

LOST SOULS

Screenplay by
Pierce Gardner

FADE IN ON:

Black screen

SOUND OS -- a CHOKED BACK BREATH, GASPING, lungs looking for air, the struggle for life and we --

FLASHCUT TO:

INT. LIMBO/WATER - ANOTHER TIME

GASPING for BREATH continues, more relentless, harder, heavier and into the FRAME we SEE fragments, slowed into special motion, dreamlike, surreal:

Dirty blonde hair lifts and tumbles;

Bubbles POP through the murky water;

A hand and then its attached arm swims, in trouble, trying to climb;

And then floats as if disembodied, momentary;

The SWIMMER drifts, then a brief effort twisting, signs of struggle;

A leg pushes off the nothingness, threatened, an impossible fight;

And the claustrophobic GASP, a last choked back BREATH as other sounds begin to bleed in: the CRACKLE of a RADIO, a few VOICES MURMURING and then more clearly --

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Jesus, please... Jesus...

The water blurs opaque, into a murky veil of illusion and we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FORD FIESTA - MORNING

The cracked windshield of a blue Ford Fiesta. The clouded form of the drowning SWIMMER is replaced by a small plastic day-glo cross that sways as the Fiesta is lifted up on a tow truck hoist. A PARAMEDIC jogs over to the car as

PARAMEDIC (O.S.)
Hold it, hold on...

The Fiesta stops its ascent. The passenger side door opens and the Paramedic reaches in and snares the bopping cross.

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING

The Paramedic carries the plastic symbol over to a middle aged woman who's sitting on a stretcher, wearing a foam neck brace and looking totally relaxed. This minor fender-bender is an ignored sideshow on a quiet commercial street.

As the woman reclaims her crucifix, a lanky MAN strides by, over-coated against the fall weather. We FOLLOW the MAN as he rounds the corner.

EXT. ANOTHER CITY STREET - MORNING

And as he walks on, he gazes out at a small Catholic Church ahead.

St. Ursula's is a modest seminary sitting adjacent to the Church. And just in front, behind a chain link fence, is:

An asphalt playground used by the Church's pre-school program. A group of CHILDREN play there in happy confusion, watched by TWO FEMALE DAY-CARE WORKERS.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MORNING

One of the day-care workers alternately pushes TWO KIDS on the swings, using one hand. In her other hand, she holds a cigarette. Her clothes are worn, her sneakers frayed. A simple gold cross hangs loosely from her neck. She's got ancient holes in her ear lobes from another, earlier time, but no longer any earrings. This is MAYA LARKIN. The kids she's pushing are singing "Frere Jacques" as they soar up and down on the swings.

The second day-care worker, more nicely dressed, shoots Maya disapproving glances as she gives her swinging child modest pushes.

A Latino BOY walks up to Maya, both his shoes are untied and his jacket's unzipped. He points to his feet.

MAYA
(with mock severity)
Look at you.

She moves away from the swings, puts out the cigarette and stoops down, tying his shoes. After she finishes, Maya watches him run back into the throng. He dashes past the LANKY MAN, standing just ten feet away. A powerful figure, CLAUDE LAREAUX is in his sixties. A stern, heavy expression glances his face.

Maya stands back up slowly, looking at him, a more serious expression on her face now. She tosses her cigarette as we:

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - MORNING

A non-descript Chrysler New Yorker as it winds its way down a rural road.

INT. CHRYSLER MOVING - MORNING

The car's driver is a fleshy man in his forties named JOHN TOWNSEND. He's anxious, a nail-biter, with the worn hands of a worker. Townsend's slightly nerve-wracked, but trying to settle it all inside.

Maya touches a fore-finger across her upper lip, warm, she moves forward, covering heat vents with a cupped hand, uncomfortable, then finally flipping off the heat altogether, which makes a final WHOOSHING GASP. She POWERS OPEN the electronic window, a rough hum as...

CLOSE ON

Lareaux, in the back seat watching her. Seated next to Lareaux is a dark haired, kind looking man in his 30's, JEREMY.

Maya straightens the cuffs of her shirt sleeves - first the right, then the left. Then she repeats it all. Townsend notes the repetitive movement.

And the RADIO is ON in the B.G.:

RADIO DJ #1

So it says here in today's news that science is looking for a lost minute of daylight.

RADIO DJ #2

Yeah, what's that all about? They have satellites now that can read our ATM receipts from outer space, but no one knows how we lost a minute of sunlight?

RADIO DJ #1

When they find that minute...

Townsend FLIPS OFF the radio. There is an excruciatingly loud pause as everyone in the car sits quietly. Then Maya turns sideways, leaning towards the backseat, and whispers to Lareaux:

MAYA

(muffled by ROAR of passing truck)

Why are you doing this to me?

LAREAUX

I know, Maya, but you'll understand when you see this man. I really need your strength.

Maya silently acknowledges his remark.

LAREAUX (CONT'D)

(subbed, in French)

Ensemble pour toujours qu'il arrive.

Maya reaches over, putting a soft hand on Townsend's knee.

MAYA

Good seeing you again.

TOWNSEND

Whish the circumstances were different.

As Maya turns back around in her seat, Lareaux looks up, sees Townsend's dart of worry in the rear view.

EXT. KINGS COUNTY MENTAL HOSPITAL - MORNING

Institutional 50's architecture. Two-story building on picturesque grounds. The Chrysler pulls up to the gate.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MORNING

Lareaux, his overcoat open, walks down the dim corridor. We now see he's a priest. He's wearing a black cassock with a waist-high surplice (belt) and a narrow purple stole. He carries a Bible. Townsend, Maya and Jeremy are right beside him. We see Jeremy is also a priest. Townsend is carrying a hard, black leather suitcase.

Large windows, bordered by huge pillars, circumscribe the never-ending corridors. Thick doors line the walls, each with a tiny observation window, filled in with octagonal wire patterns. The foursome avoids looking directly at any of those windows.

They pass other rooms, doors wide open, lined with several beds each separated by worn curtains.

INT./EXT. SECOND CORRIDOR - MORNING

Sitting next to a door on this corridor is the hospital's Chief Resident Psychiatrist, DR. LESLIE ALLEN. She's casual, calm and intelligent. A mature woman in her late 50's, still attractive, at peace with herself. As she sips a cup of peppermint tea, she glances outside, through a window opposite her chair, at a huge old tree, the antithesis of the sterile, prison-like environment inside. She finds ways to

remain grounded in this place.

As Lareaux and company approach, Dr. Allen switches her gaze and --

LAREAUX
(hands over a document)
Your court order, Dr. Allen.

DR. ALLEN
(standing, makes transition)
You know I'm not comfortable with this.

LAREAUX
But your patient is legally entitled to it.

DR. ALLEN
This patient has been plagued with temporal lobe seizures.

LAREAUX
It's the patient's request, doctor.

DR. ALLEN
(insistent)
I'm aware of that, but I don't think he's in any condition to make requests. I'm trying to appeal to your more...logical self, Father.
(as she glances briefly at Maya, Townsend and Father Jeremy)
I'm concerned about harm to my patient.

LAREAUX
(picking up the Doc's visual cue)
Father Jeremy and Deacon John Townsend of St. Ursula's, and our associate, Maya Larkin.
(off her look)
Secular assistants are permitted if regarded as qualified. Maya is eminently qualified.

DR. ALLEN
I think I should join you.

MAYA
(brusquely, interrupting)
-- you wouldn't last five minutes.

LAREAUX
(getting to it)
Just open the door, please.

As the Doctor unlocks the door, Lareaux, Townsend, Father Jeremy and Maya file in. Tense. Cautious.

INT. PATIENT'S ROOM - MORNING

The room has been painted hot pink. The only furniture is a large table, a chair and a bed. A few books sit stacked on the table: Albert Beutel's Cryptology, George Fleck's Shaping Space and Claude Shannon's seminal Mathematical Theory of Communication, among others on advanced math.

A slightly round man named HENRY BIRDSON is seated in the single restraining chair, compulsively writing numbers on a yellow legal pad. He wears green hospital pants and T-shirt.

He looks up and smiles at all his visitors; a blinding, angry smile.

BIRDSON

How do you like the color in here?
(glancing over barred windows)
Spos'ed to be relaxing.

Maya and Townsend avoid looking at Birdson. Maya straightens the cuffs of her sleeves. Lareaux puts his Bible and a small crucifix on the table.

LAREAUX

Hello Henry. Do you know why we're here?

Birdson nods, pleased with himself. He stretches, languidly drops his pad onto the table and yawns.

BIRDSON

Looking forward to it. Do you have a cigarette?

CLOSE ON

Lareaux

As he catches Maya's gaze and as --

CLOSE ON

Maya, who looks back at Lareaux, we:

CROSSCUT TO A SERIES OF
FLASHCUTS:

INT. ANOTHER PLACE, ANOTHER TIME

Confined space. Cheesy lace curtains drape across plexi sliding windows, a soft and constant WHISPERING of the "Our Father" in the b.g. and we SEE: a younger Lareaux, longer hair, moving gracefully toward Maya,

SUBTITLED IN LATIN

LAREAUX

Do not remember, O Lord, our sins or
those of our forefathers.

CLOSE ON

Maya's face. Wide-eyed at 16 years old. In the b.g., Maya's
sister, stands rigid, afraid.

LAREAUX (CONT'D)

And do not punish us for our offences.

An arm twisting almost out of its socket. A SCREAM.

LAREAUX (CONT'D)

And lead us not into temptation.

SCREAMING CONTINUES. Maya's on a bed, her head jerks
sideways, involuntarily.

LAREAUX (CONT'D)

But deliver us from evil...

A crucifix follows its own shadow as we:

CROSSCUT BACK TO:

INT. PATIENT'S ROOM - MORNING

Townsend opens the black leather suitcase. Inside: rolls of
duct and masking tape, two Bibles, three rosaries, a
scapular, bottles of holy water and a gold Chalice, sitting
in foam-laden velvet, for the Communion Eucharist.

Maya quickly and expertly locks in Birdson's chair
restraints. Arms and legs.

Father Jeremy pulls out a roll of duct tape, sealing the desk
drawer shut. Then, he sets up a portable tape recorder on
the table. Secures that as well.

Birdson restrained, Maya pulls large square-cut pieces of
blackout cloth out of the suitcase. She grabs a roll of
masking tape, TEARING two pieces of it with her teeth, right
off the roll. A SEARING, jarring sound, unexpected every
time. Moving to the door, she immediately tapes a square of
blackout cloth over the observation window. As the cloth
drops, Dr. Allen's face disappears.

Maya TEARS several more pieces of masking tape, continuing to
block out each window.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Two hours later, Dr. Allen is reassuring one of her patients. She's calm, focused, helpful.

PATIENT

(pointing to his stomach)
My bowel is out. I told you. It's open, can't you see it! My stomach's been eviscerated!

Suddenly an ORDERLY bursts around the corner, sprinting toward her.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Dr. Allen and the orderly are jogging down the hallway. The sound of SCREAMING can be faintly heard in the distance.

Dr. Allen starts to run, leaving her patient, holding her stethoscope and pocket for anything that might fall out. Her BREATHING is slightly LABORED. Her patient SCREAMS after her:

PATIENT

(freaked)
My bowel!!! My stomach's been eviscerated! And you won't help me!
HELP ME!!!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

A stunned Laura Allen stands outside Birdson's room as TWO MORE ORDERLIES frantically try to pry open the door.

DR. ALLEN

(an order of meds.)
Haldol, Cogenten, Atavan 5, 2 and 2 IM.

