

Tierra Del Fuego

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - OUTSIDE OF SAN DIEGO - DAY

A road sign beside a vacant highway reads "San Diego - 14 miles." The sky above is blue; the brush on the ground is the same brown as the dirt.

A supermarket delivery truck comes BARRELLING down the road. Dust kicks up from the road as it heads toward the city.

The dust clears and a black storm cloud comes rolling in quickly from the desert in the east. Thunder BOOMS and the sky darkens.

Black clouds RUMBLE and a bolt of lightning SHOOTs down to the ground, torching a bush. A small fire starts....

FADE TO:

EXT. SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - LATER THAT DAY

A water-bombing airplane takes off from the airport and heads out to the desert brush east of the city.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

The storm has passed, leaving behind a massive brush fire. The water-bomber flies overhead and dumps its contents onto an isolated section of the fire. Steam HISSES up from the ground.

A fire truck comes along. A STATE TROOPER guides it along the side of the road, where it parks. A TEAM of firefighters climb out of the truck and unwind a long hose. The team carries the hose out into the brush, toward a fire.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - THE NEXT DAY

A CNN REPORTER, female, 40s, stands on the blocked-off highway, microphone in hand. Her CAMERAMAN adjusts the focus.

CAMERAMAN

Okay, Linda. In five, four,
three....

The reporter straightens her back and waits for instructions in her earpiece.

EXT. NORTHEASTERN CITY AIRPORT - EVENING

An AIRPLANE shoots overhead and lands on a runway. The 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 scurry to empty the plane of its luggage.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - EVENING

Inside the airport terminal, JULIAN CRISP is among the people milling around the gate. While most are either waiting for a plane to take them away or to bring them someone from afar, Julian is there just to be there.

He is an attractive man in his late twenties, wearing a rather expensive-looking overcoat and hat. As a TRAVELLER passes him, he will regard him or her for a moment, until someone new catches his eye.

His eye is caught by the change in programming on the in-terminal television set.

A CNN NEWS REPORT interrupts a videotaped special. On the screen, the reporter standing by the desert highway near San Diego is seen.

REPORTER (on TV)

This is Linda Cooper of CNN reporting live outside of San Diego. A freak electrical storm yesterday afternoon has caused the first brush fire of the year....

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

The reporter stands with her back to the fires. In the b.g., the fire fighting team works to hose down a burning bush.

REPORTER (Cont.)

.....Nearly two hundred acres have burned so far, and eastern suburbs of San Diego are being threatened as high winds aid the spreading of the fire....

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - EVENING

Julian watches the report attentively. His eyes start to gloss over from staring.

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. They AD LIB conversation.

A black Lexus sedan pulls up and parks in front of the shelter. Two people get out. The driver, MARY CARLISLE, late 20s, is a tall, slender woman stylishly dressed. Her passenger is a fifty-something 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 stops as the homeless man and woman watch Mary and the Preacher enter the shelter.

PREACHER

You think he's here?

MARY

He's usually here in the afternoon.

They enter the shelter.

HOMELESS MAN

She works here, don't she? Food line.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Sometimes, yeah.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - EVENING

Julian is still sitting in the terminal, enraptured by the television. The CNN report has ended, but Julian doesn't notice.

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 Mexican, JESUS CALDERON, stands in the doorway of a large walk-in freezer, holding a sack of onions.

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 that?

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.

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.

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

PREACHER

He's got to be different this 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

Well, he seemed right to me. A man of the people. Do you have someone else 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

That's him, yes. What's his name?

PREACHER

Julian Crisp. 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.

PREACHER

He's wealthy, too.

MARY

Good.

PREACHER

It fits our plan. I have someone
watching him now.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - EVENING

The news report has ended, but Julian is still in his daze.
His is awakened by a MAN, who shakes his shoulder. The man
is with his WIFE and young DAUGHTER. Julian blinks at the
sight of the man. The sky outside darkens quickly.

MAN

Julian? Julian Crisp?

Julian nods.

MAN

Wow, hey there. Are you okay? You
seemed a bit out of it there. How
are you doing?

Julian rises to greet the man.

JULIAN

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

My 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

Julian, it was great seeing you again. Keep in touch, okay?

JULIAN

Sure thing.

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

Sorry, no thank you.

The girl nods at him.

GIRL
Have a blessed day.

Julian walks away. The girl walks over to a phone booth and dials a number.

GIRL
Yes.... I just made contact. He refused the material. Okay.

She hangs up the phone.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - AT ANOTHER GATE - EVENING

Julian passes another gate with passengers disembarking from the jetway. He stands by the window to watch them for a moment.

A pretty STEWARDESS is one of the last people to exit the plane. She walks out toward the window by Julian and looks outside. Grey clouds billow in the darkened sunset.

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 guess.

She 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.

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

Where can I go?

AGENT

Well, sir, we have flights coming up to Miami, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh. How do they sound?

JULIAN

Is that it?

AGENT

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

JULIAN

Nowhere.

Julian steps away from the ticket agent, dejected. He heads 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 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.

Julian walks up a staircase to the street.

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 draws 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 drink. 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.

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 ADLIB discussion while heading down the sidewalk to a subway station. Julian is helpless among them.

Julian 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 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

Excuse me.

OFFICER

Sorry about that, sir.

Julian averts eye contact with the cop and continues on.

OFFICER (Cont.)

Where are you heading?

JULIAN

Pardon?

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, nothing else.

OFFICER

In this neighborhood? Better be
careful.

JULIAN

Thanks, but I'll be 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. There also
is 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. Wasn't the brightest
idea.

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 mélange 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 station there. 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. Stay
on this side of the street.
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 from the rain.

As he rounds a corner, he sees two things. The first, which he expects, is a subway entrance, 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 street 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. 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?

The young man looks up at Julian rushing toward him. A streetlight from the other side of the street, along with the falling rain, renders him almost otherworldly.

Julian stops a few feet away from the man.

