

Tierra Del Fuego

by

Michael A. Weintraub

© 1997
Blue: Revised 4/21/97

10819 Hampton Mill Terrace
Apartment #100
Rockville, Maryland 20852
301/881-8605

FADE IN:

An AIRPLANE shoots overhead and lands on a runway. A haze of the purplish sunset provides the background as the plane taxis to the gate. We also see the towering skyline of a large northeastern American city reflected in the big shiny mirrors of the airport terminal. It's old, and the shiny airplane provides a stark contrast to the dusk and grimy city backdrop.

The airplane finds a home to deposit its passengers. A CREW of airport employees hurry to empty the bowels of the plane of its luggage.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - EVENING

Among the people milling around the gate for passengers to exit the plane is JULIAN CRISP. He is an attractive man in his late twenties, wearing a rather expensive-looking overcoat and hat. He does not seem to be looking out for anyone, and just watches the people pass by. As a TRAVELLER passes him, he will regard him or her for a moment, until someone new catches his eye.

A pretty STEWARDESS is one of the last people to exit the plane. She walks out toward the area by the window where Julian is sitting and looks out of it. Grey clouds billow in the sunset to the west.

STEWARDESS

Think it'll rain tonight?

Julian doesn't answer. She looks down at him, seated, and smiles.

JULIAN

Excuse me?

STEWARDESS

When did the rain stop?

JULIAN

About an hour ago. Might start up again tonight, I don't know.

She seems to get his hint: I'm not interested. She SIGHS, and grabs the handle of her wheeled suitcase.

STEWARDESS

Thank you.

She zips off down the terminal hallway. Julian watches after her for a moment.

JULIAN

Someday.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO – SOUP KITCHEN – DAY

A few HOMELESS men and women are hanging around ST. MARY'S SHELTER AND FOODBANK. They don't seem to be doing much of anything, just sitting around on the nice sunny day.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Naw, the Padres ain't gonna do better this year.

HOMELESS MAN

Shirley, no way. They got them young Mexicans. They sure can throw fast.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Last place it is. Until the end of the century, that is. Maybe then they'll be able to pitch again.

HOMELESS MAN

Ain't you listenin' to me? They got them pitchers now. Them Mexicans.

A BLACK LEXUS sedan pulls up and parks in front of the shelter. Two people get out. The driver, MARY CARLISLE, is a tall, slender woman stylishly dressed. Her passenger is a balding and grey-bearded man wearing a white suit. His name is RICHARD POWELL, but he is known as THE PREACHER.

Despite the fact that he looks like he could be her father, the relationship between the Preacher and Mary is more mentor/pupil than father/daughter.

The conversation about baseball stops as the homeless man and woman watch Mary and the Preacher enter the shelter.

PREACHER

You think he's here?

MARY

I don't know. He seems to fit your description.

They enter the shelter.

HOMELESS MAN

She works here, don't she?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Some times, yeah.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Julian is still sitting in the terminal. Another PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN sits down beside him. She is obviously a student, on a weekend trip. She bustles with her bags, eventually emerging from her crouch with a GLAMOUR magazine and a set of airline tickets. She smiles at Julian.

STUDENT

Hi.

JULIAN

Hello.

STUDENT

Six-fifteen to Detroit?

JULIAN

I'm sorry?

STUDENT

Are you on that flight? It's next at this gate.

JULIAN

No, no. I'm here, umm, waiting for someone.

STUDENT

Oh, okay. Is it your girlfriend?

She smiles again at him, hoping the answer is No.

JULIAN

No. Well, sort of. It's a complicated situation, actually.

Julian starts to look away from the girl. The P.A. at the gate crackles to life.

AIRLINE EMPLOYEE

Now boarding flight 342, non-stop service to Detroit, Michigan, at gate D32.

The student jerks up quickly.

STUDENT

Well, that's me. Nice meeting you. Good luck with your girlfriend.

JULIAN

Yes, goodbye.

With a quick wink, she walks to the gate. Julian watches her for a moment as she hands her ticket in and enters the jetway.

Another plane has landed, and more passengers spill out of another gate area. Julian watches them with muted interest, but his face shows a sign of recognition when another MAN, approximately Julian's age, walks by with his WIFE and young DAUGHTER. Julian makes the briefest of eye contact with the man, who recognizes Julian instantly.

MAN

Julian? Wow, hey there. How are you doing?

Julian rises to greet the man.

JULIAN

I'm fine, thanks.

The man gestures to his wife.

MAN

Honey, this is Julian Crisp, I went to school with him. Susan, meet Julian, another Yalie. Julian, this is my wife Susan, and daughter Andrea.

Susan struggles with her daughter to free a hand to shake Julian's. Julian smiles at the young girl.

JULIAN

It's a pleasure to meet you.

The daughter doesn't seem to like waiting there while her parents talk to the stranger.

DAUGHTER

Mom, come on.

WIFE

Brad, let's go.

MAN

Yes, honey, we should. Julian, it was great seeing you again. Keep in touch, okay?

JULIAN

Sure thing, Brad.

The man and his family walk off. Julian looks around again, but nothing seems to interest him. He gets up and starts walking down the terminal corridor, keeping a safe distance between himself and Brad's family.

As Julian bounds down the corridor, a young GIRL steps into his path. She seems no older than sixteen years old, and her stringy blonde hair is done up in braided cornrows. She carries a stack of books in her left arm.

GIRL

Sir, may I interest you in some books?

JULIAN

Books?

GIRL

The gospel of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Julian looks over the books in her hand. They are religious literature, and he instantly realizes that she is up to something. He quickly starts to walk away.

JULIAN

I'm sorry, no.

The girl bows at him.

GIRL

Have a blessed day.

As Julian fades from view, the girl walks over to a phone booth and dials a number.

INT. SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

Mary and the Preacher gaze around the shelter. There's not much happening, as it's between meals and there's a nice day outside. A few HOMELESS people sit around, playing checkers, reading old magazines, etc. A few look up and smile at Mary as she walks by.

MARY

I don't see him here. He might be in the back.

She leads the Preacher toward the rear of the shelter.

INT. SOUP KITCHEN - BACK ROOM - DAY

Mary and the Preacher enter the supply room. A young Latino man, JESUS CALDERON, stands in the doorway of a large walk-in freezer, holding a sack of onions. He recognizes Mary.

JESUS

Hola, Mrs. Carlisle.

MARY

Hello, Jesus. There's someone I would like you to meet.

Jesus looks over the Preacher warily.

JESUS

Who's he?

PREACHER

My name is Richard Powell.

The Preacher offers his hand out to Jesus, who shakes it grudgingly. The Preacher frowns at Mary.

JESUS

What do you want?

MARY

I wanted him to meet you. I think
you're a special person.

She smiles at him.

PREACHER

It was nice to meet you, Jesus.
Mary, let's go.

The Preacher leads Mary out of the back room.

EXT. SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

The homeless man and woman are still talking baseball.

HOMELESS MAN

Now the Dodgers, they got some good
pitchers.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Yeah, they always do. Since they got
that Fernando -

HOMELESS MAN

A Mexican.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Yeah, he's Mexican.

Mary and the Preacher exit the shelter, in mid-conversation.

PREACHER

He's got to be different this time
around. Two thousand years is a long
time.

Mary unlocks the car's door with a click of the remote
control key ring.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Mary starts the engine and drives away from the shelter. The
air conditioner HUMS under the sound of the Preacher and her
talking. Mary seems a bit upset at the Preacher's
disappointment with her find.

MARY

Okay, so who else did you have in mind?

The Preacher reaches into a briefcase by his feet and pulls out a file. He opens it up and produces a black and white photograph of Julian.

PREACHER

Him.

Mary leans over and takes a look. She likes what she sees.

MARY

Who's that?

PREACHER

Julian Crisp. Rich guy.

MARY

Wealthy?

PREACHER

Yeah, it's the nineties. Someone told me about him. I think he's the one.

Mary studies the picture a bit more at a traffic light.

MARY

Yes, I think so, too.

INT. AIRPORT – TICKET COUNTER – DAY

Julian walks up to a deserted ticket counter and approaches the TICKET AGENT.

AGENT

How may I help you, sir?

JULIAN

Yes ... hello.

AGENT

Do you have a ticket, sir?

JULIAN

Umm ... no.

AGENT

How may I help you, then?

JULIAN

I'd like to go somewhere.

AGENT

Where, sir? We have flights coming up to Miami, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh.

JULIAN

That's it?

AGENT

Tonight, I mean, there are flights to Chicago and Toronto, Ontario. Where in particular did you wish to go?

JULIAN

Nowhere in particular.

Julian steps away from the ticket agent, dejected. Fumbling in his pockets, he finds a subway token and walks down the hallway leading to PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN – EVENING

Julian walks onto a train at the airport station and finds a seat. An ELDERLY WOMAN struggles with her suitcase to exit the train and Julian rises from his seat to help her.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Thank you very much, young man.

JULIAN

It's nothing at all.

With a smile, the woman is able to wheel her suitcase along out of the train's vicinity. Julian returns to his seat.

The train rumbles away from the airport station. Julian surveys the car he is on. There are a few other passengers, crowded in bunches of families and luggage. Julian appears to be the only non-traveler among the group on the car. As the subway train leaves, the SOUNDS around Julian amplify, yet he remains peaceful. The metal GRATING of the train on the tracks and various CONVERSATIONS amplify in volume, but over time a new VOICE, not on the train, is heard the loudest. Julian doesn't seem to hear the voice, which is that of a woman.

CONVERSATIONALIST #1

Honey, did you check the hotel reservation confirmation line?

CONVERSATIONALIST #2

Damnit! My bag's ripped. Look, here. Do you see it? Those sons of bitches.

CONVERSATIONALIST #3

The pilot had to stop the landing because the plane that landed before us didn't know their way around the runway strips, apparently, and were a bit lost.

CONVERSATIONALIST #4

Don't they have those funny signs and lights there for just that?

CONVERSATIONALIST #3

Yeah, I guess so. Anyway, we had to go and circle the airport again. It's just as well, because for some reason the movie that they were showing—I wasn't watching it—was still running. I think there would've been a mutiny if they had landed without finishing the movie.

The WOMAN'S VOICE starts to FADE IN. We recognize it as Mary's:

MARY V.O.

Dear Julian.

The conversations start to FADE OUT, while Mary's voice starts to reach the volume of the subway train. No one seems to hear her, nor does anyone seem to be talking on the train.

MARY V.O. (Cont.)

Do not stare too long at the return address and postmark, you will not recognize me because of that. Nor will my handwriting or voice stir your memory either.

The train enters a station and slides to a stop. Julian gets up and walks to the doors. When they open, he exits.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - EVENING

Julian walks through the throngs of evening passengers and makes his way to the exit. The woman's voice CONTINUES, over the various NOISES of the station (conductor calls, trains, conversations, etc.).

MARY V.O. (Cont.)

You have never met me, but that will change soon. Do not fear me.

Julian walks up a staircase to the street. We remain behind in the station.

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 slices his way through 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 Guinness, 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

I'll be fine. No problem, it's nothing, really.

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 heads 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, back into the crowds in which he came.

INT. CHASER'S NIGHTCLUB - BATHROOM - NIGHT

The bathroom of the nightclub is surprisingly spotless. Even the trashcan is in order; there're no balled-up paper towels scattered around it on the floor.

A TOILET FLUSHES and Julian exits a stall. He goes to the sink and washes his hands. Outside the bathroom, there is a lull in the music, and not-quite-as-loud PUMPED-IN house music is heard.

The music gets louder when the door is opened, however. JERRY, another club regular like Julian, enters. He recognizes Julian.

JERRY

Hey Julian. Great show tonight, eh?

JULIAN

Not bad, yeah. How have you been?

JERRY

Pretty good. You still seeing Liza?

JULIAN

No. We broke up last month.

JERRY

Sorry to hear that, man. I think I saw her out there tonight.

Julian doesn't seem interested.

JULIAN

She's here? Tell her I say hi, then.

Julian exits the bathroom. Jerry seems a little surprised.

INT. CHASER'S NIGHTCLUB - FLOOR - NIGHT

Another BAND, this one not unlike the previous one, starts their set. The club is even more crowded now, and the dance floor is packed. Julian squeezes into an open space to the left of the stage.

Across the floor, by stage right, is LIZA, Julian's ex-girlfriend, and her friend ELLIE. Liza looks out and sees Julian.

LIZA
Hey, he's here.

Ellie peers out. It takes her a moment, but she soon picks Julian out of the crowd. He is standing alone, facing the band.

ELLIE
Big surprise. You gonna talk to him?

LIZA
Should I? I don't think so.

ELLIE
Why not? Even though you two broke up, you're still allowed to talk.

Ellie shakes her head.

LIZA
If he comes to talk to me, I'll talk to him.

Liza looks over at Ellie. Ellie appears disappointed.

EXT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

The club empties and Julian joins the throngs of people exiting. He appears to be caught in a group of FRIENDS, as they head down the sidewalk to a subway station. Julian is helpless among them.

FRIEND #1
That was great. I mean, wow, I couldn't believe that.

FRIEND #2
Last time I saw them there, it was nothing like that.

JULIAN
Umm, excuse me.

Julian has to barge his way through two or three people to exit away from them.

He stands back, leaning against a building, as he watches dozens of people head down the staircase to the subway.

After a few moments, he is pretty much alone. A few PEOPLE, obviously drunk, stumble by. But as soon as they leave Julian is alone again.

He starts to walk, rather aimlessly, down the streets. He escapes the arc of a streetlight, disappearing down, into the darkness.

EXT. CITY STREETS - A LITTLE LATER THAT EVENING

Julian rounds a corner and nearly bumps into a POLICE OFFICER. The officer is a young man, barely out of training, and a nightstick swings loosely from his hands.

JULIAN
Whoa, excuse me.

OFFICER
Sorry about that, sir.

Julian averts eye contact with the cop and continues on.

OFFICER (Cont.)
Where are you heading?

JULIAN
I'm sorry?

OFFICER
Where are you heading?

Julian stops and turns around to face the cop.

JULIAN
Oh, I was just over at Chaser's.
Taking a walk, that's all.

OFFICER
In this neighborhood? Better be careful.

JULIAN
Thanks, but I'm fine.

OFFICER

Sure you don't need a ride somewhere? There aren't too many cabs in this part of town. At least not this late. I can call a car for you.

The officer taps the walkie-talkie on his belt. Julian also notices a revolver close to it, along with a clip of .22mm ammunition.

JULIAN

No, really. I'm just catching some fresh air before hopping on a train. Thanks, though.

Julian starts to walk away, but the cop joins him. The two walk side-by-side.

OFFICER

Y'know, there was a homicide here last night.

He points to a spot on the ground. It might've been a bloodstain last night, but the darkness and a rainfall has muted it.

JULIAN

Really? What happened?

OFFICER

Guy came out of the club you were just at, Chaser's, and decided to walk home. This isn't the best neighborhood for that kind of exercise.

JULIAN

Ahh.

The officer nods and leads Julian around the street corner. They come up to a bank, eerily cast in orange streetlights. Yellow police tape is virtually everywhere on the sidewalk there.