From the room, a CHORUS of TORMENTED VOICES is heard. A hideous CACOPHONY that builds in intensity with each passing moment, punctuated by sharp explosions of wood and glass.

It sounds like the room is being torn to pieces. Along with everyone in it.

Something heavy hits the door on the other side.

Suddenly, the door BURSTS open. The screaming instantly stops.

Lareaux's at the door, pushing past the two orderlies and as he collapses against a wall, Dr. Allen sees he's shaking, completely devastated. Father Jeremy hurries after him, concerned.

FATHER JEREMY

Father, are you alright? Can you get up?

Laura Allen walks slowly over to the door. And bracing herself, she leans forward and stares inside.

The room is immaculate. Nothing's damaged, not a stick of furniture is out of place. Townsend and Maya slowly back out, careful not to look at Birdson who sits nonchalantly still tied to his chair...

BIRDSON

He's right here, you know.

Birdson turns and stares at Dr. Allen with a chilling look of triumph.

BIRDSON (CONT'D)

(same languid posture, his own
thought process etched in his
brain)

Come on in...

Dr. Allen freezes. Townsend moves past her. Maya pulls the door shut very quickly. In her hand, she's grabbed Birdson's legal pad and one of his advanced math books.

EXT. MANHATTAN CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE - MORNING

A restless CROWD clusters outside the entrance of the Manhattan courthouse, a mixture of press, public and security.

INT. COURTROOM - MORNING

Inside the packed courtroom, the atmosphere is hushed and tense.

Up on the witness stand, MR. SILBERMAN, a meek, reluctant witness, is testifying. The DEFENSE ATTORNEY is relentless.

The JURY seems pretty intent on the testimony. They eye:

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (O.S.)

Mr. Silberman, you worked with the
defendant, George Viznick, for two
years.

The accused, GEORGE VIZNICK. He's in his early 20's, with thick, black hair and strong features. His neatly-pressed suit and tie cannot disguise the fact he has the feral eyes of an unrepentant psychopath.

MR. SILBERMAN (O.S.)

Yes.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (O.S.)

(pacing in front of witness)
And how would you describe him?

MR. SILBERMAN (O.S.)
Quiet. Real quiet...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (O.S.)
And on the day of the murders, his state
of mind?

MR. SILBERMAN (O.S.)
Seemed...on edge.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (O.S.)
On the day of the murders
(dramatic pause)
what did the defendant request?

MR. SILBERMAN (O.S.)
He asked to go home early. He said he
was bothered by all the people who kept
telling him what to do.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY (O.S.)
(to the jury)
Tell the jury how many people work in
that office with you and Mr. Viznick.

MR. SILBERMAN (O.S.)
Just me.

There's a general MURMUR at this disclosure and... In the first row, wearing his press credentials like all the other prominent members of the media, sits PETER KELSON. Peter's in his early 30's, fit, handsome, well-dressed, even seductive. The ubiquitous success story, cynical, edgy and focused, he's all or nothing. Peter takes notes in a leather book, graph paper, his own color-coded system, meticulous annotation. He stares intently at the defendant.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM IN THE SEMINARY - DAY

A woman's arm and hand are visible as she writes -

CLOSE ON

piece of notebook paper covered with a nonsensical collection of vowels and consonants.

We TILT UP to see Maya, who tosses the sheet onto a pile of rejects. She takes a sip of coffee. Stale. Maya reacts. Finishes a cigarette. Puts it out in a plain glass ashtray. Lying next to her pack of cigarettes, a vintage Zippo, inscribed, "peace and fuck you."

To Maya's left is Birdson's legal pad. On it he has written rows of numbers in neat, precise handwriting. Maya has drawn red lines at regular intervals, showing a repeating pattern of 11 numbers in a row.

In the b.g., her used, always, "ON," 24" TV is airing a daytime talk show. Guy describes his girlfriend's affair AD LIB. Maya reacts to the insanity of the show.

On the wall above Maya's table that serves as her desk, is a varied collection of crayoned drawings from the children in her day-care class, a postcard from Louisiana depicting New Orleans, a postcard-sized copy of Modigliani portrait of a woman, and an old photograph of Maya and her sister.

CLOSE ON

The page she just discarded "IF R EQUALS ONE" at the top and letters of the alphabet matched up with a series of numbers. Birdson's cryptology book is visible to Maya's right, as she works off her newest piece of paper, labeled "IF S EQUALS ONE." Maya moves to her mini fridge. Looks inside. Pulls out a soda. Pops the tab. Spray startles her a moment. Wipes off her fingers. SLAMS the door.

TIME CUT:

Comparing numbers and letters with a second piece of paper, Maya notes that the first number, 24, gives her the letter "P." The next number, 13, produces an "E." She writes those down. Flicks a long ash into a half-full ashtray. Gulps air.

TIME CUT:

Maya continues the coded procedure. The next three numbers equal a "T," an "E" and an "R." Finally spelling "Peter."

Maya gets up. Stretches. Ashtray getting full. Taps out a single cigarette from her shirt pocket. Lights it. EXHALES deeply. Excited and scared at the same time.

TIME CUT:

Maya checks her newest numbers, adding the letter "K." Tamps out her cigarette into an ashtray with earlier cigarette debris. Small stacks of used up paper. Maya stares at her results, exhausted.

INT. HALLWAY/COURTHOUSE - DAY

An explosion of CHATTER as the CROWD empties from the courtroom. Many of the MEDIA rush to a press room across the hall.

As Peter heads that way, we see he enjoys some celebrity status. Heads turn and fingers point as he goes by. Peter stops a tall, Asian 26 year-old who's striding by with a thick packet.

This is MICHAEL KIM, Peter's researcher.

MICHAEL

Mr. Kelson, here's the stuff you wanted
on pathological narcissism.

PETER

What about that psychic, what's his
name, Szabo?

MICHAEL

He can see you Thursday.

PETER

(shaking his hand)
I think it's gonna be a waste of time.

MICHAEL

(trying to reassure his boss)
The police used him as a witness in this
case.

PETER

(unsmiling, but he likes
Michael)
I'll be at Bedford tonight, if you need
me.

MICHAEL

(big smile)
Nice suit.

Peter takes off, weaving his way through the crowds. And as
he enters a MEN'S ROOM:

INT. MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Peter saunters up to a urinal. A rough looking man in his
late 40's comes out of a stall and approaches Peter. This is
a tough cop named MIKE SMYTHE.

SMYTHE

(smiling, friendly)
Hey! Mr. big shot.

PETER

(smile emerging)
Mike. Oh, the christening. I meant to
call...

SMYTHE

(releases his hold)
Yeah, right. I don't know why I
bothered inviting you guys. I knew you
wouldn't show.

Peter finishes. Zips up and goes to wash his hands. Smythe
looks in the mirror, too, noticing a food stain on his shirt.

He dabs at it half-heartedly.

SMYTHE (CONT'D)

So, Viznick's got a meet with his lawyer
in the ayem.

PETER

(his interest is piqued)
Really? You know, seeing these guys
away from the court, the facade slips.
You catch things.

SMYTHE

Yeah, yeah. I've heard it before. Just
be sure you spell my name right. Nine
o'clock?

Smythe hands Peter a tiny penlight.

PETER

What's this?

SMYTHE

So you can see where you're going when
you crawl up his asshole.

Off Peter's smile, we:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - AFTERNOON

The typical particle board and wallpaper set that looks
better on the small screen. Two chairs, one with Peter and
one with the glossy blonde, perfectly styled, TV personality,
SALLY PRESCOTT.

THE FLOOR MANAGER silently finishes the countdown as a make
up man touches up Peter before rushing off the set.

SALLY

As a part of today's story on the trial
of mass murderer George Viznick, we
welcome Peter Kelson, author of the
current best-seller, VICIOUS INTENT.
Thank you for joining us, Peter.

PETER

Thanks for having me, Sally.

SALLY

Peter, you're now writing a book about
the Viznick case. You seem to be making
a career of studying sensational
murderers. I have to ask, how does it
make you feel when you sit in courtrooms
day after day, face to face with alleged
killers?

PETER

Well, long-term exposure to things like this tends to give you a sort of clinical understanding of the subject. After awhile, you begin to make friends with it, so to speak.

SALLY

It's as if you are saying the closer you get to evil, the less evil it becomes.

PETER

No, the less mystifying. Good and evil are only illusions. There is no such thing as evil with a capital "E." That suggests some third party bad guy pulling all the strings.

SALLY

(a bit mesmerized)

You're referring to the defense's efforts to prove that George Viznick is tormented by "demonic voices?"

PETER

There weren't any voices.

SALLY

Not even from some mental illness, as the prosecution asserts?

PETER

As if there's another cause for little voices? No, Sally, Viznick's a manipulator, he's clever, he has what I call malignant narcissism.

SALLY

What do you mean by that?

PETER

Well, we all have a degree of narcissism, Sally, but a malignant narcissist is dangerously self-obsessed.

SALLY

Are you saying he's legally sane?

PETER

Well, George Viznick is in the grayest of gray areas in the sanity spectrum. Viznick is not psychotic. He's simply unable to submit to any higher authority.

SALLY

Meaning, Viznick's a man who answers to

no one. Not even God.

PETER

(steps ahead of her)

Right. If you believe in God. As a narcissist, Viznick couldn't blame himself for the alleged murders. He created the voices after the fact. In order to avoid the simple truth that there is no outside force that guides George Viznick and that George Viznick needs to pay.

SALLY

(personally interested)

And what about you? What about Peter Kelson? Where is your moral compass?

Peter is momentarily serious, interior, then the brief slight smile.

PETER

Well, lucky for me, I'm not on trial, Sally. However, I like to think I'm the actual needle on the compass. Morality is which way you're facing. The needle always points north.

Sally smiles, a sucker for that sort of crap.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

The TECHNICAL DIRECTOR leans over to a CAMERAMAN.

TECH DIRECTOR

Sally's hot for this guy.

A tall attractive female P.A. overhears.

P.A.

He's cute.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO

SALLY

(more taken with him than she thought)

Peter...Kelson, ah, thank you for joining us.

PETER

A pleasure, Sally.

TECH DIRECTOR (O.S.)

And that's a cut.

Sally leans forward to Peter and proffers a copy of his book.

SALLY

Would you sign it for me?

PETER

(flashes a killer smile)

Of course.

EXT. SAINT BENEDICTUS/MANHATTAN - AFTERNOON

A Range Rover double parks in front of an immense Catholic Church. Peter gets out.

Across the street, a group of Orthodox Jews walk by. On the steps of the church is an exotic woman, stylish in a yellow Prada dress with a matching yellow nylon zip jacket. CLAIRE VAN OWEN hugs the collar to her neck against a sudden winter guest. She's a magazine stylist and Peter's girlfriend. As Peter meets Claire on the street, he grabs hold of her, relaxed. He kisses her deeply. Claire still reacts, though it's been a year.

CLAIRE

(obviously in love)

I missed you.

PETER

(seeing it)

Do you think they have a room here?

She smiles at the possibility.

CLAIRE

How'd your interview go? I'm sure you charmed the hell out of Sally.

PETER

She's a talk show host. They can't be charmed. By definition.

Claire slides an arm through Peter's. Then, she reaches up, suddenly kissing him hard on the mouth.

INT. SAINT BENEDICTUS - AFTERNOON

Peter and Claire walk down the center aisle, dwarfed by the vast vaulted ceiling and rosette stations of the cross. At the Travertine and Terrazzo altar, there's a solemn atmosphere. Choir practice is just about to end and the SINGERS are CHANTING A-CAPELLA in Latin.