YOUNG MAN

Huh? Who are you?

JULIAN

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.

JULIAN

Are you okay? Did they hurt you?

YOUNG MAN

Just 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, I have more where they came from.

YOUNG MAN

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

JULIAN

No, there is no need to 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.)

There you go. 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 her darkened apartment, the only light is a desk lamp shining down on a stationery pad. 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. She finishes the letter.

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.

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 her husband CHARLES, 30s, overweight and curled on his left side. He is smack-dab in the middle of the 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. She reaches up onto the nightstand for a tissue. Blotting her face, she calms down.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Julian sits with his friend, ROSE, on a bench in the park. Rose is a thirteen-year old sprite, on the cusp of womanhood. She is dressed in modern, urban fashions, with her shoulder-length blonde hair in a ponytail under a baseball cap.

Julian is eating a pretzel and intermittently throws scraps of it toward the pigeons on the lawn. Rose swings her legs under the bench and gazes at the sky.

ROSE

It's going to rain again.

JULIAN

You think so? Looks like it is clearing up to me.

ROSE

No, I feel the change. It's something in the air. My bones are chilled.

JULIAN

They are? How are you feeling?

ROSE

Oh, that's nothing. I'm doing great.

JULIAN

Good. Too bad about the rain. I like this.

A pigeon lands on the bench next to them. Julian offers it a large piece of his pretzel. It accepts it and flies off.

ROSE

Then what are you doing here?
It's always raining.

JULIAN

Good question. I have always lived around here. I am not sure I would know how to live anywhere else.

ROSE

Sure you would. There are lots better places than this.

JULIAN

I suppose. What time is it?

ROSE

Three-thirty.

JULIAN

I should go. I have a meeting soon.

ROSE

Okay.

They both get up off the bench. Julian throws the rest of his pretzel to the pigeons.

JULIAN

Come see me again tomorrow, okay?

ROSE

Sure.

They hug each other goodbye. Julian heads off toward a subway stop while Rose stays behind.

Rose watches the other CHILDREN playing in the park. They don't seem to notice her. She starts to walk over to them but changes her mind and walks around them, toward the swing set.

Rose gets on the swings and pushes herself up. As she gains height and speed on it, she starts to smile and GIGGLE. Soon, her giggle leads to a LAUGH of pure joy.

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 executive office we are in is a large picture window. Outside, it has darkened again. Rain threatens.

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, early 20s, 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. We want to work with the established organizations such as Greenpeace, on the grassroots level, to get awareness of the important issues of our times into the collective consciousness of America.

JULIAN

Do you think this is preaching?

CAROLYN

No, of course not. It's educational.

Julian mulls this over.

JULIAN

There is a fine line there, though.

CAROLYN

Then why do we go to school? By your 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 coat pocket 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 picks up a professionally-bound document that each person at the table has.

ANNE (off document)

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

Julian thumbs through his copy of the budget report.

JULIAN

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

The participants seem flabbergasted. The other two at the table, DAVID and LEESA, exchanged openmouthed glances.

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 are more than welcome. Just let me know how long my article should be and when you will need it.

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.

LEESA

That was incredible.

DAVID

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 leave the office. Carolyn closes the office door and returns to her desk. She dials a long-distance telephone number.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - EVENING

Rush hour prevails. Taxi cab horns BLARE, and the promised 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 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 David's and Leesa's voices.

DAVID O.S.

Can you believe that?

LEESA O.S.

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

DAVID O.S.

He has? Who the hell does he think he is?

LEESA O.S.

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

DAVID O.S.

Nice guys don't just donate sixteen 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:

LEESA O.S.

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

DAVID O.S.

Low profile? With that kind of bank balance?

Julian 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.

LEESA 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.

DAVID O.S.

Does he have a rubber fetish? Live in a cave?

LEESA 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.

DAVID O.S.

No, I suppose we shouldn't.

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.

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

COMPUTER SPEAKER

You have one new mail message.

Julian reads his e-mail.

 Date: Thu, 24 Mar 15:52:00 -0800
 From: preacher@new-fire.org
 Subject: The Coming

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."

We await you.

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

There is no signature or name at the end of the message.
 Julian looks at the "From" e-mail address, "preacher@new-
 fire.org," 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 takes out a head of lettuce, a ripe
 tomato, a cucumber, etc.

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, from which
 he takes a sip. The 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 - 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. Soon he finds himself back where he started from. The channel shows an infomercial for some super-amazing 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 by a fiery TELEVANGELIST 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)

....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 changes to the televangelist. His sermon is muted, but it's undoubtedly full of fire and brimstone.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Julian wakes up on the sofa, slightly bewildered. The television is off. He takes the empty wine glass into 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. 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.

He runs into the bathroom.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - AFTER

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.

He walks 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.

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.

A moment later, Julian returns with a FedEx overnight letter. 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 have no idea 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.

The doctor smiles and leaves. 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. 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.

Julian 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 and retrieves the FedEx letter. He looks at the label again.

JULIAN

San Diego? Who do I know in San Diego?

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. The old black man looks at him funny. Julian doesn't notice his 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 a 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--? Who 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. She is mouthing the words as she writes them 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!

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 his head tilts down.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Julian and Rose sit again on the park bench. He shows her the letter.

ROSE

This came this morning?

JULIAN

Yes.

ROSE

No idea who Mary is?

JULIAN

Correct.

ROSE

Weird. Very strange. Let me see your hand again.

Julian places his right hand on her lap. She holds it gently. The bandage has a tiny red spot on the palm.

ROSE

This doesn't hurt at all?

JULIAN

No. Odd, right?

ROSE

Quite, yes. Looks like you've got yourself a mystery here.

JULIAN

Well, what should I do?

Rose lets go of his hand.

ROSE

I don't know. Take one thing at a time.

JULIAN

Okay. The hand.

ROSE

Let it heal. Be glad it's not infected.

Julian nods.