OFFICER

Be careful, these buildings provide some great corners to hide behind. They just jumped the guy from around the side of the bank here. Made him withdraw his savings from this money machine, too.

The officer leads Julian under the tape to the money machine by the bank. It's ensconced in more yellow tape and the wide-angle video camera is little more than shattered mirror-glass. A defined bullet hole is visible in the center of the melange of reflections.

JULIAN

Then what happened?

OFFICER

Well, we think he tried to run away, but they caught him and (moves his finger across his throat) well, it wasn't pretty. The rain got most of the blood away, but these streets don't clean too easily.

The officer looks back at the murder scene, a half a block away. He then looks up at the leaden night city skies.

OFFICER (Cont.)

Might rain again tonight, though. That might do the trick.

JULIAN

I was planning on getting on at the Seventeenth Street station. Just a block or two from here.

OFFICER

You be careful, sir. We haven't made any arrests yet for last night's homicide.

JULIAN

Will do, officer.

OFFICER

Sure I can't keep you company until you get there?

JULIAN

No, I'll be fine, thanks. I know these streets like the back of my hand.

The officer considers Julian for a second. Julian smiles and the officer nods.

OFFICER

Okay, sir. Just be careful. I'd stay on this side of the street, if I were you. There're more lights here.

Julian nods.

JULIAN

Will do, thanks.

Julian walks off. The officer stands back, watching Julian recede into the shadows.

EXT. CITY STREETS - JUST AFTERWARDS

Julian walks down the dark sidewalk, his head bowed down. A light drizzle falls down on him, and he pulls the collar up his neck to help protect it from the rain.

As he rounds a corner, he sees two things. The first, which he expects, is a subway entrance sign, about a block or two away. The second item is closer to him, but on the other side of the street. There, two MASKED MEN, wearing ski masks, have cornered a THIRD PERSON. Julian sees a glint of light reflect off the blade of a knife in one of the assailants hands, up against the throat of the victim.

The situation is eerily silent. A CAR'S ENGINE rumbles, but sounds like it's a block or two away. Julian stops suddenly, and recedes into a doorway to watch the situation.

The third person is revealed to be a YOUNG MAN, probably another club-attende like Julian was. Carefully, he slides his wallet out of his pocket and hands it to one of the muggers. The mugger steps back for a moment to peruse the contents of the wallet, and nods.

MUGGER

Okay, let's go.

The second mugger lets the man go with a shove. The man falls to the wet pavement. With a hard kick to the stomach by the first mugger, the two run off to the subway entrance. Julian's view of them fades somewhat as they dash off.

The young man on the ground starts to rise. He starts to COUGH.

It's this sound, of the young man coughing, that prompts Julian. He rushes across the street to him.

JULIAN

Hey. Are you all right?

POV – YOUNG MAN ON KNEES

We look up at Julian rushing toward us. A streetlight from the other side of the street, along with the falling rain, renders Julian almost otherworldly.

BACK TO SCENE

Julian stops a few feet away from the man.

YOUNG MAN

Huh? Who are you?

JULIAN

You don't know me. Are you okay?

The young man gets up to his feet. He holds his stomach, and breathes a little heavier than normal, struggling to inhale. He stretches out, and immediately WINCES in pain.

YOUNG MAN

I'll live.

JULIAN

What happened?

YOUNG MAN

You saw it, didn't you? They held a knife to my throat and asked for my wallet. Who was I to refuse.

JULIAN

Yeah, I saw that. Did they kick you hard?

YOUNG MAN

A little. I might've bruised a rib.
Don't think it's broken, though.

Julian reaches in his pocket for his wallet. He fishes through it and withdraws about three bills. He hands them to the young man.

JULIAN

Here, go get yourself a cab.

The young man reluctantly thumbs through the bills. He counts them.

YOUNG MAN

Fifty dollars?

He starts to hand the bills back to Julian. Julian steps back and shakes his head.

JULIAN

Keep them, you need it more than I
do right now.

YOUNG MAN

Are you sure?

JULIAN

Sure, there's more where they came
from.

Julian smiles. This is the first time we see Julian smile, and we see it the way the young man does, as an angel brought down from heaven. Julian's smile is amplified by the moonlight, the streetlights, and the glistening raindrops. Something perfect appears in it, and it causes the young man to smile too. Everything is going to be all right.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, thanks a lot. I really
appreciate it. Can I -

JULIAN

No, please don't pay me back. Take
care of yourself, okay?

Julian starts to step away, back into the street. A taxi cab goes by, splashing water up onto Julian. He flags it down, and the cab stops.

JULIAN (Cont.)

Here's your cab. Have a good night.

Julian leaves the young man, who gets into the cab.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A subway car pulls up and Julian walks on. A solitary PASSENGER is seen sleeping in a seat by the window. After the doors close, it slides away, virtually silently, into the night.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

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

MARY O.S.

...You have never met me, but that will change soon. Do not fear me. (a beat) You recently suffered an unusual wound on your right hand. I know that you did not feel any physical pain from it, but I wonder as to the emotional trauma. Again, do not fear me or this occurrence. It will all make perfect sense to you soon, I assure you. Please be patient.

She pauses to take a breath.

MARY O.S. (Cont.)

I am a stranger to you now, but I feel like I know you so well. My dreams are full of you, yet troubling to me is that I am not in them with you. Is that a premonition? Will you someday leave me behind? I hope not, and I also 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, Mary folds it, inserts it in an envelope pre-addressed to Julian Crisp, 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. MARY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The faint sounds of someone SNORING blend with the rhythmic monotone of a CEILING FAN circling itself endlessly. As we grow accustomed to the darkness, the figure of the sleeper is slowly formed. It is a MAN, slightly over-weight, curled on his left side. He is smack-dab in the middle of a queen-sized bed.

When Mary enters the bedroom, she flips a switch that turns on a light in a closet. We see her outline enter the closet, get undressed, and then, with her back to us, enter a bathroom. In there, she turns on another light and closes the door.

Like a burglar, we silently creep on over to the other side of the room, trying to listen in on the bathroom. We hear WATER FLOWING from the sink, Mary BRUSHING HER TEETH, and shortly later the water is turned off.

MARY O.S.

Very good. He's going to be so proud of you.

She BLOWS HER NOSE loudly and a moment later the TOILET is FLUSHED.

She shuts the light and opens the door, back into the darkness of the bedroom.

She strolls on over to the bed, only to find the man occupying most of it. She slides in next to him, so that she's on his right side and is facing his back.

MARY

Honey, please.

She nudges him slightly.

MARY (Cont.)

Charles, dear. I'm very tired.

Charles GRUNTS and rolls over onto his stomach, making room for her.

CHARLES

How are you feeling? Are you sleepy yet?

He looks over at the alarm clock: 2:12 A.M. He YAWNS.

MARY

I think so. Make some room for me, please.

He slides over a little more toward his side of the bed. She moves in next to him. Impulsively, she reaches her arms around him and kisses his neck.

CHARLES

'Night dear.

Rejected, she SIGHS and moves back over to her side of the bed and curls up, her back against him.

A few moments later, he resumes SNORING. However, she's not snoring, she's SOBBING. Something's bothering her, and it's probably something to do with him. She reaches up onto the nightstand for a tissue. Blotting her face, she calms down.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - SAVE THE EARTH'S HQ - DAY

Welcome to Save the Earth, an upstart non-profit environmental activist organization. This is their international headquarters, a stylishly designed 5,000 square foot downtown office. We are on the sixteenth floor of an office building, and an entire wall of the boardroom we are in is a large picture window.

There is a meeting in progress. Julian is one of the participants, seated at the head of the table. Also, there are four other people, three WOMEN and one MAN. One of the women, an attractive woman with long brown hair named CAROLYN, is speaking to Julian.

CAROLYN

Thank you for meeting with us, Mr. Crisp.

Julian nods. Everyone else around the table smiles. Carolyn continues:

CAROLYN (Cont.)

We understand how busy you are, and will keep this brief. Our organization is not going to try to compete with other, more established, organizations such as Greenpeace. We want to work with them, more on the grassroots level, to get awareness of the important issues of our times into the collective consciousness of America.

JULIAN

Isn't this preaching?

CAROLYN

No, of course not. It's educational.

Julian mulls this over.

JULIAN

Isn't there a fine line there, though?

CAROLYN

Then why do we go to school? By that reasoning, schools just preach, too.

Julian seems satisfied by this answer.

CAROLYN (Cont.)

So, we just hope to provide the necessary informational materials for Americans to make the proper choices when it comes time to vote.

Julian starts to nod. One of the other women at the table, ANNE, speaks up.

ANNE

Since we're not a pay-for-membership organization, and we refuse corporate sponsors, financial concerns are our most important matter at this time.

JULIAN

How much do you need?

Julian reaches into his briefcase for his checkbook.

ANNE

We are looking to secure three primary sponsors. Each of the three would pay an equal amount, and get the chance to write an editorial in each monthly issue of our magazine.

JULIAN

Have you found any sponsors yet?

Anne STAMMERS. Carolyn quickly covers for her.

CAROLYN

Actually, Mr. Crisp, you were the first person we approached.

JULIAN

Good. May I be the only sponsor?

ANNE

Mr. Crisp -

JULIAN

Please, call me Julian.

Julian starts to write a check.

ANNE

Julian, sir, we estimate that our yearly budget would require approximately nine hundred thousand dollars for full optimization of our developmental plans.

She points at a professionally-bound document in front of her. Everybody, including Julian, has a copy. Julian thumbs through his copy.

JULIAN

Ahh, yes, I see. Well, would you allow me to be your sole sponsor, at an introductory rate of one million dollars a year?

The participants seem flabbergasted.

CAROLYN

Yes, sure. Thank you very much, Julian.

Julian fills out the check and hands it to Carolyn. He rises from his seat.

JULIAN

Great, then. You're quite welcome. Just let me know how long my article should be and when you will need it by.

Carolyn, Anne, and the two other people at the table rise and take turns shaking his hand.

CAROLYN

Certainly, we'll be in touch. Thank you, again.

Anne holds the door open for Julian as he walks out. The other three people stand around, amazed.

CAROLYN

That was incredible.

MAN

I can't believe that.

Carolyn looks at her watch, and seems surprised at the time.

CAROLYN

Okay, you folks will have to excuse me. I have to call someone in California now, I think they're going to like what I have to say.

She smiles, and other three people there leave the office.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - EVENING

Rush hour prevails. Taxi cab horns BLARE, rain PATTERS down into grey puddles. Small waves emanate from the piercing semi-frozen droplets. A gaggle of rush hour workers, all anxious to get out of the city, namelessly push through the packs; each one is faster and more determined than the previous one.

Julian exits the building. He seems out of place in the mob. That is, he does not appear to be frazzled or yearning for home. Julian carries his briefcase with ease.

Julian walks along the street and listens to the voices of the STREET VENDORS, OFFICE WORKERS on their way home, and other BUSINESSMEN, busy on their cell phones. We hear VOICES, too, but they come from inside the building, and not the street.

They are the voices of a MAN and a WOMAN, and they are obviously talking about Julian. We recognize the man as the only other man at the meeting besides Julian. The woman is probably the other person there, the one who did not speak.

MAN O.S.

Can you believe that?

WOMAN O.S.

Actually, yes, I can. He's done this before.

MAN O.S.

Who the hell does he think he is?

WOMAN O.S.

He's just, I don't know, a nice guy.

MAN O.S.

Nice guys don't just donate a million dollars to a start-up environmental organization. You've met him before?

Julian promptly stops walking, and ducks down a subway staircase.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - EVENING

Underground, Julian encounters even more people. The subway station seems to be suffocating everyone. All of the travelers are wearing heavy raincoats and the heater is on overdrive. The conversation continues:

WOMAN O.S.

Once, yeah, well, no. I've seen him, though. High society parties and all that. He's pretty low profile, though-

MAN O.S.

Low profile with a check for a million bucks in his pocket?

Julian slides a token into the turnstile and pushes his way to the tracks. Julian accidentally knocks the headphones off a young LATINO who bumps into him. The young man starts to SCREAM a flurry of obscenities at Julian, but we don't hear them. Apparently, Julian doesn't either. His mind is elsewhere.

WOMAN O.S.

No, you know what I mean. He's quiet, doesn't go out too often. I've heard people him "Batman," too. But never to his face.

MAN O.S.

He has a rubber fetish, too?

WOMAN O.S.

I don't know him that well. It's because he's a rich orphan who likes to do a lot of good. And, we shouldn't complain about that last part. We're a million dollars richer because of it.

Julian steps onto a subway train car. He faces the door as it closes on his face. The train lumbers on to the next stop, under the city that's under the rain.

MAN O.S.

No, I suppose we shouldn't.

The man CHUCKLES.

EXT. MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mary exits her apartment building and walks out into the parking lot. She heads assuredly to her car. Starting the engine, she drives off.

EXT. FEDERAL EXPRESS OFFICE - DAY

Mary parks in the parking lot and walks across the lot to the FedEx office. She carries the letter to Julian in her hands.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Julian steps in the front door of his apartment. He lies his briefcase down on the hardwood floors and hangs his coat up in the closet.

He walks over to his desk, but there are no messages on his telephone answering machine. With a click, he turns on his computer.

It whirs to life with CLICKS and BEEPS. Julian checks the progress of it booting up, appears satisfied, and then walks away from the desk.

He heads into his bedroom to change. We remain behind, checking out Julian's apartment. To call it nice would be an understatement. The rent is approximately three times what a typical inhabitant of this city would find exorbitant. There is a large sofa in front of a 45" large screen television. To the right of the sofa is a reclining La-Z-Boy chair, and next to that is a nice fireplace. There are no pictures on the mantle above the fireplace, just a few unlit candles in fancy candlesticks. Above the mantle is a exquisitely-framed painting by Raphael.

Julian comes back into the main room. He's changed out of his suit into something a bit more comfortable, jeans and an old sweatshirt. He sits down at his desk, and presses a few keys on his computer's keyboard. A modem BLURTS out a phone number and then makes a few of the usual BEEPS and BLURTS that modem users have grown accustomed to.

Julian clicks his mouse a few times and soon enough his computer SPEAKS to him.

COMPUTER SPEAKER

You have two new mail messages.

Julian reads his two e-mail messages. The first one appears to be a weekly environmental action update. Julian skims the header topics in the compiled message, and then moves it from his Inbox: to a different folder on his e-mail system.

The second message is something completely different.

Date: Thu, 24 Mar 15:52:00 -0800
 From: preacher@newfire.com
 Subject: The Coming Millennium

Dear Julian,

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

-----end of message-----

There is no signature or name at the end of the message. Julian looks at the From: e-mail address, preacher@newfire.com, and shrugs. He doesn't recognize it. He presses the DELETE key and the message disappears from his screen.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

Julian opens his refrigerator and looks inside. Despite being a bachelor, Julian keeps a well-stocked and neat kitchen. It's so well stocked in fact, Julian can't decide what to eat. After a few moments of peeking behind various items at the front of the fridge, he decides to make a salad and takes out a head of lettuce, a ripe tomato, a cucumber, etc.