Standing before them, keeping time and tone, is FATHER JAMES MCKENZIE, a good-natured priest in his late fifties. He sees Peter and Claire and lets the choir practice wind down. Singers begin to collect their music as Father James moves toward his visitors, happy to see them, as always. He gives

Peter a strong hug.

FATHER JAMES

How're you doing?

(to Claire)

Looking lovely as always.

PETER

You ready?

James turns to the choir.

FATHER JAMES

Alright, you shrieking harpies, enough
of that racket. Be off with you.

The choir makes their way out in several directions, shaking
their heads at Father James' corny humor.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)

And if you have to sin tonight, try to
make it something original.

A GROAN from the group at the bad pun. Claire and Peter
smile.

CUT TO:

INT. VESTRY/SAINT BENEDICTUS - AFTERNOON

Father James carefully and ritualistically removes his
vestments.

INT. RANGE ROVER - AFTERNOON

Peter is driving up the West Side Highway, relaxed, an arm
out the window. Claire is beside him.

James sits in the back, peaceful, meditative, as the trees
lining the road move by in a sort of blurred landscape.

FATHER JAMES

Between your book sales and this TV
thing, there's going to be no living
with you. And let me guess, you boiled
God down to a conceit.

PETER

You know how I feel. The world is
random. The only certainty I believe in
is death.

FATHER JAMES

Given all that's happened, I understand.
The world is random, but then there's
faith. Where are you in death without
it?

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly a car cuts Peter off. Peter slams on his breaks. Close call. Claire's purse falls off her lap. Lipstick spills out. She steadies herself against the dash with a hand. James is pressed forward into his seat belt.

FATHER JAMES

What a...jerk!

CLAIRE

Peter, are you okay?

PETER

Fine.

Peter resumes driving, mildly irritated.

CLAIRE

(getting back to the conversation)

It's great of you to let William and Susan stay at the house until he gets on his feet.

PETER

(cutting across the earnestness)

It's Susan's cooking, Claire. That's why Uncle James lets them stay.

FATHER JAMES

Nonsense, it's all of our home.

(to Claire)

So how's work treating you?

CLAIRE

Frustrating. Form over content. Everything's so retro.

FATHER JAMES

Well, if Peter here would hop off his laurels long enough to marry you...

At the wheel, Peter gazes straight out at the road. No expression. But he cringes inwardly.

CLAIRE

(interrupting for Peter's sake)

...you wearing a watch, Father?

FATHER JAMES

Yes. It's exactly...

he slides back his sleeve as Clair looks at her watch.

CLAIRE

Can you check the century hand for me?
Mine seems to be ahead.

James LAUGHS. Peter shakes his head. The notion of commitment more private to him than to his more expansive uncle. Claire inadvertently glances at Peter, then she looks out her window, an awkward, inward moment.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM - SEMINARY - AFTERNOON

Maya's TV is on, as usual. She SNAPS open a bag of edamame soy nuts, popping them into her mouth, while a lit cigarette sits in the glass ashtray next to her. She eats and smokes alternately. Feet up, socks on. Maya's flipping through the Manhattan white pages, looking for the last time, Kelson.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN - AFTERNOON

Caption has been flashed onscreen:

PETER KELSON, AUTHOR OF VICIOUS INTENT.

Sally Price is interviewing Peter Kelson.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maya glances up and she can't believe what she reads. Takes her a moment to pull it all in:

MAYA

Oh my God!

INTERCUT WITH TV SCREEN AS NECESSARY.

PETER

...as a narcissist, he couldn't blame himself. He created the voices after the fact.

Maya shoves a pen between her teeth, while she tears off a sheet of paper. She immediately scribbles the name of the book on the torn piece of paper.

As Maya looks back up at the TV, a dart of interest.

INT. BOOKSTORE - AFTERNOON

A table showcasing the current best-sellers prominently features Peter's book, VICIOUS INTENT.

Maya reaches in and picks up a copy. Immediately flips to the jacket flyleaf at the back. Reads a moment and as she does we see the bio: "born in Bedford, NY, a crime writer whose own parents were murdered..."

Maya heads to a payphone and dials.

INT. TOWNSEND'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

INTERCUT

John Townsend sits at his meticulously maintained PIANO, which is in sharp contrast to the otherwise rundown surroundings. The phone rings.

TOWNSEND
(picking up)
Hello?

MAYA
I know who he is.

TOWNSEND
Maya? What do you mean?

MAYA
I'll explain everything later. Can you meet me tonight?

EXT. BEDFORD HOUSE - DUSK

It's a large house. Peter pulls up and HONKS. As he, James and Claire get out of the car, they walk past an old swing hanging from an enormous tree. Childhood remnant. Expecting them, a man in his late 30's wearing heavy rimmed GLASSES moves out of the house. This is WILLIAM, Peter's brother, followed by his wife, SUSAN.

WILLIAM
About time, I'm starving.

He grabs Peter in a bear hug. Peter looks uncomfortable. And as he pulls free, he collides inadvertently with a low hanging tree branch. As it starts to bleed, Peter sucks on his lip. The swing moves slightly in the b.g.

CLAIRE
I could use a drink.

WILLIAM
I've got martinis on ice and I grabbed some good bottles from the cellar.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone except Susan troops into the dining room, where an impressive dinner awaits them. They take their places behind their respective chairs. A routine. BUZZ of conversation.

WILLIAM
Hey, Peter, I missed your show. How'd it go?

CLAIRE

Don't worry, we taped it.

PETER

I don't think they got my best side.

Susan moves in, carefully balancing a few ceramic platters and then she bends over the table, squeezing the last plate onto a huge wooden table already covered with plates of various food. Then, she sits down herself. Takes a little breath.

SUSAN

This is it. If you need anything else, get it yourself.

WILLIAM

(mock distress)

Susan, I don't see any salt.

SUSAN

I love you, too.

CLAIRE

(to Susan)

You know, I made a reservation at Marco's for Peter's birthday dinner, but maybe you should cater it.

FATHER JAMES

What time did you make it for?

CLAIRE

(to Father James)

Eight. That okay?

WILLIAM

By the way, I want your advice on what to get him.

PETER

(immediately to William, kind)

I don't want you spending any money on me. Not right now.

FATHER JAMES

(to Peter)

Peter, in life, you should never deny the giver the pleasure of the gift.

(amused, to Claire)

All those years raising him. They seem to have had absolutely no effect. Now William, at least he listened to me.

WILLIAM

Let's eat already.

Father James bows his head and immediately, the family follows. A signaled, almost unconscious gesture known to everyone. They all look down except Peter. Claire gives him an annoyed glance.

FATHER JAMES

Bless us, oh Lord, for these thy gifts through thy bounty through Christ our Lord. And a special blessing for Peter and William's mother, Andrea, and their father, Jack, in whose memory we gather here every year. May their souls and the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace. Amen.

A stark silence as Peter and William remember. Claire looks at Susan. Then:

PETER

Hey, Will, remember that dream I used to have over and over again when I was little, about the bear and the mountain. You know, right after...

William nods "yes."

PETER (CONT'D)

...well, you know, I really think the trial's getting to me, because I've been having this weird dream every night. Only this time, of course, it's much different...

Everyone's looking at Peter.

CLAIRE

You never said anything to me...

PETER

It's probably trivial.

JAMES

Recurring dreams are never insignificant.

PETER

Okay, I'll tell you. I'm reading a book - I can't remember what the book is when I wake up - but I realize halfway through it's something I've written. Or will write. Anyway, I get to the end of the book and I'm feeling very satisfied and I close the cover to read the title and it only says "x-e-s". Three letters. For some reason, that makes me feel great, and I wake up.

CLAIRE

(looking around at the silenced
table, holding back a smirk, a
moment, then)
Peter, "x-e-s" is "sex" spelled
backwards.

More silence, then James bursts out LAUGHING. Then Susan
can't hold it back and then William.

PETER

(looks around, big smile
turning into LAUGHTER)
What can I say? I'm not a master of the
obvious.

And that sends everyone into an uncontrollable fit of
LAUGHTER and as they're all in various states of choked back
hysterics, suddenly William's LAUGHING becomes seriously
uncontrolled and then:

William's head involuntarily jerks backward, his eyes begin
to roll up.

Susan is first to notice, while LAUGHTER continues in the
b.g. and she leaps to catch him.

As William starts to tip over backward in his chair, Peter
then realizes and together, Susan and Peter ease William onto
the floor and turn him on his side.

James grabs a pillow from an armchair in the room, shoving it
under William's head and...

As William's epileptic attack winds down slightly, Susan
looks up at James:

SUSAN

It's been a long time since his last
seizure. I guess we've got to adjust
his medication again.

INT. SEMINARY HALLWAY - NIGHT

The shadowy figures of Maya and John Townsend can be seen
almost in silhouette.

TOWNSEND

And what are you thinking we should do
now?

MAYA

I've filed a report with Father Frank.

TOWNSEND

A lot of good that'll do.

MAYA

We need all the help we can get.

TOWNSEND

I've dealt with these people before,
Maya. They're not going to help us.

MAYA

We'll see Father Frank in the morning.
There's nothing to be done until then.

TOWNSEND

(on edge)

Alright, Maya. We'll do it your way.

INT. SEMINARY CHAPEL - NIGHT

A troubled John Townsend prays to God for answers.

INT. SEMINARY OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

FATHER FRANK, a sweet-faced priest in his 40's, is conferring
with two church officials. We TRACK him as he exits the
office and cross through to:

INT. ALTAR - CONTINUOUS

A JANITOR polishes the marble of the ornate altar. Father
Frank enters and pauses a moment to watch the man at work.

FATHER FRANK

Don't forget to polish the brass
afterwards.

EXT. SEMINARY GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

The seminary has a small, planted, meditative garden, shoe
horned in behind the rectory buildings.

Maya sits on a simple wooden bench, her tiny cross glinting
off sunlight. Her eyes are closed and her head is tilted up
toward the sun.

Maya snaps out of her reverie, as Father Frank approaches.

FATHER FRANK

(kind, but resolved)

Maya, the Diocese has rejected your
report. And I must say, I agree with
them.

A JET ROARS overhead, DEAFENING momentary noise. Father
Frank looks up a moment, then:

FATHER FRANK (CONT'D)

(comforting tone)

I don't mean to belittle you, but we've

been through this before. Satan is not what you think he is. Satan is not some creature.

MAYA

You weren't there. Give me time to get some proof.

FATHER FRANK

Please, Maya. I'm trying to get us into the next century and you insist on this medieval nonsense.

MAYA

If you really believe in God, why is it so inconceivable that his enemy is just as real?

FATHER FRANK

Maya, for the last time, I will not tolerate these obsessions.

Anxious, Maya rubs her cross between a thumb and forefinger, distractedly.

INT. SEMINARY STAIRWELL - EARLY MORNING

Maya crosses through the dim hallway and heads up the stairs.

INT. SEMINARY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A bright, clean bathroom with new fixtures and fluorescent lights. Maya comes in, trying to contain her frustration. Turns the water on. She watches the water a moment. Then puts her hands in. Cool on her wrists. Splashes her face.

MAYA

(despairing)

Stupid man. I can't do this...

At that moment, she hears something. It's faint, but unmistakable - the sound of SCRAPING METAL ON METAL. Then it stops.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Hello?

No response.

ANGLE FROM ABOVE:

Maya faces all six stalls. She walks to the first one, pushes open the door. It's empty. She repeats this at the second stall, the thirds, the fourth, the fifth. All are vacant. Now the last one. She pauses just a second.

The lights HUM. She pushes it open. It's empty. Disturbed,

she turns back to the sink and as she looks down, the water flows instantly backwards, disappearing up into the faucet.

