way.

JULIAN

Damn! We've got to beat them on
this one. Congress?

SANTORE

I've got a meeting with Senator
Weaver at ten a.m. tomorrow
morning.

Julian takes out his checkbook and starts to write a
check.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Julian and a BELLBOY enter the room and turn on the lights. The bellboy places Julian's bag on the bed, receives a five dollar tip from Julian, and then discreetly excuses himself. Julian notices the bedside clock reads 11:45 p.m. and SIGHS. He then heads to the bathroom.

INT. US CAPITOL - SENATOR WEAVER'S OFFICE - MORNING

An INTERN answering the phones is swamped with calls as Santore enters. She recognizes him and smiles, pointing to a chair for visitors. Finally, she hangs up the phone.

INTERN

Good morning, Mr. Santore. The Senator is running late. Would you mind waiting a few minutes?

SANTORE

Not at all.

INTERN

Would you like some coffee?

SANTORE

Please.

The intern rises and starts to walk over to the coffee maker. Just as she reaches up to pull down a coffee mug for Santore, the phone RINGS again. Hurriedly, she rushes to get the phone, holding the mug in one hand.

INTERN

(into phone)

Senator Weaver's office.

The CALLER starts to talk the intern's ear off, and the intern's face grows pained. She starts to gesture wildly to imitate the caller's voice with the hand holding the empty coffee mug.

INTERN (Cont.)

(into phone)

No, ma'am. Senator Weaver has already endorsed the legislation. Thank you for your concern.

The caller won't give up easily. The intern listens some more, trying to end the call. Santore gets up from his seat and takes the coffee mug from the intern. She mouths a thank you as he goes to pour his own coffee. When Santore goes to sit back down and finally enjoy his coffee, the door opens and Senator WILLIAM WEAVER enters. Weaver is surrounded by two AIDES and seems busy. He recognizes Santore and bends over to shake the seated man's hand.

WEAVER

John! How are you?

SANTORE

Fine, Bill. How are you?

WEAVER

Busy, my friend. Come into my office.

EXT. US CAPITOL - DAY

Santore and Weaver walk out together from the Capitol, down the lawn, and towards the street.

WEAVER

Thank you for visiting, John.

SANTORE

My pleasure. Thank you for meeting with me.

They reach the end of the lawn and Santore flags down a cab by the curb. The two men shake hands before Santore gets into the cab. After the cab pulls away, Weaver waves once before heading back up the lawn to the Capitol.

INT. DUKE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Julian is waiting in the lobby area of Duke's, a classy, expensive restaurant where many Washington power lunches take place. He watches the taxi cabs outside drop off their passengers for lunch. As taxi after taxi unload passengers, Julian starts to get frustrated, but is finally satisfied when he recognizes Santore exiting one.

EXT. DUKE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Santore exits the cab, pays the cabbie, and walks inside.

INT. DUKE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Santore enters the restaurant and meets Julian by the host's stand. The two men approach the MAITRE D'.

JULIAN

Crisp, party of two. We have a reservation for twelve-thirty.

The maitre d' nods and leads the two men to a table. They sit down and the maitre d' exits.

JULIAN

How was it?

SANTORE

Surprisingly successful. Amazing what an election year will do for a fringe issue group.

JULIAN

Great, John. Did he want to meet with me too?

SANTORE

No, I don't think that will be necessary.

JULIAN

(nodding)

Good. I have other place to be.

SANTORE

Care to discuss?

JULIAN

No.

Julian smiles.

JULIAN (Cont.)

Actually, I'm sure you'll hear all about it when it happens.

Santore nods. He understands what Julian's up to.

SANTORE

I can't wait to hear about it. When?

JULIAN

It was supposed to be tomorrow, but this whole Alaska incident screwed up my schedule. Maybe we'll get it on by Wednesday. I'm going to fly back to Palm Beach tonight, since I'm not needed any more here in DC.

Santore nods.

SANTORE

We appreciate your visit, Julian.

JULIAN

I didn't get to see too much work at the office last night, John. Mind if I stop by this afternoon, check up on your team?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - WASHINGTON, DC - DAY

Julian and Santore enter the building and join a throng of OFFICE WORKERS as they enter the elevator.

INT. SAVE OUR PLANET HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The elevator opens and Julian, Santore, and three other Save the Earth employees walk out into the office. At this time of day, just after lunch, there are nearly two-dozen workers, volunteers, and interns all about, checking information on computers, making phone calls, and comparing notes and files with each other.

JULIAN

Good afternoon people.

VARIOUS PEOPLE

Hello Mr. Crisp.

JULIAN

Keeping busy, I hope?

They all nod. Julian nods as well and smiles. He and Santore walk into Santore's office.

INT. SAVE OUR PLANET HEADQUARTERS - SANTORE'S OFFICE -
DAY

Santore sits behind his desk and Julian sits in a guest
chair opposite him.

JULIAN

What else is going on this week
with you?

SANTORE

A picket line outside a paper
processing plant in Oregon, and
several ads in the *USA Today*
raising awareness of the issue.

JULIAN

Good. Anything else?

Santore shakes his head.

JULIAN (Cont.)

No? How's the budget?

Santore continues to shake his head, this time more
solemnly.

SANTORE

Not well, Julian. We're almost
about to let some of the interns
go.

JULIAN

Really? What's happened?

SANTORE

Inflation's happened.
Everything's costing more. Mostly
office-type expenses, stationery,
supplies, copies.

JULIAN

Well, how can I help?

Again, he reaches into his coat pocket, taking out his
checkbook.

INT. SAVE OUR PLANET HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Julian exits Santore's office and mingles with the various employees. He starts with two young female employees, LESLIE and SUSAN, working at a Macintosh workstation, huddled together over the keyboard.

JULIAN

Hello. How is everyone?

LESLIE

Fine, sir.

JULIAN

Good, I'm glad to hear. What are you working on?

SUSAN

The final galleys for the boycott ad.

JULIAN

Oh yes, the *USA Today* one?

SUSAN

Yes, for that. Would you like to see them?

JULIAN

Certainly.

Employee #2 hands a newspaper-sized printout to Julian, who starts to study it. The headline reads "WESTLAND TIMBER IS KILLING THE FOREST." Below the headline is a black-and-white drawing of an owl fleeing a falling tree.