JULIAN

Okay. Sounds good. The letter?

ROSE

I have no idea there. Think she'll write again?

Julian shrugs.

ROSE

I don't think so. She probably was just testing the waters. You can't hang up on a letter.

JULIAN

So she will call me next?

ROSE

That's my guess, yeah.

JULIAN

I see. Interesting.

ROSE

Yeah.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

He looks over at the clock: 9:12 P.M. Julian puts the book away and thumbs through Mary's letter again. After re-reading it, he folds it up and places it on the nightstand. 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 telephone)

Hello? (a beat) Hello? Ian? No, not here, you must have a wrong number.....All right, goodnight.

Julian hangs up the phone.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary and her Charles are sitting together on a sofa. Charles is dressed in his work clothes: green hospital scrubs. Mary sits still, in a semi-daze.

CHARLES

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

MARY

(whispering)
Belief is a mysterious thing.

Charles doesn't hear her.

CHARLES

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

MARY

(still whispering)
You're not worthy of belief.

CHARLES (Cont.)

Huh? Don't complain about any nightmares, then. 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 is visibly shaken.

MARY

I don't want to hear about it!

CHARLES

Mary, we need to talk about this. It was horrible, yes, but now it's time 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

Cheryl. She needs help with the planning. I'm going over. I'll be back by eleven.

CHARLES

Jesus, she's been planning that wedding for three years now.

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. She rolls down the windows and 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.

MARY

Hello. Could you break a dollar for me?

The cashier shakes his head.

CASHIER

Lo siento, tieno que comprar alguna cosa.

Mary scowls and scans the candy rack by the register. She picks out a pack of gum 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 close it back up, Mary slides him another bill.

MARY

No, better make it two dollars.
Gracias.

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.

After she puts the last quarter in, she drops her hand. It is hurting, and she stretches the fingers to ease the hand muscles. Once the pain subsides, 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 is excited to be talking to Julian and speaks quickly.

MARY (into telephone)

Hello Julian.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARY AND JULIAN:

JULIAN (into telephone)

Who is this?

MARY (into telephone)

I sent you a letter. Has it arrived yet?

JULIAN (into telephone)

Who are you?

MARY (into telephone)
Mary, Julian. My name is Mary.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Is that it?

MARY (into telephone)
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 (into telephone)
I am? What?

MARY (into telephone)
How is your hand?

JULIAN (into telephone)
My hand? Fine now- Wait, how did
you know-

MARY (into telephone)
-Don't ask that. Do you wonder
why it happened?

JULIAN (into telephone)
Why? I should be more concerned
with how.

MARY (into telephone)
Don't be. The cause is not more
important than the reason.

JULIAN (into telephone)
And what might that reason be?

MARY (into telephone)
You are a very special person.
Did you read my letter?

JULIAN (into telephone)
Yes, I read your letter. It made
no sense to me. I will hang this
phone up this moment unless you
tell me exactly who you are and
what you want. Is it money?

MARY (into telephone)
 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, please. Listen
 to me.

END INTERCUT

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 (O.S., on telephone)
 Julian? Are you listening to me?

Julian tiredly runs his hands over his face and through his
 hair. There is a Band-Aid on his right palm. There is also a
 smaller Band-Aid on the back of his hand.

JULIAN (into telephone)
 Yes.

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 (into telephone)
 Okay, good. 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. Do you understand that,
 Julian?

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 Yes.

MARY (into telephone)
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 (O.S., on telephone)
How am I supposed to answer that?
Of course not!

MARY (into telephone)
I think so.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
Are you crazy?

MARY (into telephone)
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. It is time for
a new beginning.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
Whoa, slow down right there! This
is not a saint you are talking
to, I have no belief -

MARY (into telephone)
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 (into telephone)
Explanations of what?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
 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., O.S., on telephone)
Increased technological
 dependence, decreased humanity.
 An overall lack of humility.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 Can this world be fixed?

MARY (into telephone)
 Yes. And it is you that can do
 it.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 Where is my sign? I am unsure -

MARY (into telephone)
 It was your hand. Your injury.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 Really?

MARY (into telephone)
 Yes, Julian - believe it.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 I will think about it.

MARY (into telephone)
 Good, Julian. I will be in touch.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits up in bed.

JULIAN (into telephone)
 Wait. How can I contact you?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Not right away. For now, it is
important that I initiate
everything. I must leave now.
Good night Julian.

JULIAN (into telephone)
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
What's the matter? Never seen a
gringa 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 desk lamp. In his hand is Mary's letter, still in the envelope. He sits down at his desk, reaches toward his computer, but changes his mind. He holds the envelope to his face and notices the faint lipstick smudges Mary left behind when she sealed the envelope. He inhales deeply. Julian re-opens the envelope and reads the letter again.

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 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. 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. 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 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, 40s, a blow-dried GQ-spawned 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 dangerously around 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. 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 glass counters, other, turned-off, televisions.

Julian gazes, open-mouthed, at the orange glows.

FADE TO:

EXT. MANSION - DAY

The house is completely aflame. Three fire trucks are parked on and near the driveway, with water hoses lying taut in the snow. FIREFIGHTERS spray water up toward the second floor windows.

A firefighter comes running out of the blazing front door. In his hands is a blanket-covered bundle. A PARAMEDIC rushes over to him and takes the bundle, carrying it onto a stretcher. The blanket is opened enough to reveal young Julian, face partially burned and blackened by smoke, CRYING. The paramedic rushes to place an oxygen mask over young Julian's face.

Julian struggles to escape the blanket as the mask is placed over his face. He begins to fight with the mask.

Another firefighter exits the house, carrying the limp body of Julian's mother over his shoulder. He lies the body on a stretcher by the backdoor of the ambulance and covers it with a blanket from head to toe.

The paramedic looks over at Julian, sadly shaking his head.

FADE BACK TO:

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Julian's eyes are still glazed 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, and then quickly 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 telephone)
Hello? (pause) What is it, Mary?

