088754

CLARITY

by

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FIRST DRAFT
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FADE IN:

On the faint undulation of an ELECTROCARDIOGRAM.

PAN OVER to a once-beautiful woman, the glean gone from her skin, lying still in bed. Her face is hollow. Sunken.

Almost as if something deep inside were eating her alive.

A HAND tenderly caresses the woman's forehead. There is love in this touch. Follow the hand back to it's owner:

DR. DANIEL SHEPARD

Sitting beside the bed, the dim fluorescent overheads casting long shadows over his tired, aged face.

No lack of light, though, can hide his sadness.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Shepard saws his weathered fingers through the woman's cold, chafing hand.

She stops breathing. Shepard notices, his suspicions confirmed by the--

FLATLINING EKG

The whine, like a muted scream, cuts through the silence of the hospital, it's diagnosis unappealable. The noise literally stabs at Dr. Shepard, knocking the air out of him.

A part of him...here...now...has died.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - GREENROOM - NIGHT

A backstage panorama. MUSICIANS chill in pre-show ritual, soaking up the lavish accommodations of food and booze.

Meet the four mega-stars of rock band Battle Royale.

GUITARIST
(strumming his guitar)
All I'm sayin' is, it's the best truffle risotto I've ever had.

DRUMMER
And this is nearby?

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

GUITARIST
Just across the bay.

ON A GLASS TABLE, a line of cocaine -- A NOSE sweeps in, snorting -- Head snapping up --

ADAM DALEY

AKA Lead singer. A GROUPIE sits beside him on the sofa. Her clothing sparse.

ADAM
(wiping his nose)
I myself am a fan of the classic 99-cent chilli cheese dog.

The groupie--stoned out of her mind--licks Adam on the shoulder, leaving her tongue plastered there. Frozen.

Adam looks at her. Used to it.

Out of the bathroom walks the BASSIST. The man's so dedicated he takes his guitar with him into the john.

BASSIST
Mac and cheese, motherfuckers. And I'm not talking about any of that Velveeta shit. Give it to me...

He's interrupted by a TECHIE popping his head into the room.

TECHIE
Two minutes.

He's halfway out the door:

ADAM
Waitwaitwait. Is my brother here?

The techie consults his ever-present clipboard.

TECHIE
Um...I'll check for ya, Adam.

EXT. OAKLAND ARENA - COLISEUM WAY - NIGHT

A long line of cars inch forward, blocking the street across two lanes in a late rush for the parking lot.

In the right lane a pallid black LIMOUSINE carefully crawls forward, its tinted windows the color of the early night sky.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

DRIVER (PRELAP)
Sorry about this, sir.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Fidgeting subconsciously in the back of the limo is 33 year-old RONALD DALEY. Handsome, yet introverted, if you didn't know him you'd probably call him odd.

THE DRIVER has his arm over the front-compartment divide, casually addressing his passenger.

DRIVER
Last minute rush.

RONALD
We're not gonna miss the show?

Ronald looks questioningly at the gridlocked cars.

DRIVER
No, sir.
(beat)
They're holding it for you.

RONALD
(pleasantly shocked)
Oh. Cool.

A PHONE RINGS --

He twists around.

DRIVER
It's right behind your head.

Ronald grabs the phone.

CROSS CUT:

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - GREENROOM - CONTINUOUS

Adam cradles the phone on his shoulder, sporadically wiping his nose.

ADAM
You're holdin' us up, bro.

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CONTINUED:

RONALD
(unconvincing)
When you drop twenty bitches in my car, I'm gonna take my sweet time.

ADAM
(after a beat)
What was that? When did you start talking...Are you trying to...How about I handle the rockin' of the rollin', you handle the teachin' of the schoolin'.

RONALD
(laughing)
That doesn't even make sense.

ADAM
What doesn't make sense is I'm making 30,000 fans wait for you!

RONALD
Hey. You wouldn't even know how to play with your dick, let alone a guitar if it wasn't for me.

ADAM
(smiling)
Just get here, okay?

WE STAY WITH ADAM

As he hangs up the phone. The band's balding manager (BARRY) strides in through the greenroom door, a cell-phone surgically attached to his left hand.

BARRY
What's the hold up?

The band members turn to Adam; here's the reason.

ADAM
Ronnie's not here.

BARRY
(after a beat)
Christ. Alright. Fine. He's got five.

Barry exits. TRACK WITH HIM INTO:

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INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Barry walks down the concrete hallway, past technicians and various other crew.

RANDOM CREW MEMBER
Hey, Barry.

Barry gives a slight handwave as he continues around a corridor, up a stairwell and out onto the left wing of the sprawling stage set up inside the stadium.

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Barry walks over to the STAGE MANAGER and the two...well, they can't talk because the crowd is CHANTING SO LOUDLY!

As Barry yells something, CAMERA FLOWS past the two, out over the stage, into the audience.

FOCUS IN ON a maturely attractive, too dolled-up for the show ASHLEY KONER. On the verge of turning 18, Ashley is the craziest fan there is.

CROWD
Battle Royale! Battle...

AUDIO CUT TO:

INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

MARILYN
Royale? Stupid name.

We're inside a news studio, about to go on the air. MARILYN KONER reads from her copy as a make-up girl puts the finishing touches on this late-thirties, artificial beauty.

The PRODUCER stands next to a Latino male anchor (GIL).

PRODUCER
What? Honey, they're like the biggest band in the world!

MARILYN
Not my kind of music.

GIL
I'm sure your daughter loves 'um.

An assistant walks over to the producer, whispers in his ear.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

PRODUCER
Alright. We're going live.

MOMENTS LATER - -

CU. of a hand counting down--

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
Five, four, three...

Two beats.

Marilyn is all smiles as she sits behind a large desk, next to her fellow anchor, a backdrop of the SAN FRANCISCO SKYLINE bathing the two in theatricality.

GIL
Good evening. I'm Gil Sanchez.

MARILYN
And I'm Marilyn Koner. You're watching channel ten news.

Marilyn turns to look into another camera. As she talks, a graphic appears in a box above her right shoulder.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
(reading from Teleprompter)
Our top story tonight. Battle Royale fever is sweeping San Francisco as the former local band Rolling Stone Magazine called: *the past, present and future of Rock n' Roll* takes over Oakland Arena. We go...

CAMERA PULLS BACK to we reveal we've been watching this speech on a TELEVISION inside:

INT. C.C.'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The flat-screen T.V. sits in a lavish cabinet on one wall of this spacious, overly mahogany corner room somewhere on the 57th floor.

Seated at his desk is CHARLES CROWNING "C.C." HUNT. Late-fifties, fully graying, C.C. signs his name to a form on company letterhead: HUNT PHARMACEUTICALS.

A slight volume increase from the television motivates C.C. to glance over.

CONTINUED:

As he does, CAMERA pushes past him, through the window of his panoramic office and STRAIGHT.....

.

.....

.

...DOWN 57 STORIES in the blink of an eye to the bustling street below.

A WHITE BMW roars past and we *ZOOOOOOM inside the car to:*

MONROE WEAVER, clutching the steering wheel with a calm patience, his black skin syrupy over the white leather.

INT. WHITE BMW - CONTINUOUS

Head-shaved dashingly, Monroe holds a power in his eyes that one cannot immediately explain.

TALK RADIO plays from the car's speakers:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...But the anti-cancer drug could not receive FDA certification. Nobel Prize winner and current head of USF Medical Center, Dr. Daniel Shepard, had this to say.

DR. SHEPARD (V.O.)
It's not just a step backwards. It's taking the baby, the bath water, the whole entire bathroom and throwing it out. This is just another tremendous blow in a long line of setbacks for cancer research.

Monroe changes the channel -- A station plays Duke Ellington's "THE MOOCHE". Leaning his elbow out the open window, he soaks in the jazz while approaching a red light.

In the lane directly to his right, two annoyingly uninhibited FRAT-BOYS pull up in a convertible and notice Monroe.

FRAT-BOY #1
Hold on. Is that the guy from TV?

FRAT-BOY #2
Holy shit it is. Dude. Dude. Can you see dead people?

They laugh and jet off when the light turns green. Monroe turns the jazz up louder as he pulls forward.

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CONTINUED:

WE HOLD - -

Not concentrating on Monroe's disappearing car. Instead:

RACK FOCUS to a quaint CHURCH across the street, previously obscured by Monroe's BMW.

FATHER REESE (PRELAP)
You may ask yourselves, in these times of trouble and turmoil...

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The church is relatively empty, save for a smattering of worshippers here and there.

FATHER FRANKLIN REESE, early-fifties and tired, puts only as much energy into the sermon as he has to.

It is, after all, a Saturday night.

FATHER REESE
...where is the lord our god? And if he is up there, in his kingdom of gold and light watching us, why does he not show us his hand? Catastrophe and pestilence plague our lands with not a single miracle of faith to give righteous balance. In this day and age, can we as modern Catholics be expected to make what is required of us, notably, a leap of faith? An unequivocal certainty within ourselves that says, yes, we shall be reborn and redeemed. Genesis, Chapter 22: *god sayeth to Abraham take thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains.*

A POLICE OFFICER enters the sanctuary, surveying the pews.

Father Reese takes a nervous pause. Eyes locked on the cop.

The officer notices a pregnant woman, sits with her and her two kids. A picture-perfect family.

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CONTINUED:

Reese, composure regained, reaches for a glass of water. The break in the sermon is summarily ensconced.

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
Why? Why did God ask a father to kill his son? This is a recurring theme for our lord. He killed his son. And he continues to kill ours. And yet, again, where is his hand?

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - NIGHT

The inky black is punctuated by several flashbulbs. The first note from a guitar slowly builds, causing the audience to cheer until--

AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHT

Onstage as pyrotechnics reveal *Battle Royale* diving into the opening number.

ADAM
(singing)
She showed me inside her room
And took me down,
Then she grabbed my head.
She threw me on her bed,
Then we started making love.
Do you think we'll make it out?
I don't think there's any doubt.
I just messed around to piss you off.

Adam constantly keeps turning to the wing of the stage, looking for someone who isn't there.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ronald runs through the concrete tunnels of the arena, the sounds of his brother's voice growing louder and louder.

He turns a corner and jogs up a flight of stairs, the music near deafening as he runs to the wing of the stage.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Adam spots his brother and instantly turns his performance up *several* notches.

(CONTINUED)

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ADAM
She said I think you're the devil in disguise.
She said this to me.
She said I think you're the devil in my eyes.
She said this to me.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Ashley and a frumpy friend, KATE, dance and sing along. PUSH IN on Ashley, her eyes so distinct we --

MATCH CUT TO:

MARILYN -- EYE'S GLEAMING like an animal hunting it's prey.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Smoothing the wrinkles in her blouse, Marilyn lithely rushes past the Maitre d' into the dim, crowded dining area.

A pug-faced man in his mid-forties checks his watch, annoyed. This guy's receding hairline languishes so far behind his ears it can't help but give away the obvious...he's a BOB.

Marilyn approaches his table, her best face forward.

MARILYN
Hi, Bob.

BOB
Marilyn. You're looking quite lovely.

MARILYN
I wanted to look my best for the man behind *Good Morning, America*!
(jokingly looks around)
Now where is he?

BOB
(chuckling)
I want to tell you, your name was one of several that came up during a conference call this morning.

MARILYN
Really?

Bob smiles and takes a full-bodied drink of wine.

CONTINUED:

BOB
I told them you and I had a meeting tonight and based on the outcome, well, I'd give them my personal opinion of who would be the best replacement.

Marilyn is only slightly flustered by Bob's obvious sexual overture.

MARILYN
Perhaps then we should think about ordering. The salmon here is really...or how about the lamb, it's quite--

BOB
(interrupting)
Marilyn. You keep talking about the main course. But what I'm really interested in...
(beat)
Is the dessert.

SFX: A DOORBELL (PRELAP).

INT. MIDDLE CLASS HOME - NIGHT

An African-American WOMAN, early 20's, dressed entirely in black, opens the front door. Monroe Weaver enters.

WOMAN
Thank you so much for coming, Mr. Weaver.

MONROE
Call me Monroe.

The woman leads Monroe toward the living room. Untouched. Calm. Like the house itself were in mourning.

WOMAN
She wasn't sure you made house calls.

MONROE
Your mother is one of my most loyal clients. I certainly couldn't say no after hearing about your brother.

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They reach a chair, its high-backed, auburn upholstery blocking Monroe's view of --

ROSE

Old and weary, tears drying in the wrinkles of her dark face. She stares vacantly out into the faintly lit backyard.

Monroe kneels beside her, slowly. Studies her before:

MONROE (CONT'D)
Hello Rose.

Rose gazes out at a SWING-SET, rusted and old. A bygone era.

ROSE
I heard him. I heard his voice, coming from inside his old room.

Monroe absently looks up toward the ceiling.

MONROE
What did he say?

ROSE
I don't know. He was trying to tell me something, though. Of that I'm certain.

Monroe puts his hand on Rose's arm and takes a deep breath.

MONROE
Okay, Rose. Let's talk to your son.

EXT. C.C.'S SAUSALITO MANSION - ESTABLISHING

Night looms over the large, oak-trimmed mansion. A GREY BENTLEY pulls up the spiraling driveway.

The car Stops. Idling.

A long moment. Finally. The ignition turns off.

INT. C.C.'S SAUSALITO MANSION - CONTINUOUS

C.C. walks through the entry hall and removes his coat, throwing it across a table where a Dewars-on-the-rocks sits. Ready.

CONTINUED:

C.C. picks up the glass and takes a long drink.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

At separate ends of a long dining room table, C.C. and his sad-eyed wife, SALLY, sit stone quiet.

C.C. sets down his fork, finished.

C.C.
I'll be in the library.

The room descends back into silence. Sally stops eating, her husband's coldness stealing her appetite.

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - STAGE - NIGHT

We enter mid-song. Adam has perspiration dripping down him as he screams into the mic.

ADAM
If I would come crying home at night
All I'd need to make it feel right.
A shot of tequila, my bro by my side
And "Young Frankenstein," magic memory ride.

Adam turns and winks at his brother, pulling back for the brief musical interlude.

As the cue for him to sing comes...nothing.

Instead, Adam seems to teeter, grabbing the mic stand and pulling it towards his chest, as if in crushing pain.

The rest of the band, confused, vamps.

And vamps some more.

Suddenly, Adam locks eyes with someone in the audience, ever-so-briefly, then collapses forward, off the stage.

The audience, thinking this is part of the show, carry Adam above their heads, body surfing through the crowd.

BACK ONSTAGE

The band stops playing. Ronald looks over to Barry and the two dart out, hopping over the edge of the stage into the audience, doing their best to push toward the spot where they last saw Adam's floating body.

(CONTINUED)

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Moving forward, Ron and the manager reach Adam's unconscious figure, propped up by twc fast-acting security guards.

Blood drips from Adam's nose.

EXT. OAKLAND ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

An ambulance races out of the lot and rapidly turns onto Hegenberger Road.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Ronald holds his brother's hand as a paramedic tends to Adam, mechanically squeezing oxygen via a plastic respirator.

INT. DR. DANIEL SHEPARD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. Shepard sits at his spacious desk, looking several years older than when we first met him. He shuffles aside some papers as his diminutive assistant, JANE, nervously enters.

JANE
Doctor Shepard. We have an ambulance headed here. A drug overdose.