JULIAN

(while reading)

Very nice. What's your name?

SUSAN

Susan O'Reilly.

JULIAN

Susan. Very nice. Are you an artist?

SUSAN

A graphic designer, actually,
sir.

JULIAN

Please, call me Julian.

SUSAN

All right, Julian.

She smiles at him. Beside her, Leslie goes back to work,
ignoring Julian and Susan.

JULIAN

Did you work on the PacOil ad
last fall, Susan? I liked that
one a lot.

SUSAN

You did? Great, thanks. I wasn't
the lead on that, Leslie was,
though.

Susan pokes Leslie in the ribs.

LESLIE

Huh?

JULIAN

I just wanted to say how much I
liked the PacOil ad you did last
fall.

LESLIE

Oh, thanks. I appreciate it, sir
—

SUSAN

— It's Julian, Leslie. Call him
Julian.

Susan smiles at Julian.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE — FOYER — NIGHT

A very tired Julian enters the front door and throws his
bags on the floor. He then walks away, leaving his bags
to sit there until the morning to be unpacked.

INT. STRANGER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

In a darkened apartment, the only light is the desk lamp shining down on a stationery pad on a desk. On this pad, we see a STRANGER's hand writing a letter. It is a woman's hand, finely manicured with blood-red nailpolish, wielding a fine, gold-nibbed fountain pen.

STRANGER O.S.

(as she writes)

....I hope you understand what I am trying to convey to you, Julian, and that you acknowledge me. I will be calling you soon to confirm reception of this letter. Please do not forsake me.

Without signing the letter, the stranger folds it, inserts it in an envelope pre-addressed to Julian Crisp in West Palm Beach, Florida, and licks the envelope shut. She then kisses the back of the envelope, leaving a faint reddish trace of lipstick behind on it. Finally, she puts the envelope down on her desk, and turns off the light, leaving us in the dark. We never see her face.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm clock by the bed changes from 7:59 to 8:00, and the BEEPING ALARM starts up again. Julian wakes up and sits up. He rubs his eyes with his hands, and blood covers his face. He doesn't notice the blood until it starts to trickle down his face, into his mouth. Startled, he jumps up.

Julian looks down at the bed and finds the entire right side of the mattress streaked with blood. He then looks down at his hands and sees that his right hand is cut.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Julian rushes in from the master bedroom and turns on a faucet, washing his bleeding hand. As blood turns the sink red, it slowly starts to recede as the wound is cleaned out. When the blood finally appears to stop flowing out of the hand, Julian uses his good left hand to turn off the faucet and wrap a towel around the injured hand.

After a moment, he peels back the towel to inspect the wound. There is a perfectly round, nearly quarter-sized, hole in the palm of his hand. On the back of his hand, corresponding directly with the hole in his palm, is a smaller, dime-sized, hole.

Julian removes the towel and holds the hand up to the light. A small streak of light peaks through the hand. Amazed, Julian re-wraps the hand in the towel and heads back into the bedroom.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Julian walks up to the bed, and flips through the sheets, trying to find a source for his wound. He finds nothing that possibly could have left such a puncture through his hand. Shocked beyond possible comprehension, he sits down on the edge of the bed to study the injury.

Julian presses his left hand deep into the wadded towel, but doesn't feel any pain from the pressure. He then removes the towel yet again and squeezes the hand tightly with his good hand, but except for the blood that passes itself onto his left hand, there's nothing to indicate any injury. He feels nothing but amazement and a latent sense of confusion at his condition.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Julian and a young DOCTOR are alone in a curtained-off partition.

JULIAN

No, I don't know how it happened.
It was fine last night, but this
morning it was bloody.

DOCTOR

There was no knife or anything
beside the bed?

JULIAN

The nearest one was in the
kitchen.

DOCTOR

Well, there's no sign of infection, which is good. A large wound like that which is left open that long can easily fester.

He hands Julian a business card out of his coat pocket.

DOCTOR (CONT.)

This is Doctor Ramirez, call him if it does get infected. He'll take care of you.

JULIAN

Thank you, doc.

The doctor smiles and gets up to leave. Julian stays seated on the bed, looking oddly at his bandaged hand.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Julian walks to his car and gets in, favoring his injured hand as he opens the door.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Julian walks in and heads to his phone answering machine. He presses the button.

ELLIE

(on machine)

Julian, hi, it's me; Ellie. I know you're still in Washington, or Alaska, but I just wanted to say hi. Give me a call when you're back in town: 555-4328.

A BEEP signifies no more messages. Julian walks away, not bothering to write down Ellie's number.

INT. BIOTECH RESEARCH LAB - ANIMAL CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

A team of black-clad ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS are quietly sneaking around the darkened lab, unlocking cages and awakening sleeping chimpanzees.

One of the activists, ERIN, takes a chimpanzee by the hand and leads it to an exit like a parent helping a small child.

ERIN

Come on, it'll be okay.

At the exit door waits Julian. He is also clad in black, and holds the door open and guides the animals out.

JULIAN

Thanks Erin. Come on, little guy.
It'll be okay.

The chimpanzee stares quizzically at Julian, who smiles back. The chimpanzee seems to understand something in the smile and takes a step out the door and into a van outside.

Erin starts to head back to another cage to unlock it, but is SLASHED by a claw before she can open the door.

ERIN

Ouch!

She turns away from the cage as Julian rushes up to her.

JULIAN

Calm down! Let me see.

She holds up her hand for Julian to see. He takes it in his injured right hand and studies it.

JULIAN

Chris! Get over here! We need a
salve!

CHRIS rushes over, carrying a medical bag. As he approaches, the chimpanzee that slashed Erin pushes open the door and scampers out onto the floor. The other chimpanzees waiting to be freed see this and starts to CHATTER loudly, heading for the door Julian was holding open earlier.

JULIAN

Damn. Someone's going to have to
tranquilize that one. Give me the
bag, I'll take care of Erin,
Chris, calm down that monkey.

Chris takes out a tranquilizer gun and hands the bag to Julian. Julian fishes in the bag with his left hand, still holding Erin's bloody hand in his bandaged right.

ERIN

What happened to your hand?

JULIAN

Nothing. I cut it in the kitchen.
Let me see that.