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

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

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I called him last night.

INTERCUT BETWEEN MARY AND PREACHER:

PREACHER
Oh, excellent. How was he?

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

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I think so, well, he will.

PREACHER (into telephone)
Excellent. This is superb, dear.

MARY O.S.

Okay then. How do we proceed?

PREACHER (into telephone)

Call him again, tonight. Do it from home. Let him call you back if you need to. I have to go. I'm going away for this weekend, so come and see me....

He looks through an appointment book.

PREACHER (Cont., into telephone)

....next Monday, at nine A.M.
Okay? Good.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

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. ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

Julian walks out to the sidewalk. There are millions of people, it seems, congregated on that one street corner, all waiting for buses, 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

Pardon me.

HOMELESS MAN
Spare a dollar, sir?

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 with a hopeful face.

JULIAN
Come on. I am 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.

HOMELESS MAN
Thank you again, sir.

He takes a large bite of his corned beef sandwich.

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

Julian picks up a large pile of coleslaw with his fork.

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

Julian stops shy of putting the forkful of coleslaw into his mouth.

JULIAN
God blesses me?

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

JULIAN

Sometimes, yes. It's something
I'm working on.

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, JINGLING his McDonalds cup of
change. Julian just sits there, shocked.

HOMELESS MAN O.S.

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.

EXT. RESTAURANT - AFTER

The homeless man walks out of the restaurant and walks around the corner into an alley.

EXT. ALLEY - AFTER

The homeless man walks up to the young girl we saw in the airport offering books to Julian. She is holding a walkie-talkie.

GIRL

Good job. I heard everything.

She hands him a wad of small bills and he smiles. He opens his coat and unfastens a microphone he had clipped to his shirt.

Ten feet from them, on the street, Julian walks by the alley, unaware of the girl and the homeless man.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Mary enters, 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 to the ground.

MARY

Damn you Charles.

She walks into the bedroom and lies down on the bed. Exhausted, she slowly starts to WHIMPER.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Julian carries a hand-basket of 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.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - 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. Mary's eyes are red and tears blot her cheeks.

CHARLES

Damn it! 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. Instead, she drops it, and it CRASHES loudly on the glass table.

Charles 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 no physical pain is registered. Tears, however, continue to stream down her pinkish-red face. 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.

MARY

Let go of me.

She tries to break out of his grip, but he's too strong. Finally, 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 remains in the room, 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. 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 clean, white golf towel and gently wraps it around her injured right hand.

INT. 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, Miss Jones.

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

MARY

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

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Mary exits an elevator down the hall and finds her temporary home. She takes a keycard out of an envelope 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.

TITLE CARD:

Three years ago.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Mary walks up to her car and finds a flier stuck under her windshield wiper blade. She takes a cursory look at it and crumples it into a ball in her purse pocket.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Mary throws her purse down in the passenger seat. The note falls out beside it. Mary un-crumple it.

Looking for a new direction?
Dr. Richard Powell can help you!
Find what you need.

Mary gently and carefully folds the flier, and places it in her bag.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mary sits at her desk, dialing the telephone. The flier sits out open in front of her.

MARY (into telephone)
Yes, hello. My name is Mary
Carlisle, and I saw your flier.

INT. THE PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mary enters and the Preacher stands up at his desk.

PREACHER
Hello, Mary?

MARY
(nodding)
Hi. Can you help me?

PREACHER
Certainly. My name is Richard
Powell.

He offers his hand to her. She takes it and they shake hands.

PREACHER (Cont.)

Do sit down, please.

MARY

Thank you.

Mary sits in a large chair opposite the Preacher.

PREACHER

Now.... what is your problem?

MARY

I just recently - two weeks ago - had a miscarriage. I have wanted a baby since I got married, two years ago.

PREACHER

This was your first pregnancy?

MARY

Yes. I was four months along.

The Preacher writes down some notes on a yellow pad.

PREACHER

I see.

MARY

Charles - my husband - and I have been trying for years now. This is the farthest we've ever gone. There have been so many false alarms.

PREACHER

There were?

MARY

Yes. I was starting to show now. I was so excited.

PREACHER

What happened?

MARY

I awoke in bed one morning covered in my own blood. Charles wasn't home; he was working the day shift.

PREACHER

-What does he do?

MARY

He's an obstetrician.

PREACHER

I see. Continue.

MARY

Okay. I awoke to the sunlight. I was lying on my back, and my nightgown was red. I had been hemorrhaging for over an hour, they told me. I called 911. They came immediately. I passed out again soon after that. I knew what was happening. I could hear the scream, the desperate cry.

PREACHER

The cry?

MARY

Of my baby. Dying, sliding out of me.

PREACHER

It passed to heaven, Mary. Do not fear that.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. HOTEL ROOM - A LITTLE LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary lies asleep on the bed. The TELEPHONE RINGS. Mary JERKS up, wide awake. She stares at the phone as it continues to ring, not sure if she wants to answer it.

MARY

Who knows I'm here?

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

MARY (into telephone)

Hello?

PREACHER (O.S., on telephone)

Hello Mary.

Mary sits up in bed.

MARY (into telephone)

How did you find me here?

PREACHER (O.S., on telephone)

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

MARY (into telephone)

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

PREACHER (O.S., on telephone)

Who were just going to call?
Charles?

MARY (into telephone)

No, Julian. I'm through with Charles.

PREACHER (O.S., on telephone)

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., on telephone)

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., on telephone)
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. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits up in bed, reading the biography of Magellan by the light of a single lamp in the bedroom. He is almost finished reading the thick book.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - 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 telephone)
Hello?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Hello Julian.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Mary, hello. I'm glad you called.
How are you?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I'm just fine, thank you.
Yourself? How is your hand?

Julian looks at the tiny scar on his palm.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Fine now, hardly noticeable.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

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

MARY (into telephone)
 Good. Have you been thinking
 about what we spoke about the
 other night?