DR. SHEPARD
Give it to Jackson.

JANE
It's Adam Daley.

The way she says it makes Dr. Shepard remove his glasses.

DR. SHEPARD
A potential candidate?
(a long breath)
Get everyone ready.

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - NIGHT

The crowd, confused and upset, stands around in the now brightly lit arena.

ONSTAGE

The stage manager comes forward, addressing the mic.

CONTINUED:

STAGE MANAGER
Ladies and gentlemen. Unfortunately, Adam Daley has come down with a severe case of exhaustion, complicated by the fact that he's recovering from the flu. Tonight's show will therefore have to be canceled.
(over "boos" from the audience)
Your tickets will all be refunded.

The crowd grows upset -- Throwing things onstage -- Yelling.

FOCUS IN on Ashley, not quite convinced about what she's just heard. She turns to her friend Kate.

ASHLEY
That's bullshit. That's such bullshit.

KATE
They didn't even play "You're my last!"

ASHLEY
No. I mean...something's really wrong with him.

KATE
What are you talking about?

The crowd is now moving toward the exits.

ASHLEY
When he collapsed, he looked at me. Right fucking at me. And he didn't look tired.

INT. OAKLAND ARENA - EXIT - MOMENTS LATER

Ashley and the crowd are mulling forward. Ashley notices a TOUR STAFFER off to the side, giving instructions to a security guard. Ashley walks over to him.

ASHLEY
Hey. Hey. That whole thing about the flu, that was bullshit.

The staffer is in no mood. He brushes her off.

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CONTINUED:

TOUR STAFFER
You heard the announcement. You get your refunds at the window.

ASHLEY
Don't give me that shit. I want to know what happened to him!

The staffer turns his full attention to Ashley.

TOUR STAFF MEMBER
I don't have time for you. You heard the announcement. Get your refund. Go home.

Ashley stands there, fuming.

ASHLEY
This is fucking bullshit!

She returns to Kate and removes her cellphone.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I have to make a phone call.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

CU. of a nightstand as a cellphone lights up and RINGS, cutting through the sound of MOANING and THUMPING from the offscreen bed.

A hand reaches out and pushes the cellphone to the floor.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO E.R. - NIGHT

From the sliding-glass entrance burst two paramedics, wheeling Adam in on a stretcher. Ronald follows behind. The HEAD NURSE on duty rushes over.

PARAMEDIC #1
Cardiac arrest. Complications from a cocaine overdose.

Ronald tries to follow the stretcher but an orderly dressed in green stops him and points him toward a waiting area.

HEAD NURSE
Take him to E.R. six. Do we have a pulse?

CONTINUED:

PARAMEDIC #1
Jeremy gave him 300 joules. It's weak but it's there.

From another hallway, Jane steps out and approaches the stretcher, blocking its way.

JANE
We need to take him to the Hunt Wing.

HEAD NURSE
But it's just an overdose.

Two orderlies, dressed in white scrubs, step out from the perpendicular corridor and take hold of the stretcher.

JANE
(stepping backwards)
Dr. Shepard would like to handle this patient personally.

INT. USF E.R. - WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

The head nurse, a bit perturbed, walks past a very scared and shell-shocked Ronald. He sits in a chair, absently watching a television on the wall.

HEAD NURSE
Excuse me. Can I get you anything?

RONALD
(hoarse)
Water--
(clears throat)
Water, please.

The nurse leaves and Ronald turns his attention back to the television.

ON THE TELEVISION - -

A REPORTER stands in front of USF Medical Center.

REPORTER
...Having collapsed at approximately 8:23 this evening, Adam Daley was immediately rushed to...

(CONTINUED)

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Ronald notices something on the television, in the background. He raises his arm and...yep...that's him, sitting in the waiting area. He turns and looks out the window, seeing the news van reporting live.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
...the University of San Francisco medical center to undergo treatment for what band manager Barry Tomboulis said was exhaustion...

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bob, Marilyn's dinner guest, sits in bed, watching the same reporter on television. Offscreen a toilet flushes and Marilyn walks out of the bathroom naked.

BOB
(never taking his eyes off the television)
Your phone keeps beeping.

Marilyn walks over to the nightstand and kneels down, picking the cellphone off the floor. She flips it open and looks at the message.

MARILYN
It's nothing. Just my daughter.

Bob isn't paying any attention.

BOB
Exhaustion? If he'd have been a real rock n' roller, he'd have had an overdose!

INT. FATHER REESE'S PRIVATE STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Father Reese sits attentively on a dark-green sofa as the reporter wraps up her broadcast.

REPORTER
(on television)
We'll keep you updated on the condition of local son Adam Daley as events unfold. Back to you, Gil.

CONTINUED:

Reese turns off the television and unlocks a drawer in his desk, pulling out a faded color picture of him with two young boys.

As if it were a memory he didn't want to remember, Reese quickly returns the picture to the drawer, giving us the briefest glimpse at the only other object inside --

A SMALL HANDGUN

-- Before he slams the drawer closed.

INT. HUNT EXPERIMENTAL WARD - NIGHT

Adam Daley lies motionless in bed as a TECHNICIAN attaches various medical devices to his chest.

PULL BACK and reveal the room, full of equipment and scanners the likes of which have never been seen outside the laboratories of General Electric and Dow.

Verging on science fiction, this medical ward is what could be science fact in the very near future.

Most prominent of all the equipment is a large, telescopic device called a TUNNELING FLUORESCENCE SPECTROMETER (TFS), aimed directly at Adam's comatose body.

Dr. Shepard enters the room, clad in special clean, static free scrubs. He approaches Adam and the technician.

DR. SHEPARD
When did it happen?

TECHNICIAN
Five minutes ago.

Dr. Shepard nods and walks out of the room.

INT. USF E.R. - WAITING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Ronald sips from a glass of water as Dr. Shepard enters and sits across from him.

DR. SHEPARD
Ronald Daley? I'm Dr. Daniel Shepard.

RONALD
How's my brother?

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

DR. SHEPARD
Your brother overdosed on cocaine.

Ronald lets this sink in.

RONALD
That's what they told me in the ambulance but, that's what I wanted to talk to you guys about. He doesn't do cocaine.

DR. SHEPARD
Ronald, we found...traces isn't the word. There was a staggering amount circulating through his blood stream.

RONALD
Is he going to be alright?

DR. SHEPARD
(softly)
No. I'm afraid not. A few minutes ago Adam lapsed from an unconscious state into a deep coma. His heart is weak from cardiac arrest. And his body can't rid itself of the cocaine and do what it needs to do to keep your brother alive.

RONALD
I want to see him.

Dr. Shepard pulls out a clipboard and form.

DR. SHEPARD
Of course. We'll need you to sign this, first.

Dr. Shepard hands Ronald a pen and without reading the form Ron scribbles his John Hancock.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Follow me.

INT. HUNT EXPERIMENTAL WARD - MOMENTS LATER

An electrical door whirs open. Ronald is in awe at the sheer amount of equipment surrounding his brother. He sits silently in a chair already set up next to the bed.

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CONTINUED:

RONALD
Adam...

The only reply is the buzz of machinery.

RONALD (CONT'D)
When dad died and all that shit just kept coming and, well, after it happened I promised I'd watch out for you. I was your big brother and I learned that there are people and things in this world that just are wrong. I shouldn't feel like this was my fault.
(beat)
God damnit, why would you do this to yourself? This wasn't you. It wasn't us. I might have promised to protect you but I swear to god, what happened to the unspoken pact that you wouldn't leave me alone?

INT. VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Shepard approaches a one-way mirror looking out onto Adam and Ronald, not allowing Ron the slightest idea that a bustling core of computers and nurses are readying for something big behind the wall.

DR. SHEPARD
Are we set?

JANE
The T.F.S. is at eighty-percent power. Should someone remove the brother?

Beat.

DR. SHEPARD
In a minute.

INT. HUNT EXPERIMENTAL WARD - CONTINUOUS

Ronald holds his brother's hand as he listens to the weak EKG next to the bed. Slowly, methodically, Ron puts his brother's hand down on his bared chest.

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CONTINUED:

RONALD
(choked up)
I...Don't. Don't think I can watch this. I think I need to go home.

He leans down and kisses his brother.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I love you.

He turns and exits the room right as Jane opens the door. She is somewhat surprised, half expecting she'd have to pull him away. The two step into the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ronald stands still, teetering.

JANE
Mr. Daley. Would you like me to get--

Without warning, Ronald grabs her and hugs her tight, crying into her shoulder.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Machines whir as Dr. Shepard and a SUITED MAN quietly discuss the matter at hand.

DR. SHEPARD
Are we ready for nine a.m.?

SUITED MAN
What happens if he's, well, not dead?

DR. SHEPARD
We're cutting life support in a few moments. The brother signed off.

The suited man turns and looks out at Adam.

SUITED MAN
I'll let your associates at Cal-Tech and UCLA know. James won't make it out from Boston in time.

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CONTINUED:

DR. SHEPARD
We'll do a video feed if need be. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a mountain to move.

INT. HUNT EXPERIMENTAL WARD - MOMENTS LATER

The room and all its equipment purrs ominously to life.

A LOW WHINE from the T.F.S. permeates above the din. Blue phosphorescent light builds, pouring from the device.

The whine grows louder.

The light grows brighter.

Counterpoint: Adam's EKG grows weaker.

At the exact moment Adam's heart flatlines--

A BURST OF ENERGY shoots from within the hull of the T.F.S.

So bright the room itself seems to emanate pure energy.

As the sounds of machinery crescendo - -

CAMERA BLOWS OUT

Leaving us--lingering--in a calm, BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KONER RESIDENCE - MORNING

The door into Marilyn's bedroom swings open and a bleary eyed Ashley looks inside. She takes note of the not-slept-in bed and finds no trace of her mother.

Ashley walks downstairs and into the kitchen, throwing open cupboards to grab a bowl and some cereal.

After pouring the cereal and milk, she takes her breakfast into the living room.

Plopping down on the couch, Ashley searches for the remote control while balancing the cereal on her lap. She can't find it, forcing her to walk over to the TV and switch it on.

ON THE TELEVISION - -

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

T.D. JAKES, famed southern Bishop, is preaching to a stadium like church full of parishioners --

Ashley quickly changes the channel to:

-- GOLF. The crowd is quiet as Davis Love III prepares to chip onto the green, thirty yards away.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
(softly)
It doesn't get more exciting...

CLICK! to a CAR COMMERCIAL.

CLICK! to a FOOTBALL GAME.

The 49er's are away facing off against the Denver Broncos, rain blistering down onto the soggy field.

Ashley turns to head back to the couch when the familiar strings of an ABC NEWS SPECIAL REPORT interrupt the game.

ONSCREEN Gil Sanchez sits at the news desk, giving that melodramatic look we've come to expect from our newsanchors.

GIL
Good morning. We interrupt this broadcast of the Niners-Broncos' match-up to bring you this special, live report on music star Adam Daley, who, it has been reported, died last night of undisclosed causes. For further details, we take you now live to the University of San Francisco Medical Center.

Ashley has collapsed on the couch, her eyes glassing over. She carefully places the cereal onto the coffee table and watches intently.

INT. USF PRESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reporters snap pictures as Dr. Shepard heads to a podium on an elevated stage at the front of the room.

Two other scientists in suits sit on the stage, nervous. A large PLASMA SCREEN hangs on the wall, behind Dr. Shepard.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

REPORTERS
(calling out)
Dr. Shepard/Is it true.../Cocaine was reported/etc.

DR. SHEPARD
Please, ladies and gentlemen, if you would, hold your questions.

The reporters quiet down and Dr. Shepard, himself a little nervous, begins the most important speech of his life.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Last night, at 8:31 p.m., Adam Daley, lead singer of rock band *Battle Royale*, was admitted into the emergency room for what appeared to be cardiac arrest brought on by drug ingestion. At my request he was moved to the Hunt Experimental Ward where I personally oversaw his treatment. Unfortunately, the amount of cocaine in his system, coupled with a massive heart attack made it impossible for us to keep Adam from slipping into a comatose state.

We notice Ronald sitting off by the side of the stage, near an exit. He's stone-faced, barely even listening.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
At 10:31, Adam's heart stopped and he was pronounced dead.

The reporters go crazy, jockeying to ask Dr. Shepard questions. He uses his hands to try and stop the onslaught.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Please, I said hold your questions.

The reporters slowly quiet down. Most notice Dr. Shepard's heavy breathing -- He has something important to say.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Approximately two years ago, James Gruner, professor of spectral and molecular biophysics at MIT, began research into a new type of imaging device, six-hundred times more powerful than the most advanced MRI.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (2)

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Using infinitely small waves of neutrinos, this Tunneling Fluorescence Spectrometer, or T.F.S., is capable of detecting the collision of two atoms from as far away as one mile. It is, ladies and gentlemen, so advanced, that we believe it can pick up energy variations in opposing dimensions alongside ours.

Silence from the reporters, except for one:

REPORTER #1
Are you saying you've discovered proof of alternate dimensions?

DR. SHEPARD
No, science isn't there yet. I'm saying this device, we believe, will eventually be able to detect whether the Brane Theory of ten diametric dimensions is correct. Basically, I'm just trying to convey the sheer power of this technology.

REPORTER #2
Dr. Shepard, what does this have to do with Adam Daley?

Ronald is now paying full attention. He wants the same question answered.

DR. SHEPARD
It'll all make sense in a moment. Adam Daley was admitted to the E.R. and we soon realized he would not recover from his cardiac arrest. Which is why he was transferred into the experimental ward, where we have one of only two tunneling fluorescence spectrometers in the world.
(beat)
At the time of death, the body loses twenty-one grams of weight. Many people believe this to be the weight of a man's soul.
(beat)
It is.

Dead silence from the audience.

CONTINUED: (3)

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Using the T.F.S., the most advanced spectral imaging device ever conceived, we now feel conclusively that we have proof of the existence of the human soul.

On the plasma screen behind Dr. Shepard, a TOPOGRAPHICAL ENERGY SIGNATURE of Adam Daley lying in bed appears.

Machines in the background register brighter or darker based on the power surging within.

Adam's body, still alive, is a phosphorescent blue.

The SOUND of the EKG flatlining fills the press room. In an instant, Adam's body turns grey and a PURPLE ENERGY SIGNATURE rises over the body. It hovers in place for a split-second, then VANISHES entirely.

The sequence repeats as Dr. Shepard narrates.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
The T.F.S. reads energy signatures, almost like a scanner reads a barcode. The higher the energy source, the brighter the image. At the exact time of death, the T.F.S., which is directly tied into Adam's EKG, sends out a burst of neutrinos, causing this enhancement of the image you see here.

Using a remote, Dr. Shepard slows down the image.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
The energy, the very life-force of the body, has disappeared in an instant, specifically 1/200th of a second. Over the next 100th of a second, we capture this, a previously nonexistent source of energy that rises up from within the body.

The reporters all stand and begin asking questions.

REPORTER #2
(fighting to be heard)
Dr. Shepard! How do we know this picture hasn't been doctored in any way?

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (4)

DR. SHEPARD
I would hope my reputation would put me above such a question of doubt, however I do understand your position. This project has been in development for almost a year, with myself and the brightest minds in science working in tandem. Two of them sit to my left. Dr. Elliot Margolin from Cal-Tech and Dr. Michael Kirkpatrick of UCLA will both be available for questions after I'm done. The collective validation of these minds, along with several others in the lists that will be provided afterwards, should more than extinguish the idea that this is false testimony.