He squeezes some Bactine on Erin's hand.

ERIN

Ouch! That stings.

JULIAN

(smiling)

That means it's working.

He places a square gauze pad over the cut, and tapes it down.

Chris moves closer to the scared chimpanzee, wielding his tranquilizer gun like a big-game hunter.

CHRIS

Easy girl, it'll be okay.

The chimpanzee sees the gun and SCREAMS. She starts wildly flailing her arms and hits a fire alarm button. Lights immediately FLASH, and a blood-curdling ALARM sounds.

INT. BIOTECH RESEARCH LAB - SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD sees the animal control room light up on a computerized map on his computer monitor.

GUARD

What the...

INT. BIOTECH RESEARCH LAB - ANIMAL CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Julian starts to organize his team.

JULIAN

Come on people, let's move it!
We've got to go NOW!

They start to move it. They head out the exit door, Chris dragging the tranquilized chimpanzee with him.

INT. BIOTECH RESEARCH LAB - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The team heads down the stairs to the bottom level, where another black-clad PERSON is holding the door open.

PERSON HOLDING DOOR

Eight, nine, ten. Okay, Julian,
that's everyone. Let's go!

JULIAN

Okay, into the van!

EXT. BIOTECH RESEARCH LAB - BACK LOT - NIGHT

Two vans are idling by a trash dumpster. In one, several chimpanzees are being led in, and team members pile into the other. Both sets of doors are shut, and a second later the two vans drive off.

But it's too late. A BioTech security car cuts the lead van off. The van tries to swerve around the security car, but can't. A SECURITY GUARD in the car leans out and FIRES a gun at the tires of the first van, successfully stopping its escape. Two Palm Beach County Sheriff's OFFICERS in a marked car arrive, and the second van stops, defeated.

As Julian and his team are led out of their vans into police vehicles, a news van arrives and a REPORTER and his CAMERA- and SOUNDMAN exit the van.

While the two technicians are setting up their equipment for a live report, the reporter recognizes Julian.

REPORTER

Julian?

Julian hears his name and turns to face the reporter. A look of recognition flashes on his face, but he doesn't have time to respond as he is shoved into the police car. The reporter turns to his team as the cars drive off. The camera's light shines in his face as the boom is lowered just above his head, out of the camera's sight.

REPORTER (TO CAMERA)

Are we on? Hello, this is James Branch, reporting live for Channel Seven action news from the grounds of BioTech Research, where just a short while ago a daring break-in was foiled by Palm Beach County Sheriff's officers. Reportedly led by Palm Beach millionaire and philanthropist Julian Crisp, the team of nearly a dozen stealthily black-clad animal rights activists broke into the BioTech labs and tried to "rescue" the chimpanzees. I'm told that sixteen animals were taken from their cages, where they are used for AIDS research and other human-interest projects....

INT. PALM BEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - JAIL - NIGHT

Handcuffed together like on a chain gang, Julian and his nine-member team is led into a large cell by an aging OFFICER. After they're all in he SLAMS the door on them, not bothering to unlock their handcuffs.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

The ten people, looking bedraggled and tired, are standing before a stern-looking JUDGE at an arraignment.

JUDGE

I hereby set bail at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars per person. Court date is March first of this year. Court is now dismissed.

He BANGS the gavel down on the table and rises to leave. After he exits, a BAILIFF leads Julian, the first person on the human train, out of the courtroom.

BAILIFF

Come on, tree-hugger.

Julian shoots him a dirty look, but keeps quiet.

EXT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

A taxicab pulls around the corner to Julian's house and stops by the curb. There are a half dozen news vans parked on his driveway, on his lawn. They don't pay any attention to the cab when it arrives; it is only when Julian steps out that they bother to care.

Julian exits the cab and is astonished at the crowd on his lawn. He is speechless, but unfortunately they are not. They bombard him with QUESTIONS, and swarm around him within seconds of him stepping out onto the lawn.

REPORTER #1

Julian! Julian!

REPORTER #2

Why were you at BioTech?

Julian doesn't answer the barrage of questions and finally, dazedly, makes his way to the front door and squeezes himself inside.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Julian enters the house and slumps down on the floor. Outside, the questions continue, and there are repeated KNOCKS on the door. Julian rises from the floor to walk inside, but immediately bumps into NILDA, his portly Hispanic maid.

NILDA

Mr. Crisp! Are you okay?

JULIAN

Nilda! I'm fine, I think. Who are all those people?

NILDA

I don't know, sir. They were there when I got here this morning.

JULIAN

They were here at dawn?

NILDA

Yes.

Julian shakes his head and walks inside. Nilda follows him.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Inside the kitchen a mop bucket, full of bubbles, sits with a mop inside it. Nilda picks up the mop and gestures to the wall-based telephone with the handle.

NILDA

I had to turn the telephone off the hook, there were so many calls.

JULIAN

It's all right, Nilda.

NILDA

Mr. Crisp, I was so scared for you. Are you okay?

Nilda puts the mop back in the bucket, too anxious to work.

JULIAN

Don't worry. I was arrested last night. I'll be fine, I'm out on bail.

Nilda hands him an overnight letter package.

NILDA

This came an hour or two ago. I didn't answer the door; it was slipped under it.

Julian holds the envelope with his injured right hand, gazing curiously at it. The handwriting on the address label looks vaguely familiar to him, but he doesn't recognize it.

NILDA

Your hand, sir! What happened? Did the police-

JULIAN

Nilda, no. I cut it myself the other day.

NILDA

I was worried. Tommy, my son, he was beaten by the police during the riots in Miami a few years ago.

JULIAN

No, no. I'm just clumsy, that's all.

Still staring at the address label, he starts to walk out of the room.

JULIAN

Why don't you go home now, Nilda? Take the afternoon off. I'll distract the media by the front door if you want to sneak out the back door.

NILDA

Thank you, sir. Thank you.

She starts to take off her apron and fold it up. She then walks to the back patio door and exits.

Still holding the package, Julian walks to the front door.

EXT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

The reporters start to pack up to leave, having gotten the necessary video footage of Julian they came for. But, they stop and get back in position when the door opens. Julian steps out onto the porch, shielding his eyes from the spotlights with the letter.

REPORTER #1

Julian! What happened?