She turns back again, watching the room change from pristine to rotting decay. The stalls behind her have changed. The doors are closed again. They're battered, chipped, scarred. Rusty water flows from underneath. She whirls around. On the stall directly behind her, the letters "X" "E" and "S" have been scratched into the metal in loose, flowing script. At the same time, the lights go dim. The HUM is uneven, more menacing. Alarmed, Maya closes her eyes, then opens them. The vision remains. Her breathing gets lighter, faster. Fingers appear on the top of the stall door behind her. The door is pulled open. A man in inside, wearing hospital clothes. It's Henry Birdson. His eyes bore into hers. He's got a knife in his right hand. Petrified, she stares back.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You're not real.

He leers and nods, "Yes I am." He steps toward her. Every instinct in her body screams at her to run. But she stays put. And we HEAR A CHOKED BACK BREATH and Birdson slowly extends his knife, just inches from her face.

Closer to her face. Then closer still. Until the tip of the blade is slowly creeping toward Maya's eye.

ECU

of the tip of the blade, literally millimeters from her pupil. Closing painfully slow. Maya braces herself.

ECU

of the tip of the knife now only a hair away.

ANGLE ON

Birdson. He smiles. And THRUSTS. She suddenly reaches up and grabs for the blade. The lights "flare" horrifyingly bright for a split second. We hear a surreal distortion of Maya's voice crying out.

And "Birdson" vanishes. Maya's looking at a pristine bathroom, its unmarked stall doors pulled tight. Victorious but drained, she slumps forward.

INT. LAREAUX'S ROOM - MORNING

Inside Father Lareaux's Spartan room at the seminary, Lareaux lies in bed, his face turned towards the wall. He's MUMBLING. Maya has pulled herself together and sits by the bed with Father Jeremy and an irritated Father Frank. In the b.g., John Townsend is urgently riffling the books and papers on Lareaux's desk. Most of which we SEE are about demonic possession.

Unknown to anyone, Townsend slides two of the books under his coat.

FATHER FRANK
(to Maya)
Leave him alone.

Maya doesn't want to hear that. She leans closer. The full wound of her childhood pressed back into her eyes.

MAYA
(compassionately)
Father, it's me, Maya. Tu m'entends?

Lareaux rolls over and looks at her. The change in his appearance is shocking. His eyes are red-rimmed and his expression is unfocused.

LAREAUX
(with a nursery rhyme cadence)
...the ark sank, the sun set, the ark
sank again.

MAYA
Father, I'm right here.

LAREAUX
(like a child)
...the ark sank, the sun set, the ark
sank again...

his eyes are wild. Father Frank turns to Maya.

FATHER JAMES
He's not going to respond...

Maya slowly backs away.

FATHER FRANK
The doctor's concerned he may never come
out of this dementia.

MAYA
He will. He has great faith.

FATHER FRANK
But bad judgement. And now you see how
dangerous the consequences can be.

Maya moves over to a silent John Townsend.

MAYA
John. I've got to head back to the
city.
(to Father Jeremy)
Would you page me if there's any change

whatsoever?
(Maya hurriedly writes her
pager number down for Jeremy)
Anything, okay?

FATHER JEREMY
(under his breath)
I wish I could help.

Maya smiles sweetly at Father Jeremy.

INT. SEMINARY HALLWAY - MORNING

Maya and Townsend confer down the hall from Lareaux's room.

TOWNSEND
It's useless...look at him.

MAYA
You can't back out on me now. We need
to be sure.

TOWNSEND
(agitated)
Sure of what? Who cares if this guy is
devoid of faith or sleeps over a
pentacle? Results are what Lareaux
would want.

Maya stares intently at Townsend. Father Jeremy approaches
from down the hall, aware of the tension between them.

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)
You don't want to face it.

MAYA
Look, John, I'm facing it.

TOWNSEND
I'm not waiting until it's too late.

Townsend walks away.

FATHER FRANK
Is he going to be okay?

MAYA
I hope so.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

CLOSE ON

A list of names, all doctors. Some have been crossed off.
And as we PULL BACK, we see Maya's on the phone on a Bedford

main drag and, as she DIALS, she pivots in the booth, anxious thought process, a pencil being lobbed between two fingers. Suddenly, a VOICE over the phone.

MAYA
(into phone)
Hi, I'd like to make an appointment for
Peter Kelson.

As she waits, she pivots back around again.

MAYA (CONT'D)
no, he's not a new patient. Okay, thank
you, bye.

Maya crosses off another doctor's name from her list. DROPS in two more quarters, as several sit stacked by the phone.

Maya glances around. As she checks her list, TAPPING out another number, she takes a deep BREATH as she sees

A MAN walking his dog. The dog suddenly stops, squats and takes a greasy shit right on the sidewalk. Maya can't believe it, wants to say something but the line picks up:

MAYA (CONT'D)
(refocusing)
Hi, I'd like to make an appointment for
Peter Kelson.
(a beat)
No, he's a returning patient. You
don't. Thanks anyway.

Crosses off another name. DROPS in two more quarters. TAPS out another number. Maya bends the silver phone cord distractedly, back and forth awhile, and as the line picks back up:

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

MAYA (CONT'D)
(rote)
Hi, I'd like to make an appointment for
Peter Kelson.

RECEPTIONIST
Kelson, hold on a second...

Maya waits anxiously as

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Okay, Mr. Kelson hasn't been here in
awhile...

A pause, while Maya listens, then, repeating.

MAYA

Tomorrow. Ten o'clock? Great.

Maya hangs up, circling a name and address on her list, and as she takes off as we:

INT. BEDFORD GENERAL PRACTITIONER - DAY

Doctor's Office. Formica reception desk. Small waiting room. Few PATIENTS sit, reading magazines, waiting for their doctor.

Maya walks in the door, moving to the rectangular opening at the check-in desk.

Young receptionist, visibly pregnant, castors around to Maya, handing her the clipboard, standard procedure.

MAYA

(taking it in, but ignoring it)
I don't know how to begin, by
boyfriend...

(looks around, in whisper)
my ex-boyfriend. The last time we were
together, he, shit...

Maya's on the verge of tears. The receptionist knows what's coming.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I took one of those home pregnancy
tests, but I don't want to tell him.
I'm RH negative. My blood type is
negative...

(starting to cry)
If he's RH positive, I'll have to
terminate.

RECEPTIONIST

(handing Maya Kleenex)
How many weeks are you honey/

MAYA

Thirteen. The last time, can you
believe it? This is how he says
"Goodbye?"

RECEPTIONIST

(registers alarm)
You need his blood-type. Like right
away.

MAYA

(ready to let receptionist
connect the dots)
Well I know he's come here before.

RECEPTIONIST

What's his name?

MAYA
(carefully)
Peter...Peter Kelson.

RECEPTIONIST
You just call?

MAYA
(sniffing)
I didn't know what else to do...

A long moment, Maya's anxiety increasing, then:

RECEPTIONIST
(casts back to Maya)
You're in luck. Says Peter Kelson's
an... AB negative.

Maya has a moment of confusion as...

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
Two negatives always make a positive.

MAYA
(overjoyed, huge smile)
Oh, thank you, thank you so much!

INT. BEDFORD RECTORY - DAY

Maya enters a small reception area. Behind its counter sits an elderly DEACON and a SECRETARY.

SECRETARY
May I help you?

MAYA
Yes, I have some questions regarding the
baptismal records for one of our new
constituents.

SECRETARY
And the person's name?

MAYA
Peter Kelson.

EXT. SOHO STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

We see the normal activity of a Soho street. The camera pulls back and into Peter's office where see Peter working at his computer.

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

It's a writer's domain. Books everywhere. Stacked and

shelved in an obvious order, by size and subject. There are also several silver and leather-framed photos of Peter and Claire with known literary celebrities. At the large granite and birch desk, an exhausted Peter switches off his computer.

PETER
(hits INTERCOM)
Mrs. Quintana, let's go home.

His secretary, MRS. QUINTANA, appears in the doorway. She's a strong-willed Latino in her forties.

MRS. QUINTANA
I plan to.
(beat)
You want a tip?

PETER
Lemme guess. The lottery.

MRS. QUINTANA
Sometimes I can just feel the numbers.

PETER
You know what they say. You have the same chance of winning whether you play or not.

MRS. QUINTANA
You watch. One day, I'll hit the jackpot, get the big house, car, clothes. I'll have more money than God.

She smiles and exits.

MRS. QUINTANA (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Y yo tendre mi propria secretaria.

SNAPPING off the lights in her office. And in the b.g., the fragmentary sounds of a party going on somewhere down the hall, in another office. A moment, then her outer office door slams.

Peter goes back to work at his desk. Finishing up. Another moment and he hears Mrs. Q's door PRESS BACK OPEN.

PETER
(not looking up)
What'd you forget?

No response. Peter looks up. He waits, then continues to put his things away in preparation for leaving. After a moment, he glances up to see MAYA standing in the doorway. She's taken pains to look attractive. Her best clothes. She looks great. A simple beauty.

PETER (CONT'D)
(startled)
May I help you?

MAYA
Peter Kelson?

PETER
(observes everything about her)
Yes... and you are?

MAYA
(slightly flirtatious,
gregarious)
I saw you on television yesterday. You
were brilliant.

PETER
Thank you. Do you work in the building?
You coming from the party?

Maya takes the chair opposite Peter's desk. He stands
waiting. A little put off by her forwardness.

MAYA
You said that malignant narcissism was
not evil.

PETER
Not pure evil. That's correct.

MAYA
And also that...

PETER
(uncomfortable)
Listen, I'm sorry, but I'm running late.

MAYA
That there is no such thing as evil with
a capital "E."

PETER
Not the most popular opinion, but yes.

MAYA
What if I told you I was a malignant
narcissist?

Intrigued, Peter stops what he's doing and sits down.

PETER
A narcissist doesn't admit it. It's the
extreme of self-denial.

MAYA
(ignoring Peter's comment)

And I also believe in God and the Devil.
In fact, I know they exist.

PETER

Well, by saying that, you're
acknowledging the existence of a higher
power. Which, to a narcissist, is
impossible.

MAYA

I murdered my parents, Mr. Kelson. And
while they deserved it, I still went to
confession the following Sunday.

Peter leans back in his chair. Studies her carefully.
Doesn't really know what to say.

PETER

Ooooooh-kayyyyyyy.

MAYA

In the end, the jury saw it my way.

PETER

Well, then it all seems to be working
out for you. Listen, Ms...?

MAYA

Do you remember Henry Birdson? The math
professor who won the Salwen Medal, then
went home and killed his family?

PETER

(irritated)

What's that got to do with you?

MAYA

Last week the Catholic Church certified
him as genuinely possessed. You realize
how rarely they make that ruling?

PETER

I do.

MAYA

An exorcism was just held for Birdson.
It failed. Disastrously. Which means
there's still a demonic spirit present
in his body.

(then)

I was wondering, perhaps you'd like to
go meet Henry. He's pretty amazing.

PETER

I'll bet.

MAYA

On television, you seemed so sure of yourself. If you're really that confident, you'd be willing to let someone prove you wrong?

PETER

The world would be so much simpler if it were all just about good and evil. Unfortunately I find it much more slippery and elusive place.

MAYA

(intrigued by Peter's mind)
Well, I think it's very simple. Here's a tape of Birdson's exorcism.
(drops tape on Peter's desk)
I'll be at the Public Library. Tomorrow at 2... if you want to meet him.

Maya rises and heads for the door. Seductive. A certain power in her clarity.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I believe that murder and murderers are the most interesting proving ground for these kinds of questions. Don't you?