As the bevy of reporters attempt to ask the next question--

CUT TO:

INT. MONROE WEAVER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Monroe sits at his desk, in an office fit for a king, typing at the computer as his secretary, DOLORES, flies in.

DOLORES
Monroe. You're not gonna believe this.

She turns on a TV displaying the press conference.

INT. USF PRESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Shepard is in the middle of answering a question.

DR. SHEPARD
...It was our desire, of course, to give hope to millions of people. Make death something not to be feared and allow people to live their lives to a fuller extent because of the elimination of that fear. Now understand, when we set out, we had no idea whether the soul existed or not. We could have very easily discovered nothing.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
We had hope, of course, that the outcome would be along the lines of what you see here. Yes--

Dr. Shepard points to another reporter.

REPORTER #4
Does this mean that upon our death our soul goes to some form of afterlife?

DR. SHEPARD
That's a question I can't answer. Is it a possibility? Of course. The soul disappears immediately upon exiting the body, which leads me to believe that it must travel somewhere. Understand, this source, the soul, is itself such a small yet powerful source of energy that it is quite possible that it could pass into some alternate dimension. Dr. Margolin will speak about the possibility of the soul crossing into this parallel dimension in a moment.

REPORTER #4
Are you saying that heaven could simply be an alternate dimension?

DR. SHEPARD
Quantum theorists have put forth that concept, yes. Doctors Margolin and Kirkpatrick will take over from here.

Dr. Shepard walks offstage as a flurry of questions are volleyed.

EXT. THE OLYMPIC CLUB - 8TH TEE - DAY

C.C. Hunt and two greying businessmen are playing an early morning game of golf. C.C. is teed up and preparing to swing when a CELL-PHONE RINGS.

C.C. turns toward the culprit, who silences the phone and waves an apology. C.C. pulls his driver back and...

Another cell-phone rings. This time it's the other businessman's.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

C.C.
(quietly angry)
Maybe you better answer that.

The businessman does so. As he listens, incredulity creeps across his face.

BUSINESSMAN
(into phone)
Are you serious?

INT. USF HALLWAY - DAY

Dr. Shepard walks across the hall, joined at his side by his assistant, Jane. Ronald tracks them down from behind.

RONALD
(calling out)
Why did you do this to him?

Dr. Shepard and Jane turn around.

DR. SHEPARD
I'm sorry I didn't tell you. But this had to be done.

RONALD
You made a circus out of my brother.

JANE
Mr. Daley, what we did here--

RONALD
(interrupting)
I want to talk to him.

Dr. Shepard nods to Jane, who walks down the hall and waits.

DR. SHEPARD
Can you imagine for a moment, unselfishly, what your brother and I have given to the world? Hope beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

RONALD
I want to grieve my brother's death, you son-of-a-bitch. His death is not a gift for the entire world to gloat over.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

RONALD (CONT'D)
Now every time I turn around, I'm going to have to be reminded of this...farce.

DR. SHEPARD
It's not a joke, Mr. Daley. This is the scientific equivalent of Moses coming down Mt. Sinai.

RONALD
Why my brother?

DR. SHEPARD
Everyone in the modern world knows your brother's name. His celebrity was a necessary conduit. I needed a Jesus and your brother is already bigger than that, so it was terrific luck...

Ronald interrupts with a seething inner rage he's trying both to repress and push out at the same time.

RONALD
Luck? My only family dying was luck? You sick fuck. You had no right. No fucking right.

DR. SHEPARD
I had every right, Mr. Daley. You even signed a paper to that effect.

RONALD
I never...You lying...

Ronald stops, remembering the sheet of paper Dr. Shepard had him sign.

DR. SHEPARD
Ronald, all around us people are dying. AIDS, cancer, war and famine. Think about what this will give them and what it will give the families of those countless victims. This is bigger than you or your brother, Ronald.
(beat)
It's bigger than me.

Dr. Shepard heads down the hall, meeting up with Jane. Ronald stands motionless in the corridor.

IN THE BACKGROUND

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A throng of excited reporters exit the press room. One of them notices Ronald.

REPORTER #5
Wait! That's the brother!

REPORTERS
RONALD!/Mr. Daley!/How do you feel.../etc.

Ronald turns toward the sea of faces heading for him. Suddenly, he rushes over to a garbage can along the wall and vomits.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

It's standing room only for the 11 a.m. service. Off in the wing Father Reese stares out from behind a beige curtain, in disbelief at the crowd before him.

The CHURCH SECRETARY comes over, dressed in her Sunday best.

CHURCH SECRETARY
Father Reese. It's already 11:15.

FATHER REESE
(stuck in the gaze)
Lot of people cut there.

CHURCH SECRETARY
I called Loretta at First Baptist. She said the fire marshal almost shut them down. Had to start a separate service in the parking lot.

Father Reese breaks his gaze and turns to the secretary.

FATHER REESE
I can't go out there, I don't know what to say.

The secretary is confused on how to respond.

CHURCH SECRETARY
But...it's 11:15!

ANGLE ON The back of the room, where Sally Hunt finds her way through the crowd to an empty corner.

CONTINUED:

As composed as can be expected, Father Reese walks out, his white surplice forcing attentiveness as he stands behind the pulpit.

FATHER REESE
Good morning. It's interesting to see so many faces. Many of you I recognize, though can't say I've seen you for quite a long time.
(nervous laughter from the congregation)
I know why you're here. And it's for the same reason you probably stopped coming. Television. There's no denying football games are more exciting than my sermons, but faith takes effort. Now, suddenly, some doctor comes on television and says science has proven what religion has been telling you for thousands of years. It took God coming from your TV set, not from within his own house to make you believe. To say your faith is true would be a lie.

ANGLE ON The church secretary, looking around the room, afraid that Father Reese is offending parishioners.

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
Faith requires, inherently, belief without proof. Throw in proof, and it's no longer faith. It's fact. I'm ashamed that it requires something like this to fill these seats. I'm ashamed that this day and age has ripped religion out of your lives and made it a chore. But above all, I'm ashamed to be right there with you. I call you faithless.
(beat)
So am I.

INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - MORNING

Marilyn disheveledly rushes past various monitors displaying out-of-focus video of the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES giving a national address, his remarks pumped into the studio.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

PRESIDENT
(onscreen)
...I have met Dr. Daniel Shepard on numerous occasions and find him to be a man of unparalleled honesty and integrity. His discovery--

The President continues speaking as Marilyn approaches Gil and the segment producer, their eyes glued to a monitor.

MARILYN
What's he saying?

Gil turns his attention to Marilyn.

GIL
God bless America, what else would he be saying?
(beat)
Are those the same clothes you were wearing last night?

MARILYN
Fuck you, Gil.

Gil smirks as he turns back to the monitor.

PRESIDENT
--I have entrusted the head of the National Science Foundation to put together a committee to further look into this groundbreaking discovery. However...

INT. RONALD'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

CU. of Ronald's radio. PULL BACK to reveal Ronald driving home from the hospital. The car is full of chrome and looks straight out of the 80's. We're not quite sure what kind of car it is just yet, however.

PRESIDENT (V.O.)
...I feel this nation, along with the rest of the world, should embrace this revelation with open hearts and open minds. Dr. Shepard has given us hope, not just for our souls, but for humanity itself and the future of mankind. Thank you and god bless.

CONTINUED:

Ronald pulls the DELOREAN -- yeah, he drives a DeLorean -- into his driveway, past several reporters camped out on the street.

INT. RONALD'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Ronald hastily unlocks the front door. The shouts of reporters down the driveway disappear as the door slams shut.

Ronald throws his keys on a table. The house is quite spacious for just him, yet somehow also very cluttered. It's apparent from the decorations this was not always his house.

He walks over to his ANSWERING MACHINE and sees the light flashing "FULL". He hits play --

PRINCIPAL GARRETT (O.S.)
Hey, Ronnie. Listen, I am so sorry to hear about Adam. Don't think twice about coming in this week. I'll get your classes covered. You take as much time as you need.
(long sigh)
Yeah. Wow. I'm really sorry. Your brother was god's gift to rock and roll. God's gift.

Hits DELETE. The machine BEEPS.

ANSWERING MACHINE
Sunday, 10:20, a.m.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
(whimpering)
Mr. Daley, it's Ashley. I was hoping we could talk. Nevermind. I'll see you in class, tomorr...Or not. I guess. I hope you're doing okay.

Ronald's finger hovers over the *delete* key before hitting *skip* instead.

ANSWERING MACHINE
Message saved. Next message
Sunday, 10:35 a.m.

REPORTER (O.S.)
Mr. Daley. Kyle Kennedy, San Francisco Chronicle. Please give me...

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

Ronald deletes the message.

ANOTHER REPORTER (O.S.)
Ronald. Taylor Schwartz, ABC New...

DELETE.

YET ANOTHER REPORTER (O.S.)
This is Michael Day from *Good Morning America*. I'm calling to see what your reaction...

Ronald grabs the answering machine and rips the phone line out of the wall.

ANGLE ON a shelf full of DVDs. Ronald's hand reaches over, pulls out *Young Frankenstein*. Puts the disc into the player. He sits on the couch and hits play on the remote.

As the movie begins--

CUT TO:

INT. USF CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

In the waiting area, a receptionist fields calls--lots of them--when a figure rushes past, hell-bent on seeing the university chancellor. The figure bursts through the door to the inner office before the receptionist can even react.

INSIDE THE OFFICE

Chancellor LAWRENCE ADAMS sits behind his desk, talking to Dr. Shepard. They both react as C.C. barrels in, cutting them off, still dressed in his golf attire.

C.C.
What the fuck is going on here, Lawrence?
(notices Dr. Shepard seated on a couch)
You son-of-a-bitch. You--

LAWRENCE
(interrupting)
Charles, calm down. Take a seat.

C.C.
(re: Dr. Shepard)
I figured you'd be here.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

C.C. (CONT'D)
You lying...I put fifty million dollars into what you assured me was a breakthrough in cancer research. I even let you bastards build a new fucking wing. This is what I get for my money?

Dr. Shepard very calmly leans forward.

DR. SHEPARD
What we've discovered is priceless.

C.C.
Horseshit! You forged a year's worth of cancer research and you used my money to do it. I saw the paperwork, you're accountable.
(turns to Lawrence)
This was all a fraud, a front!

DR. SHEPARD
It was necessary, C.C. Look what we've done! You're looking at this from a matter of dollars and cents. In terms of medical advancement, we've given people a look at the very essence of what makes them human.

C.C.
Oh well isn't that sweet. I didn't give you the fucking cash to advance a load of crap. You were an investment, damnit. And I expected a fucking return, not the god damn human soul. How the hell am I supposed to bottle that?

LAWRENCE
Charles, I'm sure the publicity of your involvement with this discovery will easily help...

C.C.
(cutting Lawrence off)
Pick up the *Wall Street Journal* on Tuesday and tell me about fucking publicity.

C.C. stands up and walks to the door, still fuming.

WGAw Registered

C.C. (CONT'D)
How am I supposed to sell medicine, why...Why would people pay what I make them pay to save their lives when they don't fear death?

DR. SHEPARD
And you accuse me of fraud?

C.C. stares Shepard down. Beat.

C.C.
I'm not the one going to jail, Daniel.

INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - EVENING

Marilyn sits behind the desk, on-the-air, talking into camera.

MARILYN
Monroe Weaver, city icon and noted spiritualist has been making quite a stir since Dr. Shepard's shocking announcement this morning. Yesterday, many considered him a joke. Today, he's the second biggest story in San Francisco.

EXT. MONROE WEAVER'S OFFICE BUILDING - EVENING

A reporter, SARAH YAMAMOTO, stands across the street from a huge crowd, pressing forward trying to enter Monroe's building. Police block the door and perform crowd-control.

SARAH
Marilyn, I'm standing here on Post Street, where a crowd over four hundred strong has gathered in an attempt to see Monroe Weaver, whose office is located on the 4th floor of the building behind me...

VIDEO FOOTAGE -- EARLIER THAT DAY

Monroe tries to push past the crowd, into the building. Police act as body guards.

CONTINUED:

SARAH (O.S.)
Mr. Weaver! Mr...Would you comment on your reaction to today's news.

Monroe stops in front of CAMERA. Does his best to stand still amidst the surging crowd.

MONROE
(loudly over the crowd)
Anything that helps build this country's faith is a step in the right direction. When I woke up this morning, I knew every one of us possessed a soul full of humanity...

Monroe gets jostled forward. He quickly regains himself.

MONROE (CONT'D)
...I knew everyone of us possessed a soul capable of wonderful things. I'll go to bed tonight still believing the same thing.

WE PULL BACK from a television, now inside:

INT. KONER RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CAMERA DRIFTS around the room, the sound of CRYING growing louder as we concentrate on a corner.

The early evening shadows have crept across the room, somewhat obscuring Ashley, seated with her knees pulled close to her chest. She's holding a PICTURE FRAME.

MOVE IN closer still to reveal a medicine bottle, the Hunt Pharmaceutical logo on the side. Pills lay strewn about on the floor.

Ashley wipes her eyes and we reveal the photograph she's looking at, longingly: her, age five and her father. They're both smiling as we...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CHURCH CLASSROOM - BLACK & WHITE FLASHBACK

The images are grainy as a much younger Father Reese sits around a circle of SUNDAY SCHOOL BOYS. He looks up at two of the boys seated next to him -- the same two boys from the picture in his desk -- and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the boys starts reading a bible passage MOS.

FLASH CUT:

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - BLACK & WHITE FLASHBACK

The class is getting out as young boys file down the hallway. Stay focused, however, on the door to the classroom.

When Father Reese walks over to close the door, we notice the elder boy from the picture still standing in the room, nervously waiting.

His brother turns around in the hall--the last boy to exit--watching his brother disappear as the door shuts.

SFX: TELEPHONE (PRELAP)

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. FATHER REESE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Father Reese wakes up, twisting around in bed to reach the phone. He answers it, groggy.

FATHER REESE
Hello?
(beat)
Yeah. Hold on.

EXT/INT. FATHER REESE'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Reese opens the front door and picks up his MORNING NEWSPAPER. He looks at the front page:

A NEW DAY HAS DAWNED

It's the biggest damn headline you've ever seen. Under it--

AN IMPOSING PICTURE of Dr. Shepard at the press conference.

Father Reese heads back inside, scrolling down to the bottom of the front page. AN ARTICLE -- Bottom right hand corner:

Veritas Excolo Deus -- Vatican Claims "Truth Serves the Lord"

Reese walks back into his bedroom, reading. Grabs the phone.

FATHER REESE
I see it. Right here.
(beat; reading)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
Cardinal Giuseppe Montevechio, speaking on behalf of the Pope, said, "The Pope has continuously advocated the marriage of science and religion, working together in tandem. This discovery only serves to brace the beliefs that the Catholic Church has been putting forth for two thousand years.
(beat)
I'm as surprised as you.
(beat)
Wait, you don't? You were expecting this?
(beat)
How can you possibly believe this means anything? It's a picture of purple light hanging over a body. It's meaningless.
(beat)
Well, faith is not the question here.
(beat; terse)
Fine. Thanks for calling.