He places the vegetables on the counter and finds a cutting board and a LARGE CUTTING KNIFE. He rinses the vegetables in the sink and starts to cut them up with the knife.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Julian sits under a lovely chandelier, eating his dinner. There's a glass of white wine on the table, too, which he takes a sip of every so often. The finished salad is large enough for a meal, and covered liberally in vinaigrette dressing.

A stereo system in the other room plays Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" symphony. The lilting melody of "Springtime" provides a nice touch to Julian's meal.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

After eating, Julian carries his dishes back into the kitchen and places them in the sink. He sets the wine empty wine glass on the counter and pours green dishwashing soap onto the dishes and utensils. The cutting knife lies on top of everything, apparently guarding it. Julian appears fascinated by his reflection in the shiny knife, and he pours just a bit too much soap onto the dishes. When he turns the sink on, and water spills out onto the dishes, they appear to be buried in bubbles by the excess of soap.

The bubbles start to overflow the sink as the water level gets too high, and Julian shuts off the water. After pouring himself another glass of wine, he leaves the kitchen.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian sits on the sofa, watching the television. He sips from his glass of white wine every so often as he channel surfs.

He doesn't find anything that can capture his attention for longer than five or ten seconds, apparently, as he is quickly clicking his remote control from channel to channel. He scrolls through the list of available channels, but soon realizes that he's back where he started from. It is an infomercial for some super-amazing, but ultimately useless, kitchen gadget.

Julian gets up from his sofa and heads to the bathroom.

MAN (on TV)

Now Cindy, what this does is truly revolutionary. It will save nearly half the time it takes to prepare most meals.

CINDY (on TV)

Dan, that's truly extraordinary. I know I just can't wait to try it out myself!

The TOILET FLUSHES in the bathroom, and somehow the television changes channels. A religious sermon is in progress.

TELEVANGELIST (on TV)

"And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory."

As soon as Julian opens the bathroom door and walks out, the station suddenly changes back to the infomercial. Julian isn't sure if he heard the sermon or just imagined it.

JULIAN

Give him glory?

He sits back down on the couch and watches the infomercial, trying to glean any religious sermon in it. After another half-minute or so of Dan and Cindy praising their product he changes the channel again, to CNN. The REPORTER is on a hilly, windy location labeled TEMECULA, CALIFORNIA on the screen.

REPORTER (on TV)

... The fires started yesterday afternoon in this small community about forty miles north of San Diego. Three firefighters have already been rushed to the hospital from smoke inhalation. As the fires have crept to the south and west, Interstate 5, the highway heading to Los Angeles, risks being closed by the first brush fire of the year. There have been some unseasonably hot temperatures along the U.S. and Mexican border ...

Julian stares at the helicopter-filmed shots of the fires ravaging the brushy countryside. His eyes gloss over from the reds and oranges projected on the screen. He doesn't appear to be concentrating at all on the television. His mind is elsewhere...

FADE TO:

INT. MANSION - DAY (TWENTY YEARS AGO)

Welcome to Julian's childhood. We are in a mansion in an opulent suburban neighborhood. Julian is a small child now, and his MOTHER and GRANDPARENTS are huddled around the Christmas tree. Julian's mother is helping him unwrap his gifts.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Julian appears to be in some sort of a trance on his sofa. The CNN report from California has ended, and a commercial for a MEN'S HAIR-GROWTH product is on.

INT. MANSION - DAY (TWENTY YEARS AGO)

Behind the Christmas tree, a SPARK jumps out of the wall where the electric lights are plugged in. The spark latches on to a branch of the tree and burns brightly.

The spark turns into a fire, and soon the tree is engulfed. Decorations and garlands looping around the room of the house spread the fire, and the family is trapped in the living room...

EXT. MANSION - DAY (TWENTY YEARS AGO)

Outside of the house, all appears calm. A foot of snow has been pushed to the side of the driveway, where a large blue Cadillac is parked. The first signs of the fire soon appear in one of the front windows of the house, and fine white window curtains soon get engulfed by the flames.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (PRESENT TIME)

Julian lies curled in a fetal position on the sofa, quietly WHIMPERING and crying.

JULIAN

Mother ...

The volume on the television fades out, and again the channel mysteriously changes to the televangelist. We can't hear what he's saying, but it's undoubtedly full of fire and brimstone, the usual televangelist staples.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Julian wakes up on the sofa, slightly bewildered. The television is mysteriously off, but Julian doesn't notice. He takes the empty wine glass into the kitchen.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

The soap bubbles that covered the dinner dishes earlier have dissipated. Julian sets the wine glass into the sink and heads off into bed. Virtually everything remains in the sink, but the knife Julian used to cut up his salad is mysteriously gone. He doesn't notice its absence as he leaves the kitchen.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm clock by the bed changes from 7:59 to 8:00, and the BEEPING ALARM starts up. 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 APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Julian rushes in 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 APARTMENT - 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.

He doesn't get much of a chance to ponder this much, though, as his period of quiet introspection and wonder is disrupted by the DOORBELL. Wrapping the towel around his hand again, he heads off to the front door to answer it.

We remain behind in the bedroom, though, and look around for the source of the cut. The knife he cut up his salad with the previous night is nowhere to be seen, and before we can do too much of a search Julian returns, a FedEx OVERNIGHT LETTER in hand. He doesn't seem to recognize much on the envelope than his name and address, Mary's handwriting is unknown to him.

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.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Julian enters the station from the subway entrance with groups of TRAVELERS. Again, as in the airport, Julian is just there to hang out, and watch people come and go. He stands still, near the entrance, for a while. People of all shapes and sizes, every color of the rainbow, every economic tax bracket, they're all there. Julian seems amazed at this microcosm of America, of Earth.

He watches the train schedule on a television monitor. Different trains, heading to different destinations, arriving from every city imaginable, they're all there. Color-coded in a way Julian can't crack, it's another rainbow there at the station. He stares at the monitor, and the colors blur to him, like a tie-died music video.

A YOUNG WOMAN bumps into him. She is also looking at the train schedule. Her red hair matches a hue of the monitor. Julian looks over at her and is transfixed again. The woman notices Julian staring at her and quickly walks away.

Dejected, Julian SIGHS and heads over to a bench. He sits down next to an OLD BLACK MAN. He, too, seems to be there just to be there. He WHISTLES an old melody, Julian can't place it. He doesn't regard the man that much, though.

Julian reaches into his bag at last and retrieves the FedEx letter. He looks at the label again.

JULIAN
San Diego, California?

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

Mary
P.O. Box 3473
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. Just a typical purple and orange FedEx letter. He turns it back around, shaking his head.

JULIAN
Mary?

Finally, he rips open the envelope. Inside, there is another envelope. It is blank except for "JULIAN CRISP" neatly printed on the front. Inside of that envelope is a single folded sheet of paper. Both the paper and the envelope are from the same, fancy stationery set. It is Mary's letter.

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, but we hear him READ IT OUT LOUD. Now it's the old black man's turn to look at him funny. Julian doesn't notice the man's glances.

JULIAN

Dear Julian. Do not stare too long at the return address or postmark – you will not recognize me from them. You have never met me, but that will change soon. Do not fear me.

Julian stops reading and stares again at the envelope. Nope, he shakes his head, the author is right: he's never met her. He turns back to the letter.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – DAY

Mary stands alone with her eyes closed in the middle of the living room.

MARY V.O.

You recently suffered an unusual wound on your right hand. I know that you did not feel any physical pain from it, but I wonder as to the emotional trauma. Again, do not fear me or this occurrence. It will all make perfect sense to you soon, I assure you. Please be patient.

INT. TRAIN STATION – DAY

Julian continues reading, his voice blending with Mary's. The old man has vacated his seat and Julian sits alone.

JULIAN

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

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

JULIAN

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

A passing FAMILY regards him. Julian quickly turns his gaze back down at his lap.

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 not, and I also 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. TRAIN STATION - 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. He folds the letter up and gently puts it back in the envelope.

JULIAN

Who knew what happened to my hand?
That was last night! This was sent
yesterday! What the...

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

Julian peeks down at his hand. A tiny drop of blood appears on the bandage on his palm. He stares at it, and slowly resigns himself to defeat. His head tilts down; he just can't handle it anymore.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

Julian enters the kitchen and looks at last night's dishes. The bowls and other dishes from his salad are still there, and the KNIFE is back on top. Julian doesn't notice that it has returned, but he does pick it up, nonetheless. He holds it up against the light, as if looking for bloodstains on it. There are none. It is spotless, and Julian gazes at his own reflection in the blade.

He puts the knife back in the sink and heads over to the refrigerator. He opens up the freezer component and selects a frozen dinner. He rips the lid off the cardboard container and pops it in the microwave. He sets it to cook for three minutes and heads out of the kitchen.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian lies in bed, lights on, reading a novel. The letter from Mary lies beside him on the bed, and he keeps glancing over at it in between paragraphs of the novel.

He looks over at the clock: 9:12 P.M. He YAWNS. The novel is obviously not that interesting.

Julian puts the novel away and thumbs through Mary's letter again. He tries to compute that in with the wound on his hand and the mysterious e-mail he received the previous day.

He can't, though, and gives up. He folds up the letter and places it by the discarded novel on the nightstand. Sighing, he shuts the light and lies back down to sleep.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Julian is asleep in the dark, when the TELEPHONE RINGS. He groggily wakes up after the second ring and answers it after the third.

JULIAN (into phone)
Hello? (a beat) Hello? No, there's
no Ian here ... That's all right,
goodnight.

Julian hangs up the phone. He sighs in the darkness.

JULIAN
I hate being alone.

He rolls over in bed, onto his back. He sighs again.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and her 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 Lexus. She enters and starts the engine. As she rolls down the windows, she drives off, her hair blowing in the wind of the 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 slides him another bill.

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 APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian is still asleep. The alarm clock reads 12:00 A.M. Again, the PHONE RINGS. On the third ring, he reaches over to answer the phone.

JULIAN
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. 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 APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits up in bed. He flicks on the light and starts pacing around the room, phone in hand. 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 also a smaller Band-Aid on the back of his 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

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.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian seems confused.

JULIAN

Explanations of what?

MARY V.O.

Everything. Your injury, the
decadence in the world, poverty,
drug addiction, teenage pregnancy,
environmental disasters, a lack of
respect for life...

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary continues:

MARY (Cont.)

...Increased technological
dependence, decreased humanity.

JULIAN

Can this world be fixed?

MARY

Yes. And it is you that can do it.

Julian is starting to sound convinced.

JULIAN V.O.

I will think about it.

MARY

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

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian, now sitting again, 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 places it back on the hook. He then storms out of the bedroom.

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 speak Spanish 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 APARTMENT - NIGHT

Julian rushes in from the bedroom and turns on a light. In his hand is Mary's letter, still in the envelope. He sits down at his desk, considers turning on his computer, and changes his mind. 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. SHOPPING MALL - ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Julian, appearing a little dazed and out of place, enters a large, warehouse-sized electronics store. Neon signs designate the various sections in the store: HOME ELECTRONICS, APPLIANCES, COMPUTING, etc. The store is approximately half-full, and there are many blue-shirted EMPLOYEES huddled around potential buyers.

Julian wanders through the various sections, not really seeing anything that catches his interest.

A SALESMAN approaches him. He is a young man with a scraggly moustache over his lip.

SALESMAN

How may I help you today, sir?

JULIAN

Oh, I'm just looking, thanks.

SALESMAN

If you need any help, let one of us know.

JULIAN

Sure thing, will do.

The salesman leaves Julian. A FAMILY comes barging on by with a full cart. Julian has to step out of the way to avoid them, they're too busy looking at the merchandise to watch out for other customers.

Julian heads over to the television sets. He's not looking to buy one, it's just the wall of several dozen televisions all showing the same program that draws him over. The giant wall of televisions are showing a SOAP OPERA. As Julian nears, the program is cut into. A NEWS FLASH is ruining many a bored housewife's afternoon, as it appears a climactic portion of the soap opera was just interrupted. The voice of the NEWS ANNOUNCER reverberates from dozens of television speakers.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (on TV)

We interrupt this program to provide continuous on-location reporting of the San Diego Brush Fires. CNN Reporter Dan Chase brings us this report.

EXT. HIGHWAY – OUTSIDE SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA – DAY (on TV)

DAN CHASE, a blow-dried GQ-esque reporter, stands on the shoulder of a highway. He is surrounded by eerie orange smoke. Behind him, cars crawl along in the smoke, trying to head to where they need to go before the fire eventually cuts off the highway. Chase holds a microphone in his hand and faces a video camera unit.

CHASE

Thank you, Catherine. Surprising most officials, this early string of brush fires, touched off by a freak lightning storm after a long dry spell, marches south toward San Diego. I stand now along Interstate 5, the main highway linking San Diego to Los Angeles, one hundred and fifteen miles to the north.

Chase takes a few steps away from the road, toward the brush. A few lonely, isolated fires burn there.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Julian remains standing, staring at the monitors. The burning bushes on the television cast bright orange glows onto the shiny surfaces of the store: the mopped floors, the sheer yellow counters, other, turned-off, televisions.

Julian gazes, open-mouthed, at the orange glows. Again, like he was while watching the news coverage last night, he's not quite there anymore.

He stays like that a few moments until his eyes glaze over. A WOMAN comes over and stands next to him. She sees his shocked, expressionless face.

WOMAN

I know, I can't believe it, either. Just last week she was engaged to Clarence.

Julian snaps out of it. He looks over at the woman. She gestures at the monitors, again showing the soap opera.

JULIAN

Yes, well, that's part of the thrill of these things. You never know what's going to happen from one week to the next.

WOMAN

I know! I remember a few years ago
Clarence was in that coma, remember?
And then Shelley, his own sister,
runs off with his fiancée, who no
one knew was a lesbian except
Shelley. I mean, what kind of stuff
do they expect us to believe?

Julian just smiles, shakes his head, and walks away.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mary sits down at her desk and picks up the telephone. She
dials a number.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - MORNING

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 (into phone)
Hello? (pause) What is it, Mary?

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mary speaks in a calm, collected voice. It sounds forced.

MARY (into phone)
I called him last night.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARY AND PREACHER:

PREACHER
Oh, excellent. How was it?

MARY
It went fine, I think. He seemed a
little disturbed at first, but that
seems natural.

PREACHER
Yes, I suppose it would.

MARY
Still, he didn't hang up on me. I
think it went well.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

The Preacher smiles.

PREACHER

I can't believe our luck with this one. He's perfect. Do you think he believes?

MARY O.S.

I think so, well, he will.

PREACHER

Excellent. This is superb, dear.

MARY O.S.

Okay then. How do we proceed?

PREACHER

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

MARY O.S.

What about Charles?

PREACHER

He doesn't know?

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mary struggles to answer.

MARY

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

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

PREACHER O.S.

I understand. Mary, I have to go. Please, call him tonight. Tell Charles if you need to. I'm going away for this weekend, so come and see me (he looks through appointment book) next Monday, at nine A.M.

She hears him hang up the phone. Mary holds the phone, DIAL TONE DRONING, in her hand.

MARY
Monday, nine A.M.