Peter knows he agrees, but before he can respond, she's gone.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PETER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EARLY EVENING

It's a small, elegant building in Chelsea. Scaffolding covers exactly half of the exterior. Building's being sandblasted. CONSTANT GRATING NOISE. Work area's flooded in artificial spotlight.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Peter walks past the building's doorman, JOSEF. Eastern European, mid-60's, formal and outwardly polite. Josef nods a professional "good evening" to Peter who acknowledges Josef as he continues toward the elevator.

PETER

(indicating noise)
Great sound. How the hell do you live with that all day?

Josef laughs politely, he likes Peter. Peter presses the elevator button and waits, sticking his free hand in a pocket and as he pulls out Maya's tape, he remembers as...

The BELL to the elevator DINGS and the door SLIDES open. Peter inspects the tape with some curiosity, then stuffs it back into his pocket, momentarily lost in thought. Stepping

into the elevator, he suddenly PULLS in a breath, startled.

PETER (CONT'D)

Mrs. Levotsky, jeez you...

His comment is directed at an impossibly-elderly woman, MRS. LEVOTSKY. She scowls as though this was the only expression her parents could afford for her. She holds her cane with her right hand, with her left she tries to balance her antiquated laundry cart.

PETER (CONT'D)

Let me help.

But when Peter reaches for the cart, she waves him off with a deepening in her scowl that we don't want to see get any deeper. The elevator door slides SHUT.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Peter puts the key in his door, apartment 5-A. Glancing down the hall, he sees Mrs. Levotsky struggle toward her door. As she feels his stare, she turns slowly around and to Peter.

MRS. LEVOTSKY

What're you look at?

Pissed off, Peter shoves the key into its lock and goes in.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It's dark, except for refracted light from the building opposite. Peter FLIPS on the interior lights and we can see lots of money has been spent here; the interior's warm and tasteful. It's eclectic, evolved. Works of art pepper the surroundings. A small, luminous aquarium sits by the entry wall.

PETER

(drops food into aquarium)

Hi guys.

(calling)

Claire?

No answer.

INT. PETER'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Peter heads into the open kitchen. The flood lights on the outside cast strange, distorted shadows of people moving. Peter reaches down behind the refrigerator and fishes out a pack of cigarettes. He turns on the vent over the stove and lights up, blowing the smoke directly up into the vent, tapping the ashes directly down the sink drain. Unseen by Peter, a cigarette ash drops and lands on the stove.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Peter reappears a moment later, holding a bottle of beer. Takes off his jacket, laying it on top of the sofa. He moves over to the CD player where he flips on some contemporary music. Then he takes a long swallow of beer and sits back down into the sofa.

PETER

Better.

BUMP, BUMP, BUMP. Peter looks up at the wall, irritated.

PETER (CONT'D)

Mrs. Levotsky, we really need to have a couple brews and talk one of these days.

Peter takes the remote to the CD, turns up the volume.

CLOSE ON:

The lights on the equalizer. They go from the middle range of green and yellow up to the orange and occasionally red, indicating the volume is pushing "complain."

In response, Mrs. Levotsky BANGS on the wall a little harder.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON

A luminous fly-fishing lure, with a black thread body and wings of transparent green and yellow fabric. It's locked in a tiny vice, its barbed hook shining.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Peter, all concentration, is bent over a magnifying glass, using two tiny precision hooks to wrap thread onto the lure. He's at a table in the corner of the living room. A colorful collection of finished lures are displayed on his work area, below a watercolor of a man fly-fishing.

Peter gets frustrated as he repeatedly tries to hook a thread and misses. In the b.g., a leather framed photo of Peter with his parents at an exquisite lake. Peter pushes himself back from the table. Takes a beat. Walks over and picks up the tape Maya gave him.

He studies it for a second. Then he naps off the CD player, puts the tape on the cassette deck and hits "play." There's no sound. He turns the volume way up. There's a HUM, but nothing else. Annoyed, Peter hits "forward," then "play." Still nothing. He pushes the volume to the top.

PETER

(to himself)

What'd you expect?

BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MRS. LEVOTSKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

From this P.O.V., the HORRENDOUS ROAR of Birdson's EXORCISM is heard. Mrs. Levotsky raises her cane in desperation...

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

From this P.O.V., the tape continues to play soundlessly.

Peter hears rapid POUNDING from Mrs. Levotsky's apartment. Faster, more frantic. The pictures on his wall SHAKE violently.

PETER

Oh...come on, lady! Give me a break!

Mrs. Levotsky's POUNDING continues for some time. Finally ending in a booming THUD. Peter looks up at the wall, waits, then smiles.

PETER (CONT'D)

Little cough syrup will do ya, eh, granny?

Peter bends down to snap off the tape, failing to notice that the lights on the equalizer are PUSHING HIGH into the red on all channels. He turns off the tape and puts on a Sonny Rollins CD. The music begins at an EAR-PIERCING volume. Peter scrambles to turn it down, then flops back onto the sofa.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - LATER

The door CLICKS, then opens. Claire moves in carrying bags of take-out. She sees Peter dozing on the couch.

Claire kneels beside him, gives him a kiss and Peter leaps out of his sleep with a start.

PETER

Shi... Sorry, honey. I was having the weirdest dream.

CLAIRE

Bad?

PETER

(doesn't want to go over it)
Weird. The book again. Sex spelled backwards...

CLAIRE

I must really be slacking off. Hungry?

PETER

Uh...sure...I...what?

CLAIRE

Sushi.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Claire is clearing her plate as Peter picks at the remains of a sushi dinner. Claire notices the cigarette ash Peter dropped earlier, picking it up and smearing the ash between her fingers. She shoots a glance at Peter, but does not comment on her discovery.

CLAIRE

I can't believe it's already starting to get dark so early.

PETER

Hmmm.

CLAIRE

You know, there was a guy on the radio today trying to explain why we're losing daylight. Quarks and dark matter, things like that. Even how daylight savings has caught up with us over the last hundred years and our universal watch is just fast, you know?

Claire looks up, seeing Peter is lost in thought.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Peter, where are you?

PETER

Sorry. It's just...a strange woman waltzes into my office today. Tells me she murdered her parents and can prove Satan exists.

CLAIRE

(dismissive)

Did she waltz in or fly on little bat wings?

PETER

(unacknowledged)

Says she can get me in to see this killer.

CLAIRE

Now that you're on TV, you're a magnet for all the wackos out there.

Claire sees Peter's thinking about it.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Oh, Peter, you're going to pursue this.

PETER

(sees her concern)

No. Of course not.

(checking out the food)

Mmmm. Anago. My favorite.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

George Viznick's lawyer is seated at the table. He's impatient. A door opens. A manacled Viznick is brought in by two GUARDS. His orange prison jumpsuit is badly ripped in back. A few bruises are visible on his torso. Viznick stands impassively as his restraints are unlocked.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

George, come in.

(sees his client)

What the hell happened to you?

VIZNICK

It's nothing.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Sure it is. If the guards did this, we can file charges.

VIZNICK

Not the guards.

(smiles)

Some of the prisoners are easily disturbed.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

You have to tell me who did it.

Viznick leans closer to the lawyer.

VIZNICK

I can take care of myself.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

I'm gonna go make a stink. Sit tight.

I'll make sure you get a change of clothes.

The attorney exits.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

Peter and Smythe enter a small room with a few chairs. It's dominated by an oversized, one-way window that allows them to look onto the adjacent interrogation room. A speaker system

lets them hear what's going on, but they can't be heard. A GUARD enters with a replacement outfit. Viznick stands passively as his restraints are unlocked.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

From this side, the window is a mirror. In its reflection, Viznick is seen peeling off his clothes.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PETER

Seems George isn't making too many friends in lockup.

SMYTHE

Yeah, look at that sweet face. You'd never guess he killed nine people. I'm gonna get my smokes. Be right back.

PETER

You're too old to smoke. Won't be able to shoot hoops with your grandkid.

Smythe gives Peter a dirty look, ignoring the advice, as he exits. Peter looks back down at his notes.

GUARD #1 (O.S.)

What the fuck's that?!

Peter looks up and sees the shocked Guard staring at Viznick's bare back. It's covered by an enormous tattoo depicting Christ hanging upside down from the bottom of a cross, pinned there by a nail through his feet. His dangling arms end in stumps. His severed hands are still nailed to the crossbar. The effect is horrific yet mesmerizing. As Peter watches, Viznick puts on a shirt, covering the tattoo, and then sits with his back to Peter. The cops and guard exit. Peter moves closer to the glass.

PETER

(contemptuous)

You don't fool me, Georgie.

Viznick's head tilts. Ever so slowly, he turns around until his eyes meet Peter's. He smiles.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Viznick's looking at the mirror. His reflection looks back.

INT. VIEWING ROOM

Peter's thrown. Is he seeing what he thinks he's seeing? Spooked, he moves three feet to his right. Viznick's stare follows him without hesitation. Perplexed, Peter moves again and again, the killer continuing to track him.

PETER

What the hell?

Peter looks up as Smythe re-enters the viewing room. Sees Peter's fear.

SMYTHE

What's the matter with you?

PETER

He's looking right at me.

Both men turn to face Viznick, who is now gazing placidly a few inches to the left.

PETER (CONT'D)

He could see me.

SMYTHE

(offers Peter a cigarette)

I'll quit, maybe you should start.

A docile Viznick pivots in his chair and yawns.

PETER

Maybe...my imagination.

Peter gives Smythe a short smile.

EXT. CITY STREET

Peter crosses the street from the police station. He steps out between two parked cars and immediately into the path of a speeding van. Suddenly, a hand reaches out, jerking him back. The van ZOOMS by, missing Peter by inches. He looks at his savior, it's a CRANKY middle-aged woman.

CRANKY WOMAN

(acerbic expression)

Wake up!

Peter stares at her as she walks by. She turns, sticks out her tongue at him.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Peter ascends. The button for the fifth floor is illuminated. The elevator chimes. He looks up and sees the elevator stopping on the fourth floor. He steps back to make room. It's Claire.

CLAIRE

Hey, what are you doing here in the middle of the day?

PETER

Forgot my car keys. What are you doing on the fourth floor?

CLAIRE

I spaced out.

PETER

Well, it's a nice surprise. Should I hit the "stop" button?

He leans in and gives her a sexy kiss.

EXT. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Maya's waiting. A group of Japanese TOURISTS including several women in kimonos, a group of Catholic school GIRLS in uniform and a mounted POLICEMAN are part of the street scene. Maya stamps out her cigarette as Peter pulls up.

INT. RANGE ROVER - DAY

As they take off, Peter motions to his cupholder, where two coffees sit securely.

MAYA

(picks up coffee)

Thanks. I'm glad you came. Take the Williamsburg Bridge.

As Maya glances over at Peter, she's slightly fascinated. Peter remains reserved, but polite.

MAYA (CONT'D)

So...what did you think of the tape.

PETER

I think you gave me the wrong one.

MAYA

(carefully)

What do you mean?

PETER

(slightly irritated)

It was blank. Nothing on it. You gave me the wrong one.

Maya takes a sip of coffee to conceal her shock.

MAYA

You're sure? There was nothing?

PETER

I cranked it all the way up. Nothing but hum.

Maya's unnerved. Peter sees it.

PETER (CONT'D)
So what'd I miss?

MAYA
(covering well)
You're right. I must've made a mistake.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Maya and Peter are walking towards the entrance. She's touching the cuffs of her sleeves.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Peter and Maya turn the corner and approach the door to Birdson's room. An ORDERLY is walking with them.

ORDERLY
Shouldn't we wait for the doctor?

MAYA
I'm sure she won't mind.
(re: the door)
It's not locked?