JULIAN

Last night, I, and my associates, were arrested for allegedly breaking and entering into BioTech Research.

REPORTER #1

Why?

JULIAN

We were charged with not only breaking and entering, but theft of over a dozen laboratory chimpanzees. They faced nearly certain death from horrific, torturous experiments.

He sees Nilda sneaking around the side of the house, behind the reporters, who are entranced by Julian. He smiles at her.

JULIAN (CONT.)

I, and my associates, all pleaded not guilty this morning and were released on bond. That is all I have to say for now, thank you.

He takes a step back inside and slams the door shut. The reporters stare at the door in silence for a moment, and then start to pack up again to leave.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Julian sits down at his desk and peers at the envelope.

JULIAN

San Diego, California?

He shakes his head. He doesn't recognize the return address:

Mary
P.O. Box 8796
San Diego, CA 92106

He runs his fingers over the writing, but that doesn't help any. He turns the envelope over and sees nothing on a first glance. He returns to the front.

JULIAN

(still shaking his head)
Mary?

Finally, he rips open the envelope. Inside, there is a single folded sheet of paper. It is the same letter the stranger was seen writing in the dark room.

He gazes at the letter, as if mesmerized by her fine handwriting. He doesn't read it and runs his fingers lightly over the words. We can't read the letter.

JULIAN

(reading out)

Dear Julian. Do not stare too long at the return address or postmark - you will not recognize me from them. Nor will my handwriting or voice stir your memory either. You do not know me, but do not fear me.

Julian stops reading and stares again at the envelope. Nope, he shakes his head, the author is right. He turns back to the letter.

INT. STRANGER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MARY CARLISLE, the stranger seen writing the letter to Julian, stands alone with her eyes closed in the middle of the open living room. It is a classy apartment, well furnished, in suburban San Diego, California. She is attractive and appears to be of the same age as Julian.

MARY V.O.

You recently suffered a wound on your right hand. I know that you did not feel any physical pain from it, but I wonder at the emotional, psychomental trauma.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Julian continues reading, his voice blending with Mary's.

JULIAN

(continuing reading)

I am a stranger to you, but I feel like I know you so well. My dreams are full of you, yet troubling me is that I am not in them with you. Is that a premonition? Will you leave me behind?

Julian puts the letter down. He can't believe it.

JULIAN

What the hell? Who the hell does
she think she is?

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mary is seen writing the letter again, this time we do a
C.U. of her face, mouthing the words she is writing on
the page.

MARY

....I hope you understand what I
am trying to convey to you,
Julian, and that you acknowledge
me. I will be calling you soon to
confirm reception of this letter.
Please do not forsake me.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Julian finishes reading the letter.

JULIAN

....Please do not forsake me.

He then turns over the letter to see if there's more on
the back. No such luck. He skims over the letter again,
but doesn't seem to have missed anything. Without saying
anything, he folds the letter up and gently puts it back
in the envelope.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Julian exits his office and walks around the house,
peeking out of windows, looking for someone spying on
him. Except for the lingering reporters on his front
driveway, who rush to the front door when they see him
poke his head out it, there appears to be nothing else.

JULIAN

Who knew what happened to my
hand? That was two days ago! This
letter was postmarked three days
ago. What the....

He catches himself thinking aloud and quickly stops. His
embarrassment is obvious.

INT. JULIAN'S CAR - EVENING

Sunset paints the roads of West Palm Beach a rainbow of colors as Julian drives aimlessly. He is thinking, trying to piece together the puzzle of the stranger's letter.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and her husband, CHARLES, are sitting together on a sofa, watching television. Charles is still dressed in his work clothes: green hospital scrubs.

CHARLES

The nurse was telling us today about a delivery that happened last night. I couldn't believe it.

MARY

Uh huh.

CHARLES

Honey, do you want me to tell you about it? I thought you didn't want to know the details.

Mary doesn't answer.

CHARLES (CONT.)

Okay, then. Don't complain about any nightmares. This woman was ten months pregnant. Ten months. Normally we induce at thirty-seven weeks, but somehow she slipped through the cracks. Welfare mother, you know, and all that. Anyway, Jacobs couldn't believe it. She was dilated, and her water broke, but it just wouldn't come out.

MARY

Charles, I don't want to hear about it.

She changes the channel with the remote control, as if to prove her point. She grows bored with the television, and starts to read a magazine.

CHARLES

Dear, we need to talk about this.
It was horrible, and we need to
move on.

MARY

You don't know! Not now!

She is interrupted by the telephone RINGING. She leaps up
from the sofa to answer it.

MARY

(into telephone)
Hello? (a beat) Yes ... I'm fine.
It's okay. (a beat) All right, at
nine o'clock. Good-bye.

She hangs up the phone.

CHARLES

Who was it?

MARY

It was Cheryl. She needs help
with the planning. I've got to go
over there. I'll be back by
eleven.

CHARLES

Jesus, when is she ever going to
get married? She's been planning
that damned reception since
October.

Mary gathers her purse and keys and exits.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Mary walks out the front lobby and heads to her car, a
black Lexus four-door sedan. She enters and starts the
engine. As she rolls down the windows, she drives off,
her hair blowing in the wind of a warm California night.

INT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary enters the 7-11 and is immediately the subject of everyone's attention. The young Mexican CASHIER and his GIRLFRIEND, sitting behind the counter with him to keep him company, stare at her. A few other CUSTOMERS, all CONVERSING in Spanish, continue to shop, with discreet looks at the rare white visitor to their neighborhood. Mary approaches the cashier and speaks to him in perfect Spanish.

MARY

Hello. Could you break a dollar
for me?

The cashier shakes his head.

CASHIER

(in Spanish)

Sorry, you have to buy something.

Mary scowls and scans the gum rack by the register. She picks out a pack of Juicy Fruit and slides that and a five dollar bill to the cashier.

He rings up the sale and hands Mary four singles and a handful of change to her. She shakes her head and hands one of the dollar bills back to him.

MARY

Quarters, please.

The cashier re-opens the register and exchanges the dollar bill for four quarters. As he is about to shut it back up, Mary hands him another dollar.

MARY

No, better make it two dollars.