She hangs up the phone.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Julian walks out of the mall to the sidewalk. There are millions of people, it seems, congregated on that one street corner, all waiting for rides, hailing cabs, etc. They're also carrying large shopping bags, while Julian is empty-handed. He steps into the crowds and emerges, unscathed, a half a block later.

Away from the mall, city life calms down a bit. It's midday, and Julian walks among the fellow natives of his city. A lot of PROFESSIONAL-TYPES in fancy business suits scurry past him. Julian isn't in much of a rush.

EXT. CITY STREETS - A LITTLE LATER

Julian turns a corner and nearly trips over a HOMELESS MAN sitting on the sidewalk.

JULIAN
Please excuse me.

HOMELESS MAN
Spare a dollar, sir?

Julian stops. He normally doesn't give out money to the homeless, but something different is going on today.

JULIAN
Are you hungry?

HOMELESS MAN
Yes, sir. Been a slow day.

He shakes his McDonald's cup. There are about two quarters and a handful of other small change coins in the cup. He looks up at Julian.

JULIAN
Come with me. I'm hungry, too. Let me buy you lunch.

INT. DELI - DAY

Julian and the homeless man sit in a corner booth. Other PATRONS look at them with disgusted looks. The homeless man appears as disgusting as Julian is dressed immaculate.

HOMELESS MAN

Thank you again, sir.

He takes a large bite of his corned beef sandwich. Julian has an egg salad sandwich in front of him. He picks up a large pile of coleslaw with his fork.

JULIAN

It's nothing. I'm glad to be able to do it.

HOMELESS MAN

Well, I thank you, son. God blesses you.

Julian stops shy of putting the forkful of coleslaw into his mouth. He has to think about it.

JULIAN

God blesses me?

HOMELESS MAN

Certainly. Don't you believe in God, son?

Julian starts to stammer.

JULIAN

I don't know. Sometimes, yes.

HOMELESS MAN

Sometimes? Son, faith isn't a part-time job. God's always there, looking out at you, at me, at everyone. And, Julian, he's got you in mind. You did good today.

Julian is flabbergasted.

JULIAN

How did you know my name???

The homeless man smiles.

HOMELESS MAN

Son, you've got it written all over your face. Julian: he who is like the sun. Even if your name wasn't Julian, it should be. You're shining, son, shining on me. You need to shine on, son, shine on.

The man finishes his sandwich. He starts to get up from his seat.

HOMELESS MAN (Cont.)

Thanks again for the lunch. I thank you, God thanks you. Shine on, son, shine on.

He walks out of the diner. Julian just sits there, shocked. The homeless man's words ring in his head.

HOMELESS MAN V.O.

Shine on, son, just keep on shining on.

Julian puts his fork down. He can't finish eating. He fishes in his wallet for a ten dollar bill.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

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 this afternoon, so I'll be late. Have dinner without me. Sorry, C.

Mary crumples up the note and throws it, aggressively, toward an invisible trashcan. 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. MARY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT 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, tightly gripping razor-sharp shards of the vase in her right 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 hand 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.

She clenches her teeth. If she could, she would kill him now.

MARY

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 an 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 golf towel 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 synch, the TELEPHONE RINGS.

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

MARY

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 just going to call Charles? Why?

MARY

No, Julian. I'm through with Charles.

PREACHER O.S.

Okay, good. Don't give up on Charles, dear. This is a difficult time for him as well.

MARY

I just ... don't know what to do about that.

PREACHER O.S.

Don't worry, everything will work itself out for you. Please, call Julian now, it is late back east. Good night, Mary.

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. 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.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Julian carries a hand-basket of common groceries through a supermarket. The store is rather crowded, and Julian has to fight his way through among deadly carts wielded by frazzled HOUSEWIVES.

Julian winds his way in to the cutlery aisle. He stands before the rack of shiny, stainless steel knives. They are all packaged protectively in plastic-fronted, cardboard-backed uniforms. Julian marvels at all the different varieties. One by one, he takes them off the pegboard display. He checks out the names and features of each kind. Some are for cutting vegetables, some for meat, some for slicing, carving, etc.

Julian can't seem to make up his mind. He is not sure if he's just looking or actually shopping.

Finally, he selects a long, fearsome, MEAT CARVING KNIFE. He places it in his basket and moves along. As he walks away, to another part of the store, we see the shiny knife stick out of the basket.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits up in bed, reading a novel by the light of a single lamp in the bedroom.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 239 - NIGHT

Mary dials Julian's telephone number. She waits a moment for him to answer.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian jerks up, places the book down beside him, and reaches over to answer the RINGING PHONE. He knows who is calling.

JULIAN (into phone)

Hello?

MARY (ON PHONE)

Hello Julian.

JULIAN

Mary, hello. How are you?

MARY

I'm just fine, thank you. Yourself?
How is your hand?

Julian looks at the tiny scar on his palm.

JULIAN

It's fine now, hardly noticeable.

INT. HOLIDAY INN – ROOM 239 – NIGHT

Mary unwraps her own hand and looks at the rapidly closing cut. She holds it to her forehead.

MARY

Good. Have you been thinking about what we spoke about the other night?

JULIAN

Yes, I have. Everything is coming into place.

MARY

Yes, everything is. I am glad.

They stop talking. Neither one knows what to say now.

JULIAN

Tell me about you. You seem to know me so well, but I don't know you.

Mary sighs, this is the question she didn't want to have to answer. She sounds defensive.

MARY

What do you want to know?

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT – BEDROOM – NIGHT

Julian lies down on his back. He stares up at the ceiling.

JULIAN

I want to know everything.

He closes his eyes and starts to listen.

MARY (ON PHONE)

Okay ... I am twenty-nine years old. I live in San Diego, California. I do not have a job presently, but I volunteer fifteen hours a week at a homeless shelter in downtown San Diego.

JULIAN
Are you married?

He hears Mary SIGH over the phone.

MARY
Yes. I have been for three years
now. My husband, Charles, is an
obstetrician.

JULIAN
I see.

His eyes are still closed.

JULIAN
What is the matter?

MARY
Nothing. Everything's okay. I've had
a long day.

JULIAN
Tell me more.

MARY
I'd like to believe.

JULIAN
Believe? In what?

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 239 - NIGHT

Mary takes a deep breath.

MARY
You. I'd like to believe in you.

There is a pause, they both take this in.

JULIAN
I'd like to believe as well.

MARY
Belief is not something you want to
do. It's something you accept. You
can try to resist it, deny it, but
ultimately, it's still there and you
must accept it.

JULIAN

Where has it been all along? I've tried, wanted, to believe. But, nothing would let me.

MARY

It's you, Julian, you're the one who has to accept it. Despite everything that's wrong, you have to find what's right. That is why I contacted you, you are the one that is right.

JULIAN

You want me to believe in myself?

MARY

No, I want you to believe.

JULIAN

In what? God?

MARY

In everything. The good, the bad, the beautiful. Believe in me; believe in love, in God, in yourself.

JULIAN

I want to.

MARY

Good. You can do it, I know you can.

JULIAN

I'll try. So, what next?

MARY

I don't know. I'll have to keep in touch with you, call you back. There is someone I need to speak to about you.

JULIAN

Who is it?

MARY

I can't tell you that, now, I'm sorry. You can call him The Preacher, if you want. I must go, now, Julian. Have a good night.

JULIAN

Goodnight Mary.

Mary hangs up the phone.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sets the phone down beside the bed. He shuts out the light again and lies back down to sleep.

His breathing is HEAVY, and he soon falls down into a light, furtive sleep.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 239 - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary is in the shower, finally cleaning the blood off her hand. She squeezes it a little, and feels a little pain. The wound is clean now, though, and a tiny little puncture is on her right palm, like a scarred bullet hole.

She uses her good left hand to shampoo her hair, and white lathery bubbles render her brown hair almost golden, and cascade down her back to the blanched white floor of the hotel's bathtub.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian wakes up. He can't sleep. Something, probably the phone conversation with Mary, is on his mind.

He turns the light back on, and heads out of the bedroom.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Julian enters the kitchen and turns the light on. It HUMS in the background as he silently finds the new knife he purchased in one of his cabinets. He removes the knife from its cardboard and plastic packaging and returns to the bedroom with it. He forgets to shut the humming light.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits down on the edge of the bed with the knife in his hands. He shifts it back and forth between his hands, getting a feel for it. The knife ends up in his right hand. He PRESSES the point of the blade deep into his left palm, about as hard as he can without drawing blood. He tests for pain, and does not feel any. Somewhat satisfied, he places the knife down on the nightstand beside the bed and shuts the light back off.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Filtered sunlight creeps through the bedroom windows and casts itself upon Julian. He is asleep, lying on his back. The sheets crumple up around him, mainly congregated on his left side. However, they are not all white. A LARGE RED BLOODSTAIN is on the sheets by his left hand.

Julian fidgets around in bed, not waking up, and his hand comes free from under the bloody sheets. Sure enough, there is another wound on his hand, this time his left. Slowly the blood clots around the wound, peacefully punctuating Julian's gradual transformation. Julian sleeps through it all.

INT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

Julian stands in the middle of the floor, watching a BAND on stage. His hands each have a Band-Aid on the palm, and under the black lights of the club they shine an eerie, electric blue.

The band is in the middle of a song. They are a five-piece act, with a LEAD SINGER, GUITARIST, BASSIST, PIANIST, and DRUMMER. The club is filled about halfway to capacity, and there's plenty of room out on the floor. The whole setting appears more intimate than the last time Julian was at Chaser's.

The band finishes a song and the small, but appreciative CROWD APPLAUDS. Julian enters the ovation. His applause is polite, and seems to be caused by the other people's clapping. His mind appears to be elsewhere.

The LEAD SINGER of the band steps back to take a sip of water from a cup. The GUITARIST steps up to the microphone to speak.

GUITARIST

Thank you. Thanks a lot. Right now we'd like to play something special. This is a song we wrote a few weeks ago, while on tour. This song is about missing home, and not being where you belong. It's called "The Fire Still Burns."

The pianist starts the tune. It's a light, single-note minor-scale melody that slowly gains in tempo. The guitarist plays finger-picked acoustic guitar in counterpoint to the piano. Soon, the full band is playing, and the MOURNFUL VOICE of the lead singer elevates in the mix.

Julian stands perfectly still among the audience. His eyes appear to gloss over from the lights. Red and orange permeates the club, and a lighting effect of a lively, burning fire is projected onto a screen behind the band. Julian stares straight ahead, looking directly at the fire.

EXT. CALIFORNIA ROADSIDE - DAY

The brushfires that have been plaguing the San Diego area appear to be mostly contained. A group of FIREFIGHTERS in yellow protective gear are out in the brushy shrubs, spraying a WHITE CHEMICAL on a burning tree. The fire HISSES as it slowly sizzles to a stop.

Behind the firefighters, unseen by them, Julian stands in the field. He is dressed as he is in the club, and doesn't seem confused as to why he's there. He stands around. The SONG by the band fills the soundtrack.

INT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

Julian stands still on the club's floor. Around him, the other people enjoy the music. Julian starts to sway, as if controlled by an unseen puppet master. His feet remain still on the floor, but his shoulders sway back and forth.

EXT. CALIFORNIA ROADSIDE - DAY

Julian stands in the field exactly as he is in the club. His shoulders sway, and he slowly begins to raise both arms up at his sides.

INT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

Julian's arms continue to rise up, and stop when they reach horizontal placement with his shoulders. He is a large, human, T. His head starts to sway with his shoulders.

The other club attendees start to notice him. One of them, a young woman wearing a baseball cap over her blonde hair, ROSE, starts to approach him.

Julian doesn't notice her, his eyes are closed.

EXT. CALIFORNIA ROADSIDE - DAY

Behind the firefighters, Julian continues to sway. Suddenly, over the music, he hears his name spoken.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Julian.

Julian opens his eyes and looks around. A bush near him has sprouted into fire and he stares at it. The firefighters notice the new fire and start to slowly lumber toward it.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Julian. Come to me.

As the firefighters approach the fiery bush and start to spray the anti-inflammants on it, Julian disappears into the chemical cloud.

INT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

Julian continues to sway as the song continues. Rose walks up to him, but Julian doesn't notice her and accidentally KNOCKS her in the head with his outstretched arms. She falls down to the floor, and her baseball cap goes flying down beside her. When she stands up, she is bald. She scampers to pick up her hat (which has a blonde wig attached) and put it back on.

Julian exits his trance. He appears shocked as to what he just did and rushes over to Rose.

JULIAN

I'm so sorry. Are you all right?

ROSE

Yes, I am. It's no big deal.

She adjusts the wig.

ROSE

Do I have it on straight?

JULIAN

Not quite, here.

Julian reaches out and helps her balance the wig on her head. She smiles when she touches him.

JULIAN

There you go.

Julian smiles at her. The band, on stage, finishes their song and set. The audience starts to applaud for an encore, but Julian and Rose stand together, talking.

JULIAN

I'm sorry, again. I didn't see you there, didn't realize ...

ROSE

Realize what? That I wear a wig?

Julian nods, shyly.

ROSE

That's good, it's not supposed to look like a wig. My hair color is really supposed to be brown, but I've always wanted to be blonde. I figured that when I was older I would just dye it, but I won't get that chance.

JULIAN

Why not?

ROSE

I have leukemia.

JULIAN

I'm terribly sorry to hear that.

Rose smiles.

ROSE

Oh, please don't be. I'm about to go to a better place. (she looks up) God is waiting for me.

JULIAN

Your leukemia is chronic?

ROSE

Yes, it is. I'm not afraid to die, though. Heaven is a beautiful place.

JULIAN

I'm sure it is.

The other members of the audience's applaud pays off. The band returns to the stage for an encore.

EXT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

Julian and Rose walk together down the sidewalk, away from the club. Here we notice that Rose is not in fact a young woman, but actually a girl on the teetering verge of womanhood. Her step still has the bouncy gait of a child.

ROSE

Really, you don't need to take me home. I know my way.

JULIAN

I insist. I want to talk to you.

ROSE

Okay, then. About what?

JULIAN

I don't know ... your faith.

They reach an intersection. They stand still a moment as a bus lumbers past them.

ROSE

What about it?

JULIAN

Well ... why? Why do you believe
you're going to heaven?

They cross the street.

ROSE

There's got to be a place better
than this.

Rose sweeps her arm out over the city's street. On the sidewalk, near the street corner, a HOMELESS WOMAN sleeps on top of a warm subway grate. Julian stops beside her, reaches into his pocket, and retrieves a five dollar bill. He places it carefully in the folds of the woman's blanket.

ROSE

This city, I don't know. I'm glad we
live here, though. Sometimes, I
guess, you need the dirt to see the
beauty.

JULIAN

I know what you mean. Why did you
approach me in there?

ROSE

In the club?

JULIAN

Yes, just now. Why me?

Rose smiles at him. She reaches out and takes his hand into hers as they walk.

ROSE

You're special.

She lets go of his hand. She imitates his earlier trance. Julian recognizes it.

JULIAN

That's, what I was doing, what
you're doing, it's devotional,
right?

ROSE

The spirit can embrace you anytime,
anywhere. Did you feel it there?

JULIAN

Yes, it was the music, the lights,
the fire ...