ORDERLY
Not necessary...anymore.

INT. BIRDSON'S ROOM - DAY

Maya and Peter enter the room. Followed by the orderly. A motionless Birdson lies on his bed. Eyes closed. His body curled backwards at a horribly severe angle and his arms are wrapped tightly around his torso. He's a gruesome sight. An IV TUBE is taped to his wrist and an EEG is attached to his head. The brain wave monitor indicates no activity.

PETER
Jesus.

A beaming Dr. Allen walks in. She's a little starstruck.

DR. ALLEN
Mr. Kelson, what a pleasure to meet you. I have to say your instincts about the criminally insane are impeccable. I am a fan.

PETER
Quite a compliment coming from you, doctor.

Dr. Allen realizes Maya's beside him.

DR. ALLEN

(to Peter)
When your secretary called, she made no
mention of her coming, too.

PETER
(glancing at Maya)
My secretary?

DR. ALLEN
You're aware that this woman was party
to the so-called exorcism.

PETER
No, I wasn't, actually.

DR. ALLEN
You should know I never felt Mr. Birdson
needed anything but professional
psychiatric care. And then, minutes
after they left, he suffered a stroke.
He's comatose. No brain wave activity
at all.

Dr. Allen adjusts Birdson's IV unit, re-taping an already
swollen hand.

PETER
So you don't believe his condition is
the result of anything supernatural?

DR. ALLEN
Of course not. They put him through
severe mental stress. Causing this
aneurysm.

MAYA
Dr. Allen, could you please tell Mr.
Kelson what you heard as you tried to
enter Mr. Birdson's room?

DR. ALLEN
(ignoring Maya)
I certainly hope you're not lending any
credence to this.

MAYA
(aggressive)
What did you hear?

Peter looks at Dr. Allen questioningly.

DR. ALLEN
The patient was in great distress.
Naturally he was...yelling.

MAYA
And was he in distress when you opened

the door? Or was he sitting here,
relaxed, at this table?

DR. ALLEN

(calmly)

There is a medical explanation for
everything that happened.

MAYA

(boring in)

You heard voices, you know you did.

There's a silence in the room. Dr. Allen stares at Maya.

ORDERLY

It sounded like a hundred people to me.

Maya, Peter and Dr. Allen turn and look at the orderly.
Peter's shocked by the orderly's admission. Glances back at
Dr. Allen.

DR. ALLEN

I've already said, Mr. Birdson was
agitated. Victor, why don't you go and
check on the patient in room 5.

Her tone is frighteningly friendly. The orderly leaves.
Peter looks at Maya, then Dr. Allen.

PETER

(curious)

Just describe it to me, the scene, when
you came back.

As Peter speaks, Maya has an uncomfortable feeling. She
turns and sees Birdson STARING AT HER. Eyes wide open.
Above him, the monitor's still showing no brain wave
activity. He grins at her.

MAYA

Oh my God!

Peter and Dr. Allen turn quickly - as Birdson snaps his eyes
back shut.

MAYA (CONT'D)

He just woke up. He's awake.

What they see is a motionless man in exactly the same
position as before. The monitor's still showing nothing but
steady, horizontal waves.

Dr. Allen shakes her head at Maya's outburst. Dismissive of
her altogether and then to Peter.

DR. ALLEN

I'm surprised at you, Mr. Kelson. And

now I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask
the two of you to leave.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Peter drives out the hospital gates. Maya's with him. The
radio is on. Peter's angry.

PETER

Where do you get off pretending to be my
secretary?

MAYA

I had to.

PETER

And this is evil? The guy had an
aneurysm and now he's in a coma.

MAYA

That's their explanation. You might not
believe me...

PETER

Well, why should I?

(beat)

Alright, what's your name, where do you
live, when did you kill your parents?

Maya doesn't answer. Peter stops at a red light. A pick up
truck full of teenagers with a young girl at the wheel, RADIO
BLASTING SOUL MUSIC, pulls up next to them. Maya uses the
moment to get out and walk quickly away. Peter watches her
go for a moment, then stares at her paper coffee cup, picks
up his cell and dials a number.

PETER (CONT'D)

Detective Smythe?

(beat)

Hey, Mike, it's Peter. Could you pull
some prints off something for me?

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Peter rides the elevator in his building. It stops and he
gets off.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Peter enters the living room.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

In here.

Peter moves into the bathroom. Claire's sitting in front of
a mirror. Her hair's up in a smooth twist, and all she's got
on is a bathrobe. We note a photograph of Peter's mother

sporting a similar hair style on the dresser.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

So, guess which stylist just got this month's "Elle" cover?

Peter runs a hand through his hair.

PETER

(half-heartedly)
You're amazing.

Claire smiles, in her own world.

CLAIRE

Hurry up, you don't want to be late.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PLUSH HOTEL - NIGHT

A glittering Italianate chandelier. As we look down we SEE: Men in black tie and women in high fashion chic form a mosaic of money and power beneath the chandelier's blazing lights. A lavish publisher's party is underway in the hotel's ballroom. In one corner, a CROWD hovers around Peter and Claire, the quintessential perfect couple.

She's in a dramatic skintight dress. He looks great in the latest tux. Adrenaline BUZZ of admiration has soothed Peter, but he's still distracted. Claire, however, is her outgoing self. William in a rented tux and Susan, in a modest gown, hang on the edge of the golden crowd. A JADED YOUNG MAN is leading the conversation.

YOUNG MAN

Did you hear how the TIMES zinged Paul Guenette's new book? They said "He writes for the ages - between five and twelve."

Everyone enjoys that remark. A gorgeous woman named LAUREN moves closer to Peter, flirting.

LAUREN

I saw you on the news. But I think you're even better live.

CLAIRE

(interrupting)
He is. By the way, Lauren, did you ever finish your book on tattoo art? I hear your publisher wants his advance back.

LAUREN

(cold)
That's not true.

SECOND YOUNG WOMAN

I think Rhonda Huston's assistant was just made an editor at S&S.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

The guy with the weird fingernails? Imagine looking over galleys with him.

YOUNG MAN

So, Peter, how crowded is the field now? There are, what, seven books in the offing about the Viznick case?

PETER

Yeah, but no one has the access I've got.

LAUREN

Is it true the cops used a psychic?

SECOND YOUNG WOMAN

I saw a psychic once. Some of these guys are definitely for real.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

Oh, really? I dropped \$250 on a session once and they guy didn't get a thing right.

YOUNG MAN

And you, Peter? Where do you stand?

PETER

Wherever there's room.

Peter feels a tap on his shoulder. A WAITER serving hors d'oeuvres is standing there.

PETER (CONT'D)

None for me, thanks.

The waiter wipes the frame and as he does, John Townsend is revealed, beads of sweat glistening on his brow and a gun in his hand.

TOWNSEND

(whispering)

God will forgive me, the time of transformation is so near.

He points it at Peter's face. Peter is in shock. Everything around him seems to blur, except the gun floating a few feet away. But Townsend hesitates, obviously conflicted.

And suddenly, the woman to Peter's left SCREAMS. The waiter's tray goes flying. With astonishing speed, William

flings himself onto Townsend. They both go down. A SHOT RINGS OUT. Pandemonium. Screams & shouting. Peter sees that William has Townsend in a brutal headlock. Townsend looks panicked, helpless. Peter is pulled back, as the two men disappear beneath a swarm of other bodies.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The enormous room is empty. All the guests are gone. The uneaten food and overturned chairs testimony to their hasty departure. Peter, Claire, Susan and William are sitting in a semi-circle. Smythe walks over.

PETER

Thanks for handling this.

SMYTHE

Sure thing. Look, I've got enough, between your preliminary statements and all the witness accounts. You can go home.

(to Peter)

Gimme til morning. Find out who he is. Until then, don't sweat it, huh? Just your random bad cheese trying to hole you.

CLAIRE

Well said.

SMYTHE

Colloquialisms 101. My only "A" in the Academy.

Peter stands and pats Smythe on the back.

PETER

Thanks again for everything.

SMYTHE

Hey, don't thank me. Somebody up there likes you.

Peter looks at William, then hugs him in a powerful embrace.

PETER

(moved)

Will, this is...

WILLIAM

It's okay.

They smile, exhausted.

SUSAN

Can we please leave now?

EXT. LOBBY - PETER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Peter and Claire exit a limo. The scaffolding is still in place but the workers are gone. Josef pushes open the door for Peter and Claire.

JOSEF

Good evening, Mr. Kelson. Miss Claire.

INT. LOBBY

Peter and Claire enter the lobby.

JOSEF

(urgent)

I want to tell you...your neighbor, Mrs. Levotsky, she's dead.

Peter and Claire are both caught off guard.

CLAIRE

What? That's horrible!

PETER

What happened?

JOSEF

(enjoyably ghoulish)

Apparently she killed herself sometime last night.

(confidentially)

The paramedics told me she hung herself. Climbed up on her dresser, stocking around her neck, but I don't know. She was completely rheumatoid...

(realizes he's speaking with too much relish)

It's a shame. Anyway, though you should know.

Peter's stunned and now completely unnerved.

PETER

Yeah, I appreciate it. Thanks, Josef.

CLAIRE

(frightened)

When did they find her?

JOSEF

A few hours ago.

Claire's blown away by the night's events.

INT. PETER'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Peter has slowed to look at the yellow police cordon, as

Claire moves on into their apartment.

INT. PETER'S KITCHEN

A bit later, Peter and Claire, both still shaken, sit across from a relieved Father James, drinking coffee.

FATHER JAMES

It's moments like this that make it clear. All that matters is those we love are with us.

Peter's touched. He pats James on the shoulder.

CLAIRE

I'm still shaking.

PETER

I can't believe Will killed him.

CLAIRE

Thank God he did.

Claire stands, exhausted. She bends down, kissing Peter on the cheek, only because James is there, and then she gives Peter a sweet hug.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

(deeply felt)

I don't know what I'd do without you.

Peter hugs her tightly. An emotional moment.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed. Don't be long.

Claire exits. James looks at Peter, sees the night's events have taken their toll.

FATHER JAMES

What is it?

PETER

Something he said, just before...

FATHER JAMES

He spoke to you?

PETER

Yeah. It didn't make any sense.

FATHER JAMES

Listen to me, Peter. You can't let the ravings of a madman disturb you, okay?

PETER

You're right, but it's funny. All my

life I thought I was simply a man who didn't believe in any of it.

FATHER JAMES

No matter, my son, he believes in you.

PETER

But it's true. I have no faith. It's strange. When that gun was pointed at my face tonight, I was surprised, but never frightened. It was as if I knew nothing could possibly happen to me and...in that one moment I didn't care about anything. Not even my own life.

FATHER JAMES

Peter. Your life must matter to you because it matters to all of us who love you.

PETER

You know, I respect that you have such faith, James. I don't understand it, but I want you to know that despite our differences, I admire you and I always will.

Father James stands and claps his hand on Peter's shoulders.

FATHER JEREMY

I appreciate your saying that. I'm gonna go now. I believe you're wanted elsewhere.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Maya is making coffee in a drip pot on a hot plate. There is a soft knock on the door.

MAYA

Come in.

Father Jeremy enters and shuts the door behind him.

FATHER JEREMY

His faith wavered. He tried to shoot Kelson last night. I don't know all the details.

MAYA

Was anyone else hurt?

FATHER JEREMY

I don't know. I don't think so.

A curious conflict of emotions passes across Maya's face - sadness coupled with relief. She sits heavily on the bed.

FATHER JEREMY (CONT'D)
Be careful, Maya.