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 Yes, I have. Everything is coming
 into place.

MARY (into telephone)
 Yes, everything is. I am glad.

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

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
 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 (into telephone)
 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 (into telephone)
 I want to know everything.

He closes his eyes and starts to listen.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
 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 (into telephone)
Are you married?

He hears Mary SIGH over the phone.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Yes. I have been for three years
now.

JULIAN (into telephone)
I see.

His eyes are still closed.

JULIAN (Cont., into telephone)
What is the matter?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Nothing. Everything's okay. I've
had a long day.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Tell me more.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I'd like to believe.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Believe? In what?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Mary takes a deep breath.

MARY (into telephone)
You. I'd like to believe in you.

There is a pause, they both take this in.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
So would I.

MARY (into telephone)
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 (O.S., on telephone)
Where has it been all along? I
tried, wanted, to believe. But,
nothing would let me. The world
prohibited me.

MARY (into telephone)
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 (O.S., on telephone)
You want me to believe in myself?

MARY (into telephone)
No, I want you to believe.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
In what? God?

MARY (into telephone)
In everything. The good, the bad,
the beautiful. Believe in me;
believe in love, in God, in
yourself. The world consists of
everything, both good and bad.
You must believe for it to all be
good.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
I want to.

MARY (into telephone)
Good. You can do it, I know you
can.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
I think I can, too. How should I
proceed? What should we do?

MARY (into telephone)
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 (O.S., on telephone)
Who is it?

MARY (into telephone)
I can't tell you that, now, I'm
sorry. I must go, now, Julian.
Have a good night.

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
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. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

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

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 finds the new knife he purchased. He removes the knife from its cardboard and plastic packaging and returns to the bedroom with it. He forgets to shut the 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 looks at the alarm clock, it's 3:35 A.M. He gets up from the bed, stretches, and puts a coat on. He puts the knife in a coat pocket.

EXT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Julian steps out onto the curb of his street and looks around. A few TAXIS linger, but there isn't too much other traffic around.

He starts to walk around the block, toward a park.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Julian walks through the park until he exits it at the opposite end. He doesn't see another person while in the park.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Near the park is an old Catholic church. Julian stands on the front steps of the church, looking up at the woodcarvings on the door and frame. A stained-glass window reflects the orange streetlights. He touches the carvings, etching his fingers in and out of the grooves.

Julian reaches out and pulls the door handle. To his surprise, it opens. Julian enters the church.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The only light inside of the church is from the stained-glass windows letting in the streetlights. Julian walks in the light's beam toward the altar, and its large crucifix.

The area near the altar is better lit due to an emergency exit lamp near a side door, in the corner. Julian walks around the altar to the cross. He stands by it, his head near the knees of the prone Christ. He looks up at the detail, and sees the pain on Christ's face and the nails in the palms.

Julian looks at his own hand and reaches it up, touching the crucifix. He rubs his hand slowly over the body of Jesus, as high as he can reach. Then, he brings his hand back down and into his pocket. He finds the steak knife and holds it out. He puts it against his left palm, flat side on the skin. He slides it up and down, feeling the smoothness.

He holds the knife up to the crucifix and the different lights of the church reflect off of it into his eyes.

EXT. PARK - DAWN

Julian dozes on a park bench as the sun rises. The CHIRPING of the birds awakes him. He shrugs off the sleep and stands up. He looks at his wristwatch.

JULIAN
Six forty-five.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Julian stands on the front steps of a brownstone apartment. Various PEOPLE exit the building, on their way to work or school. Julian steps out of the way, he's waiting for someone.

Soon, Rose exits, with another FRIEND her age. They carry schoolbags and TALK as they come down the stairs. Rose is again wearing the baseball cap.

ROSE
Oh, hi Julian.

JULIAN
Good morning.

ROSE
What's up?

JULIAN
Nothing. I just was around and wanted to say hello. I figured you would be heading to school now.

Rose shrugs.

ROSE
Everyday. Julian, this is my friend Tanya. She's in seventh grade.

JULIAN
Hi Tanya.

She smiles at Julian.

TANYA

Hello. Rose, I have to meet Mrs. Carson before class. I'll see you later.

ROSE

Okay.

JULIAN

Bye Tanya.

TANYA

It was nice to meet you.

Tanya heads off.

ROSE

Her brother has leukemia, too. She's my friend now.

JULIAN

How's he doing?

ROSE

Not well.

They start to walk down the sidewalk to her school.

JULIAN

I see. Too bad.

ROSE

He's older, about nineteen. He used to go to college. He's been in the hospital for a month now. I'm not sure he's going to get out, either.

JULIAN

You went home within a week the last time you were sick, remember?

ROSE

Yes. Still, he's not going to make it. I still might.

JULIAN

I know you will. I can feel it.

ROSE

Good. I have to go now. We still
on for tonight?

JULIAN

Yes. Come by around eight.

Rose nods and walks off.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Julian is asleep, lying on his back. The sheets crumple up around him, mainly congregated on his left side. 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.

The telephone RINGS. Julian groggily sits up and answers the phone.

JULIAN

Hello?

ROSE (O.S., on telephone)

I'm downstairs. You coming?

Julian looks at his bloody hand.

JULIAN

I am going to be a minute. Come
on up.

He buzzes her in and hangs up.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Rose enters the building. She waits for an elevator and when one comes she enters it, alone.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Julian washes the blood off his left hand. The wound is similar to his last one.

Rose enters the bedroom and heads toward the bathroom. She stops when she sees the bloody bed.

ROSE

Oh my God! What happened?

JULIAN

It happened again.

He shuts the faucet and dries his hand on a towel.

ROSE

Again? This is serious.

JULIAN

I know.

WE TRACK JULIAN AS HE WALKS BACK INTO THE BEDROOM.

ROSE

How did it happen this time?