Rose takes his hand back and they continue walking to another intersection. Her fingers rub over his wound, smoothing it down.

ROSE

That was God talking to you. I guess
I overheard.

JULIAN

It was beautiful. Unspeakably so.

The two turn a corner. Rose, with her free hand, points at one of the slumbering apartment buildings.

ROSE

There. I live on this block.

JULIAN

Are your parents worrying about you?

ROSE

My father is very forgiving.

JULIAN

I can imagine, yes. And, your
mother?

ROSE

She was killed when I was seven.

JULIAN

Oh my Lord, I'm so sorry -

ROSE

No, don't be.

They stop in front of Rose's building. It is a lovely Victorian brownstone, split level and shoulder-to-shoulder with its neighbors. No secrets stand between the different homes. Letting go of Julian's hand again, Rose steps up onto the second step up to the doorway. The height difference between them has lessened, but she still isn't quite up to eye level with him.

ROSE

It was a twin-engine airplane. It went down in perfect weather outside of Cleveland a week before I was diagnosed. They said it was mechanical failure, but that wasn't the truth. God brought that plane down to teach us a lesson.

JULIAN

Oh my! That's horrible!

ROSE

It taught me several things. With death comes life. And, with the ugly comes beauty. I've lived more in the last five years than most people do in seventy-five. And, last year, I accomplished something I've been dreaming about. I jumped out of an airplane.

JULIAN

You are so amazing.

ROSE

Thank you, so are you, Julian. Go on, take this opportunity. Live again, and do not forget to look for the good, the beauty, the God. Be the good, the beauty, and the God.

Rose leans forward and gently kisses Julian on the lips. His eyes close as the perfect, chaste kiss transforms her life into him. Slowly, she pulls away. Julian's eyes remain closed.

ROSE

Good night Julian.

Julian's eyes open to see Rose's beaming face. She starts to unlock the apartment's front door.

JULIAN

Goodbye.

Rose starts to step inside the opened door. She is silhouetted by a dimly-diffused light inside.

ROSE

Be good.

She shuts the door. Julian remains there a moment.

JULIAN

Good night, my angel.

INT. BUS STATION - LATER THAT NIGHT

Julian enters a practically-deserted bus station in the city's downtown area. A TICKET AGENT stays awake by BLARING a LATE NIGHT TV SHOW. Julian finds, without much trouble, an open seat in the waiting area. A mechanical clock changes digits from 1:12 A.M. to 1:13. An unseen CONDUCTOR announces an arriving bus.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Now arriving, bus number 1216, from Buffalo, New York. Passengers will be exiting through station door number three.

A few other people in the waiting area shuffle toward the third door. Julian, sitting about ten yards away, turns around to watch the proceedings. A handful of tired, but relieved, PASSENGERS stumble in from the outside. The bright fluorescent overhead lights of the station appear to daze them. A portly and uniformed BUS DRIVER follows them in and makes a beeline for the men's room.

Julian rises from his seat and walks to an open vending stand. The middle-aged black OWNER nods at him.

OWNER

What'll it be?

JULIAN

Coffee, please. Black.

The owner nods and dispenses steaming, black as the night coffee in a disposable, paper-handled cup. He slides it across the countertop toward Julian.

OWNER

Eighty-nine cents, please.

Julian hands him a one dollar bill and accepts the change from the owner.

JULIAN

Thank you very much.

OWNER

Have a good night, sir.

Julian heads back to his seat. He sits there for a while, warming his hands on the coffee in them. He takes the occasional sip, trying to muster as much flavor out of the muddy beverage as possible.

Soon, two YOUNG MEN come and sit near Julian. One is very tired, and rests his head on his friend's shoulder and closes his eyes. His friend looks over at Julian, who averts his gaze. Julian sees a caged-in and closed MAGAZINE STAND across the station. He gets up and starts to walk over to it, dumping his unfinished coffee in a trash can along the way.

The magazine stand has long-since closed for the night, but Julian still eyes the covers and headlines with interest. An aluminum fence prevents Julian from scanning all the titles, but he can see two of the four sides of a rotating stand. One rack appears to be filled with "general interest" magazines (Time, Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, etc.), but the other appears to be more "special interest" oriented.

The top of the rack is adorned with Harlequin-esque romance novels, while the remainder of the display are well-designed and laid-out religious-oriented readings and literature. A bald-headed, grey-bearded Baptist in a regal blue robe, REVEREND JAMES RIVER, appears on the cover of such titles as Flow With The Lord and The River of Faith. Julian studies these titles with great interest.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mary enters the office and sits down across the desk from where the Preacher would sit. He is not in the room, but is heard in a side room, TALKING.

PREACHER

Cream? Sugar?

MARY

Just one sugar, thanks.

PREACHER

Okay, just a moment.

Mary leans over the desk and peers at an open folder. It is labeled JULIAN CRISP. There's not much there, a blown-up black and white surveillance photograph and a transcription of a telephone conversation.

The Preacher enters, holding two mugs of coffee. He offers one to Mary.

PREACHER

One sugar.

MARY

Thanks.

She takes a sip of the coffee. The Preacher sits down across from her.

PREACHER

So, how are you? Everything okay?

MARY

(sighing)

Well ...

PREACHER

Talk to me.

MARY

Okay. Charles and I had yet another fight last night. I'm just about to move out on him.

PREACHER

What will you do then?

MARY

I don't know. I have some money saved up. I'll definitely get a job. I'll need to do that, certainly.

PREACHER

Okay. I understand, the disintegration of a relationship, particularly a marriage, is always difficult. Just know that I'm always here for you.

MARY

Thank you.

The Preacher takes a sip of his coffee and looks over Julian's file.

PREACHER

How about our friend Julian?

Mary's spirits lift.

MARY

Things are coming along nicely, I can tell.

PREACHER

How nicely?

MARY

Well, he's definitely interested in us. He's turning.

PREACHER

Good, good.

He nods.

MARY

I think he wants to meet me. I hope ...

PREACHER

Will he come out here?

MARY

I'm almost sure.

PREACHER

Good, good. I'd like to meet him.

MARY

Yes, so would I.

PREACHER

What's the next course of action?

MARY

I'm going to call him again tonight.

PREACHER

Good. Call me afterwards, at home.

MARY

Okay.

The telephone on the Preacher's desk RINGS. He answers it.

PREACHER (into phone)

Yes? ... Really?

He puts the phone down a moment.

PREACHER

Mary, darling. I'm sorry, but I have to take this call. Let me know how he is, tonight, please.

MARY

Okay. Goodbye.

Mary exits. The Preacher returns to his phone call.

PREACHER (into phone)

Okay, I can talk now.

INT. MALL BOOKSTORE - DAY

Julian wanders into the bookstore. He is carrying a bag from an expensive men's clothing store.

An EMPLOYEE stands by the entrance, fixing a display of best seller hardcover novels.

EMPLOYEE

Good afternoon, sir. Anything I can help you find?

JULIAN

Two things, actually.

EMPLOYEE

What's that?

JULIAN

First, biographies.

The employee starts to lead Julian back into the store. They talk while walking.

EMPLOYEE

Anyone in particular?

JULIAN

Yes, Ferdinand Magellan.

EMPLOYEE

The first man to sail around the world.

JULIAN

Actually, he never made it. He was killed in the Philippines.

EMPLOYEE

Oh. Okay, well, we have three bios of him in stock.

He points out the three books to Julian.

JULIAN

Okay, I have this one, but not these two. Happen to have a recommendation?

The employee shakes his head.

EMPLOYEE

Sorry, man, but I haven't really thought about him since high school history class.

JULIAN

Okay, then. I guess I'll just try them both.

He picks both of the biographies up and examines the titles.

EMPLOYEE

What else can I help you with?

JULIAN

Where is the theology section?

The employee starts to lead Julian to the rear of the store.

EMPLOYEE

Back here, by the children's books.

Julian stands before an entire wall of Bibles and other theological readings.

JULIAN

Wow.

EMPLOYEE

Anything here I can help you find?

JULIAN

No, thanks. I just want to browse.

EMPLOYEE

Okay, then. I'll be up front by the register if you need any more assistance.

JULIAN

Thank you.

The employee leaves Julian, who sets the two Magellan biographies on an empty part of a shelf. He then cocks his head to the right to scan the titles on the spines of all the different books.

The bibles all look the same to Julian, who appears a bit overwhelmed by the large selection. He picks out what looks as if is the largest, most complete and annotated, as well as expensive, leather bound edition of the King James.

In Julian's hands, it seems to weigh a ton. He flips through the pages and appears to be satisfied with its contents. He places the bible on top of the stack of Magellan biographies and moves on down the section.

The theological writings appear to overwhelm Julian even more than the bibles did. There's so much selection there that he doesn't know where to start.

One title catches his eye, however. The Coming Millenium, by RICHARD POWELL. Julian takes the book, a slender paperback, off the shelf and peruses it. On the back cover is a photograph of Powell, whom we recognize as THE PREACHER. Something about the book, an academic tome about an apocalyptic messiah who will rescue the world from the travesties of a changing millennia, interests Julian. He thumbs through the contents for a moment before placing it on his stack.

From there, he heads over to the R section of theology, but doesn't find any books that interest him.

Julian picks up his hefty stack of books and carries them up to the cash register area. The employee who helped him earlier finishes ringing up a CUSTOMER, an elderly lady buying children's books.

EMPLOYEE

That'll be six dollars and thirty-six cents, please.

The customer hands him a ten dollar bill and he produces the change for her. Placing her items in a plastic bag, he smiles as he hands them to her.

EMPLOYEE

Have a nice day, ma'am.

She nods and walks away. Julian steps up to the register.

EMPLOYEE

All set, sir?

JULIAN

Yes.

The employee rings up Julian's sale. He stops at the Preacher's book.

EMPLOYEE

You know, this is the fourth copy of this title we've sold this month.

JULIAN

Really?

EMPLOYEE

I think that it was reviewed on a newscast, or something. I've never seen such demand for a minor publisher's work before.

Julian nods.

EMPLOYEE (Cont.)

Anyway, it'll be fifty-five dollars and seven cents, please.

Julian takes an American Express card out of his wallet. He slides it along the glass counter to the employee.

The card is swiped through the register's reader, and after a moment, it is processed and accepted. The register spits out a receipt.

EMPLOYEE

Sign here, please, sir.

He hands the receipt and a blue ballpoint pen to Julian, who affixes his signature with a flourish.

The employee takes the receipt back and splits it in two. He places the bottom, carbon copy in Julian's bag and hands it to him.

JULIAN

Thank you.

Julian takes his bags in hand as he walks out the door, back into the mall.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits in the sofa, reading the Preacher's book. The television is off, and CLASSICAL MUSIC is heard lightly in the b.g.

After a few moments, Julian sets the book down, a bookmark holding a place near the back of the book.

He gets up from the sofa and heads to the bathroom. Soon after, he exits and heads to the kitchen.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Julian opens a bottle of wine with a fancy corkscrew and pours a glass into a fine crystal wineglass set down on the counter.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Julian re-enters the living room the classical music stops. He sets the wineglass down on the coffee table by the sofa and heads over to the stereo to change the CD.

He looks through his CD collection and has trouble deciding what to listen to. He owns approximately 50 CDs, and they're all neatly organized in an oak case on top of the entertainment center beside the fireplace.

Finally, he makes a selection and opens up the glass door to his entertainment center to get to the CD player. He replaces the CD in the player and presses the PLAY button.

Just as the music starts on the new CD, the TELEPHONE RINGS. Julian doesn't hear the phone because of the loud crash of the music, so when the second ring sounds, he finally hears it.

The next few moments are a bit madcap as he rushes to both turn down the volume of the stereo and retrieve the telephone. Finally, after the fourth ring, he succeeds.

He picks up the phone.

JULIAN

Hello?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Hello Julian.

Julian breathes a quick sigh of relief.

JULIAN

Mary.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

How are you?

JULIAN

I'm fine. Thanks. You?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

I'm fine as well, Julian. Have you been thinking about our situation?

JULIAN

Yes. I'm ready.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Good.

There is a bit of an awkward pause. Julian sits down with the phone on the couch. He sets the Preacher's book out of the way.

JULIAN

All along, I've always wondered, why me?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

I know ...

JULIAN

Wait, let me finish. I live a rather standard life. I mean, yes, I'm wealthy. But, I don't flaunt it. No one knows who I am, but I try to make my presence known. I contribute millions of dollars a year to environmental and other causes. People call me -

MARY (O.S., on phone)

—

Batman.

JULIAN

Yes, they call me that. I don't mind. In fact, I enjoy it. It's not the most flattering name, but I suppose it could be worse. The media doesn't know me.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Yet. They will soon, Julian.

JULIAN

How soon?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

As soon as you're ready.

JULIAN

I already said I'm ready.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Okay. There's someone you need to meet.

JULIAN

This Preacher?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Yes. His name is Richard, though. Richard Powell.

Julian looks down at the book's cover.

JULIAN

Is he there with you?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Yes. Well, no, he's not here. But he is in this area. San Diego.

JULIAN

You're not married to him?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

No. My husband's name is Charles.

JULIAN

Okay. I'm sorry.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

No, don't be. He's more like a father to me.

JULIAN

When can I meet you? I want to.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

I know. I want to meet you, too.

A pause. Julian starts to smile.

JULIAN

I can fly out there tomorrow. I'll have to settle some business in the morning, but I can take an afternoon flight.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Good.

JULIAN

Where should I meet you?

MARY (O.S., on phone)

I can meet you at the airport. Call me when you land. 619-555-5834.

JULIAN

5834. I figure if I get a flight here at noon, I'll get there in six hours, but there's a three hour time difference. So, I'll be there around 3.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Okay. I'll be home then. I can't wait.

JULIAN

Neither can I. I must get going. I have to prepare, pack.

MARY (O.S., on phone)

Okay. Three P.M. tomorrow. Goodnight, Julian.

JULIAN

Goodnight, Mary.

He hangs up the phone.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary, crouched on top of the lowered toilet seat, hangs up the cordless phone in her hand. She places the phone on the sink's counter and lowers her head in her lap.

After a moment, she lifts her head back up with an enormous smile on her face.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the darkened bedroom, a beam of light is seen under the closed bathroom door. In bed, Charles SNORES.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary dials a number on the cordless phone.

MARY

Hello, Richard? (a beat) He's coming here tomorrow. Yes. Three o'clock or so. He's going to call here from the airport.

INT. PREACHER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The Preacher is in bed, alone. He is leaning on his side, talking into the phone.

PREACHER

Mary. Great. Call me tomorrow night.
But, not this late, please.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Julian is sitting at his desk, furiously typing away on his computer. Beside the desk is a packed garment bag. On a notepad, the following is written:

Flight #289
Departing 12:10 P.M. EST
Arriving 3:50 P.M. PST
Mary 619-555-5834

He finishes typing and saves the document. Thumbing through his address book, he finds a phone number and dials it. As he waits for the call to be answered, he closes the address book and places it in his garment bag.