EXT. MANHATTAN - MORNING

The hustle and bustle of a typical weekday morning. As Peter crosses the street, nearing his office, suddenly a MESSENGER on a bicycle skids and falls. The Messenger's on the ground, crashed, his mail everywhere. Immediately Peter moves to help him up, grabbing an arm, trying to collect the spilled envelopes. All the morning PEDESTRIANS step over or around the mess, in typical New York fashion. The embarrassed Messenger thanks Peter, AD-LIB, and we...

INT. PETER'S OFFICE

Peter's typing at his computer. He is surrounded by newspaper clippings, interview transcripts and other research relevant to the Viznick trial. His printer JAMS. As he moves to fix it, the intercom blinks.

PETER
Yeah.

MRS. QUINTANA
It's Detective Smythe.

Peter picks up.

PETER
What's up?

SMYTHE (O.S.)
How're you doin' today?

PETER
(tough)
It's another day. I think I'm alright.

SMYTHE (O.S.)
You got the right attitude, anyway,
look, we gotta talk.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Smythe exits the building just as Peter approaches.

SMYTHE
I'm fed up inside, let's walk.

Peter and Smythe take a walk down the street. Smythe stops a moment at an outdoor vendor. Buys a hotdog.

SMYTHE (CONT'D)
We traced this guy to a seminary in
Newark. If you can believe it, he was a

deacon.

(shifting a file under his arm)
Talked to the man in charge there, a
Father Frank Page. He said the gunman,
John Townsend, was caught up in some
nonsense about the Devil, along with a
priest named Lareaux and a woman named
Maya Larkin - the same woman whose
prints were on that coffee cup. Now can
I please get the fill?

Smythe licks a mouthful of mustard just ready to drip, then
takes a huge bite off his dog.

PETER

She came to me with a wild story about
demonic possession.

SMYTHE

(hands Peter Maya's file)
She's got a juvenile record from New
Orleans. Parents died when she was 13.

PETER

Parents died?

SMYTHE

Yeah, murder-suicide.

PETER

What happened?

SMYTHE

Mother killed the father, then killed
herself. Crime of passion.

PETER

She told me she killed them.

SMYTHE

Not what the records show. Anyway, she
was a runaway, arrests for vandalism,
petty theft, drugs, the whole bit.
Parole records show she graduated from
community college, moved into a retreat
house, teaches some classes at the
seminary school, hasn't been in any
trouble since.

Smythe finishes his hot dog and chucks the wrapper into a
nearby can.

SMYTHE (CONT'D)

We hauled her in earlier but didn't have
anything hard to tie her to Townsend.
Far as the priest goes, he won't be
bothering you. Suffered a complete

mental breakdown, during - get this -
during an exorcism.

PETER

Where is she now?

SMYTHE

Had to let her go.

(beat)

I see you thinkin' there, superstar.
Don't.

EXT. RANGE ROVER - DAY

Peter drives into the Lincoln Tunnel. Two men stand outside the entrance, arguing. As Peter passes, they begin fighting.

SMYTHE (V.O.)

I'm sure I don't have to remind you she's still a possible accessory to attempted murder...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Maya stands before a roomful of children. She holds an oversized picture of a hat.

THE CLASS

Le Chapeau.

MAYA

Tres bien.

SMYTHE (V.O.)

...and the obvious, you could get another gun in your face.

Next is a picture of a dog.

THE CLASS

Le Chien.

PETER (V.O.)

Don't worry, I won't go anywhere near her.

The door to the hall is abruptly flung open. Peter strides in. Maya sees his anger.

PETER (CONT'D)

(harsh)

We need to talk.

MAYA

Peter, please...

Peter's overt belligerence scares the children.

PETER

Now!

He motions towards the door. Maya turns to the class.

MAYA

Children, I'll be right back. Just stay
in...

Peter grabs her and escorts her to the door.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(unconvincing smile)
...your seats. Be right back. Don't
worry.

And as she's pulled into the hall, we SEE:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maya, still holding the brightly colored vocabulary pictures, stands with Peter in the hallway. Opposite her in the hall, is a window, and to the left, an old radiator with chipped enamel paint. Next to the wall is a plain wooden bench. Maya stands with her back to her classroom door. She continually checks on her kids through a window in the door.

PETER

(really pissed off)
Last night a guy named John Townsend
tried to shoot me and now I find out you
knew him. What the fuck is going on?

MAYA

Please, the children.

Peter moves in close, crowding her against the wall.

PETER

(lowering his voice)
Why did he try to kill me?

MAYA

(looking at classroom)
Townsend believed, just as God became
man in Christ.

(Maya turns back to Peter)
So Satan will assume human form. I
believe it too.

Peter grabs the pictures out of her hand and pitches them into the hall.

PETER

And the point is?

MAYA

At the exorcism, Birdson boasted that Satan is about to take over the body of a man.

(long pause)

You are that man, Peter.

PETER

What?!?!

MAYA

It's true. Birdson knew your name, he was writing it in numerical code. It wasn't easy but I figured it out. It spelled your name.

PETER

(sarcastic)

Why didn't Birdson just say so?

MAYA

If you're possessed, you can't reveal anything Satan wants hidden. Unless you trick him.

PETER

(now completely unimpressed)

Trick him.

MAYA

The good outwitting the bad. It's like Birdson had a split personality.

PETER

(he's had it; laughs)

You should think about getting professional help.

MAYA

You're already contaminated. It's why you couldn't hear the tape. There's probably a pentacle near your bed. To sanctify you.

PETER

I'm not going to be drawn into this.

MAYA

I know this sounds crazy. I understand. Check your parents' blood types. Are you sure your parents are your birth parents?

PETER

My parents are dead. Don't even think of bringing them into this.

The school bell rings. Within seconds, the hallway is flooded with kids and teachers.

A smiling Father Frank stops out of a classroom. As he sees Maya and Peter down the hall, his face darkens. He starts towards them.

MAYA

(moving to Peter; whisper)

You're about to become the anti-Christ
who is born unholy and becomes the door
to eternal suffering in this world.

PETER

(pissed off at himself now)

If you or any of your lunatic friends
ever come near me again...

Peter notices Father Frank moving up on Maya and takes off.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE SEMINARY - DAY

An angry Peter walks to his Range Rover. The wind is up and it has started to rain. Peter's under-dressed, hunching his shoulders against the elements. He's parked a distance from the Seminary. As he begins a slow jog to his car, the rain begins to come down a bit harder. Suddenly, Peter slips on the wet pavement and falls, scraping his hand. A moment, while he gets his bearings and then he picks himself up, the rain now shooting down the side of his face.

INT. MAYA'S ROOM IN THE SEMINARY - CONTINUOUS

An anxious Maya sits at her desk. Suddenly, there's a hard knock on the door and Father Frank enters. Maya looks up, unprepared.

FATHER FRANK

I've had it. Townsend's dead. The
police are calling and now I see you
having a scene in front of the children.
I'm sorry, Maya, you've been with us for
many years, but effective immediately,
I'm rescinding your right to live at the
church.

MAYA

Father, I have nowhere else to stay.

FATHER FRANK

You have a sister in New Orleans.

Maya looks up at him, but Father Frank's out the door.

INT. FATHER LAREAUX'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Father Lareaux sleeps quietly, quasi fetal. Maya moves to

the room soundlessly. A renewed sadness stabs her at the sight of Lareaux. She studies him a moment, then cups his face in her hands. Slight disturbance in Lareaux's body, like a child's startle reaction. Maya lets go and leaves as quietly as she came.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Upscale. Claire and Peter at lunch. Peter is clearly agitated. His clothes are still wet and pretty wrinkled. Claire looks at him with tenderness.

PETER

I'm gonna have to get a restraining order. What a nightmare.

CLAIRE

I don't know. In a way, I'm glad it all happened.

Peter looks at her skeptically, a little pissed off.

PETER

You're glad somebody tried to kill me?

CLAIRE

(nervous about confronting him)
No, of course not, but I think now that this has happened, a lot of things can start to come out...

PETER

(still pissed)
Yeah, like...

CLAIRE

(coming on a little stronger)
Like you need to admit that losing your parents when you were twelve was traumatic.

PETER

(unafraid)
It's with me all the time, Claire, I just don't like to talk about it.

CLAIRE

Well, it shattered your faith in everything.

PETER

(trying to lighten it)
I'm just temporarily off my game.

CLAIRE

(boring in)
You need to believe in something besides

yourself.

PETER

I believe in you.

A moment where Claire hesitates, then she decides to let herself be flattered.

CLAIRE

(leaning in, close to Peter)
I love you. You look a mess.
Why don't you go home and clean up
before you go back to work.

Claire kisses Peter, brief but deep, as she gulps in a short gust of air.

Outside the rain has stopped as Claire gets up, taking off for work without him.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE SEMINARY - DAY

Maya is sitting on an iron bench outside the playground. A shoulder bag with some of her belongings lays beside her. She stands, picks up her sack and walks across the street to a small diner.

INT. DINER - DAY

It's warm, crowded and NOISY. WAITRESSES banter with longtime customers about the ups and downs of everyday life. Maya enters in a state of complete distress. She sits at the counter next to a MOTHER and her LITTLE GIRL. Their drinks and sandwiches are spread out everywhere. The little girl cusp her hand around a tall glass of milk. She wears black patent shoes, a red jacket, hood attached. Maya bows her head and covers her eyes. She's losing it...

MAYA

(whisper)
I can't do this anymore.

The little girl, about 4 years old, tugs on Maya's sleeve.

LITTLE GIRL

You have to put your napkin in your lap.

MOTHER

(embarrassed)
Gina!

Maya looks at the solemn little girl.

MAYA

(to her mother)
It's okay.
(she puts her napkin in her

lap)
Better?

MOTHER
I'm sorry, she's very into rules.

LITTLE GIRL
Doesn't your daughter put her napkin in
her lap?

MAYA
(softly)
I don't have a daughter. I'm not
married.

LITTLE GIRL
Aren't you lonely?

MOTHER
Okay, Gina, that's enough.

Maya sees the little girl wants an answer. Moved, she bends
close and whispers in her ear.

MAYA
I have someone who takes care of me.

She pulls back. The little girl looks up at Maya
reprovingly.

LITTLE GIRL
(cruelly)
But he's dead. Jesus is dead.

And then she smiles at Maya, a wicked smile. Maya looks at
the little girl, and then at her mother. The mother's eyes
are sparkling with malice. The room begins to warp and
distort. And we hear a choked back breath.

Horrified, Maya quickly turns in her chair and faces away
from the vision, praying silently with eyes closed. After a
moment, she opens her eyes. The room looks normal again. In
the reflection of the mirror across the counter she sees that
the two seats next to her are empty, the utensils untouched.
Sighing with relief, she turns back. But the little girl and
her mother are still there. The mother's face suddenly looks
elongated, her eyes move too close together and her nose
disappears. A frightening distortion, but momentary. And
the little girl's smile widens with spite.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
You're so weak.

With a loud, frightened cry, Maya sweeps her arms out,
knocking all the nearby glasses, utensils and dishes to the
floor with a tremendous crash. Milk bleeds over the counter.
All eyes turn to her. Distraught, Maya sees the little girl

and the mother are gone. She grabs her bag and runs out the diner.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's quiet, shadowy. The aquarium has begun a slow leak and a small puddle of water has pooled beneath it. Peter enters. He notices the water on the floor. He goes into the bedroom.

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM - DAY

The ledge of the building across the way can be seen from Peter's window. A WOMAN is moving near the ledge, setting out a grouping of potted geraniums. From downstairs, a shaft of light is visible.