Father Reese hangs up. Confusion in his eyes.

INT. USF CANCER WARD - MORNING

Dr. Shepard walks into a room, grabbing a CHART off the door.

INSIDE

A nurse is adjusting the I.V. of a restless JERRY SILVERMAN (28), his head bald and his weight next to nothing.

DR. SHEPARD
Good morning, Jerry.

As the nurse leaves the room, Jerry points to the newspaper on his night stand.

JERRY
So I see you took yesterday off.

Dr. Shepard puts the chart down.

DR. SHEPARD
How are you feeling today?

WGAw Registered

JERRY
A bit under the weather. Listen, Doc, I've gotta ask, what with all this hoopla going around about life-after-death.
(beat)
What's your position on circumcision?

DR. SHEPARD
(beat; smirking)
It's been a few years, of course, but I look back on it as a positive experience.

Jerry's laugh morphs into pain. Even laughing is difficult.

JERRY
Doc. Tell me. Is this all for real?

DR. SHEPARD
Is what for real?

JERRY
When I die, do I get to go to heaven?

Dr. Shepard stares down at Jerry for a long moment.

DR. SHEPARD
Yes you do, Jerry.

Jerry appreciates the answer. They have a brief moment. Not doctor-to-patient. But friend-to-friend. Beat, then--

Shepard picks up Jerry's chart and heads toward the door.

JERRY
Doc!

The Doc twists back to Jerry, silhouetted by the sun streaming through the window.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Dr. Shepard exits the room.

EXT. BENTON ACADEMY - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

Ivy-covered walls, uniformed students and a large bell tower in the center of the quad scream private school. Several late-comers rush to class.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT (PRELAP)
As you all know...

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

PRINCIPAL GARRETT stands before the class, addressing Ronald's students. Ashley sits toward the back.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT (CONT'D)
...Yesterday, we lost a great man. An American hero. A great artist. I am proud to say I knew Adam Daley, Mr. Daley's brother. He was an inspiration.
(starts getting choked up)
Sorry. I'm sorry.
(beat)
I will be covering Ronald's classes until he gets over the shock...
(get's choked up, again)
Again, I'm sorry. We have a lot to talk about, current events being what they are. However, I think we should consider making a class card expressing how we feel and I'll take it over to Ronald's in the coming days.

A hand shoots up from the back of the classroom.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT (CONT'D)
Yes, Ashley?

ASHLEY
Mr. Daley lives next door to me, I can just take it to him.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT
(unenthused)
Well, okay. That would be fine. I guess. Um, sure.

INT. C.C.'S SAUSALITO MANSION - DINING ROOM - MORNING

CU. OF A LAPTOP

A real-time stock-ticker for *Hunt Pharmaceutical Corporation (HPC)* showing the stock slowly dropping:

80.77 -- 80.25 -- 80.20 ...

C.C. sits at the long table, drinking a cup of coffee. He glances between the computer and the morning paper.

Sally enters from the sitting room and waits for a greeting. Her husband doesn't even look up.

C.C.
Where were you yesterday?

Sally looks at the back of her husband's head.

SALLY
I went to church.

Long silence from C.C.

C.C.
(simmering)
Wonderful.

CUT TO:

A TELEVISION - -

ANDERSON COOPER sits behind his desk, reporting live via CNN.

ANDERSON COOPER
(onscreen)
Exact reports coming out of Bangladesh are unconfirmed but the toll looks likely to be between five and six hundred members.

INT. RONALD'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Ronald, asleep on the couch, looks like he hasn't moved since the previous day.

Probably because he hasn't.

CONTINUED:

ANDERSON COOPER (O.S.)
What is quite possibly the second largest mass suicide since Jonestown is being blamed by most on the recent news out of San Francisco. For a detailed...

A LOUD KNOCK on the front door causes Ronald's eyes to slowly open. Another knock.

He doesn't budge. Then the doorbell rings.

Still, doesn't budge.

EXT. RONALD'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ashley stands at the front door, frustrated, CARD IN HAND. She bangs on the door again.

ASHLEY
Mr. Daley! It's Ashley!

No sound from within. Exasperated, Ashley leans down to slide the card under the door when she notices a KEY sticking out half-way from beneath the doormat.

She reaches down and grabs it, quickly pocketing it. As if in response, the door opens, revealing a disgruntled Ronald.

RONALD
Ashley?

ASHLEY
Hi. I brought you this.

She hands him the card. He turns inside, leaving the door open for her to follow.

INT. RONALD'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ronald scans the card as he walks into the dining room. Ashley trails behind.

ASHLEY
Principal Garrett thought we should make you that.

RONALD
Garrett still thinks you guys are in second grade, does he?

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

Ronald sits down at a table. Beat. Ashley stays standing.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I don't see your name.

ASHLEY
Um, I signed the back.

ANGLE ON the card as Ronald flips it over. The entire back is covered in the most perfect, minute handwriting. A very noticeable *"LOVE, ASHLEY"* at the bottom.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I told Mr. Garrett I'd bring it by because we're neighbors.

Ronald looks up from the card.

RONALD
But we're not neighbors.

ASHLEY
Yeah, but that's what I told him. It was only half an hour on the bus.

Ronald, stoic, looks back down. Still staring at the note:

RONALD
Well, thank you Ashley for bringing this by. I guess I'll see you...

He looks up and realizes Ashley isn't in the room.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The refrigerator door stands open, Ashley's face bent down looking for something to eat. The only thing Ronald can see is her VERY CUTE BUTT, visible around the edge of the door. He has to tear his eyes away from it.

RONALD
What are you doing?

Ashley pops her head up, over the door.

ASHLEY
What do you eat? All you've got is a jar of pickles.

CONTINUED:

She holds it up, like a trophy. The lone source of sustenance in the house.

RONALD
I eat out.

ASHLEY
Well then go change or something. You look like your brother just died.

There. She did it. She broached the subject. It hangs there for a moment, Ashley growing more and more nervous as Ronald soaks it in.

RONALD
Give me ten minutes.

INT. RONALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

We hear the sound of a shower O.S. as Ashley looks through the stack of Ronald's DVDs, videos, music, etc. She notices the *Young Frankenstein* DVD CASE laying on top of the television. She picks it up, smiles and starts singing.

ASHLEY
If I would come crying home at night,
All I'd need to make it feel right.
A shot of tequila, my bro by my side,
And "Young Frankenstein," magic memory ride.

While she's singing, she notices the telephone is unplugged. She plugs it in and goes back to tidying up.

After a moment, the PHONE RINGS.

INT. CHURCH - THAT VERY MOMENT

Father Reese sits in one of the pews, alone, cell phone in hand.

PUSH IN to reveal a TELEPHONE DIRECTORY open beside him.

INT. RONALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ashley answers the phone.

ASHLEY
Hello?

(CONTINUED)

FATHER REESE (O.S.)
(flustered at hearing a woman's voice)
Is this, um, Ronald Daley's home?

ASHLEY
Yeah. Can I help you?

FATHER REESE (O.S.)
Is this his wife?

ASHLEY
Sure. Who is this?

FATHER REESE (O.S.)
My name is Franklin Reese. I used to be Ronald's pastor.

ASHLEY
He's in the shower. Franklin Reese, right?

FATHER REESE (O.S.)
Father Reese, yes. If he would, please, it's quite important, have him call me. 555-6453.

Ashley takes down the number.

ASHLEY
Okay. I'll tell him you called.

She goes to hang up the phone when...

FATHER REESE (O.S.)
Wait.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Father Reese leans forward.

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
Tell me. Is Ronald...is he happy?

INT. RONALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ashley is a little surprised by the question. Beat.

CONTINUED:

ASHLEY
No, he isn't. I'll let him know you called.

She hangs up the phone as Ronald comes into the living room, wearing a sweatshirt and jeans, his hair still damp.

RONALD
You plugged in my phone?

Ashley turns, surprised.

ASHLEY
Yeah. Why? Now, people can actually call you.
(beat)
I have a message. You, I mean, you have a message.
(looks at note)
Father Franklin Reese. Said it was very important.

Ronald's face is a mixture of shock and anger. He walks over and unplugs the phone...again.

INT. HUNT PHARMACEUTICAL HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

C.C.'s secretary, BELINDA, speaks on the phone.

BELINDA
Okay. Tomorrow at 4. I'll tell him.

C.C. comes striding out of his office as Belinda hangs up. She stands and follows along beside him.

BELINDA (CONT'D)
Where are you off to in such a rush?

C.C.
Jesus, Belinda. I'm going to the fucking bathroom.

BELINDA
Oh, um, Dean called. They've set up a meeting with the entire board tomorrow at noon.

C.C. stops walking.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

C.C.
Dean called you on this?

BELINDA
Just now. Said he was running late, couldn't talk long.

C.C.
That little prick...

C.C. is interrupted by an ASSOCIATE, running down the hall holding a fax.

ASSOCIATE
Charles. I was looking for you. Have you heard about this?

C.C. takes the fax.

ASSOCIATE (CONT'D)
Salazar over at Smith Barney just downgraded us to a "B".

C.C.
After one day? That little prick.

He hands the fax to Belinda. Beat.

C.C. (CONT'D)
I've gotta go to the john.

He heads off, leaving Belinda and the associate behind.

INT. FOG CITY DINER - EVENING

Ronald and Ashley sit in a booth, waiting for their food. Ronald has no clue what he's doing here.

Ashley glows, somewhere between reserved sympathy and pleased-as-punch.

ASHLEY
And so I told Jason, you gotta start acting your age. But then it dawned on me, he's seventeen, he is acting his age. I just can't stand these boys. Last time I go out with a guy who's younger than me. All they want is sex. Like Jason...

CONTINUED:

Ronald finally gets the energy to talk:

RONALD
Ashley.

ASHLEY
...no matter what...

Too bad Ashley doesn't take notice.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
...I knew everything was some calculated ploy to get me in bed and fuck me silly for, what, two minutes if I'm lucky? That's why I'm saving myself for someone special.

She looks at Ron a little too long and a little too hard.

RONALD
I'm your teacher, Ashley.

ASHLEY
You're also my friend.

Ronald uncomfortably looks down at his water glass. Beat.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I didn't thank you for the concert tickets the other night.
(Ronald looks up)
So thanks.

She puts her hand on his. Awkward moment. Ron pulls his hand back, looks around, paranoid.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(re: Ronald's look)
You think we're gonna be caught? That my mom'll walk through the front door?

RONALD
(after a beat)
No...yes...I'm thirty-three!

ASHLEY
And I turn eighteen in two months.
(beat; flustered)
But that doesn't matter. When my...my dad died, all I wanted to do was just, just sit in front of the T.V.
(MORE)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (2)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
and never leave and you can't tell me you don't, just, right now want to get out of this restaurant and sit in front of your fuckin' T.V. and sit there forever. And I care too much to see that happen. I don't want you becoming as fucked up as me.

Ronald is overcome. Doesn't know what to say.

The moment is broken by the waitress bringing their food. Ashley's got a burger. Ronald stares at his chilli-cheese dog. The two eat, choosing to remain quiet.

Comfortable, maybe for the first time, in silence.

CUT TO:

A SYRINGE punctures piebald skin. A droplet of blood forms.

INT. DR. DANIEL SHEPARD'S OFFICE - EVENING

Removing a rubber tourniquet, Dr. Shepard depresses dark, syrupy liquid from the syringe into his forearm. He withdraws the needle and applies a cotton ball to the area.

The door opens. His assistant, Judy, enters.

Quickly, Dr. Shepard hides his arm behind the desk. Nonchalantly, he closes a drawer full of syringes and serum.

Judy looks at Dr. Shepard. Sadness. First time we've seen her show this kind of emotion.

JUDY
Doctor...

INT. USF CANCER WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Shepard and Judy stand over Jerry Silverman's bed.

He's dead. He's twenty-eight and he's fucking dead.

The EKG's been unhooked. The oxygen pumps are dormant. An eerie lack of noise.

JUDY
The family is on their way.

Dr. Shepard looks down at JERRY'S FILE. Judy exits the room.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

FROM THE HALLWAY--

The door closes behind Judy. Through the small viewing window in the door we catch a glimpse of Dr. Shepard abruptly throwing the file against the wall.

Damnit.

EXT. FORT POINT PRESIDIO PARK - EVENING

Ronald and Ashley walk along the coastline, the towering expanse of the GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE high above them, blocking out the last remnants of the setting sun.

ASHLEY
So how come you weren't the rockstar of the family?

RONALD
I taught him how to play guitar, you know?

ASHLEY
Why'd you stop playing?

RONALD
He had the charisma to pull it off. I just decided to leave the rockin' of the rollin' to him and I would do the teachin' of the schoolin'.

ASHLEY
What?

RONALD
(remembering, fondly)
Yeah, I don't know.
(beat)
Ashley. Why aren't you going to college?

She playfully pushes him.

ASHLEY
Here we were having a perfectly good conversation!
(sees he's serious)
Mom had me in college. Not a day goes by that she doesn't remind me how my being born destroyed her "plans.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
" I don't want to go to college. I just want to get as far away from her as I possibly can.

RONALD
I've met your mom. She seems like a nice woman. You might not like her now but you'd miss her if she were gone.

ASHLEY
Where are your parents?

RONALD
(after a beat)
I don't know.

Ashley doesn't press the subject. Stops and takes in the bay. Never looks at him.

ASHLEY
My mother...You have no idea how one person can make everything good in life turn to shit. She hates what I represent. I'm daddy's little girl. Mom hated having to marry my father. She cheated on him. Everyone knew. Then he had a heart attack. Didn't even cry.

RONALD
(after a beat)
I'm sure she was trying to be strong for you.

ASHLEY
Do you ever think about killing yourself?

Ronald doesn't know what to say. He's concerned, though.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I saw on the news this morning, they're sending psychologists to schools because more people killed themselves yesterday than any single day in history. They say now that we know this isn't the end--we think this isn't the end--that everyone wants to give it all up. Why do you think so many people can't stand this place?

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (2)

His silence answers back. Beat.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Sometimes I think about taking a walk...

She looks up at the Golden Gate Bridge.

FLASH CUT:

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DREAM SEQUENCE

The bridge is utterly empty. Except for Ashley. Walking. Wind screams lightly through the massive steel cables.

She approaches the safety rail. The ocean reflects the full moon's light far below. Very far below.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
...And never looking back.

The wind stops. Silence. Ashley steps onto the rail, balancing for a second, then gracefully sliding forward.

Dropping down.

FLASH CUT:

EXT. FORT POINT PRESIDIO PARK - CONTINUOUS

Ashley looks at Ronald, eyes glassed over. She reaches for his hand. Takes it. Holds it.

He squeezes back.

RONALD
I'll take you home.

INT. USF CANCER WARD - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Silverman clan (mother ABIGAIL, father SIMON and ten year-old sister BRIANNA) exit Jerry's room, having just viewed the body.

Brianna is in tears. The parents, strangely, are not.

Dr. Shepard, allowing them their privacy, stands beside the door. Solemn. A seasoned pro...but this never gets easy.

DR. SHEPARD
I am so terribly sorry.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

Abigail hugs the good doctor.

ABIGAIL
Thank you.

DR. SHEPARD
I wish there was something I could do. That FDA rejection shot any possibility of sending the cancer into remission.
(beat)
I'm gonna miss your son. He was...