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary walks out of the 7-11, quarters jingling in her hand. She walks around to the side of the store to the payphones. She looks at her watch; it's 8:59 P.M. She lifts the handset of the furthest payphone and starts inserting the quarters into the pay slot. She dials a long distance number, Julian's, from memory.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian is in bed, reading a magazine, when the phone rings. He reaches over to answer the cordless phone.

JULIAN
(into phone)
Hello?

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary seems excited to finally be talking to Julian.

MARY
Hello Julian.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARY AND JULIAN:

JULIAN
Hello. Who is this?

MARY
The person who sent the letter
you received today. You did
receive my letter today?

JULIAN
That depends, I get a lot of
mail. Who are you?

MARY
You may call me Mary.

JULIAN
I may call you Mary? Is that it?

MARY
That's all that's important to
you now. In fact, I am not
important at all. You are the one
who is important.

JULIAN
I am? Why?

MARY
How is your hand?

JULIAN

My hand? It's fine now - wait,
how did you know-

MARY

-Don't ask that. Do you wonder
why it happened?

JULIAN

Why? I'm more concerned with how.

MARY

Don't be. The cause is not more
important than the reason.

JULIAN

And what might that reason be?

MARY

You are a very special person.
Did you not read my letter?

JULIAN

Yes, I read your letter. It made
no sense to me. In fact, if I
weren't in some legal trouble of
my own now I would've given it to
the police. Be thankful I
haven't.

MARY

Legal trouble? Ahh yes, your
arrest. That will be taken care
of, don't worry.

JULIAN

I know it will be taken care of.
I'm not an idiot, I know how to
handle things. I'm going to hang
this phone up right now if you
don't tell me exactly who you are
and what you want. Is it money?

MARY

No. You will not hang up on me.
You realize how I found you, and
that I can find you again if you
hide. So don't waste either of
our time, Julian. Listen to me.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian has been pacing around the room with the cordless phone. He resigns himself to listening to Mary and sits back down on the bed. He doesn't answer her at first.

MARY V.O.

Julian? Are you listening to me?

Julian tiredly runs his hands over his face and through his hair. The bandage on his right hand is just a Band-Aid on his palm. There is a small scar on the back of the hand.

JULIAN

Yes, I'm here.

MARY V.O.

Okay, good. I'm sure you've seen a calendar and noticed that this millennia is almost over. You seem rather informed, so I'm sure you've also read a newspaper lately. The world is collapsing. Time is collapsing. When the Year 2000 comes, no one will be ready for it....

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary keeps talking, in English, to Julian as several Spanish-speaking OBSERVERS start to take an interest in her. They can't understand what's she's saying, but her body language becomes more pronounced and assertive, and soon enough she is drawing a small audience, none of whom can understand her.

MARY

The world, bluntly said, needs a savior. Someone to come in and sweep up the ashes of the past, of our decadence, and lead us on to the third millennia. Do you understand that, Julian?

JULIAN V.O.

Yes.

MARY

Good. It's a rather simple concept, and a simple idea. But it's a difficult proposition. Who will be that savior? Who is the Chosen One? Is that you, Julian?

JULIAN V.O.

How am I supposed to answer that? Of course not!

MARY

Do not dismiss yourself so quickly, Julian. Did you not learn anything from the wound? It is the reason that is important, not the cause. Just like what I'm talking about now, it is important that you save the world. The cause is everything that's wrong with the world. You can set it right.

JULIAN V.O.

Whoa, slow down right there! I'm not a saint, I don't even believe-

MARY

(curtly)

You're going to have to believe, Julian. Think about it. Think about why your hand was cut, what it means. Stop looking for causes and look for explanations.

JULIAN V.O.

(sounding convinced)

I will think about it.

MARY

Good, Julian. I have to leave now, I will be in touch again.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian looks down at his scarred hand.

JULIAN

Wait. Can I contact you?

MARY V.O.

Not right away. For now, it is important that I initiate everything. I must leave now. Good night Julian.

JULIAN

Hold on. When will you-

Click. Mary has hung up. The DIAL TONE drones endlessly until Julian SLAMS the phone down, furiously. The dial tone continues as he grabs the phone and slides the on-off button to off. He then storms out of the room.

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary turns away from the pay phone to find the onlookers staring at her. They stop their WHISPERING and CHATTERING as she smiles at them.

MARY

(in Spanish)

What's the matter? Never seen a white woman before?

She walks past them back to her car and gets in. Without a sound, the onlookers watch her drive off into the night.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Julian rushes in and turns on a light. On his desk is Mary's letter, still in the envelope. He holds the envelope to his face and notices the faint lipstick smudges she left behind when she sealed the envelope. He inhales deeply and seems to smell something, as if her perfume, her scent, has carried itself across the country with the letter. Something is there, and Julian smiles and re-opens the envelope. He reads the letter again, more understanding of its meaning and author.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - FOYER AREA - NIGHT

Mary enters the darkened apartment and turns on the light. There is no sign of Charles, and his SNORING can be faintly heard in the otherwise silent apartment. Mary walks to the bedroom door and peeks inside. Charles is sound asleep in bed.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary finishes washing her face and dries it off with a towel. She begins to undress, unbuttoning her blouse. She then holds her hands to her belly, framed by the loose silk blouse, as if molding an invisible pregnant bulge. She stares at herself in the mirror and slowly her face grows more sad. She appears to be on the verge of tears when she shuts the light and exits back into the bedroom.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary crawls into bed and tries to avoid touching Charles, who is still snoring. As if by instinct, he senses her presence, and rolls over, his arm flailing down on top of her. She also rolls over but can't seem to distance herself from him.

She doesn't seem to be getting any rest, and a moment later rises again from the bed, pushing Charles' arm off her, returning to the bathroom.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary re-enters the bathroom and sits down on the lowered toilet seat. She dabs her wet eyes with a tissue.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - MORNING

Julian is pacing around the room, TALKING on the speakerphone. James Quinn's VOICE is his audience.

JULIAN

I can't explain it on the phone
James.

QUINN O.S.

Come on in this afternoon,
Julian.

Julian walks over to his desk and looks at his appointment book. He thumbs to the present date.

JULIAN

Okay, James. Three o'clock good? I have a meeting with my lawyer at one. And do me a favor, would you? Find something about end of the millennia thought, ok?