JULIAN

I bought a knife yesterday. I went to sleep after you went to school.

Rose finds the bloody knife on top of the Magellan biography beside the bed.

ROSE

Did you do this? Julian?

Julian shakes his head.

ROSE (CONT.)

Do you swear?

Julian nods.

JULIAN

Yes. It wasn't intentional.

ROSE

Julian.

Julian sits down on the bed and lowers his head.

JULIAN

I swear, Rose. I really do. It was not intentional.

ROSE

How did it happen then?

Julian shakes his head. He starts to look up at Rose. She has a disapproving, almost motherly, look on her face. Julian's eyes start to tear over.

JULIAN

I wish I could tell you.

ROSE

All right, come on. We're late.

INT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

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

Rose is a few feet away, talking to a BOY her own age. Julian watches the band on stage attentively.

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 appear to be mostly contained. A group of FIREFIGHTERS in yellow protective gear spray WHITE CHEMICAL on a burning tree. The fire HISSES as it slowly sizzles.

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 looks 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. Rose and her friend stop talking and listen. Rose watches Julian carefully out of the corner of her eye. 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. He closes his eyes.

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.

EXT. CALIFORNIA ROADSIDE - DAY

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

MARY 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.

MARY (Cont., 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 am so sorry, Rose. Are you all right?

ROSE

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

She adjusts the wig.

ROSE

Is it 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 meant not to embarrass you, I just lost control there.

ROSE

What's happening to you?

JULIAN

I wish I knew. It is something good, though, I can feel it. It's almost like I'm elevating. Rising up.

Rose smiles.

ROSE

Yes, I can feel it too. You're going to join me.

JULIAN

Join you? Where?

ROSE

With God. In heaven.

JULIAN

Am I going to die? I do not feel it.

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

EXT. CHASER'S - NIGHT

Julian and Rose walk together down the sidewalk.

ROSE

You're transforming, Julian. Changing.

JULIAN

But does that mean I have to die?

ROSE

No. Part of you will, your present self. I can't wait to go to God. Soon, it will happen.

JULIAN

How will I know?

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

ROSE

You will feel it. I will, too. I believe it. I see my invitation to go to heaven.

JULIAN

Well.... why? Why do you believe you are 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.

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

ROSE

You're special, Julian.

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

JULIAN

What I was doing, what you are doing, is 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 just overheard.

JULIAN

It was beautiful. Unspeakably so.

The two turn a corner. Rose's apartment is there. They walk up and stand on the steps. Rose stands a few steps higher than him, so that they're at the same height.

ROSE

We're here.

JULIAN

Good night.

Rose leans forward and gently kisses Julian on the lips. His eyes close. 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 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. 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. Behind him the FAX MACHINE whirs to life. The Preacher turns around and waits for the printout to come.

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.

The printout begins to emerge from the fax machine. The Preacher holds his hand out to catch it. When it arrives, he looks it over and hands it to Mary. It's a grainy surveillance photograph of Julian, taken last night in the bus station. It's of him looking at the magazine rack at the newsstand.

PREACHER

Take a look at this.

MARY

What is it?

PREACHER

From last night.

MARY

Yes, but what does it mean?

PREACHER

I don't know. There's some interesting stuff on that rack. Religious booklets. James River.

MARY

Who's that?

PREACHER

Southern Baptist. Very popular. I've met him a few times.

MARY

What's he like?

PREACHER

Very evangelical. Likes to get out with his church. A man of the people, if you will.

MARY

Like Julian.

Mary hands the picture back to the Preacher. He places it in Julian's file.

PREACHER

Yes, how about our friend Julian?

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 telephone)

Yes? Really?

He puts the phone down a moment.

PREACHER

(to Mary)

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 telephone)
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.

He points out 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. 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, 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 interests Julian. He thumbs through the contents for a moment before placing it on his stack.

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

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. Oprah, maybe. Or maybe Larry King. I've never seen such demand for a minor publisher's work before.

INT. JULIAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Julian sits in the sofa, reading the Preacher's book. 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 (into telephone)
Hello?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Hello Julian.

Julian breathes a quick sigh of relief.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Mary.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
How are you?

JULIAN (into telephone)
Fine. Thanks. You?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I'm fine as well, Julian. Have
you been thinking about our
situation?

JULIAN (into telephone)
Yes. I am ready.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
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 (into telephone)
All along, I have wondered, why
me?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I know....

JULIAN (into telephone)
Wait, let me finish. I live a rather standard life. I mean, yes, I am wealthy. But, I never 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 telephone)
—Batman.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Yes, they call me that. It hardly bothers me. In fact, I enjoy it. It is not the most flattering name, but I suppose it could be worse. The media doesn't know me.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Yet. They will soon, Julian.

JULIAN (into telephone)
How soon?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
As soon as you're ready.

JULIAN (into telephone)
I already said that I am ready.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Okay. There's someone you need to meet.

JULIAN (into telephone)
This Preacher?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Yes. His name is Richard, though. Richard Powell.

Julian looks down at the book's cover.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Is he there with you?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
Yes. Well, no, he's not here. But
he is in this area. San Diego.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Is that who you are married to?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
No. My husband's name is Charles.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Okay. Sorry.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
No, don't be. He's more like a
father to me.

JULIAN (into telephone)
When can I meet you? I want to.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I know. I want to meet you, too.

A pause. Julian starts to smile.

JULIAN (into telephone)
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 telephone)
Good.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Where should I meet you?

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
I can meet you at the airport.
Call me when you land. 619-555-
5834.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Okay. I figure if I get a noon
flight, I will be there in six
hours, not counting the three
hour time difference. So,
hopefully I will be there around
3.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
 Okay. I'll be home then. I can't
 wait.

JULIAN (into telephone)
 Neither can I. I should get
 going. I have to prepare, pack.

MARY (O.S., on telephone)
 Okay. Three P.M. tomorrow.
 Goodnight, Julian.