Dr. Shepard is lost for words. He's emotionally disturbed by the eerie calm coming from the parents.

SIMON
Doc. He's in a better place. You showed us that. We're just thankful there's no more pain.

Dr. Shepard kneels down to Brianna. Face to face.

DR. SHEPARD
Your brother was...What was the game that I saw you two playing?

BRIANNA
Connect-Four.

DR. SHEPARD
Well Jerry told me that when he was playing Connect-Four with you, he was happier than he ever was. No matter what bad stuff was inside him, you made him feel better.

Brianna tries to wipe away the tears.

BRIANNA
My parents say this is good. They say Jerry has gone somewhere better. But I want him back. This isn't good. Jerry should be with me.

SIMON
She'll understand, soon enough.

BRIANNA
Is he? Is he in a better place?

CONTINUED: (2)

Dr. Shepard stares for a moment. He wants to answer. He needs to answer.

He can't. So he stands.

DR. SHEPARD
I'm sorry but I must be getting back to work.

He's affected by their callousness. Stifled, he turns down the hall. Judy joins alongside, barely keeping up.

He rushes toward a door marked: EXIT.

EXT. VERANDA - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Shepard escapes outside. Judy stays back a few feet. Below, on the property line of the hospital, one-hundred some odd people have gathered in a CANDLELIGHT VIGIL.

DR. SHEPARD
Judy, they didn't even cry.

JUDY
Why would they, Daniel? You didn't think this would happen?

DR. SHEPARD
I've been a doctor for thirty-three years. They've always cried.

JUDY
This is what you wanted. This was the whole point! If you can't stop death, stop the fear of it! Prove there's nothing to fear.

Dr. Shepard looks out over the city, all lit up.

DR. SHEPARD
Sixty-two thousand, three hundred and forty-two reported suicides. Just yesterday.

JUDY
Their death's aren't your fault.

Dr. Shepard SIGHS. Long and deep. Looks at the candles flickering on the ground.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

DR. SHEPARD
I hope they feel the same way.

EXT. KONER RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Ronald's DeLorean pulls up into the driveway. Stops. Turns off the engine.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD we see Ashley and Ronald. It's like that awkward moment at the end of a date...not that this is a date, of course.

ASHLEY
Thanks for, you know, letting me spend time with you.

RONALD
It's funny. I always thought you came by after class all these years because of my brother...because of who my brother was.

ASHLEY
Can I ask you something kind of weird?
(beat)
Why do you drive a DeLorean?

RONALD
(smiling)
Ah. Adam gave it to me. He thought it'd be funny if someone actually drove around in a DeLorean.

ASHLEY
Have you seen him yet?

RONALD
What?

ASHLEY
Your brother. When my dad died, I'd wake up in the middle of the night and I'd see him. Right in that moment before my eyes were completely open. Like a flash.

RONALD
No.

CONTINUED:

ASHLEY
You will.

Beat. Running out of things to say:

ASHLEY
Don't come in.

RONALD
(taken aback)
What? I wasn't planning...

ASHLEY
That's my mom's car there. I don't think she...

RONALD
Well maybe I should just say hello.

ASHLEY
Can you please not?

Ronald eyes her up. He'll leave the mother for another day.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
So when are you gonna be back in class.

RONALD
Soon.

ASHLEY
(awkwardly)
Thanks for the ride.
(beat)
Okay.
(beat)
I'm going now. I'll see you soon.

She gets out, swinging the DeLorean's door upward. Laughs a little at the crazy car.

Ronald watches her until she's inside. Safe.

INT. KONER RESIDENCE - ENTRY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley quietly closes the door behind her. She takes off her sweatshirt, throws it on a coathanger.

She pauses, noticing a strange jacket.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

A TOILET FLUSHES. Out of the downstairs bathroom a YOUNG LATINO MAN heads for the door, grabbing his jacket.

YOUNG LATINO MAN
(eyeing-her up)
Hola. Who are you?

ASHLEY
Hi, I'm Ashley. Mom's good in bed, isn't she?

YOUNG LATINO MAN
Oh. I thought you were her sister.

MARILYN (O.S.)
Rafael, get the fuck out of my house!

Rafael leaves. Ashley waits at the bottom of the stairs as Marilyn comes down. She holds a Whiskey Sour.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Where in the god damn have you been?

ASHLEY
Out.

Marilyn slaps her.

MARILYN
Don't get smart with me.
(beat)
Let's sit down.

They head to the living room and awkwardly sit down. Marilyn takes a long drink.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Were you out with that James...John boy again?

ASHLEY
Mom, I'm not having this conversation.

MARILYN
What time does school get out?

ASHLEY
What?

CONTINUED: (2)

MARILYN
I said, what time does school get out?

ASHLEY
2:30.

Marilyn looks at her Ebel. Takes a moment for her to focus.

MARILYN
According to this it's 9:37.
(beat)
Seven hours.

ASHLEY
What. You wanted to know where I was so I wouldn't walk in on you and Chachi?

MARILYN
That man was just here to--
(beat)
It's none of your damn business. Your business is my business because you live in my fucking house.

ASHLEY
Can I go now?

MARILYN
Who the hell dropped you off?

ASHLEY
Just some friend. Ronald.

MARILYN
And how old is Ronald?

ASHLEY
Why, you want him?

Ashley's mother bites down on a cube of ice.

MARILYN
I am a personality in this town, Ashley. I don't want people seeing my daughter with DeLorean driving dicks. I have a reputation.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (3)

ASHLEY
That you do.
(beat)
It was my teacher. Ronald Daley.
English teacher.

Marilyn gets up, heads to a cabinet and removes a bottle of single malt. Pours herself another glass.

MARILYN
That name sounds familiar.

ASHLEY
Probably because you've met him like four times at school.

MARILYN
No, the last name.

ASHLEY
Because he's Adam Daley's brother.

Marilyn almost chokes on her booze.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Look, Mom, he's a nice guy. I went over to make him feel better. We went and had dinner. He even wanted to come in and talk to you but I saw that guy's car out there...look, don't worry. He's my teacher.

MARILYN
(after a beat)
He said he wanted to talk to me?

EXT. KONER RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

Ronald sits in his car, the engine idling softly, lights off.

He watches Ashley and Marilyn's heated conversation through their living room window.

An engine guns off by the side of the house. Headlights come on and Rafael's car pulls out.

He passes by Ronald. They share a look. Ronald instantly realizes why Ashley didn't want him coming inside.

EXT. HIGHWAY 87 - NIGHT

The coastal highway blurs past us, the moonlit Pacific calmly lapping just over the guard-rails.

Ronald's DeLorean drives back into the heart of the city. Rain begins to fall upon the windshield.

EXT. STREET - RONALD'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The rain falls harder now on the three or four news vans camped out on the street in front of Ronald's house.

The reporters all clamor for Ron's car at it pulls quickly up the drive. Hidden amongst the commotion sits a FIGURE.

Cautiously, the figure slips behind a bush and heads up onto private property. Nobody notices.

EXT. RONALD'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Blocked from the media circus by a long, curved driveway, Ronald exits his car. An overhang keeps him dry as he slides his key into the frontdoor.

SPLASHES

Or footsteps -- On the wet pavement behind him -- Turns -- Can't make out the person approaching. It's too dark.

RONALD
You're trespassing!

FIGURE
I'm not a reporter.

The figure steps forward, into the light:

FATHER FRANKLIN REESE

It's been many years but Ronald--frozen with shock--instantly reccgnizes his former priest, soaked by the rain.

FATHER REESE
I just wanted a moment of your time.

RONALD
(still shocked)
What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

FATHER REESE
I need to tell you something.

Ronald registers a flash of anger.

RONALD
What could you possibly need to tell me?

FATHER REESE
Can we talk inside where it's not so...wet?

RONALD
No.

Father Reese nods, lucky Ronald's even talking to him.

FATHER REESE
I read about Adam. Saw on TV, too. Guess it's the only thing people are talking about these days.
(after a beat)
I'm a bad priest. I'm a bad man. I stopped believing in the things I was preaching so long ago...

He trails off, wiping the water from his face.

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
You can't begin to know what it's like to devote yourself fully to God, only to have feelings within that no hallowed being would ever let someone feel. I've done things, so many things. To you. To others.
(beat)
I didn't stop because I knew there couldn't be a God.

RONALD
Are you blaming God for what you did to me?

FATHER REESE
I can't blame God. I don't know if he even exists. Two days ago I was positive he didn't. Now I'm not so sure.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (2)

RONALD
It's been twenty-one years. Now! Now, you suddenly think you have an excuse?

Father Reese starts fidgeting. He's not getting the reaction he wanted.

FATHER REESE
I know how much Adam meant to you. You know I never laid a hand on him. You always protected him.

RONALD
Yeah, because that's what the deal was. Keep my mouth shut and...just get the fuck out of my driveway.

Ronald turns to open the door.

FATHER REESE
You could tell now.
(beat)
Why haven't you?

Ronald stops. Turns.

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
You should have told. You could have saved all those kids.

Ronald steps out into the rain.

RONALD
You told me I was the last one. You said if I kept my mouth shut, you'd never do it again.
(beat)
I was trying to save all those kids.

FATHER REESE
I needed to be stopped.

Ronald loses it, grabbing Father Reese by the collar.

RONALD
I was ten!

He throws Reese to the ground. Reese starts crying.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER REESE
(loud; in pain)
Nobody wants to be a monster.

Ronald kicks him square in the stomach. Leans down to Reese's ear:

RONALD
Come here again and I'll kill you.

And that's that. Ronald goes inside.

Father Reese, kneeling on the pavement, coughs up blood. He stands, wipes his chin.

And lets the rain wash over him.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE SAN FRANCISCO - MORNING

The sun crests the horizon, sending shards of early morning light through the beams of the Golden Gate Bridge, glistening over the soft waves of the bay.

EXT. RONALD'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The driveway is empty. Quiet. "BABA O'RILEY" by The Who begins its melodic overture.

CAMERA CRANES UP to the second floor, over to the master bedroom window.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)
(over the music)
Good morning, San Francisco. It's six a.m., say goodbye to the rain and hello sunshine. You're listening to "Rob Rowe in the Morning" on KFOG 104.5. We got a little "Baba O'Riley" to get your day jump-started.
(beat)
THE WHO!?!?

THROUGH THE WINDOW - -

CONTINUED:

Ronald rolls out of his king-size bed and walk to the bathroom. He flips on the light, illuminating a large jacuzzi-tub and marble sink.

CUT TO:

CU. OF TOOTHPASTE squeezed onto a brush.

INT. MONROE WEAVER'S BATHROOM - MORNING

ANGLE ON Monroe's clean-shaven face in the mirror. He's brushing his capped-white teeth as "Baba O'Riley" continues.

He switches off the bathroom light and steps into the apartment's large bedroom, adorned with a modern, elite sensibility and a view to kill for.

Monroe grabs a WHITE SPORT-COAT off his bed and throws it over his shoulder.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. USF HOSPITAL LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Dr. Shepard throws a WHITE LAB COAT on and takes a stethoscope out of his private locker.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.)
(singing)
Out here in the fields
I fight for my meals
I get my back into my living.

He checks his appearance in a small mirror on the locker door.

FROM INSIDE THE LOCKER - -

We see Dr. Shepard tighten a necktie around his collar. Satisfied, he closes the locker, leaving us in BLACKNESS.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FATHER REESE'S PRIVATE STUDY - BLACKNESS

CAMERA LOOKS UP FROM WITHIN A DESK DRAWER as it's pulled open, revealing Father Reese, unkempt and wide-eyed, looking down.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.)
I don't need to fight
To prove I'm right
I don't need to be forgiven.

NEW ANGLE

As Reese pulls an unseen object out of his desk. He closes the drawer and WALKS PAST CAMERA.

MATCH WIPE:

INT. KONER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - MORNING

ASHLEY BRUSHES PAST CAMERA carrying a bowl of cereal over to the fridge. She grabs a carton of milk and pours it over her Honey Combs.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.)
Don't cry
Don't raise your eye
It's only teenage wasteland.

Ashley returns the milk to the fridge, noticing a NOTE on the fridge as she closes the door:

WENT TO SPEAK TO YOUR TEACHER - MOM

Ashley tears the note off the fridge to take a closer look.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. C.C.'S SAUSALITO MANSION - ENTRY HALL - MORNING

C.C. removes a NOTE taped to the front door, setting down his briefcase in the process.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.)
Sally, take my hand
Travel south cross land.
Put out the fire
And don't look past my shoulder.

The note is in his wife's handwriting:

I WANT A DIVORCE.

C.C. casually slides the note into his pant's pocket.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The exodus is here
The happy ones are near.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Let's get together
Before we get much older.

With no emotional reaction, C.C. removes a long black overcoat from the coat closet. He gathers his things and leaves the house -- SLAMMING THE DOOR SHUT.

With abrupt anger, C.C. opens the door and slams it shut a second time. For good measure --

C.C. slams the damn thing one last time.

SLAM CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY - MORNING

A caravan of cars snake along the main artery of this unnaturally sunny cemetery, past news vans and a vast crowd of *Battle Royale* fans paying tribute to their fallen leader.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.)
Teenage wasteland
It's only teenage wasteland

Marilyn Koner, along with a CAMERAMAN, stand amongst the fans behind a police barricade, calling out as the three remaining band members exit their limos.

Despite all the noise, all we hear is the music.

TELEVISION CAMERA'S VIEWFINDER - -

Marilyn reports live as the hearse at the caravan's front pulls to a stop close to the burial site.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Teenage wasteland
Oh, yeah
Teenage wasteland

RONALD

Joins the band members, Barry and the Stage Manager as a pallbearer.

ROGER DALTRY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They're all wasted!

The six mourners carry the casket over to the burial site, where dirt sits piled near a six-foot deep hole, shored on both sides by metal winches. Flowers encompass the grave.

Beside the open hole sit two identical tombstones.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

Despite all this formalness, there is no sign of a priest.

"Baba O'Riley" grows faster and faster as the coffin approaches the grave, dozens of friends watching in the wake.

The mass of people down by the road stand solemnly. Many of them are crying softly.

Marilyn's cameraman points the television camera downward for some semblance of respect. She glares at him -- FILM!

Ronald and the other Pallbearers reach the grave and lower the casket down, carefully aligning grooves on its side with the mechanical device that lowers the coffin into the earth.

Father Reese, without his white clerical collar and signature black attire, stands at the back of the crowd. Watching from afar. A glint in his eyes.

The coffin slowly lowers down; ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Mourners throw flowers onto the descending grave.

One by one they approach, faster and faster as the music builds to it's blazing climax.

Ronald stands over the grave. Watches as it comes to a stop at the bottom of the hole. He throws a single rose into the grave as the music comes to a CRASHING END--

SLAM CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY - LATER

Much of the crowd has dispersed, leaving only a few devoted groupies, a few devoted officers and a few devoted mourners.

The funeral is finally over.

Ronald heads to his car, briefly pausing to receive the consolation of two older women.

MARILYN (O.S.)
(yelling)
Ronald! Ronald Daley!

Ronald turns and sees Marilyn, standing beside her cameraman back past the now almost nonexistent police barricade. Ronald quickens his step over to a limo; damn reporters.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Ronald! I'm Marilyn Koner. Ashley's mom!

CONTINUED:

Ronald stops at the car door and slowly turns around. He makes a quick decision and trudges over.