QUINN O.S.

End of the millennia? Why?

JULIAN

I have to go, James, just find that out, ok?

QUINN O.S.

All right, Julian. I'll see you at three.

CLICK. Quinn has hung up. Julian hangs up the speakerphone and exits the room.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Julian is getting dressed. His thoughts, however, are with last night's conversation with Mary.

MARY V.O.

You're going to have to believe, Julian.

Julian lifts up the Band-Aid on his palm. Underneath, the wound is merely a scar, dime-sized like the mark on the back of his hand. Discarding the Band-Aid, he runs his hands over the smooth skin of the scar.

MARY V.O.

Did you not learn anything from the wound? It is the reason that is important, not the cause.

Julian shakes his head again, not quite accepting Mary's fate for him. He shuts the door behind him as he exits the bedroom.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Mary is also getting dressed and reliving the conversation.

JULIAN V.O.

Slow down there! I'm not a saint,
I don't even believe....

She shakes her head, upset at the disbelief she heard from Julian.

MARY

(muttering to herself)
You're going to have to try
harder.

Finished dressing, she exits the bedroom.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - MORNING

Mary, carrying a bag of dirty laundry, gets out of her black Lexus and walks to the entrance to a dry cleaner store. She enters.

INT. MR. CLEEN'S DRY CLEANERS - MORNING

Mary enters and is immediately deafened by the ROAR of an industrial-sized fan blowing in the store. GRETA, the elderly cashier, is sitting behind the counter, watching a TALK SHOW on a television. She recognizes Mary.

GRETA

Hello there Mrs. Carlisle.

MARY

Hi Greta. Got something for you
here.

Mary dumps the sack of laundry on the counter. Greta starts sorting the clothes into different piles.

The talk show fades to a commercial.

GRETA

Have you heard about the man in
Florida?

MARY

(laughing)

Which one, there are a lot of men there.

GRETA

The rich one. He was arrested for trying to steal a bunch of lab animals the other night. He thinks he can buy his freedom.

Mary recognizes Julian's story and becomes very interested.

MARY

What? Is he on that show?

GRETA

No, his lawyer is. Big fat-cat rich defense lawyer.

The show returns from commercial to a still photograph of Julian taken from his lawn. Mary studies it until it dissolves to the PANEL of guests. The HOST stands out in the AUDIENCE.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

JESSICA MORRIS, the shimmering blonde talk show host, is dressed in a pink power suit. In one hand she is holding a microphone, and in the other a stack of notecards. Standing in the sea of the audience, she addresses the guests on stage, including DEXTER VANDERWALL, Julian's lawyer.

MORRIS

Thank you for joining us, Mr. Vanderwall.

VANDERWALL

It's my pleasure, Ms. Morris.

MORRIS

Can you tell me what separates your client's case from just any other wealthy person and their private moral causes? Is Mr. Crisp unique in the light of celebrity activists?

VANDERWALL

Certainly. My client, Julian Crisp, not only is innocent of this and any other crime, but firmly believes that animal testing and torture must be stopped.

The AUDIENCE in the studio doesn't buy this. They start making noises of disagreement, WHISTLING and SHOUTING "Yeah right."

BACK TO DRY CLEANER'S:

GRETA

Damn lawyers. They think they can buy justice. They're the reason this country's going to hell.

Mary doesn't answer. Greta looks over at her, oddly.

GRETA (CONT.)

Huh? Don't you think so?

MARY

Uhh, yeah, I think so. I'm sorry, I have to go.

Mary puts the rest of her laundry on the counter and walks out.

EXT. MALL - DAY

Mary storms out and returns to her car. She fumbles with her keys, obviously anxious about something. Finally, she manages to unlock the door and get in.

She doesn't start the ignition. Instead, she picks up her phone and dials one of the preset buttons. It doesn't take a split-second for her caller to answer.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Behold THE PREACHER. He is a white-bearded, balding middle-aged man sitting behind an expensive oak desk. He looks like a new-age guru, and is surrounded by religious artifacts, gilded crosses, etc. He picks up the telephone.

PREACHER

Hello? (pause) What is it, Mary?

EXT. MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Mary is in near-hysterics.

MARY

Did you just see the talk show,
Julian, he was on it.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARY AND PREACHER:

PREACHER

Slow down. Take a deep breath.

MARY

(hyperventilating)
Okay. There was just a TV show
with his lawyer.

PREACHER

Julian's lawyer?

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

The Preacher appears quite interested.

PREACHER (CONT.)

Is it still on?

He fumbles through the papers and books on his desk,
looking for a remote control.

MARY O.S.

I don't know. It may still be.

PREACHER

(flipping through channels on TV)
I don't see it. What was he
saying?

MARY O.S.

Nothing really. It was just
disturbing to see it as a
national story.

PREACHER

Disturbing? No, Mary, this is good. People are starting to learn his name.

MARY O.S.

This is good?

EXT. MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Mary seems in disbelief.

PREACHER O.S.

Incredibly. I can't believe our luck with this one.

MARY

Okay then. How do we proceed?

PREACHER O.S.

Call him again, tonight. Do it from home. Let him call you back if you need to.

MARY

What about Charles?

PREACHER O.S.

He doesn't know?

MARY

No. It's been ... rather difficult lately. Since the ...

Her voice trails off. She doesn't want to say it.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

The Preacher turns off the TV, unable to find the program with Julian's lawyer.

PREACHER

I understand. Mary, I have to go. Please, call him tonight. Tell Charles if you need to. Come see me tomorrow, nine a.m.

He hangs up the phone.

EXT. MALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Mary holds the phone, DIAL TONE DRONING, in her hand.

MARY

Nine a.m.

She hangs up the phone and starts the engine. She pulls out of the parking spot and a moment later a white BMW, similar to Julian's, takes her spot.

EXT. COLLEGE - PARKING LOT

Julian parks his white BMW in a spot near the academic building. He gets out and walks to the building.

INT. COLLEGE - ACADEMIC BUILDING - DAY

Julian enters and dodges STUDENTS, all young and aloof, as they make their way from classroom to classroom. Somehow, the masses part, clearing the way for Julian to walk in an unobstructed path to Dr. Quinn's office.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - QUINN'S OFFICE - DAY

James Quinn sits at his desk, talking with Ellie.