JULIAN (into phone)

Hello, Carolyn? Julian Crisp here.
I'm fine, thanks. Listen, I have to
run out of town, but I wanted to
finish my article and get it off to
you before I jetted ... Of course,
yes. Can I fax it to you? Great.
555-3421. I'll send it now ... I'll
be in touch, thanks.

He hangs up the phone.

Clicking his mouse around, he sends the document out as a fax transmission. The computer's modem WHIRS and BEEPS as the fax is sent.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Julian enters the crowded terminal from the subway exit. He holds his garment bag in his hand.

He approaches the ticket counter. A TICKET AGENT smiles at him.

AGENT

Hello sir.

JULIAN

Hello.

AGENT

How may I help you?

JULIAN

My name's Crisp. I have a reservation to pick up.

The agent keys in his name. After a moment, she looks back up to him.

AGENT

Yes, you're confirmed on flight #289 nonstop service to San Diego, California, departing at 12:10 P.M. First class. Just one passenger?

JULIAN

Correct.

He takes his American Express credit card out of his wallet and hands it to her.

AGENT

Thank you.

She processes his credit card. The computer printer spits out a ticket.

AGENT

Here you go. Would you prefer an aisle or window seat, Mr. Crisp?

JULIAN

Window, please. I've never been to California.

AGENT

Oh, it's beautiful. San Diego is real nice this time of year. Are you going there for business?

JULIAN

You could say that.

AGENT

What would you say?

JULIAN

I'm going there for a bit of
business, but mostly pleasure.

He winks at her.

AGENT

Sounds like fun.

JULIAN

I hope so.

She hands him his ticket.

AGENT

There you go. You're in seat 3A. The
flight will start boarding in a few
minutes at gate D32. It's flight
289.

JULIAN

Gate D32. Thank you very much.

AGENT

You're welcome, sir. Enjoy your
trip.

She winks at him. Julian smiles and walks away.

INT. AIRPLANE - FIRST CLASS COMPARTMENT - DAY

Julian is settled into his window seat. He has a pillow
propped up behind his head and a folded blanket on his lap.

An ELDERLY MAN is seated next to him.

ELDERLY MAN

Hello, son.

JULIAN

Good day.

ELDERLY MAN

I hate airplanes.

JULIAN

Oh.

ELDERLY MAN

I was shot down out of a plane
during the big one.

JULIAN

Big one?

ELDERLY MAN

World War II, son. The big one.

JULIAN

Oh.

The airplane starts to slowly pull away from the terminal.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Please fasten your seatbelts. We
will be departing shortly.

ELDERLY MAN

Here we go.

He sighs a deep, sloppy sigh. Julian cringes.

FADE TO:

INT. AIRPLANE — FIRST CLASS COMPARTMENT — AN HOUR LATER

Julian is asleep, his head curled toward the shuttered
window. The elderly man's seat is empty.

All appears normal on the plane. A male FLIGHT ATTENDANT
picks up finished lunch meals from the passengers. A movie
is shown on a projection screen. About half of the people
are awake and watching it.

The elderly man exits the restroom and starts to walk back
to his seat.

Suddenly, a burst of TURBULENCE throws the elderly man onto
the lap of a sleeping passenger.

ELDERLY MAN

My sweet Lord!

The DING of the pilot's warning bell sounds repeatedly. The flight attendant struggles to push his cart back to the preparation area. He finally succeeds, and picks up the P.A. handset.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (ON P.A.)
Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten
your seatbelts.

The woman that the elderly man fell onto helps him rise back to his feet. He struggles to walk the few steps to his seat, holding onto the tops of seats for support. He slumps down next to Julian.

The turbulence continues. Julian remains asleep, unaware.

The scratchy voice of the PILOT is heard on the P.A.

PILOT (ON P.A.)
Ladies and gentlemen, this is Pilot
Richardson. We're just over
Columbus, Ohio now, and there's a
violent thunderstorm below us that
we're flying right through.

The turbulence calms down a bit, but the damage is done. There are spilled drinks everywhere, a few CRYING CHILDREN, PANICKED PARENTS, and SICK PASSENGERS.

The elderly man reaches in the magazine holder of his seat and finds the airsickness bag. Hyperventilating, he holds it up to his face. After a moment, he calms down.

ELDERLY MAN
Just like Korea ... just like Korea.

He continues to BABBLE to himself. Julian continues to sleep.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mary exits her bedroom and goes to sit down in the living room. She holds the cordless phone in her hand.

On the couch, she reaches for the television remote control. She turns it on, flipping through cable station after cable station. Nothing of interest catches her attention.

INT. AIRPLANE – FIRST CLASS COMPARTMENT – DAY

The flight attendant comes around to Julian and the elderly man. Julian is still asleep. The attendant taps Julian gently on the shoulder.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Excuse me, sir. We're about to land. I'm going to have to ask you to return your seat to the upright position.

Julian nods, groggily.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Thank you, sir.

EXT. SAN DIEGO INT'L. AIRPORT – RUNWAY – DAY

Julian's plane glides down from the skies and makes a picture-perfect landing on a postcard-perfect day in San Diego.

INT. AIRPLANE – FIRST CLASS COMPARTMENT – A BIT LATER

Julian looks out the window as the plane lands on the runway. A fresh green lawn surrounds the runway, and above that Julian sees only the clear blue California sky.

INT. SAN DIEGO INT'L. AIRPORT – TERMINAL – A FEW MINUTES LATER

Passengers from Julian's flight exit the jetway. Julian, carrying his garment bag, follows the elderly man, who is greeted by his FAMILY. Julian steps out of the way and into the terminal.

He finds an open telephone at a bank of payphones and sets his bag down on the floor by it. He reaches into his pocket and finds the sheet of paper with Mary's number written on it. He then inserts a quarter into the payphone and dials her number.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – DAY

Mary is watching a cooking show with only the slightest bit of attention. Most of her concentration is on the silent telephone by her side. A glass of melting ice cubes sits on the coffee table in front of her.

Mary reaches to get a remaining sip out of the glass, without success. She rises from the couch, taking the glass with her as she heads to the kitchen.

She doesn't make more than five steps when the TELEPHONE RINGS. Mary jumps, and the glass drops from her hand and tumbles to the floor. The ice cubes spill out on to the carpet. She rushes back to the couch to retrieve the phone. She turns it on.

MARY (into phone)

Hello?

INT. SAN DIEGO INT'L. AIRPORT - TERMINAL - DAY

Julian has to cover his right ear to be able to hear the phone with his left.

JULIAN (into phone)

Hello, Mary.

INTERCUT BETWEEN JULIAN IN AIRPORT AND MARY IN APARTMENT

MARY

Hello, Julian. Are you here?

JULIAN

Yes, I'm in the C terminal.

MARY

Great. I'll head on over. Look for me outside the terminal in fifteen minutes. I'll be driving a black Lexus.

JULIAN

Okay. Fifteen minutes. Black Lexus.

MARY

I'll see you then.

JULIAN

I can't wait.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mary stands by the spilled glass, cordless phone in hand.

MARY (into phone)
Neither can I. I'll leave now.

JULIAN (O.S., on phone)
Okay. Goodbye.

Mary hangs up the phone. She quickly reaches down for the spilled glass and cleans up the ice cubes. She returns the phone to its base and takes the glass into the kitchen.

EXT. MARY'S APARTMENT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Mary walks hurriedly out of her apartment building and up to her car. She unlocks the door and sits down in the driver's seat.

A moment later, the car ZIPS away out of the parking lot.

EXT. SAN DIEGO INT'L. AIRPORT - DAY

Julian stands in the passenger drop-off/pickup area, watching for Mary's Lexus to pull up. His garment bag sits by his feet.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Mary slows down her car as she enters the airport terminal area. On the curb, about a half-block from her, she sees Julian standing there, waiting for her.

She slides the car to the curb beside Julian. Putting the car into park, she opens the driver's door and steps out.

EXT. SAN DIEGO INT'L. AIRPORT - DAY

Mary and Julian face each other for the first time. They don't speak for a moment; each is filling in the blanks. Mary compares Julian to the photographs she's seen of him. Julian compares her to the voice he's heard and the images in his mind.

JULIAN
(hesitantly)
Hello.

MARY
Hi Julian.

Mary steps around the car and stands in front of Julian. She is about two inches shorter than him. She extends her hand out to him. He takes it, and they shake hands.

Soon, they stop shaking hands, but continue to hold on to each other's hand.

JULIAN

I'm so glad to meet you.

MARY

So am I.

She slowly lets go of his hand.

MARY (Cont.)

Come on, we'll talk in the car.

She presses a button on the electronic key chain in her hand and the trunk door POPS open. Julian picks up his bag from the curb and walks around to the back of the Lexus. He places the bag in the trunk and shuts it.

Mary opens the driver's door and unlocks the passenger door.

Julian steps inside the Lexus.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Julian sits beside Mary as she restarts the car's engine.

MARY

Welcome to California. Have you ever been here before?

JULIAN

No. Never been on a plane before, either.

MARY

Really?

JULIAN

Never. I usually take trains everywhere I need to go back east.

MARY

How was the flight, then?

JULIAN

Fine, I suppose. I slept most of it.
What time is it, here?

MARY

A little after three P.M.

JULIAN

Okay, thanks.

He adjusts his watch.

MARY

Do you have a place to stay? A
hotel?

JULIAN

No, not yet. I figured you could
help me find one.

MARY

Yes, I know of one.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - DAY

Mary pulls into the parking lot of the Holiday Inn she
stayed at after she had the fight with Charles.

MARY (O.S.)

Is a Holiday Inn okay?

JULIAN (O.S.)

That'll be fine.

Mary parks the car and her and Julian exit. They walk up to
the entrance of the hotel.

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Julian and Mary walk up to the registration counter. A
MEXICAN CLERK looks up at them.

CLERK

Hello. May I help you?

JULIAN

Yes. Do you have any vacancies?

CLERK

Yes, we do.

JULIAN

Great. I'd like a room please, non-smoking.

The clerk looks at Julian and Mary.

CLERK

Single occupancy? Or will both of you ...

JULIAN

— No, just a single.
She's just my friend.

He smiles at Mary.

CLERK

Okay. Fifty-five dollars, please.

Julian slides him his American Express card.

CLERK

Thank you.

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL — CORRIDOR — SHORTLY AFTER

Julian, hotel room keycard in hand, leads Mary down the hallway to his room. They stand outside it, and Julian unlocks it with the keycard.

JULIAN

Room 139.

He opens the door and they step in.

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL — ROOM 139 — DAY

Julian places his bag flat out on his bed and appraises the room.

JULIAN

Standard hotel room, eh?

MARY

Yes, nice, but nothing fancy. I hope it'll be okay for you?

JULIAN

Yes, sure.

They stand still a moment, not sure what to do.

MARY

Well ... I spoke to Richard -

JULIAN

- The Preacher?

MARY

Yes. I spoke to him earlier this afternoon. He's busy tonight, but looks forward to meeting you tomorrow.

JULIAN

Okay, that's good. I'm in no rush to do anything.

MARY

Good. (she checks the time on her watch) I have to get going now, I'm sorry. I'll call you tonight, okay? I'll see if we can get dinner. Would you like to meet my husband?

JULIAN

Yes, I would.

MARY

Good, I'll invite him along, then.

Mary leaves. Julian unpacks his bags and hangs his clothes in the closet.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Mary enters her apartment to see Charles sitting in the dining room eating a microwaved dinner.

CHARLES

Oh, nice to see you.

MARY

Hello.

CHARLES

Where the hell have you been? It's almost seven o'clock.

MARY

I was stuck in traffic. Rush hour.

She shrugs.

CHARLES

Where have you been?

MARY

I had to pick a friend up at the airport.

CHARLES

Who's in town?

MARY

Julian.

CHARLES

Who the hell is that?

MARY

My friend.

CHARLES

Why haven't I heard of this "friend" before?

MARY

Because you haven't deserved to.

CHARLES

What?

MARY

I wanted you to meet him, I wanted to tell you about him. But, you're not worthy.

CHARLES

Calm down, dear.

MARY

Don't call me that anymore.

CHARLES

Mary, please. What are you talking about.

He stands up and walks over to her.

MARY

Stay away from me, Charles.

CHARLES

Calm down, please. Talk to me.

MARY

I ... I picked up someone very special today at the airport. He's in a hotel room right now, waiting for us to come take him for dinner. (she looks at his meal) But, my husband, you, wouldn't wait for me.

CHARLES

Mary, honey, I didn't know.

MARY

No, it was supposed to be a secret. Only a few people, myself, and Richard, we know. Soon the whole world is going to know about him. He's special -

CHARLES

He is? How so?

MARY

I can't explain it to you. You wouldn't understand.

CHARLES

Oh, yes, I do. I can understand when you're fucking someone else.

Mary SLAPS him across the face. He doesn't react, and a red welt slowly forms on his cheek.

MARY

I used to love you, you know.

CHARLES

I know, Mary.

He sits back down. Mary remains standing. Streams of TEARS slowly pour down her face.

MARY

I used to be a lot of things. I had a job, a career, a future. Then I married you, and threw that away for this.

She gestures with her arms around the apartment.

MARY (Cont.)

For a while, it was good. I was happy. I was in love with you.

CHARLES

Yes, Mary, I know.

MARY

Then, it happened. Everything I held sacred was flushed from my body, literally. I laid on my back for you one too many times, Charles. I couldn't bear you a child.

CHARLES

Stop.

MARY

No, I must say this. I couldn't love you anymore, do you understand? The last month has been the most incredible time of my life. I have been liberated, not only from you, but from everything that held me down before. I have met the most fascinating people in the world. My life was completed today. Richard foresaw it, predicted it.

CHARLES

Richard? Who is that? Who is Julian?

MARY

I'll explain to you, but you won't understand.

CHARLES

Really? Try me.

MARY

Richard is a prophet, the Preacher
who sees what is to come.

CHARLES

And what does he see?

MARY

He saw. He saw Julian come to us.

CHARLES

And who is Julian?

MARY

(in a whisper)
Julian is the savior.

CHARLES

The what?

MARY

The savior.

Charles shakes his head.

CHARLES

Of what?

MARY

This world.

CHARLES

I don't understand.

MARY

I knew you wouldn't.

She exits the apartment. Charles remains seated,
dumbfounded.

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL – ROOM 139 – NIGHT

Julian lies on the bed, head propped up by the pillows,
reading a Magellan biography. The TV is on, but the sound is
muted.

Julian finishes reading a chapter and closes the book. He
rises from the bed to stretch out.

As his arms are fully extended, there is a KNOCK on his room's door. He drops his arms and goes to the door.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - ROOM 139 - NIGHT

Mary stands outside Julian's door. He opens it and smiles at her.

JULIAN

Do you have the bath towels I asked for?

MARY

I'm sorry?

Julian laughs.

JULIAN

Just kidding, come on in.

He lets her into the room.

INT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - ROOM 139 - NIGHT

Mary stands next to the muted TV. Julian turns the TV off with the remote control.

MARY

Thanks for letting me in. I'm sorry I didn't get to call.

JULIAN

It's all right. Where is your husband?

MARY

He won't be joining us tonight, I'm sorry.

JULIAN

Oh, don't be.

MARY

We got into a fight.

Julian doesn't say anything.