RONALD
Put the camera down.

Marilyn nods to her cameraman, who grasps the camera with one hand and lowers it to his side.

CAMERAMAN
Camera's off.

Ronald stays a few feet behind the barricade.

RONALD
What are you doing here?

MARILYN
I'm reporting on the funeral for channel ten news.

RONALD
I didn't know you were a reporter.

MARILYN
Ashley said you wanted to talk to me. I figured since I'm here...

Ronald finds this mildly amusing. Marilyn steps closer, right up to the taped-off barricade.

RONALD
I do. Want to talk.
(beat; not wanting to talk)
About Ashley. But now's probably...

MARILYN
(interrupting)
Well, Ashley's always been quirky.

RONALD
Okay, um.
(might as well...)
Has she seemed down or depressed lately?

MARILYN
She's a teenager. At sixteen they drive, at seventeen they get depressed.

(CONTINUED)

Ronald nods. He's not getting through to her.

RONALD
Do you know if she's been taking anything?

MARILYN
Taking what? What would she be taking?

RONALD
Well I...

Marilyn interrupts again, shaking her head.

MARILYN
We shouldn't even be talking about this right now. My god, my manners. How are you doing? I'm so sorry about your brother.

RONALD
I appreciate that.
(beat)
I guess maybe we should set up a meeting some other time. Soon.

MARILYN
Absolutely. You must, just, be devastated. I mean, how did you react to Dr. Shepard's announcement?

RONALD
(tersely)
I don't give a shit about Dr. Shepard.
(beat)
Pardon my language.

A POLICE OFFICER walks between the two, removing the yellow-tape barrier.

POLICE OFFICER
Excuse me.

Marilyn is now able to take a slight step forward.

MARILYN
So you don't feel like your brother helped make an amazing contribution to the greater good?

CONTINUED: (3)

Ronald is slightly taken aback by the question.

RONALD
I don't care. I've never seen such a disregard for, I don't know, someone who's died. Or for their family.
(beat)
I just miss my brother.

Marilyn smiles softly, nodding, like she's feeling his pain.

MARILYN
Do you believe he's in a better place?

Ronald slowly starts backing away, uncomfortable with the questions.

RONALD
He isn't here. That's all I know.
(beat)
Call the school, we'll set-up a meeting next week.

MARILYN
(compassionately)
Certainly. Again, I'm so sorry for your loss, Ronald. Your brother's music was an inspiration.

Ronald nods and heads back to the last remaining limo, his DRIVER chewing on a toothpick, waiting.

The cameraman turns to Marilyn, smirking.

CAMERAMAN
Your brother's music was an inspiration? You hate *Battle Royale*.

MARILYN
Did you get it?

The cameraman taps the side of his camera. Marilyn can barely contain her excitement.

INT. HUNT PHARMACEUTICAL BOARDROOM - DAY

C.C. Hunt sits at the far end of a long mahogany table, the brown and grey suits of the board members around him softly contrasting with the classically ornate fixtures of the room.

All eyes are turned to the far end of the table, where the room's youngest and most dapper member, DEAN KENSWORTH, smoothly addresses the executives.

DEAN
It is abundantly clear to all of us that Hunt Pharmaceutical's recent plummet on the NASDAQ can be directly attributed to the announcement by Daniel Shepard two days ago. The fact that this company paid for one specific research project and then delinquently sat back while the money was applied to another is gross negligence on the part of upper management. Daniel Shepard's redistribution of funds donated by our CEO to a study that might very well bring Hunt Pharmaceuticals to the brink of bankruptcy shows the vast flaws in this company's system of checks and balances.

Dean looks C.C. directly in the eye. His egotistical smile shooting around the room like a laser.

DEAN (CONT'D)
In other words, fellow members of the board of directors, our chief executive officer signed the very check that will bring about this company's downfall.

Dean sits down as all heads look to C.C. for a reaction. Slowly, methodically, C.C. stands.

C.C.
Seventy-nine years ago my father founded this company. Thirty years ago he handed it over to me. Now you expect me to be blamed for something entirely beyond my control, simply because I was doing my job?

CONTINUED:

He looks for sympathy in the faces of the board members. Finds none.

C.C. (CONT'D)
I personally sought to fund research into a cure for cancer, something Dr. Daniel Shepard has always been at the forefront of. He has a fucking Nobel-prize, for god's sake. I underwrote something I thought would send this company through the stratosphere. Give us profits beyond our wildest dreams. The cure to the most vicious disease on the face of the planet. I wanted to help cure cancer.

Dean smirks condescendingly, cutting in:

DEAN
We all know you had the best of intentions, Charles. That's why we're not suing you.

Dean considers this an act of contrition. C.C. just glares, sitting back down.

DEAN (CONT'D)
What it comes down to is you just don't write checks for that much money and then not oversee the application of it.

C.C.
Shepard's paperwork was in immaculate order.

DEAN
That may be. But everyone in this room has stockholders to whom they are accountable. This company needs to put forward the picture of reliability. And we feel you're no longer a part of that picture.

C.C. soaks this in. He knew things would be bad. But not this bad.

C.C.
So that's it then?

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (2)

He grabs his jacket from behind the chair, stands and throws it on.

DEAN
The company will buy out your majority stake and you'll remain on the board as a consultant.

C.C. strides around the long table, toward the large oak doors of the boardroom. He starts chuckling to himself as he slowly passes Dean.

C.C.
You're firing me from my own company...You little prick.

He exits.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Wearing street clothes, Dr. Shepard sits in front of a desk, carefully reading a manilla file propped on his crossed leg.

DR. BRADLEY ESKANDER, a craggy faced octogenarian, holds fort behind the desk, his lab coat trailing to the floor.

DR. ESKANDER
Have you been giving yourself the injections twice a day?

Dr. Shepard doesn't look up from the file.

DR. SHEPARD
Morning and night.

DR. ESKANDER
It was an experimental drug to begin with, Daniel.

DR. SHEPARD
(looking up)
And unlike mine, it apparently doesn't work.

Dr. Eskander sighs, throwing his elbows on the desk.

DR. ESKANDER
You know very well if you gave yourself your own drug, not only would you be breaking federal law, you'd probably kill yourself.
(MORE)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

DR. ESKANDER (CONT'D)
(beat)
Besides. We caught the cancer far too late in the game. At the least, the injections will give you an extra month.

Dr. Shepard closes the file. Doesn't flinch.

DR. SHEPARD
Well. Might as well start smoking again.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - DAY

Principal Garrett stands unhappily in front of the class, holding a paperback copy of Michael Crichton's *CONGO*.

Drawn on the chalkboard behind him is an elaborate diagram with the phrase "KILLER GORILLAS" circled at the center.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT
It's only beneficial for you if you actually follow along with the reading assignments. You are about to go off to college, fifty pages in one night should not be a problem.

Ashley doodles in her notebook, not paying attention. Beside her, Kate sarcastically raises her hand.

KATE
Mr. Garrett. What is the scholastic benefit of reading Michael Crichton? Shouldn't we be reading Dickens or...John Grisham?

The class chuckles. Garrett sighs.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT
So many artists aren't appreciated until after they die. We are privileged enough to live in a time when Michael Crichton is already a living legend. This is the era of Crichton. And his books are not just fun-filled romps. They're full of symbolism and double-entendre. I mean, just, take for example the Lost City of Zinj...!

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

The door opens and Ronald, still dressed for the funeral, enters. Talking amongst the students immediately subsides.

Principal Garrett pushes to the doorway, privately talking with Ronald.

PRINCIPAL GARRETT (CONT'D)
(flustered)
Ronald. What are you...Why are you here?

RONALD
It's not a weekend, is it?

PRINCIPAL GARRETT
Are you sure?

RONALD
If I wasn't here, I'd just be sitting in front of the T.V. I need this.

Garrett nods, pats Ronald on the shoulder and hands him the copy of *Congo* before exiting.

Ronald walks over to his desk, looking at the book in his hands. His eyes dart up to Ashley in the back row, her face aglow with a small smile. He quickly turns to the board.

Dutifully, he grabs an eraser and starts wiping the slate clean.

INT. C.C.'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

From his vantage point high above the street, C.C. stares out the window at the hive of activity far below. His hands rest flush against the glass, smearing fingerprints on the pane.

The office door opens, reflecting C.C.'s assistant softly in the floor-to-ceiling Plexiglas.

BELINDA
Your wife's not answering, C.C.

C.C. doesn't turn around. He's riveted by the bustle below.

C.C.
Try again.

CONTINUED:

BELINDA
I've called a dozen times already...

C.C.
TRY AGAIN!

He bangs a palm against the Plexiglas, shooting a vibration across the high-rise view.

INT. ENGLISH CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Ronald sits at his desk to the right of the chalkboard, grading a paper with a thin red marker. The faint sound of students yelling filters in through the open door.

Soft footsteps. The door closes. Ronald calmly looks up at Ashley, standing across the room. She slowly approaches, her pleated skirt rustling against her tan legs.

ASHLEY
Hi. Surprised to see you today. Glad too.
(beat)
How was it today?

Ronald caps the red marker.

RONALD
It was. Now it's over.

ASHLEY
Were there a lot of people there?

RONALD
Yeah.

ASHLEY
I wish I could've come. I had a math test.
(beat)
Okay, I just lied. I didn't have a test. I hate cemeteries.

RONALD
Don't you ever go visit your dad?

Ashley sits down at a school-desk in the front row.

WGAw Registered

ASHLEY
I don't need to go to a tombstone to visit my dad.

Ronald nods. Complete understanding.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
1 to 10.

RONALD
What?

ASHLEY
1 to 10. On a scale of how sad you are. Like an eight?

Ronald thinks for a moment.

RONALD
Four.

ASHLEY
Really? Jesus, I like live my life at a constant "four."

RONALD
Being here helps.

ASHLEY
Do I help?

RONALD
Of course. Everything. The whole routine. Just...Even grading these papers.

Ashley stands, stepping over to the desk.

ASHLEY
Those are our papers? What'd I get?

She's beside the desk, reaching for the papers.

RONALD
You can't look...Ashley, I'll hand them back tomorrow.

She tries to thumb through the stack, a foot from Ron.

CONTINUED: (2)

ASHLEY
(playfully)
Come on, stop being so uptight.

RONALD
I'm not uptight!

ASHLEY
Yes you so are.

RONALD
I'm--

Their lips meet. Out of nowhere, Ashley has literally taken the words right out of Ronald's mouth.

For a moment, Ronald doesn't know how to react. But caught up in the moment himself, he closes his eyes.

And for a second, they're like any two lovers kissing.

For a second.

With sudden realization, Ronald quickly pulls away, the force sending his wheeled office chair back against the wall.

You could hear a pin drop...

ASHLEY
1 to 10. How mad are you that I just did that?

Ronald remains silent. He leans forward, hands wrapped over his knees to support his sagging shoulders.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Please talk. Ronald.
(beat)
I'm feeling really fucking stupid here.

She starts to softly cry.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I need to know if that was stupid or wrong or right or...god damnit.
(yelling)
TALK!

His neck bends slightly, allowing us the slightest glimpse of confused eyes.

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED: (3)

RONALD
Go home.

ASHLEY
Not until you tell me why you kissed back.

Ronald can't tell her. *He* doesn't even know. Haphazardly, he brushes the papers into his briefcase, spilling several on the floor. Ronald gets on his knees to pick up the papers. Ashley kneels beside him to help.

RONALD
(yelling)
STOP!

His bark instantly crushes her. Ronald slams the suitcase shut and heads for the door. Stops.

Turns halfway, unable to make eye-contact.

RONALD (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

He quietly closes the door behind him, leaving Ashley to wipe her tears away. Alone.

INT. MONROE WEAVER'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Dolores the secretary sits in the empty waiting room, talking on the phone as she casually rubs a finger across her teeth.

She ignores Dr. Shepard opening the office door--

DOLORES
(into phone)
I don't know, baby. We had pizza last night. I know. I'll be home in twenty-five minutes, we'll make something.

DR. SHEPARD
Excuse me.

DOLORES
(into phone)
Baby, I gotta go. No. We had pizza last night. Bye. I love you too.

Deloris hangs up. Begins packing away her purse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOLORES (CONT'D)
Press isn't allowed up here.

DR. SHEPARD
I'm not press.

DOLORES
There's no more appointments today. How'd you get past the guard?

She looks up and freezes. Instant recognition.

DOLORES (CONT'D)
Good Jesus.
(beat)
You've been good for business.

DR. SHEPARD
I can imagine. Is Mr. Weaver still here?

DOLORES
He's finishing up with his last appointment. I can interrupt.

DR. SHEPARD
No. I'll wait.

He sits down and grabs an old *Reader's Digest--Large Print.*

INT. BULLPEN - ABC NEWS/GOOD MORNING AMERICA - NIGHT

The office is still abuzz as Bob (Marilyn's dinner guest from three days earlier) enters the maze of offices and meets up with a SEGMENT PRODUCER holding a VIDEO TAPE. They scurry into an alcove with a VCR/TV set-up. Rapid fire:

BOB
Why didn't anyone call my cell?

SEGMENT PRODUCER
I did. Went straight to machine.

BOB
Why didn't anyone call the restaurant?

SEGMENT PRODUCER
Do you wanna watch this or not?

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

He pops the tape into the VCR and the video automatically starts playing.

ONSCREEN:

ABC NIGHTLY NEWS WITH PETER JENNINGS - -

Sitting resolutely behind his desk, addressing CAMERA:

PETER JENNINGS
...ABC News has obtained an exclusive copy of the very first interview with Adam Daley's only living relative, brother Ronald. It comes to us from Marilyn Koner at our affiliate in San Francisco.

EXT. MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY - VIDEO FOOTAGE - THAT MORNING

CAMERA is awkwardly pointed upward, held at the cameraman's side, his angle sometimes off the mark.

MARILYN
You must, just, be devastated. I mean, how did you react to Dr. Shepard's announcement?

RONALD
(tersely)
I don't give a (beep) about Dr. Shepard.

BACK TO BOB & SEGMENT PRODUCER - -

SEGMENT PRODUCER
(over video footage)
Legal had a shitfit but Jonas said, "fuck it." It's too good.

BOB
Get her on a plane. Now.

INT. MONROE WEAVER'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Dr. Shepard looks through his *Reader's Digest*. The door to the inner office opens and Monroe escorts out a middle-aged couple, tissues held up to their faces. They ad-lib goodbyes and exit, not noticing Dr. Shepard.

But Monroe sure does.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

DR. SHEPARD
Come into my office.

Monroe laughs a little, sitting down on the plush L-shaped couch across from Shepard.

MONROE
You know we're closed.

Shepard glances at a copy of the LOS ANGELES TIMES on the table. On the frontpage--

A COLOR PICTURE of the good doctor in front of USF Medical Center. The crowd is so thick security has to plow a path for Dr. Shepard.

DR. SHEPARD
You do make exceptions, though, right?

MONROE
What can I do for you?

A half beat.

DR. SHEPARD
I have to be honest, I have no clue why I came here. I felt compelled for some reason.

MONROE
Most people have no idea why they come here either. They just do.

Shepard picks up the *L.A. Times* and casually flips it over.

DR. SHEPARD
I'm a cancer researcher. It's been my life's work, up until a few months ago. I've seen over a thousand succumb to this vicious disease, attacked from within by their own bodies.
(deep breath)
But it wasn't until three years ago that I truly realized how devastating death was.