QUINN

This paper will be forty percent of your grade, Ellie. Would you like me to look at a rough draft of it?

ELLIE

Would you please?

QUINN

Certainly.

Outside, Julian's brisk FOOTSTEPS are heard.

QUINN (CONT.)

Ahh, yes. Julian's here. If you'll excuse me please, I have a meeting.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - OUTSIDE QUINN'S OFFICE - DAY

Julian KNOCKS on the door.

QUINN (CONT., O.S.)

Yes, Julian. Come in.

Julian enters.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - QUINN'S OFFICE - DAY

Inside, Julian doesn't seem surprised to see Ellie meeting with Quinn. Ellie, however, seems quite surprised, initially, and then upset at him not returning her call.

QUINN

Julian, welcome. This is Ellie Donalds, she is in the class you spoke to last week.

JULIAN

It's a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Donalds.

Ellie is flabbergasted. She can't speak, so she just nods at him.

QUINN

Ellie, thanks for coming in. Please stop by again if you would like to.

Ellie gets up and leaves. Julian takes her seat.

JULIAN

I hope I wasn't interrupting anything...

QUINN

No, nothing at all. You know her, don't you?

JULIAN

How did you know? Surely I didn't betray it?

QUINN

No, she had asked about you.

JULIAN

Oh? (suddenly very interested)
And what did you answer?

QUINN

I told her not to think about you. That you spelled trouble and all that.

Julian LAUGHS. Quinn does too, but he wasn't joking about that. There's an awkward pause before they remember about why Julian came to visit.

JULIAN

Thanks for agreeing to see me on such short notice, James. Did you get a chance to look up what I had asked you to?

Quinn fumbles around with the papers on his desk, looking for a book. Finally, he seems to find it.

QUINN

Here. (hands the book to Julian)
The Coming Millennium, by Richard Powell.

JULIAN

Richard Powell. Why does that name sound familiar to me?

QUINN

Turn the book over.

Julian does. We recognize the face in the picture as that of The Preacher, Mary's mentor. Julian seems to recognize the picture as well.

JULIAN

He looks familiar... Who is he?

QUINN

Name's Richard Powell. He's the leading expert on what you asked about. End of the millennium, religious rapture, all that. You've probably seen him on a talk show or two.

JULIAN

No, it's not there. I don't watch that trash.

QUINN

Maybe you should. I saw your lawyer on it this morning.

JULIAN

Vanderwall? He was on TV?

QUINN

Taking your heat? Or, spreading your propaganda?

Julian smiles.

JULIAN

I have no idea what you're talking about.

QUINN

Yes, I thought you'd say that. But, this Powell's a real nutcase, if you will. Interesting book, I read it last fall. He writes a lot about this sort of thinking. Fascinating material, from a simply scholastic point of view. You remember what happened at the last turn of the millennium?

JULIAN

Mass suicide and sacrifice, right?

QUINN

Yes. Great stuff. Gave writers like Dante and Boccaccio fodder for centuries. Oh, and the artwork. I could, really, rave about that for hours.

Quinn finds a book and gently opens it. It is a facsimile of a medieval text, full of crude, primary color drawings, images of chaos and rapture showing tortured souls and zombie-like humans. Julian leans in and carefully turns the pages.

QUINN (CONT.)

Look familiar?

JULIAN

Book of Revelations, right?

QUINN

Quite correct. Amazing stuff. Fox ought to make a TV movie about it. Ratings would be incredible.

He CHUCKLES in his English, quirky, way.

JULIAN

Powell buys into all of this?

QUINN

He doesn't buy it, he sells it. He's out in California, cult-central.

JULIAN

California, you say? San Diego, perhaps?

QUINN

Yes, the San Diego area. You know him?

JULIAN

I think I know a friend of his. May I take this book?

QUINN

Certainly. Here, these are a few other works by him.

He opens a drawer and finds a few photocopied pamphlets. Powell's name is in big, bold text along the tops of the red-colored cardboard covers. The titles, below, have such titles as "The New Messiah," "Modern Day Sodom and Gomorra," and "The End of the World." Quinn hands the booklets to Julian, who is amused by both the cheapness of the literature and the splashy titles.

JULIAN

Sounds like my kind of bedtime reading. Thank you James.

QUINN

No problem, Julian. Just return them by the date inside the back cover for me. The library here on campus hates me already, I had to have Sylvia check them out for me. Thank god for TAs.

JULIAN

One other thing: might you have a bible that I could borrow?

QUINN

You don't own one? What sort of philosophy student were you?

Quinn gets up and finds a King James Bible in the overflowing masses of his bookshelf. He hands the tome to Julian.

JULIAN

An agnostic one.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Mary enters, carrying shopping bags from expensive clothing boutiques. She walks in, places the bags down by the door, and sees a message written on a notepad by the telephone. She picks it up.

CHARLES V.O.

Hi honey. I'm covering for Davenport tonight, so I'll be back late. Sorry, C.

Mary crumples up the note and throws it, aggressively, toward an invisible trash can. Despite the force she threw it with, it sort of floats in the air as it glides to the ground.

MARY

Damn you Charles.

She walks into the bedroom, and through the open door, we see her lie down on the bed. She is exhausted and slowly starts to WHIMPER. We remain in the hallway.

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - EVENING

Dusk approaches outside the window as Julian sits at his desk, reading The Preacher's book, and occasionally typing notes into his computer. He finishes reading a chapter, stops, ponders it for a moment, and then starts hammering out a steady stream of text into the computer.

After several moments, he stops, satisfied at his work. He presses a few buttons, and then the WHIR of a printer starts. When the print job is finished, Julian takes the stack of papers produced (about five) and paces around the room, inspecting his work.

Halfway through the second page, he sees something wrong and immediately flips through The Preacher's book for confirmation. Unsatisfied there, he turns to the Bible, opening it from the backside to the Book of Revelations. There, he finds his confirmation, and he scribbles his correction onto the printed text.

The other pages give Julian no problems and soon he is sitting back down at his computer, PURPLE GLARE cast across it by the sunset.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - LATER THAT EVENING

Julian is still typing away. It is obvious that his typing skill has improved over the few hours he has been working. He is now typing at a speed that even a seasoned secretary would be envious of.