JULIAN (into telephone)
 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. 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 telephone)
Hello, Carolyn? Julian Crisp
here. Listen, I have to run out
of town, but I wanted to finish
my article and get it off to you
before I left. Can I stop by?
(pause) Great. Be there in half
an hour.

INT. SAVE THE WORLD'S HQ - CAROLYN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Julian and Carolyn stand in her office. Carolyn is reading
the article Julian has written for her newsletter.

CAROLYN
Where are you headed?

Julian finishes writing out a check.

JULIAN
California.

Carolyn looks up from the article.

CAROLYN
Oh, really? Which part?

JULIAN
San Diego.

CAROLYN
I'm from Orange County.

JULIAN
Where is that?

CAROLYN
Just outside of LA.

JULIAN
Yes, right.

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 is 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
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
Captain Richardson. We're just
over Columbus, Ohio now, and
there's a violent thunderstorm
below us that we're flying right
through. We're going to try to
fly above it, but it'll be just a
few more moments of this.

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 Guam.... Just like
Guam.

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

EXT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A taxi cab stops in front of Rose's apartment and the CABBIE gets out, the engine still running, and walks up to the front door of the building. He rings an apartment on the console.

CABBIE

Taxi's here.

He returns to his idle taxi. A moment later, Rose, and her PARENTS exit the building. Rose needs assistance from her FATHER as she walks down the steps. Her mother carries a small pink suitcase. Rose takes a final look back at her building and lets her father help her into the cab. Once everyone is in, the cab heads off down the road.

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.

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.

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 telephone)
Hello?

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

Julian, standing at a payphone, has to cover his right ear to be able to hear the phone with his left.

JULIAN (into telephone)
Hello, Mary.

INTERCUT BETWEEN JULIAN AND MARY

MARY
Hello, Julian. Are you here?

JULIAN
Yes, 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.

INT - MARY'S APARTMENT - DAY

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

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

JULIAN (O.S., on telephone)
Okay. See you soon.

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. SAN DIEGO INT'L. AIRPORT - DAY

Julian stands in the passenger drop-off/pickup area, watching for Mary's Lexus. 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.

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.

MARY
I'm so glad to meet you.

JULIAN
So am I.

She slowly lets go of his hand.

MARY (Cont.)
Come, we'll talk in the car.

She presses a button on the keyless remote 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.

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

Almost five o'clock.

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.

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - 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 wants to meet you for dinner, is that okay?

JULIAN

Fine. What time?

MARY

I don't know. Seven?

JULIAN

Okay.

MARY

What are you going to do until then?

JULIAN

I have a book I'm reading.

MARY

Okay.

JULIAN

A biography of Ferdinand Magellan.

MARY

He sailed around the world, right?

JULIAN

Well, almost. He was killed in the Philippines. It was a mutiny.

MARY

That's too bad.

JULIAN

I am still in the beginning. Something fascinating I read. He thought that Tierra Del Fuego was Atlantis.

MARY

Tierra Del Fuego?

JULIAN

Yes, the island at the tip of South America. Amazing.

MARY

What about it?

JULIAN

Imagine, he sails across an ocean that people still thought was going to lead him over the edge of the world. He sees this island as he reaches the bottom of the earth. It is at night, he sees the fires by the natives, cooking their dinners, keeping warm. He keeps sailing, but the fires, probably the first he saw in months, burn into his mind.

MARY

Yes. I see it. On the boat, he must've been so alone.

JULIAN

He starts to hallucinate, probably. Scurvy and starvation plagued his mission. He makes the leap into legend. He sees this land, and names it Tierra Del Fuego. The land of fire. It becomes nearly holy to him, and he makes it special: he links it with the legendary Atlantis.

MARY

I know. Julian, why Magellan?

JULIAN

I wish I could explain it. I feel something, a kinship. He saw the world and set out into it. That is the best I can tell you.

MARY

Okay. I have to go now. I'll pick you up in an hour.

JULIAN

I'll see you then.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - EVENING

Mary sits across from the Preacher.

PREACHER

He's here?

MARY

Yes, at the hotel.

PREACHER

Why didn't you bring him here?

MARY

I'm just stopping by on my way home. I didn't want to force him upon Charles. You'll meet him at dinner.

PREACHER

Okay. I have to go somewhere at eight, but maybe you two can come along.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Mary enters her apartment to see Charles sitting in the dining room eating a microwave 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. His name is Julian. He's in a hotel room right now, waiting for us to come take him for dinner. 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
Special? 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 it.

MARY

No, I must say this.

CHARLES

Why?

MARY

I can't love you anymore, do you understand? The last few months have 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? Who the hell are these people?

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 Julian come to us.

CHARLES

And who is Julian?

MARY

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. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Julian lies on the bed, head propped up by the pillows, reading one of the Magellan biographies. He 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.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

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

JULIAN

Where are the towels I called about? Did you forget them again?

MARY

Excuse me?

Julian LAUGHS.

JULIAN

Just kidding, come on in.

He lets her into the room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Mary waits for Julian to put his shoes on.

MARY

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

JULIAN

Oh, I am sorry.

MARY

We got into a fight.

Julian doesn't say anything.

MARY (Cont.)

Anyway, are you hungry? Ready for dinner?

JULIAN

Yes.

INT. MARY'S CAR - NIGHT

Mary drives and Julian rolls down his window.

JULIAN

The weather here is absolutely 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 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, across from each other at a table for four. They each have margarita glasses in hand. Together, they raise their glasses and clink them in a silent toast. A long gaze passes between them, which is broken by the arrival of the Preacher.

PREACHER

Good evening.

Mary rises from her chair.

MARY

Richard, this is Julian.

PREACHER

My pleasure to finally meet you.

JULIAN

Mine as well.

PREACHER

Mary has told me so much about you.

JULIAN

I see, yes.

MARY

Richard, please sit down.

PREACHER

I can only stay for a few moments, but I'll have a drink.