MONROE
What happened three years ago?

Dr. Shepard rubs his hands together silently.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

DR. SHEPARD
My wife died. I sat by her bed for 2 months, watched the flare of life leave her eyes. I felt it physically leave her body.

MONROE
Do you want to try and speak with her?

DR. SHEPARD
No, no, no.
(beat)
When she died, I wanted to believe she went to a better place. I needed that comfort.

MONROE
Yet something tells me that comfort is still missing.

DR. SHEPARD
I set out knowing that I wouldn't be able to stop death. But I thought I'd be able to take away the fear and the pain of it.

MONROE
And haven't you? There are a hundred people outside, all trying to see me because of what you showed on television.

Dr. Shepard stands and half-turns to the window beside the couch.

DR. SHEPARD
Do you believe...

He trails off, staring at the gathered mass several stories below. It's now a common sight for Daniel Shepard. Him looking down at people from high above.

MONROE
Do I believe in what?

DR. SHEPARD
Not in.

EXT. MONROE'S OFFICE - LOOKING THRU WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

CRANE DOWN from the office to the crowd of people below, keeping Dr. Shepard's silhouette and the window in view.

DR. SHEPARD (V.O.)
...Do you believe that there are things we'll just never know the answers to? Are we really entitled to absolute clarity?

GROUND LEVEL - -

Past the police officers and Monroe's milling devotees we find ASHLEY trudging through the milieu. She cries softly, wiping the tears away with the black sleeve of her sweater.

MONROE (V.O.)
That's kind of a funny question coming from a man who's devoted his life to finding answers. Your a doctor and a scientist. Your definition of clarity comes from numbers and fact sheets. Mine comes from within.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ashley turns the corner, leaving Monroe's building behind. Cars whip by on the street.

MONROE (V.O.)
You seek truth via one specific route, but truth cannot be defined. Truth is what you make of it. People see a Polaroid of the human soul and they believe they see the hand of god.

DR. SHEPARD (V.O.)
And you don't?

A homeless man leaning inside an alcove holds a CARDBOARD SIGN--

FOR GOOD KARMA...YOU'RE GONNA NEED IT!

Ashley takes a moment. Reads the sign. Silently moves on through the city.

INT. MONROE WEAVER'S OFFICE - THAT VERY MOMENT

Dr. Shepard still stands at the window. Monroe rises to join him.

MONROE
You loved your wife. You feel tremendous compassion for people, so much so that you have devoted your life to bettering their bodies and minds. I look at you and I see god's work.
(beat)
That's all the clarity I need.

EXT. BUSSTOP - THAT VERY MOMENT

Ashley sits on the bench flanked by advertisements for makeup and hair products.

DR. SHEPARD (V.O.)
I have many deaths on my hands. Why are these people taking their lives, thinking that will bring them the answers?

On the street, speeding toward the busstop in the after-work traffic is a familiar grey Bentley.

INT. C.C.'S GREY BENTLEY - CONTINUOUS

For a man who's never cried, C.C. is--right now--the closest he's ever been. His hands shake. His eyes stare off, distant. His world is crumbling.

MONROE (V.O.)
Just as you seek answers, they too look for gospel. Theirs is simply another ill-fated quest.

C.C. pulls up to a red stoplight. Through the driver-side window we can see Ashley waiting at the busstop.

INT. MONROE WEAVER'S OFFICE - THAT VERY MOMENT

They're standing together, the late-day sun dripping through the window, casting rich shadows over the office.

DR. SHEPARD
Did I make a mistake?

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

CONTINUED:

MONROE
Did you ask a question that needn't be asked? No. In fact, it's a question that needs an answer.
(beat)
All those people, Daniel. Ending their lives. It's not your fault.

Dr. Shepard nods and heads to the door.

MONROE (CONT'D)
Oh and Dr. Shepard!

Shepard turns, his hand on the doorknob.

MONROE (CONT'D)
Your wife says she'll see you soon.

INT. C.C.'S GREY BENTLEY - LATE AFTERNOON

C.C. has finally broken. Tears stream down his face. He instinctively hugs the steering wheel for comfort, crying into the plush leather.

A LOUD CAR HORN

Draws his attention. The light must have turned green. He hits the accelerator before looking up.

THE LIGHT IS STILL RED

The Bentley coasts through the intersection. C.C. turns left just in time to see--

A VOLVO STATIONWAGON

Doesn't even have a chance to honk as it CLIPS the back of the BENTLEY, sending it into a 180-DEGREE SPIN.

THE VOLVO skids onto the sidewalk, slamming into the brick-wall of a corner building.

BACK TO C.C.

In a daze. Everything's happening so fast. A MOTORCYCLE barrels down the cross-street--

The driver sees the Bentley at the last second, turns hard and sends his motorcycle into another CAR, stopped at its red light. The motorcyclist flies off his bike, over the car, into the windshield of the PONTIAC in the next lane.

(CONTINUED)

WGAw Registered

C.C. spins around, sees a giant MACK-RD CONSTRUCTION TRUCK barrelling down on him.

SLO-MO

As the massive weight of the truck propels it forward. There's no way it can stop in time.

C.C. watches as it comes ever closer. Time seems to stand still until--

THE MACK SLAMS INTO THE BENTLEY

Flipping it onto the roof in an end-over-end ballet.

THE TRUCK

Sharply turns to the left, tilting onto two wheels and tumbling sideways, spewing QUARRIED GRANITE over the street.

THE BENTLEY

Skids across the ground, smashing into a LIGHTPOLE.

SLAM CUT TO:

FATHER FRANKLIN REESE

Looking down at something, swirls of orange, red and white sky dancing behind his head. His eyes swirl with their own kind of color; striking, determined, sinister.

FATHER REESE
I cannot be blamed. Not for what I have done. Not for what I must do.

EXT. MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY - SUNSET

Reese stands before the recent pile of earthen soil marking Adam Daley's grave. No headstone is yet in place.

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
Your brother will not forgive me. I tried to explain to him. I told him I never laid a hand on you.

He pulls his small handgun out of a coat pocket. Rubs his fingers across it. Lets the cool metal relax the joints.

CONTINUED:

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
But he would not find forgiveness.
So I must show him the true
definition of the word.

He pockets the gun and calmly walks away.

OVERHEAD - -

A BOEING 737 streaks across the sky, it's metallic belly refracting the color spectrum of the setting sun.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE (PRELAP)
Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.
This is your captain speaking.

INT. FLIGHT 18 - CONTINUOUS

Passengers are buckled in as the 737 ascends ever higher.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
We're on our way to a cruising
altitude of 34,000 feet. Flight
time is approximately...

Marilyn sits in first class, looking excitedly out the window to the micro-world below. The aisle seat is empty.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE
...Five hours and twenty minutes.
S'bit of a stormfront over the
Rockies we're gonna have to try and
avoid. Otherwise, sit back and
enjoy the flight.

Marilyn leans back in her seat, relaxing.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BUSSTOP - THAT VERY MOMENT - ASHLEY

Sits on the bench, shaking furiously with fright.

REVERSE--

To reveal she has been witness to the massive car-accident. The Mack-Truck lies twenty yards past her, it's cargo splayed out haphazardly across the street.

In the intersection, cars are smashed and lammed. Smoke and dust drift up, the particles catching in the light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With absolute delicacy, Ashley stands. She steps carefully over the granite chunks lining the street.

In the center of the intersection -- the center of the carnage -- she stops.

Off to the side the motorcyclist lies unconscious. People are screaming for help from every direction. Ashley spins around as the cries grow louder and more numerous.

Frantic, she withdraws her cell-phone. Dials.

MACHINE VOICE (V.O.)
(from phone)
9-1-1 emergency, please hold. Due to the number of incoming calls, your call will be answered in the order in which it was received.

ASHLEY
SHIT!

She quickly dials another number.

ASHLEY
Please. Please be there.

A BUSY TONE emanates from the cell phone.

ASHLEY
DAMNIT! Plug in your fucking phone. I need to talk to you!

And suddenly, the world of the accident quickly descends back upon her. She walks over to the sidewalk, her attention on--

C.C.'S BENTLEY WRAPPED AROUND A POLE

The car is totaled, it's front and back buckled in, now a permanent fixture of the lightpole.

Ashley walks over to the driver's side window. C.C.'s head rests on the compacted steering column. Dead.

ASHLEY
Help! Somebody...

SIRENS approaching. Ashley looks off in the direction of the sound. Looks back at the Bentley--

C.C. LOOKS RIGHT AT HER

CONTINUED: (2)

He blinks. Not dead.

Ashley screams -- Backing away -- Faster.

The destruction finally too much for her to handle. She disappears around the corner.

EXT. NEARBY STREET - THAT VERY MOMENT

One side a complete parking lot. Cars packed in like sardines. Going nowhere.

AN AMBULANCE rushes past--toward the accident--over the divide on the left side of the road.

PUSH IN on Ronald's stationary DeLorean. Ron looks destroyed. Exhausted. The worst day of his life.

And now traffic.

EXT. HIGHWAY 87 - EVENING - ESTABLISHING

A yellow TAXI speeds past us, heading northbound.

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Father Reese sits quietly in the back. The CABDRIVER, a fast-talking odd-job, toggles the volume down on his radio.

CABDRIVER
So who died?

FATHER REESE
Excuse me?

CABDRIVER
Well, I picked you up at a cemetery. Figure somebody died. Wrong thing to figure?

Reese doesn't respond.

CABDRIVER
I tell ya though. Those fuckin' places. Give me the heebie-jeebies.
(beat)
I mean, you think you got three, four thousand people underground?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CABDRIVER (CONT'D)
Where do they go? You got this Jew doctor spoutin' out about heaven, sayin' hey, we all got a soul. Meanwhile these guys' in a box shoutin', hey, I ain't goin' nowhere. I'm right here in a fucking box!

FATHER REESE
What do you think happens when we die?

CABDRIVER
Who the hell knows. Who cares. We're dead. I'll know when I die. All I know is when I'm gone, I won't have to drive this cab through this fuckin' queer city. No offense. If it applies.
(beat)
What do you think? Yes. No. Purgatory?

Father Reese stares out as the sun finally sets behind the horizon, the ocean glimmering with the last day's rays.

FATHER REESE
Lets just go where we need to go.

INT/EXT. USF MEDICAL CENTER - VARIOUS - NIGHT

The hospital is eerily quiet. The WAITING ROOM sits empty.

A trio of nurses chat by the coffee machine.

Two interns toss a Nerf football in one of the hallways.

Outside, most of the gathered mob has disappeared. Only a single news van remains, the crew packing up their equipment.

On the nearby lawn, two dozen people, mostly seated, hold signs. The sole police-officer present chats with a cute girl.

INT. DR. DANIEL SHEPARD'S MERCEDES - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Shepard drives into work, past the crowd on the lawn. Someone in the crowd points to the car and the group stands, excited. They call for him.

But he just keeps driving past. Until--

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

Without reason, his foot is on the brake. The key is out of the ignition. And Shepard is out the door.

EXT. USF MEDICAL CENTER LAWN - CONTINUOUS

The crowd grows energetic, shocked Dr. Shepard--the man they've all camped out to see--is walking into their midst.

DR. SHEPARD
Well. You've been camped out for three days. What would you like to say?

MAN #1
(after a beat)
It's an honor to meet you, sir.

The crowd circles around him. They're friendlier than he expected.

DR. SHEPARD
It's an honor to meet you as well.

WOMAN #1
My brother died of AIDS two years ago. I haven't been able to sleep since. Now I can. Thank you.

DR. SHEPARD
You're all here to thank me?

The group nods.

MAN #2
You've discovered god's will. You've showed us proof of his hand.

SHABBILY DRESSED MAN
It's not about that. He didn't do that. He didn't do a damn thing.

The crowd opens to reveal a tall, SHABBILY DRESSED MAN. He's unshaven. His eyes are bloodshot.

SHABBILY DRESSED MAN
How can you possibly do what you've done and think you're not trying to play god. My son killed himself yesterday. Because of you.

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WOMAN #2
How dare you say...

SHABBILY DRESSED MAN
You lied. You act as if you want to help the world. Cure its ills. But you lie.

DR. SHEPARD
I don't know what...

He's cut off by someone in the crowd.

WOMAN #1
This man proved there's more to us than just skin and bones! He's given us hope. He's showed that each of us has the ability to be a good and decent and loving person.

Dr. Shepard watches as the crowd turns on the shabbily dressed man. From far-off, the sound of SIRENS grow. On his belt, Shepard's beeper VIBRATES.

INT. USF MEDICAL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Shepard runs through the motion-sensitive doors to the head nurse. The once calm hospital is now abuzz.

DR. SHEPARD
What's going on?

HEAD NURSE
Major car accident. Inbound.

DR. SHEPARD
How many people?

HEAD NURSE
Don't know. A lot.
(beat)
One of them's C.C. Hunt.

Oh shit.

EXT. RONALD'S HOME - NIGHT

Ronald carries his school briefcase from the driveway to the front door. His keys jangle in the other hand as he unlocks the front--

CONTINUED:

THE DOOR IS ALREADY OPEN

Strange. Ronald leans down and looks under the doormat. The spare key is missing.

INT. RONALD'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The door squeaks as it swings wide, letting the outside light spill into the cold darkness within. He slowly enters.

RONALD
Hello!

Muted voices. Coming from the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronald sets his briefcase down and notices the T.V. is on. The voices he heard are GENE WILDER, MARTY FELDMAN and TERI GARR. The movie is YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN.

ON THE TELEVISION - -

FREDDY, IGOR and INGA descend into Victor Frankenstein's infamous lab.

FREDDY
Did you hear that strange music?

IGOR
What?

FREDDY
Did you hear that strange music?

IGOR
No, not a sound.

INGA
There must have been someone else down here then.

FREDDY
It seems that way.

BACK TO RONALD - -

Watching the scene. He knows it well.

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CONTINUED:

There's something else though. Another sound. He shuts off the T.V. and hears--

RUNNING WATER

From somewhere -- Upstairs -- Ronald freaks -- Looks for something heavy -- Nothing -- Shit -- There --

HIS BROTHER'S ACOUSTIC GUITAR

It'll have to do. He holds it over his shoulder, cautiously approaching the stairs. Rubs his eyes. God he's tired.

INT. RONALD'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ronald pushes the door with his foot -- Scans left -- Right.

It's empty.

A SLIVER OF LIGHT

Emanates from under the bathroom door. Ronald readies the guitar as he walks forward--

BANG

He spins around, looking for the cause of the loud noise. Sees a tree-branch hit against the window. Sighs. Relieved.

Turns back to the bathroom--

ADAM

His brother. There. In front of him.

And then he's not. Gone in the blink of an eye.

Ronald shakes his head -- So scared he's seeing things -- But still -- There's something behind that door.

A deep breath. He opens it.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bathtub is bright red. The color of blood.

Ashley's blood.

Her naked body lies unconscious in the bathtub, her skin white. Contrastingly pale.

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CONTINUED:

A large SHARD OF GLASS from a broken mirror rests on the ground, its serrated edge burnished red. Beside it, drizzled with water stains, is a HANDWRITTEN SUICIDE NOTE.

INT. USF MEDICAL CENTER - HALLWAY - NIGHT

One word: Madhouse. Everybody, from the janitors up to the surgeons are on call and running about.