MARY

Anyway, are you hungry? Ready for dinner?

JULIAN

Yes.

MARY

Good, I'm starved. What are you in the mood for?

JULIAN

Any good Mexican restaurants around here?

MARY

(laughing)

All we have to do is drive fifteen minutes and every restaurant is Mexican.

JULIAN

Any good ones on this side of the border?

MARY

Of course, let's go.

She leads the way out of the hotel room.

INT. MARY'S CAR - NIGHT

Mary drives and Julian rolls down his window.

JULIAN

The weather here is amazing.

MARY

It's a bit chilly tonight, but that's just the heat leaving the desert.

They pass an area of burnt woodlands.

JULIAN

How bad were the fires here last week? They were big on the national news.

MARY

About average for what we get each year. This area here got burnt pretty bad.

Mary turns on her left turn signal.

JULIAN

Yes, it doesn't look too good.

MARY

It's necessary, though. Every year this sort of death and rebirth happens. It's an annual cycle.

She eases the car into a shopping center and parks outside of a restaurant.

INT. CRAZY CARLOS' RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Mary and Julian are seated, margarita glasses in hand. Together, they raise their glasses and clink them in a silent toast. A long gaze passes between them, which Julian breaks by looking down at his menu.

JULIAN

Do you recommend anything?

MARY

What do you like? The enchiladas are good, as are the fajitas.

JULIAN

Yes, the vegetable fajitas do look good.

A WAITRESS stops by their table.

WAITRESS

Are you ready to order?

EXT. CRAZY CARLOS' RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Julian and Mary exit the restaurant. Above them, a crystal clear and starry sky enshrouds them.

MARY

Thank you for dinner, Julian.

JULIAN

Thank you for inviting me out here.

Mary leans up against the side of her car. Julian looks out over the landscape.

JULIAN

Where I live, there aren't any nights like this. It's always too cloudy or the city gives off too much light to see the stars.

Mary looks up, resting her head on the roof of the car.

MARY

I think I take this for granted. It is beautiful, though.

JULIAN

Some things humble me ...

MARY

What?

JULIAN

I don't know ... I'm just babbling. Sometimes, when I see something as big as this, I realize how small I am.

Mary walks over to Julian.

MARY

No, Julian. You're not. Something in you is big. It's your heart. You have a large capacity for love, understanding.

JULIAN

What about God?

MARY

I'm sorry?

JULIAN

I don't want to compete.

MARY

Don't be silly, Julian.

JULIAN

Mary, I've given a lot of thought to this. How necessary am I?

MARY

Necessary?

JULIAN

I mean, you claim the world needs me, but I wonder. Who needs me? Does God need me? Does God need anyone?

MARY

Who would God need?

JULIAN

Does God need believers? Would there still be a God if there was no one to believe in Him? Does God ever doubt his own existence? I know a lot of people do; I used to.

MARY

But now you know, right? I used to doubt, too, then I met you.

JULIAN

You just met me today, Mary.

MARY

You know what I mean. When I first heard of you, learned of you.

JULIAN

Yesterday, Mary, I was sure. Today—now, tonight, I have doubt.

MARY

Come, let me take you back to the hotel. It's late, you're tired. We'll meet Richard in the morning, he'll make it all clear to you.

Julian starts to walk back to Mary's car.

JULIAN

Okay, let's go. I am tired.

Mary returns to the car.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL – NIGHT

Mary parks her car. She kills the engine, and her and Julian step out of the car.

JULIAN

Thank you, again, Mary.

MARY

You're welcome. I'm glad you're here.

They stare at each other. A breeze blows Mary's hair into her face. She brushes the errant strands back into place.

JULIAN

So am I.

Julian takes the hotel keycard out of his pocket. He fidgets with it in his hand, as if looking for something to distract him.

MARY

I'll pick you up in the morning, Julian.

JULIAN

Good night, Mary.

Julian walks to the lobby. Mary watches after him, and after he's entered the hotel, she gets back into the car and drives away.

INT. MARY'S CAR – NIGHT

Mary turns down the CLASSICAL MUSIC on the car stereo. It is at a soft volume, barely audible over the HUM of the car gliding effortlessly on the highway.

The stereo's digital clock reads 12:58 A.M. Mary slows down the car, easing into the right lane.

Soon, she exits the highway onto a local road, and navigates her way back to her apartment.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Julian is lying in bed, sleeping. His sleep, however, is very fitful, as he's suffering from a nightmare.

He rolls over in bed, and his flailing arm SMACKS into the nightstand. He shoots up in bed, wide awake.

Panting heavily, he turns on the lamp and looks at the alarm clock: 4:35 A.M. He groans, but is relieved he's out of the nightmare.

JULIAN

It's seven-thirty back east.

He gets out of bed. Rubbing his eyes, he appraises himself in the mirror. His hair is disheveled and his T-shirt wrinkled, but otherwise he approves. He heads into the bathroom.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Julian, fresh out of the shower, is shaving in front of a foggy mirror. He has a white bath towel wrapped around his waist.

Suddenly, he CUTS himself. He drops the razor into the sink. A tiny streak of blood appears on his left cheek.

Struggling with the pain, he has trouble staying upright. Slumping down, he falls to his knees, clutching his hand to his face.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Mary lies sleeping alone in her bed. The alarm clock reads 8:15 A.M.

Charles enters the apartment and heads into the bedroom. He watches Mary sleep for a moment, and then reaches down and places his hand on her shoulder.

CHARLES

Mary?

Mary awakens. She looks at Charles warily.

MARY

When did you get in?

CHARLES

(yawning)

Just a minute ago.

Mary gets up from bed and walks to the bathroom.

MARY

I'm late. Get some rest, you look tired.

She shuts the bathroom door behind her.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Julian sits on the bed, watching a morning talk show on the television. He is dressed and ready to go.

The telephone RINGS. Julian leans over the bed to answer it.

JULIAN (into phone)

Hello? (a beat) Yes, hello ... I slept fine, I suppose. I was up before dawn; time zone changes, you know. (a beat) Yes, I'm ready. Fifteen minutes? I'll be out front waiting for you.

He hangs up the phone and turns off the television. He exits the room.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - MORNING

Julian stands in front of the hotel, under the covered entranceway. He is wearing cheap sunglasses.

Mary's Lexus pulls into the parking lot with a vengeance. She stops in front of Julian and the passenger side window rolls down.

MARY

Come on, we're late.

INT. MARY'S CAR - MORNING

Mary is driving the Lexus like a professional racecar driver. Julian appears to be in a great deal of pain next to her.

MARY

What's wrong with you today?

JULIAN

I don't know. I'm just super-sensitive to everything. I nicked myself shaving and it was just torture.

MARY

Why the sunglasses, then?

JULIAN

When I went out to wait for you I was almost blinded. These sunglasses were all they had in the gift shop.

He pulls down the sun visor and looks at his reflection in the make-up mirror.

JULIAN (Cont.)

I don't suppose they do me justice.

MARY

No, they don't.

She LAUGHS.

MARY (Cont.)

We'll go get you a new pair this afternoon.

Julian lifts up the sunglasses from his eyes and squints at Mary.

JULIAN

Okay.

MARY

First, we have to meet Richard.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE — MORNING

The Preacher is sitting at his desk, reading the morning paper and drinking a cup of coffee. There is a KNOCK on the door.

PREACHER

Yes, come in.

Mary and Julian enter.

MARY

Richard, meet Julian.

The Preacher and Julian shake hands.

JULIAN

Nice to meet you.

PREACHER

Likewise. Please, sit down. Both of you.

Julian and Mary sit down across from the Preacher.

PREACHER

How are you this morning? Can I get you something? Coffee?

MARY

Please.

JULIAN

No, no thank you.

The Preacher heads into the side room to get the coffee.

Julian takes off his sunglasses and tries to adjust his eyes to the room's natural light.

MARY

How is it?

JULIAN

Not bad, better than outside.

The Preacher returns and hands a mug of coffee to Mary.

MARY

Thank you.

PREACHER

What's this, now?

JULIAN

My eyes are hurting this morning.

The Preacher goes to lower the venetian blinds.

PREACHER
Would this help?

JULIAN
Yes, thank you.

The shades are lowered and the room is cast in a lighted shadow, with patches of brightness here and there. The Preacher finally sits down and finally gets to regard Julian.

PREACHER
Welcome to California. I hope you're enjoying your visit.

JULIAN
Yes, I am, thanks.

PREACHER
Good. Let's get to business.

JULIAN
(nodding)
Okay.

Mary fidgets in her seat.

PREACHER
Do you understand exactly what you are?

JULIAN
Yes, Mary told me.

PREACHER
Good. Tell me, now.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Mary and Julian walk down the street in San Diego's expensive shopping district.

JULIAN
He's a very interesting man.

MARY
Yes, Richard sure is.

JULIAN
Fascinating, I mean. His insight;
it's so logical.

Mary opens the door to a fancy optician shop. Julian holds the door open and follows Mary in.

INT. OPTICIAN – DAY

Julian and Mary look over the colossal displays of sunglasses under a glass counter. A stylishly-dressed SALESLADY observes.

JULIAN
(pointing at sunglasses)
Those are nice, don't you think?

MARY
Yes, they are. How about those?

She points at a different model.

JULIAN
I like those, too. (to saleslady)
May I try these two pairs on,
please?

SALESLADY
Certainly, sir.

The saleslady unlocks the glass display and takes out the sunglasses. She hands them one at a time to Mary.

Mary takes the pair she liked and holds them up to Julian's face. Julian reaches up to take them from her.

MARY
No. Let me.

Julian puts his hands down. Slowly, Mary slides the sunglasses on him and straightens them on his nose.

MARY
Yes, I like these.

Julian looks at one of the display mirrors.

JULIAN
I do, too.

He slides off the sunglasses and reaches for the other pair. He puts them on and checks out how they look in the mirror, too.

MARY

I like the other pair more.

Julian nods and takes off the second pair.

JULIAN

(to saleslady)

I'll take these.

He hands her the first pair. The saleslady begins to ring up the sale.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Julian, wearing his new sunglasses, and Mary walk back to her car. They get in and Mary drives off, down the street.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - DAY

Mary and Julian stand by her parked car.

MARY

We have to be there by seven.

JULIAN

It's four now, right?

MARY

Yes.

They start to slowly step toward each other until they're less than a foot from each other.

JULIAN

Okay.

He takes her hands in his. She doesn't resist, and takes another half-step toward him. She looks up into his eyes.

MARY

I'd like to ...

Julian takes off his sunglasses. He stares deep into her eyes.

JULIAN

What?

MARY

I don't know.

Julian gently KISSES her. Mary steps into it, but soon pulls away.

MARY

No, not now.

She puts her arms around Julian and hugs him. Her head rests on his chest.

JULIAN

I'm sorry.

MARY

No, don't be. I have to go now, Julian.

Julian slowly steps out of her hug.

JULIAN

You don't want to get dinner?

MARY

I can't now. Later, I promise. I have to go home now.

JULIAN

Okay.

MARY

I'm sorry. I'll pick you up at six-fifteen.

Julian nods. Mary wordlessly gets back into her Lexus and drives off. Julian enters the hotel.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mary enters and hears Charles SNORING in the bedroom. She puts her keys on the table by the door and quietly walks into the bedroom.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

The shades are drawn, and an orange glow is cast around the room as Charles sleeps in the middle of the bed.

Mary enters a walk-in closet and returns with a large suitcase. She opens it on the floor. It is empty, but not for long.

Returning to the closet, Mary brings out all sorts of clothes and quietly packs them in the suitcase. When the case is full, she slowly ZIPPERS it up and carries it out of the bedroom.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary sits at the kitchen table, silently eating a hastily-made sandwich. The suitcase sits on its side next to her.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - NIGHT

Dusk descends upon the western sky as Julian stands in the parking lot. He has changed into a stylish blue suit. He looks out over the hills in the west to the sunset.

EXT. PREACHER'S CHURCH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mary's Lexus enters the full parking lot and slowly glides to the side of the building, where it parks in an open spot marked "MC" next to a WHITE BMW in a spot labeled "RP."

MARY O.S.

There are a lot of people here. A lot more than we figured.

JULIAN O.S.

Good.

They exit the car. A CROWD of over a dozen people mill outside of the entrance to the church. Mary and Julian walk past them to a rear entrance.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Preacher is sitting in a makeup chair. He is wearing a large blue ceremonial robe and adjusts his tie. A MAKEUP GIRL is fixing his diminishing hair. He appears absolutely photogenic.

Mary and Julian enter. The Preacher rises from his chair. The makeup girl scurries into a corner, eyeing Julian.

PREACHER

We all set?

Mary and Julian nod. The Preacher turns to the makeup girl.

PREACHER

Carlie, anything Julian needs?

The makeup girl takes a step forward, up to Julian. She frowns, appraising him.

MAKEUP GIRL

His eyes ... something's not quite right.

JULIAN

What? What is it?

The makeup girl looks down.

MAKEUP GIRL

No, I'm sorry. He's fine.

Mary leads Julian out of the room, following the Preacher. Julian looks back at Carlie and smiles.

EXT. PREACHER'S CHURCH - NIGHT

A few late STRAGGLERS hurry inside. A sign by the door reads:

The Church of the New Fire
Wed., March 30 - 8 P.M.
Meet the Messiah!
Learn about the Coming Millenium!

INT. PREACHER'S CHURCH - NIGHT

The Preacher steps onto the altar from a side entrance. The CROWD, a true microcosm of Southern California (Anglos, Mexicans, young, old, rich, poor, etc.) stands for his arrival. When he reaches the podium, he holds his hand out to the crowd and they all sit back down.

PREACHER

Good evening. I thank you all for gathering here tonight. I see a lot of new faces, which pleases me. Of course, I'm glad to see the old faces. Javier, Maria. Hello.

A young MEXICAN COUPLE in the front row nod silently.

PREACHER (Cont.)

To those of you unfamiliar with the Church of the New Fire, please allow me to introduce ourselves to you. My name is Richard Powell. My assistant, hiding over there in the shadows, is Mary Carlisle. Mary, come on out and introduce yourself to us.

ANGLE ON MARY, STANDING BY JULIAN JUST BESIDE THE ALTAR.

Mary shakes her head "no."

PREACHER

Mary, please. Come on out.

Julian prods Mary to step out.

JULIAN

Don't worry. Go.

Mary takes a step out onto the altar.

The Preacher urges her to stand beside him. She obliges.

PREACHER

Mary Carlisle, ladies and gentlemen.

There is a polite RIPPLE OF APPLAUSE throughout the crowd. Mary nods, blushing.

MARY

Thank you.

PREACHER

Thank you, Mary.

Mary smiles and steps back to Julian's side.

PREACHER

Now, listen to me. This may sound a bit unbelievable, but you will all know it to be true soon. Several weeks ago I was watching the television, the evening news like most of you, I'd bet, were doing the same that night. It was no special night, just another night of homicide, robbery, and general depravity. I'm not just talking about locally. San Diego is no Sodom, it is no Gomorrah. It is just like any other city in the world today. It has it's problems. I sat there, watching the live reports of death and pain, wondering if it ever could get better. Then, I knew.