The Preacher sits down.

MARY

Where do you have to go?

PREACHER

I have a meeting with a publisher
in half an hour. Perhaps you two
could stop by?

JULIAN

Oh, no, that's okay.

MARY

Where is it?

PREACHER

At my office, Mary. I do insist
you two come. They'd love to meet
you, Julian.

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 are never any
nights like this. There are
always too many clouds 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 all for
granted. It is beautiful, though.

JULIAN

Some things humble me....

MARY

What?

JULIAN

Sometimes, I feel unsure.... I just never know.... Am I 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 must not compete.

MARY

Don't be silly, Julian.

JULIAN

Mary, this is something I've given a lot of thought to. 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's go to Richard. He can explain it all.

INT. PREACHER'S OFFICE — NIGHT

Julian and Mary sit next to THOMAS BRADDOCK, a portly young man in a sweaty suit. He constantly adjusts his tie, but refuses to loosen it, not succumbing to the weather in the face of decorum. The Preacher sits across from them.

BRADDOCK

There are new self-help books published everyday, but this one would be different.

JULIAN

How so?

PREACHER

It would have a star, a protagonist. Julian, you will sell the book.

JULIAN

We need a message, one people can adopt easily. Faith is difficult for many.

MARY

What did you have in mind?

JULIAN

The environment.

BRADDOCK

I'm not sure. Most of our readers support right-wing, not liberal, causes. Our market studies tell us that plainly.

JULIAN

Well, you want to expand the market, right?

EXT. 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. 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. 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. He HOWLS with pain.

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.

EXT. 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
Everything hurts. I am super-
sensitive to everything. I nicked
myself shaving and it was like
torture.

MARY
Why the sunglasses, then?

JULIAN

When I went out to wait for you I was almost blinded. My eyes hurt, too. 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.

MARY

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 and 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

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.

INT. OPTICIAN - DAY

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

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. HOTEL - DAY

Mary and Julian stand by her parked car.

MARY

We have to be there by seven.

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 slowly steps out of her hug.

JULIAN

Do you 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 - 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 and heads toward a walk-in closet. She 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. 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."

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.

MARY

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

JULIAN

Good.

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 and learn about The Coming!

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. 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. She's responsible for everything you see here tonight. 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 the local news. San Diego is no Sodom, it is no Gomorrah. It is just like any other city in the world today. It has its 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 standing.

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.

PREACHER (Cont.)

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.

MARY

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

PREACHER

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

JULIAN

No. 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

Tonight was good, no doubt about it. This minor disagreement is unimportant.

PREACHER

I think you 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.

INT. MARY'S CAR - NIGHT

Mary, driving her car down a deserted road, 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. Well, I am thirsty.

EXT. 7-11 CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Mary parks her car. Her and Julian get out. Mary points at the payphones around the side of the building.

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 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
Gracias.

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.

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 am glad I came here. I am glad I met you. You guide me.

MARY

Thank you.

JULIAN

Do you....

MARY

What?

Julian stands by Mary.

JULIAN

Do you want to stay here tonight?

MARY

Yes. I do.

She looks up at him.

MARY (Cont.)

Is that okay?

JULIAN

I was hoping for that.

He kisses her. Mary initially seems hesitant, and Julian ambitious. Soon, as they make their way onto the bed and Mary slides herself onto Julian. Their hands move over each other, slowly undressing each other. Again, Julian regains himself and rolls Mary under him, her clothes remaining behind.

FADE TO:

INT. JULIAN'S HOTEL ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Julian and Mary make love on the bed. 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 quietly so 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, at the shelter, I knew. I'd been waiting so long.

JULIAN

So have I. So have I. When I was three, my mother was killed in a fire. Christmas morning. I was there. I'd never felt so hot before. It was like being born again. That fire....

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 - now wrinkled - she wore the night before and her hair a mess, walks out to her car in the parking lot.

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

I tried not to wake you up.

JULIAN

It's okay. I'm still not quite on Pacific time yet.

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. This is my first drive in quite a few years.

MARY

Really? You sure you remember?

JULIAN

Like riding a bike.

She hands him the keys.

INT. MARY'S CAR - DAY

Julian drives the car conservatively on the highway.

MARY

You seem to be doing okay so far.

Julian looks at the speedometer.

JULIAN

Well, pretty soon I will get up to the speed limit.

Mary looks at the dashboard.

MARY

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, take the next exit.

EXT. PREACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julian parks Mary's car 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 the folder with his name on it, the Preacher enters.

PREACHER

Good morning, good morning. I'm sorry about being tardy.

MARY

It's okay. We just got here.

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 nods.

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, you see. 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 am not sure about that. People now are very disillusioned about politics.

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. 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. Let us educate. We can, I can, travel from town to town. I can meet people.

PREACHER

We need to use your wealth to its maximum.

Julian WHISPERS to himself.

JULIAN

Magellan would not 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

—I don't know if I should feel insulted or not now.

JULIAN

I was just thinking the same thing.

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

MARY

Where are you going?

JULIAN

To 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.

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 reads "San Diego - 14 miles." We're back where we were in the beginning of the story.

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 the top button of his shirt to cool off. He takes one final look back at the road behind him and starts to walk off, east, 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 go?

MARY

No.

PREACHER

Back to his hotel?

MARY

Maybe. I don't think so, however.

PREACHER

We should check there.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN HOTEL – DAY

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

MARY

He's not here, I knew it.

PREACHER

Now where?

MARY

Back to the highway. I think he might be heading east.

PREACHER

East?

MARY

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 off Argentina, was Atlantis. Julian was fascinated by that.

PREACHER

That's where you think he's heading?

MARY

No, I don't. 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!

Julian stops walking and turns toward Mary.

MARY

What are you doing?

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? Are you okay?

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. The time has come.

Julian 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.

Julian turns to face the Preacher.

JULIAN (Cont.)

Is this what you foresaw?

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. Stay here.

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.