A gurney turns the corner and C.C. Hunt is rushed forward. Dr. Shepard walks briskly beside it.

DR. SHEPARD
Are you experiencing any blurred vision? Shortness of breath?

C.C.
No.

DR. SHEPARD
Any pain whatsoever?

C.C.
My leg. This one.

He points to his right leg. Shepard turns to another DOCTOR.

DR. SHEPARD
I want a full-body C.T. X-Ray of the chest, skull and the right leg. Find Dr. Bolware, have him do a spinal-tap.

The gurney is rolled into a room with a giant MRI. C.C. disappears behind the closed door.

DOCTOR
He should be dead.

DR. SHEPARD
(after a beat)
No. No he shouldn't.

Shepard goes to address the next problem. Practically bumps into Jane as he turns.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
Walk and talk.

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CONTINUED:

JANE
There's a patient you're going to want to deal with personally.

DR. SHEPARD
It's gonna have to wait, I've got a skull fracture, ruptured spleen...

JANE
It's a young girl, Daniel. She slit her wrists.

Dr. Shepard stops dead in his tracks.

DR. SHEPARD
What's her BP?

JANE
61 over 24. She's having a transfusion right now.

DR. SHEPARD
So what am I supposed to do?

JANE
I'll find someone to cover. Go talk to the guy who brought her in.
(beat)
It's Ronald Daley.

INT. USF E.R. WAITING AREA - THAT VERY MOMENT

Ronald sits in the crowded room, amongst patient's relatives all worriedly trying to find out about their respective loved ones. Some look sideways at Ronald, his suit drenched in blood.

Hanging in the corner, the muted television cuts to a--

SPECIAL REPORT

Spotlights from helicopters illuminate vast amounts of WRECKAGE. A crater-size hole is cut into a mountain.

Ronald stands up and walks to the television, hitting the volume button until he can hear what is...

ON THE TELEVISION - -

A REPORTER sits beside the open door of a helicopter, yelling into his microphone to be heard.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

REPORTER
...Reports are unconfirmed at this time, but it is believed that all 113 passengers and crew on Skyway Flight 18 from San Francisco to New York are dead. The cause of the crash is not yet known...

BACK IN THE WAITING AREA - -

People are starting to crowd around Ronald as he stands watching the special report.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
(onscreen)
...It is also being reported that one of the passengers on Flight 18 was Marilyn Koner, who made national news this morning with the first ever interview of Ronald Daley, Adam Daley's only living relative.

Ronald is shocked. ONSCREEN:

EXT. MOUNT OLIVET CEMETERY - VIDEO FOOTAGE - THAT MORNING

CAMERA ANGLE is once again awkwardly pointed upward, held at the cameraman's side.

MARILYN
So you don't feel like your brother helped make an amazing contribution to the greater good?

Ronald is slightly taken aback by the question.

RONALD
I don't care. I've never seen such a disregard for, I don't know, someone who's died. Or for their family.
(beat)
I just miss my brother.

IN THE WAITING AREA - -

Ronald turns away from the television, rushing out into:

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INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Where he leans back against the wall. Part shock. Part anger. Maybe a little sadness.

A figure approaches. Dr. Shepard puts his hand on Ronald's shoulder.

DR. SHEPARD
Are you okay?

Ronald's deflated. Can barely stand.

RONALD
I buried my brother this morning. A woman who used me -- Her plane just slammed into a mountain. And her daughter slit her wrists in my bathtub.

DR. SHEPARD
The girl you brought in. Her mother?

Ronald nods and closes his eyes.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
My god. Those people.

Shepard steps over to a window looking into the waiting area, the television newscast still playing. The images hit Ronald especially hard.

RONALD
I was about Ashley's...I was eighteen. A freshman at Brown. My mom and dad flew out to Providence to surprise me. They left Adam at home with some friends.

The tears come easily. Ronald doesn't bother holding back.

RONALD (CONT'D)
Their plane went down in Aurora, Nebraska. The pilot's wife had asked for a divorce the day before. Who knows if he wanted to kill himself or just wasn't paying attention.

DR. SHEPARD
I saw that in your brother's file.

CONTINUED:

RONALD
There's something that's not in the file. Aurora, Nebraska, where the plane went down is -- I don't know how or why -- Halfway. Exactly. From my college dorm and my front porch at home: 1,543 miles. I did the math.
(beat)
Maybe you can tell me what that means?

DR. SHEPARD
It means that terrible things happen and we do whatever it takes to make sense of them.

RONALD
What are you trying to make sense of?

Dr. Shepard looks around the hospital. Like he hopes the answer lies somewhere within these halls. It doesn't.

DR. SHEPARD
I needed to know, Ronald. I couldn't live with the fear anymore.

RONALD
Of dying?

DR. SHEPARD
Never seeing my wife again. I thought if I understood why something could be so easily taken away from me, this --
(motions with his hand)
-- would all make sense.

For the first time, they understand each other. Two men, devastated by death.

RONALD
I thought Adam was my last. And I'm scared. Because now I know he's not.

DR. SHEPARD
The last what?

Ronald stands up straight. Knows what he now has to do.

CONTINUED: (2)

RONALD
Is she going to be okay?

DR. SHEPARD
(comprehending)
I think so. I hope so.
(beat)
For your sake.

Ronald nods -- Deep breath -- With resoluteness to his step, he heads into the heart of the hospital. The unknown.

DR. SHEPARD (CONT'D)
She's in room 402!

THRU THE WAITING ROOM WINDOW

As visitors passively eye a press conference on CNN, the head nurse approaches a pregnant Latino woman in her late 20's. Dr. Shepard watches--but can't hear--as the nurse tells her bad news. Their eyes say it all. Death has reared its head.

The pregnant woman's hand covers her mouth. A reflex. But that's all. No tears. She places the other hand protectively on her stomach.

IN THE HALLWAY

Come the nurse and the expectant mother. Heading in the opposite direction of Ronald, who's just about to disappear behind a corner.

Shepard glances between the pregnant woman and Ron. Their reactions to death so opposite.

SLAM CUT TO:

HEADLIGHTS

Screeching right toward us.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

STAY TIGHT ON Father Reese, abstractedly staring out the car window at his destination. His vindication.

FATHER REESE
Wait. Stop. I'll walk from here.

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CONTINUED:

CABDRIVER
You alright? Something wrong? Well, guess something's gotta be wrong. Comin' here and all. You want I should wait around?

FATHER REESE
That won't be necessary

He hands the driver a FIFTY and anxiously exits the cab, his left jacket pocket weighted down by the concealed handgun.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (402) - NIGHT

Ashley's weakened body rests flat on sterile, white linens. The warm red of her complexion has slowly started returning.

RONALD

Stands in the corner. Seemingly afraid to approach. An INTRAVENOUS TUBE feeds blood into Ashley's right radial vein.

BEEP...BEEP...BEEP

As the EKG metronomically sounds out. Ronald glares at the whiny machine, slowly approaching to take a closer look for--

THE VOLUME KNOB

Which he turns all the way down. Silence now dominates.

Ron grabs a chair from the nearby wall and swings it up next to Ashley's bed. He mats his jacket into a pillow and lays his head against the backrest.

Exhausted beyond words, Ronald's eyes flutter closed. The last image he sees before sleep--

ASHLEY. ALIVE.

CAMERA moves slowly toward the wall.....THRU IT.....Into:

INT. ADJACENT HOSPITAL ROOM (403) - CONTINUOUS

C.C. in bed. A mirror image of the previous room. Except he's awake. And very much entrenched in thought. His right leg is covered in a PLASTER CAST.

Other than his leg, there's not a scratch on him.

The door opens. Closes. A very long beat before--

(CONTINUED)

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C.C. LOOKS AT HIS WIFE

Her face is so puffy from crying she looks worse than her husband. She sets a nylon duffel bag on the floor.

C.C.
I'm okay.

SALLY
Yeah. They told me.

C.C.
I shouldn't be. I should be dead three times over.

SALLY
Charlie...

She rushes forward. He envelopes her in a hug. It's the first affection we've ever seen from C.C.

C.C.
I don't know what happened. I was crying. Next thing I know, the car's spinning and a truck is heading straight for me. And I was suddenly so afraid...

SALLY
It's okay. You're okay.

C.C.
But not of dying. Part of me probably wanted to die. I don't know. All I could think about was the part of me that didn't want to die with you angry at me.

SALLY
I'm not angry. Oh god...

Sally runs her hand down C.C.'s cheek.

C.C.
The very last thing I remember doing before I blacked out --
(hard for him to even believe)
-- I prayed. I haven't prayed in 38 years. The last time was right before I asked you to marry me.
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

C.C. (CONT'D)
We were in Nebraska visiting your parents. I prayed that you'd say yes.

SALLY
(laughingly)
You were so nervous, my dad thought you were going to throw up.

C.C.
Well I prayed again today.

C.C. takes Sally's left hand and gently removes her GOLD WEDDING BAND. He looks at the ring, then to his wife...

C.C. (CONT'D)
Will you marry me?

SALLY
I'm not going to leave you.

C.C.
I'm not asking you that. I'm asking you to marry me.

Sally kisses him. They haven't kissed like this since he first popped the question.

C.C. holds her hand and slides the wedding band back onto her ring finger.

C.C. (CONT'D)
This is my second chance. I'm going to get it right this time because I can't lose you again. You're my last.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

UNENDING SPIRES reach up toward the dark heavens, tapering in at the high altar, above which hangs a burnished fresco (similar to Rembrant's) of *The Angel Stopping Abraham from Sacrificing Isaac to God.*

FOOTSTEPS

Through the empty nave. Reverberating down the center aisle.

FATHER FRANKLIN REESE

Pauses to take in the imposing surroundings. Maneuvers between a pew to the colonnade arches. Reaches--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A CONFESSIONAL

Deep crimson wood houses two sets of cabinetry. Reese hesitates before choosing the left confessional. With his hand on the door--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (402) - THE DOOR

Slowly opens on--

DR. DANIEL SHEPARD

Taking in the scene before him: Ashley and Ronald -- Asleep.

Shepard eyes the chart in his hand, then looks at the EKG. Checks a few numbers. Makes a few notes.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - THAT VERY MOMENT

Father Reese sits down in the booth. Waits silently.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (402) - THAT VERY MOMENT

Dr. Shepard motions to exit. But something stops him. The tableau of Ronald and Ashley. Looks closer at--

HIS WIFE

In the bed -- For an instant -- Then she's gone.

Everything back to normal. Shepard rubs his eyes. Beat tired.

He sits on the edge of the bed, not completely sure why. Checks the bandages on Ashley's wrists, setting them gently back down by her side.

INTERCUT:

INT. CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

A PRIEST sits behind the screen, sliding the partition away, his face obscured in shadow.

FATHER REESE
Forgive me Father, for I have sinned...

CONTINUED:

DR. SHEPARD

Makes sure Ronald is asleep before:

DR. SHEPARD
(softly)
Forgive me...

FATHER REESE

Leans forward. So used to being on the *other side*.

FATHER REESE
This is the second time I have asked for penance. The first time, it did not come.

PRIEST
No matter what, God will grant you forgiveness.

FATHER REESE
How?

Beat. The priest isn't sure how to respond.

PRIEST
Tell me what you have done, my son.

DR. SHEPARD

Looks at Ashley's fluttering eyes. Deep sleep.

DR. SHEPARD
I thought I did the right thing. But I look at you and now I'm not so sure. You have your entire future. Was this because of me?

FATHER REESE

FATHER REESE
I have lusted. That is my sin. And I have doubted God. But I don't consider that my sin. Because I think God wants us to question him. I think if he even exists -- I think he wants us to hate him.

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CONTINUED: (2)

DR. SHEPARD

DR. SHEPARD
Did you think because of what I said there's something better than living?
(beat)
Well there isn't.

FATHER REESE

FATHER REESE
I touched them. They were so accepting. I needed that comfort. I needed them because they were innocent. Because they still believed.

DR. SHEPARD

DR. SHEPARD
I lied. To everyone. For better or worse I made it all up. It was a fabrication. We manufactured the data, we created the imagery. My team and I wove a conspiracy so obvious we knew the world would ignore the science of it and just embrace the desire in their heart we all secretly hold. The desire to know what happens next.
(beat)
There is no soul.
(beat)
Or maybe there is. Either way, I didn't find the answer. I failed. And I lied.

FATHER REESE

FATHER REESE
Why would God make me do that?

PRIEST
God provides you with free will. These terrible sins are not his doing.

FATHER REESE
(angry)
They are his doing! My pain is his doing.
(MORE)

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CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER REESE (CONT'D)
Suffering is all he cares about. He killed his son for our sins? He killed his son?! Not the Jews, not the Romans. For what? He couldn't absolve us himself?

PRIEST
Perhaps we should--

FATHER REESE
(interrupting)
Perhaps you should let me finish my confession. Let me have this little bit of peace.

DR. SHEPARD

Has his head cupped in his hands. His eyes off Ashley.

DR. SHEPARD
I wanted the world to be a better place. A happier place. Less pain. That's all I wanted. Did I make a mistake? Was I wrong--

ASHLEY
What mistake?

Shepard's head snaps up. Ashley is awake.

FATHER REESE

Is sweating heavily. Something's wrong.

FATHER REESE
I put myself for so many years at his mercy. Was that my mistake? ... Was I simply lost? ... Did I fail him? ... Did he walk away from us or did we turn our heads from him? ... Is he even up there? ... Has he ever been? ... Or are we so afraid of life that we had no choice but to invent him out of thin air?

DR. SHEPARD

Stares at Ashley, unsure whether to continue.

ASHLEY
Are you okay?

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CONTINUED: (4)

DR. SHEPARD
(still shocked)
Me? I'm...fine.
(beat)
No I'm not. Did you do this because of me?

Ashley looks around the room, still getting her bearings. She sees Ronald sleeping. Pauses on him.

ASHLEY
Sometimes I don't think we have a choice. We do what we do.
(beat; recognition)
You're Daniel Shepard. Why were you talking to me?

DR. SHEPARD
I was talking to myself.

Ashley looks at her wrists. Huh.

DR. SHEPARD
Don't do this to yourself. Death doesn't hold the answers. There are no answers.

ASHLEY
Of course there are...

FATHER REESE

FATHER REESE
Why doesn't he prove to us he exists? I want that question answered. I need to know I need to know. Can you tell me?

PRIEST
No.

FATHER REESE
Well maybe he can.

THE HANDGUN

Appears at his temple -- His eyes open wide -- BOOM...

SLAM CUT TO:

WHITE

Bright. So bright we don't know what we're looking at.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
I didn't try and kill myself because I wanted answers. I was sad. And I wanted it to go away. Forever.

PULL BACK off a window. Sun so bright everything is blown out.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (402) - MORNING

CAMERA finds the hospital bed EMPTY.

ASHLEY (V.O.)
But answers, I guess, find you. I didn't think I would ever wake up again. But I did. And sitting next to me...

Now we know why Ashley's not in bed. In the middle of the night she pulled a chair up beside Ronald.

She sits there now. Peacefully sleeping. Her head on his shoulder.

ASHLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...Was my answer.

Ronald wakes up. Sees Ashley resting on his shoulder.

He closes his eyes. Lays his head on top of hers.

And sleeps.

FADE OUT.

THE END

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