He steps away from the altar and slowly heads over to where Mary and Julian are.

PREACHER (Cont.)

I know I wasn't anyone special. I'm the author, not the tale itself. I realized my position to point out the obvious to a fazed world of unbelievers. Over a few days, I pondered this. Then, a friend of mine back east phoned me up. He told me about a special person. He is The One. The One to rescue us, to provide an example of how to live, and how to act. This is a special time, my friends. The world is heading to hell in a hand basket, and we're making the special delivery ourselves.

The Preacher stops next to Julian. He smiles at Julian.

PREACHER

Ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to introduce Julian Crisp!

Julian steps out to the altar. There is a hushed silence as he gazes over the crowd, making eye contact with as many people as possible.

Julian clears his throat.

JULIAN

Hello. I don't really know what to say, so allow me to introduce myself. My name, as you know, is Julian Crisp. I have seen the way the world acts, how the people act, and I, too, am disgusted. I have been selected to provide the example to educate. If you allow me, I would be honored to do so. Thank you.

Julian steps aside. The Preacher hugs him. The audience BURSTS into applause.

Mary stands on the side, watching it all.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Preacher, Mary and Julian enter the office. The Preacher takes off his robe and hangs it on a hook on the back of the door.

PREACHER

Very good!

MARY

Are you sure?

PREACHER

Yes, definitely. Julian? What did you think?

JULIAN

Yes, I agree. Excellent. I'm excited now.

MARY

Something didn't seem right. You had to justify things.

JULIAN

Yes, you did.

PREACHER

There are some elements of truth that are hard to believe. Faith is very difficult, especially in these times.

JULIAN

No, that's not true. Faith is easiest when life is hardest. When there's no need for faith, when life is easiest, that is when it is hard to find believers.

The Preacher and Julian glare at each other. Mary steps between them.

MARY

Richard, Julian. Calm down. Tonight was good, no doubt about it. This minor disagreement is unimportant.

PREACHER

I think you two should leave now. I am tired.

MARY

Yes, Julian, let's leave.

PREACHER

I'm sorry. I'll see you both in the morning. Come see me, first thing.

Julian still glares at the Preacher. Mary tugs at his arm.

MARY

Come on, Julian.

Julian allows himself to be led out by Mary.

EXT. PREACHER'S CHURCH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Julian and Mary walk up to her car. Julian still seems a bit upset.

MARY

Are you all right?

Julian nods.

JULIAN
I'll be fine. Let's go.

They get into the car.

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - NIGHT

Mary's car heads down the road, away from the Preacher's church.

INT. MARY'S CAR - NIGHT

Mary looks over at Julian. He appears to have finally calmed down.

MARY
Julian, are you hungry at all? Do you want to get some food and talk?

JULIAN
Not really, no. I'm thirsty, though.

MARY
Okay, so am I. I know where to go.

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary parks her car. Her and Julian get out.

MARY
This is where I first called you from.

They enter the 7-11.

INT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Julian and Mary stand in line by the cash register. Julian holds a bottle of orange juice, and Mary has a bottle of fruit punch. There are THREE PEOPLE grouped in front of them.

One of the group takes a half step back, right into Julian.

JULIAN
Excuse me.

The man stumbles back to his feet and looks at Julian. He seems to recognize Julian. He turns back to his friends and SPEAKS to them in SPANISH.

JULIAN

(to Mary)

What are they saying?

Mary struggles to understand their conversation.

MARY

I don't know. It's not quite Spanish. Almost a dialect.

JULIAN

You don't get any of it?

MARY

Not enough to establish context, no.

Julian shrugs. Meanwhile, the three continue to look at Julian and CHATTER away. A FEW MORE MEXICANS enter the store and join their conversation.

Shortly, nearly a dozen people are crowded around Julian. The first man reaches around his neck and removes the GOLD CHAIN with CROSS. He hands it to Julian.

JULIAN

(shaking head)

No, I can't take that.

The man points at the cross, and then at Julian. He smiles, and offers it again. Julian takes it from him.

JULIAN

Thank you.

This causes nearly everyone else in the store, including the CASHIER, to start offering gifts to Julian.

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Julian, arms laden with gifts, walks out of the 7-11. Mary holds their drinks.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Julian and Mary enter the hotel room. He puts the gifts down on the oak desk. Mary takes a final sip of her fruit punch and places the empty glass bottle beside the ice bucket on the dresser.

JULIAN

Thank you.

MARY

For what?

JULIAN

Being my chauffeur while I'm here.

MARY

Oh, I don't mind. I like being with you.

JULIAN

So do I. I'm glad I came here. I suppose I could do all this back east, but it wouldn't be the same without you. You guide me.

MARY

Thank you.

JULIAN

Do you ...

MARY

What?

Julian takes a few steps to be by Mary.

JULIAN

I'm not sure how to ask this. Do you want to stay here tonight?

MARY

Yes. Is that okay?

JULIAN

I was hoping you'd say that.

He kisses her again.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

The lights are off in the room, but by the moonlight splashed through the curtains, Julian and Mary are visible in bed, slowly making love. Julian is on top of Mary, who CRIES softly.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - JUST AFTERWARDS

Finished, Mary rests her head on Julian's bare chest. His eyes are open, just barely. She slowly WEEPS, but at a quiet volume that Julian can't hear her.

MARY

I've always known it was you.

JULIAN

I know. So have I.

MARY

When I first saw your picture, in the shelter, I knew. I'd been waiting so long.

JULIAN

So have I. So have I.

Julian drifts off to sleep. Mary remains awake for a few moments, but then wipes her tears away with the back of her hand and moves up to Julian's head, resting in his arms.

Soon, she falls asleep as well.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL - MORNING

Mary, wearing the clothes she wore the night before and her hair a mess, walks out to her car in the parking lot.

Using the remote control key ring, she opens the car's trunk and lifts her suitcase out of it. After closing the trunk, she heads back into the hotel.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Mary re-enters the hotel room and sees Julian sitting up in bed. She sets the suitcase down by the door.

JULIAN

Good morning, love.

MARY

Oh! I tried not to wake you up.

JULIAN

It's Okay. I'm still not quite adjusted to the time difference yet. It's three hours later back east.

MARY

Yes. I just went out to my car, to get my things. I'm going to get dressed now.

JULIAN

Okay.

Mary enters the bathroom. Julian sits in bed for a moment, and then gets up to join her in there.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL – MORNING

Julian and Mary exit the hotel, holding hands, and walk to her car.

MARY

Would you like to drive?

JULIAN

Hmm ... sure. I haven't driven for quite a few years.

MARY

Really? You sure you remember?

JULIAN

Yes, it'll be fine, don't worry.

She hands him the keys.

JULIAN (Cont.)

Thank you.

He unlocks the driver's door.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Julian drives the car conservatively on the highway.

JULIAN

It's like riding a bike, really.

MARY

You seem to be doing okay so far.

Julian looks at the speedometer.

JULIAN

Well, I'm not even doing the speed limit.

Mary looks at the dashboard as well.

MARY

Yes. We seem to be low on gas, too. We'll have to stop off later to get some more, there's no time now.

JULIAN

Think we have enough?

MARY

Oh, definitely. We'll just need to get some more before we head back to the hotel, that's all.

JULIAN

All right.

MARY

Okay, you're going to take the next exit.

EXT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julian parks Mary's car parks next to the Preacher's BMW. They get out of the car and head toward the entrance.

JULIAN

Want the keys back?

MARY

No, not now. You still need to practice your driving skills. I'll let you drive when we leave here. Hang on to them.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julian and Mary enter the office. The Preacher is not there. Mary looks in the side room for him, but returns, shaking her head.

JULIAN

I wonder where he could be.

MARY

I don't know.

They sit down across from his chair at his desk. Julian looks at the papers and folders on the desk.

Just as Julian finds a folder labeled with his name on it, the Preacher enters.

PREACHER

Good morning, good morning. I'm sorry I am late.

MARY

It's okay. We've only been here a minute.

Julian subtly puts the folder back down and leans back in his chair.

JULIAN

Hello. Did you sleep well last night?

PREACHER

Yes ... yes I did. How about you? Are you all refreshed for our journey?

JULIAN

(smiling at Mary)
Yes, completely.

Mary stifles a GIGGLE. The Preacher doesn't notice their innuendo.

PREACHER

Good. Now, let's talk business.

JULIAN

All right.

PREACHER

We're about to undertake a large-scale media blitz, if you will, to instruct people to our message. It is just about time to inform the world.

JULIAN

How large a scale?

PREACHER

The model I have is the presidential election campaign. Early in the campaign, there's just a splattering of ads, to get the name out. Later, the message and issues become important, while still being tied-in with the candidate's name. That's what I think we need to do here.

JULIAN

I don't know about that. People are very disillusioned on politics now.

MARY

This will be different, though.

JULIAN

How so?

PREACHER

Julian, the world is so different now. Two thousand years ago, yes, there was no media then. But the media now is our friend.

Julian mulls this over.

JULIAN

No ... no. Jesus was a carpenter—

MARY

-And you're a millionaire. Listen to Richard, Julian, he knows what to do.

Julian glares at Mary.

JULIAN

I have thought about this a lot, too. I think the grassroots level should be our path. We can, I can, wander from town to town. I can meet people.

PREACHER

We need to use your wealth to its maximum.

JULIAN

(to himself)
Magellan wouldn't have done that.

MARY

Yes, Julian, we must.

JULIAN

That's why you chose me, then? For my money?

MARY

No, of course not. Julian, you know-

PREACHER

(cutting Mary off)
I don't know if I should feel insulted or not now.

JULIAN

Funny, I was just thinking the same thing.

He gets up from his seat and heads to the door.

MARY

Where are you going?

JULIAN

I'm going to go do what needs to be done.

He rushes out of the office.

EXT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julian enters Mary's car and starts the engine. He zips out of the parking lot.

The Preacher and Mary soon exit his office and look for him. There is no trace of Julian.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Mary's car, driven by Julian, slowly SPUTTERS to a stop on the side of a desolate two lane highway road. On the other side of the road is a sign reading "SAN DIEGO 14 miles."

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Julian tries to restart the engine, but it only GROANS at him. The fuel gauge is down below Empty. Leaving the keys in the ignition, Julian exits the car.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Julian looks at the highway sign. The heat starts to make its presence known to him, and he has to undo a button on his shirt to cool off. He takes one final look back at the road behind him and starts to walk off, in the direction he was driving before the car ran out of gas.

INT. PREACHER'S CAR - DAY

The Preacher starts the ignition of his BMW as Mary adjusts the passenger seat.

PREACHER

Do you know where he might've gone?

MARY

I'm not sure.

PREACHER

Back to his hotel?

MARY

Maybe. I don't think so, however.

PREACHER

We should check there, first.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL – DAY

The Preacher's car parks in the nearly-empty parking lot. Of the cars there, Mary's Lexus is not seen.

MARY O.S.

He's not here, I knew it.

PREACHER O.S.

Now where?

MARY O.S.

Back to the highway. I think he might've headed east.

PREACHER O.S.

East?

MARY O.S.

Just head that way. He won't be driving too fast, we'll catch him.

The car moves into reverse and soon exits the parking lot.

EXT. DESERT ROAD – BY MARY'S CAR – DAY

The Preacher's car comes SPEEDING down the highway.

INT. PREACHER'S CAR – DAY

Mary sees her car parked on the side of the road.

MARY

There it is. On the right there.

The Preacher slows down and parks behind Mary's car. They quickly get out.

EXT. DESERT ROAD – DAY

The two rush up to Mary's parked car.

PREACHER

Where could he be?

MARY

He might've walked.

PREACHER

Walked?!? We're fifteen miles from the city, and we didn't see him along the side of the road.

MARY

No, not back to the city. He could have walked into the desert.

They stand out on the highway, looking for signs of Julian.

PREACHER

Well, I don't see him.

MARY

Let's keep driving. We'll find him, I know.

The Preacher gets back into his car. Mary takes another look down the highway before getting back into his car.

INT. PREACHER'S CAR - DAY

The Preacher restarts the engine. Slowly, they begin driving down the highway.

MARY

Julian told me that he was orphaned in a fire. He was real big on the fire concept. Somehow, he learned that Magellan-

PREACHER

The explorer?

MARY

Yes, him. Julian learned that he thought Tierra Del Fuego, the island of Argentina, was Atlantis. Julian was fascinated by that.

PREACHER

That's where you think he's heading?

MARY

No, I don't. It's just a metaphor, I think. He wants to be in touch with the common people. He's going to go to the most basic place of all, the most mythic.

PREACHER

There he is!

Up ahead, about a quarter of a mile away, Julian is spotted walking on the side of the highway.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

Julian hears the Preacher's car approach him. It parks on the side of the road and Mary rushes out.

MARY

Julian! What are you doing?

Julian stops walking and turns toward Mary.

JULIAN

I told you. I'm going to do what must be done.

The Preacher steps out beside Julian.

PREACHER

Stop, Julian. Listen to us. There's nothing out there for seventy-five miles. You'll dehydrate before the sun comes up tomorrow.

JULIAN

I'm not afraid to die.

Julian suddenly drops to his knees, overcome by pain.

Mary rushes to his side.

MARY

Julian, what is it?

Julian falls down and rolls over onto his side. He holds his hands to his midsection, wincing. Soon, the pain subsides and he is able to move again.

Sitting up, he takes his hands out and we see that the wounds on his palms have re-opened. Blood drips down onto the dusty road from both hands.

JULIAN

Look. It is time.

Carefully, with his bloody fingertips, he takes off his shoes and socks. There is blood on the soles of his feet, as well. He throws the shoes aside and gets up, carefully.

JULIAN (Cont.)

I have completed my transformation.
(he turns to face the Preacher) Is
this what you had in mind?

He holds out his bloody palms and drops of blood fall on the ground between him and the Preacher. Mary stands back, horrified.

The Preacher is amazed.

PREACHER

I understand now. You do not need us
anymore, Julian.

JULIAN

You are correct. I thank you for
showing me on my way. Mary, thank
you, too.

He reaches out for Mary and she allows him to hug her.

MARY

I love you, Julian. Don't leave us.

JULIAN

I must leave. He understands.

Slowly, he lets go of Mary and turns back to the direction he was walking.

PREACHER

Mary, we must let him be now. We can
only stop him from fulfilling what
we have devised all along.

MARY

Is this really it? This is what I
left my husband for? What I gave my
life for?

JULIAN

Mary, yes, it is. You will be
remembered.

Julian starts to step away, slowly, from Mary and the
Preacher. His step is awkward, as if he is learning how to
walk again. Mary tries to follow him, but the Preacher holds
her back.

PREACHER

Mary, no.

POV - MARY, STILL HELD BY PREACHER

Tiny splotches of red, his bloody footprints, follow Julian
on the road.

MARY (V.O.)

He told me he was borne by fire.
Despite what he says now, he leaves
us as an incomplete man, more so
than before he knew of our scheme.
He is looking for himself and his
own land. He will walk on, past the
lands that need him until he reaches
that land he needs: his Land of
Fire.

As Julian disappears from sight he becomes little more than
a dark, tiny pinprick on a white sheet of paper.

FADE OUT.