He is just about to finish, we can tell, when the TELEPHONE RINGS. Julian jumps up, surprised. He has a smile on his face, knowing who it is. He picks up the cordless phone and turns it on.

JULIAN

Hello? (a beat) Ian? I'm sorry,
that's the wrong number. There's
no Ian here.

He hangs up the phone and turns back to the computer monitor.

JULIAN

I thought that was going to be
you, Mary.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mary and Charles are in the midst of an argument. Charles looks like he just walked in the door from work, he still has his white coat on over his scrubs and is holding his briefcase tiredly in one hand while actively gesturing to Mary with his other.

CHARLES

Damnit! I'm sick of this crap
every single time I mention work.
Do you expect me to change fields
just because you had -

MARY

Stop it! I won't take this
anymore!

She reaches for something to throw at him. Her face is violently red. She fumbles with an expensive-looking vase on the coffee table. As she tries to pick it up, it's too heavy for her to lift easily with one hand, leaning down from the angle she's at standing. Instead, she drops it, and it CRASHES loudly on the glass table.

Charles seizes the initiative to stop the argument. He puts down his bag and rushes over to Mary.

CHARLES

Jesus Christ! Are you okay?

Mary crumples to her knees, gripping razor-sharp shards of the vase in her fist. Blood trickles down her wrists, but she doesn't seem to feel much physical pain. Her face, however, is tear-stained and pinkish-red. She begins to hyperventilate. She doesn't answer Charles.

Charles kneels down beside Mary and tries to pry her hands open. She reacts by swinging a bloody, clutching fist up at Charles' face. She misses slashing him to ribbons by inches. Charles instinctively grabs her wrist tightly.

MARY

You bastard. I hate you, damn it.

CHARLES

Calm down! It's going to be okay.
Just chill out.

MARY

You just don't understand, do
you?

CHARLES

What's there to misunderstand?
You're just acting a bit
hysterical. It's perfectly
understandable.

MARY

(through clenched teeth)
Let go of me.

She tries to break out of his grip, but he's too strong. Finally, admitting her defeat, she drops the shard from her fist. It falls harmlessly to the floor with the other pieces of the vase, but blood follows it down from her hand. Charles immediately lets Mary go and rushes over to his bag, out of which he removes a large bandage, cloth tape, and a bottle of anti-bacterial lotion.

Mary doesn't let him treat her. She gets up from her crouched position, tucks her bleeding hand under her other arm, and starts to head to the door. She picks up her purse with her healthy hand and slings it over her shoulder with a fluid motion. She then opens the door and exits. Charles does not chase after her or call out for her. He remains in the room, as if waiting for her to return.

After a moment, there is no Mary, and he kneels down by the mess to clean it up.

EXT. MARY'S APARTMENT - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mary still has her injured hand under her other arm. She walks to her car and takes her hand out from under its protection to inspect the wound.

On her right palm, virtually identical to Julian's wound, is a small hole. Like Julian did, she holds it up to a streetlight, trying to look through it. It was not deep enough to do so, but is still a fairly impressive wound. She feels no pain, too, just amazement. With her left hand, her good one, she unlocks and opens the car door.

INT. MARY'S CAR - NIGHT

Mary reaches into the glove box and finds an emergency first aid kit. She fumbles it open, but can't find a bandage large enough for the wound in it. CURSING, she throws the kit down on the passenger-side seat's floor, and reaches into the backseat for a towel to wrap around the hurt hand. She finds a white towel, used normally for tennis or golf, and gently wraps it around her injured right hand.

While she's never met Julian or even seen his injury, she completely understands his thoughts regarding it. She feels the same confusion, bewilderment, and excitement from it. With a dazed, glassy-eyed smile on her face, she manages to start the ignition and put the car into gear to drive.

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

A NIGHT DESK CLERK is talking with Mary, who still has the towel wrapped around her hand. The clerk slides a piece of paper and a pen on the counter for her to sign.

CLERK

Okay, please sign here. The rate is fifty-five dollars for one night, one occupant, king-sized bed.

Mary holds the paper down with her wadded right fist, and manages to scratch out a signature with her left hand.

MARY

Thank you. I'll be paying in cash in the morning when I check out.

She slides the signed paper and pen back to the clerk. The clerk accepts it, smiles, and slides an envelope back to Mary.

CLERK

Your room is two thirty-nine.
Will you need any assistance with
your bags, ma'am?

MARY

No, thank you.

Mary smiles a good-bye to the clerk and walks away from the desk.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - OUTSIDE ROOM 239 - NIGHT

Mary exits an elevator down the hall and finds her temporary home. She takes the keycard out of the envelope the clerk gave her and opens the door with it. Carrying only her purse, and her right hand wrapped in a red-stained white towel, Mary pushes open the door with her shoulder and enters.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 239 - A LITTLE LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary lies on the bed, flat on her back, head propped by a pillow. She idly flips through the television stations, not staying on any one channel for more than five seconds. Various shows, programs, commercials, and other such things on a weeknight prime-time lineup are seen.

Finally, she gets bored with the selection and turns it off. Almost on sych, the TELEPHONE RINGS.

Mary stares at the phone, not sure if she wants to answer it.

MARY

(to herself)

Who knows that I'm here?

She knows: Charles. She considers not answering the phone, but curiosity gets the best of her when it RINGS AGAIN. She picks up the handset.

MARY (into phone)

Hello?

PREACHER O.S.

Hello Mary.

Mary sits up in bed.

MARY

How did you find me here?

PREACHER O.S.

I knew. Charles told me you had left, so I figured you two had gotten into another fight. Are you okay?

MARY

Yes ... I'm fine ... I was just going to call him.

PREACHER O.S.

You were? Excellent. This is moving along at a nice pace.

MARY

Do you still want me to come in the morning?

PREACHER O.S.

Of course. Nine a.m.

The Preacher hangs up. Mary stares at the DRONING handset, not blinking. Finally, the recorded voice of the OPERATOR is heard from the phone.

OPERATOR O.S.

If you'd like to make a call,
please hang up and try it again.
If you need help, hang up, and
then dial your operator.

Mary hangs up the phone. She gets off the bed and walks across the hotel room to the bathroom. After she enters it and turns on the light, she closes the door.