Peter changes his clothes. Then, he feels the scrape on his hand. Looks at it. As he moves to the bathroom. Washes his hand and as he does so, he checks his reflection in the mirror. Stares at himself a moment, then sticks out his tongue. Checks it. And then dries his hand, moving back to the bedroom, carrying his towel with him. Peter glances at his bed a moment. Half-amused, he leans over and checks behind the picture hanging above the headboard.

Nothing.

Then, he bends down, checking under the bed. Again, nothing.

Then, he moves to a bedroom closet, pulling down a black and gray speckled file box.

Inside, a series of newspaper clippings, graphic photos. Yellowed with age, one of which falls on the bed, titled, "Unsolved Brutal Murders." Peter riffles past the clippings to the coroner's report.

He speed reads it, until he gets to his parents' blood types: "Andrea Kelson - A negative." Jack Kelson - O positive." Peter stares at the information. Confused by what it's supposed to mean. Then, he pulls on a turtleneck sweater, ready to go back out.

PETER

This is ridiculous.

Peter exits the bedroom and steps back towards the living room, carrying the towel.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Peter passes through to his front door throwing his towel on the puddle of water.

INT. SECRETARY'S ANTE ROOM - PETER'S OFFICE - DAY

Peter walks in, eyeballing Mrs. Quintana's desk.

MRS. QUINTANA
Good of you to stop by.

PETER
(breezy)
We millionaires yet?

INT. PETER'S OFFICE - DAY

Peter enters to find Michael. Peter sizes up the man who's casually studying Peter's personal desk photos.

MICHAEL
Umm, Melvin Szabo, this is Peter Kelson.
Peter, this is the psychic.

The stranger looks up. He's young and cocky, with thick glasses. He's holding a picture of Peter with his parents.

PETER
(to Melvin)
I'd appreciate it if you'd put that back.

MELVIN
You are the younger of two...

He puts down that photo and picks up one of Claire, as Peter walks over to his chair and a position of more control.

MELVIN (CONT'D)
(indicating Claire)
You're afraid of committing to this girl.

Peter grabs one of his pens and begins rolling it between his fingers.

MELVIN (CONT'D)
But she worships you. Your mother's dead but your father's alive.

PETER
Nothing you couldn't find out from reading the papers. And you're already wrong on one count.

MELVIN
Viznick will get off and Michael's got a crush on you.

Michael looks alarmed. Peter notices his pen is leaking all over his hand.

PETER
You know what? You can go.

MELVIN

Suit yourself. But does this mean anything to you?

Melvin picks up a pen and writes "X-E-S" in florid script on a pad. He holds it out for Peter's inspection. Peter is rattled.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

You do know, don't you. That these are also numbers. Greek numbers, 600, 60 and 6 - or 666. The sign of the Devil.

PETER

Get out of here.

MELVIN

(pleasantly)
Goodbye.

He sticks out his hand and grabs Peter's. His expression changes from one of amused disdain to fascinated curiosity.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

Wait a minute...

His arrogance melts away. Melvin's face tightens. A shudder of fear passes through him.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

(strangled gasp)
God will forgive me...the time of transformation is so near.

But the voice is that of John Townsend.

PETER

(really shaken)
Get the fuck out of here!

INT. NYC STREET - DAY

HIGH ANGLE ON:

Peter stands in the middle of the sidewalk as the wind violently whips at his jacket. He gazes upward to the mute, gray sky. Finally he lowers his eyes. He sees something that angers him.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

A sprawling Catholic church stands before him. Peter regards it with wrath. He pushes open the door and tries to enter, but a group of LITHUANIAN parishioners pushes past him, blocking his way. A priest calls a farewell.

LITHUANIAN PRIEST (O.S.)
(in Lithuanian)
See you all next week!

The entry finally clear, Peter goes inside.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

It's dark, forbidding. The priest exits around a corner. Peter looks at the vast and spacious altar. Above it is an enormous wooden crucifix. Peter moves down the aisle toward the altar.

ECU

The sorrowful face of the Christ figure looks down on Peter with pity. The body hangs, gaunt, wracked with pain. The wrists pierced by nails, the feet cruelly hammered together.

Peter stops at the first pew. He looks up at the crucifix. Defiant.

PETER
Go ahead, do something. Show me.

He waits. For a split-second, there's a pristine silence. Then the sound of the wind rises in the church. With that, the right wrist SHATTERS with a noise like a rifle shot. Freed from one of its supports, the heavy wooden Christ SLAMS FORWARD at an awkward angle. The other wrist SNAPS IN TWO.

For a second, the Christ figure trembles. Then, with a sickening sound, the entire wooden body falls forward, swings sideways and PLUMMETS down. Peter doesn't want to look. The figure is now hanging upside down, held only by the brace at its feet. Above it, each hand remains pinned to the cross. It's an EXACT COPY of Viznick's tattoo.

INT. BIRDSON'S ROOM - DAY

Birdson's eyes open.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH

Peter staggers outside, dodging two DOGS fighting, a vicious NOISY battle on the Rectory lawn. And in the b.g., a homeless man takes a piss into a rivulet of white liquid. Peter walks in a daze, pulling his car keys from his pocket.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Peter's car moves through traffic, driving slowly, erratically. He scrapes a parked car, but doesn't stop, Corners poorly, almost hitting a pedestrian.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SEMINARY - DAY

Peter pulls up in his Range Rover across the street from the playground. He gets out of his car and crosses the street. As Peter walks closer, he sees Maya. She's sitting on a swing, looking off into space, rocking ever-so-slightly back and forth, a pile of smoked, crushed cigarettes and her shoulder bag at her feet.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Standing beside Maya is an agitated DAY-CARE WORKER. Their conversation is FAINTLY AUDIBLE. Across the yard, a SECOND DAY-CARE WORKER is shepherding the last of the kids back inside the center. The children are carefree and rambunctious, unaware of the adult drama taking place around them.

DAY-CARE WORKER

Go on, get them inside!

(sympathetically to Maya)

Look, you don't have a job here anymore.

They want you to leave.

CLOSE ON

Maya's face. She's devastated. In the b.g., a YOUNG GIRL does a triple on the roll bar. Three girls and one boy compete for distance on the monkey bars.

The Latino Boy and one of his friends LAUGH and break free from the line heading back to the school. They circle back toward Maya and swoop by her, waving exuberantly, then return to the line and go into the school. The day-care worker follows them as:

Peter walks through the gate. He walks fast toward Maya, who sees him coming, from a distance. Maya continues rocking ever so gently on her swing. Peter puts out his hands and stops it. Stares at her, scared.

PETER

(lost)

I don't understand what's going on.

MAYA

There's no reason why you should.

(tells him as gently as possible)

This has been planned from your birth. You fit all the criteria that we know of. Never baptized, born of incest, devoid of faith...

PETER

But I was baptized. And I certainly wasn't born of incest.

MAYA

You were not baptized. At least I don't believe it was Christian. Your baptism was performed by your uncle, James McKenzie.

PETER

Yes, I know.

MAYA

The only baptism he ever performed in seven years as pastor at Bedford.

PETER

So what?

MAYA

Seven years. One baptism? He's your mother's only brother

PETER

Yes.

Maya stares at Peter.

MAYA

Do you know your parents' blood types?

PETER

I looked at the coroner's report. My father's O positive and my mother...A negative.

MAYA

(taking this in a gasp of air)
Peter, your blood-type is AB negative. There's no way your birth father can be O positive. You father is not who you think he is.

PETER

(really shaken)
So...then the coroner's report is probably wrong. I mean...this is ridiculous. There's been a mistake. I don't believe any of this.

MAYA

Then why are you here?

That silences Peter. He sits heavily in the swing next to her.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Peter, I believe your baptism was perverted. Look at your certificate. Your mother was the only witness to it. Your blood-type doesn't match who you

thought your father was. Peter...I'm
sorry.

PETER

(desperate)
And if what you're saying is true, what
would happen to me?

MAYA

I don't know.
(beat)
I do know that people who are possessed
have to accept evil in some way. I
don't know if it works the same way in
this instance. I don't even know when
it's going to happen.

Peter looks at Maya for solace, but there is none. He
glances away, runs a hand through his hair and...

PETER

When Townsend tried to kill me, he said
something strange like...
(struggles to remember)
"The time of transformation is near..."

MAYA

(putting something together)
Townsend, he had some of Father's books.

EXT. ROUTE 23 - NIGHT

As night falls, the Range Rover moves out of the suburbs and
deeper into the countryside. There's a bright moon. The
highway is a ribbon of silver.

EXT. RURAL ROAD- LATER THAT NIGHT

Their car pulls up to a dirt driveway. Bordered by sagging
fences, the mail box reads "Townsend." At the end of the
driveway is a two-story, weather-beaten farmhouse with a
garage. There are no lights on. Maya says a silent prayer
and steels herself.

EXT. FRONT OF TOWNSEND'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The ground floor windows are shuttered. Maya tries the front
door. It's locked. Peter walks to the end of the porch,
looking for another entrance. Maya looks at the door, then
jams her elbow through a small pane of glass next to the
doorknob, breaking it.

PETER

(inward smile at Maya)
Okay.

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Peter and Maya enter the dark hall. Peter reaches for a light switch and flips it on. They see a hallway in front of them, stairs to the right and living room off to the left. For a moment, they stand in silence. Peter opens a closet door, glancing inside.

PETER

What are you looking for exactly?

MAYA

The books themselves or maybe some pages he ripped out.

Maya walks into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The furniture is shabby and worn. There's a battered sofa, a new TV and a coffee table. Maya goes to the table and quickly looks through a pile of magazines. Peter enters and makes a fast tour of the room. Maya gestures towards the entrance of an adjacent room.

MAYA

In here.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Maya turns on a standing lamp. This room looks more promising. There's an old piano in one corner. On one wall are two bookshelves. And next to a set of wooden chairs is a small reading table. Maya starts scanning the rows of books. Peter is immediately drawn to the table where he sees new copies of his books. Chilled, Peter turns to Maya.

PETER

He's got all my books.

Maya looks over at Peter.

MAYA

We needed to know all we could.

PETER

I'm going to look around.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter crosses the hallway into the dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM

The room's dominated by a long wooden dining table, covered with a chintz tablecloth. The window shutters are open and moonlight streams in.

Peter tries the light switch. It doesn't work. He walks around the room - and is spooked by a glimpse of movement.

It's his own reflection in a mirror. He sees a closet door and opens it. Inside, it's totally dark. He pulls a hanging cord. A light goes on revealing a small pantry filled with canned goods, foodstuff.

Peter goes to the other side of the pantry and opens another door.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Maya continues to comb through the bookshelves.

INT. KITCHEN

Peter steps into a dingy kitchen. A dirty coffee cup and a plate sit on the counter near the sink. At the other end of the kitchen, past the refrigerator, is a door leading outside. Peter approaches the door, glances through the window. He then turns and walks through a doorway.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Peter stands at the base of the rear staircase. As he starts to ascend the stairs.

PETER
(calling out)
I'll be upstairs.

INT. LIBRARY

Maya is flipping through Peter's books. Suddenly, she hears the tread of footsteps overhead. It startles her.

MAYA
(reassuring herself)
Peter...

She puts down the book and turns around. Surveying the room, she sees an entrance to the hallway that services the master bedroom.

INT. HALLWAY

Maya walks through the hall towards the open door of the master bedroom. She goes in.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

An antique oak bed dominates the room, with two suitcases lying on top. The place is a mess - clothes strewn everywhere. There's a roll-top desk in the corner with some books and papers on it. One of Townsend's jackets is draped on the desk chair.

On the opposite wall is a door that's open just a crack. The interior of a bathroom is visible on the other side. The door has a smoky, opaque window built into its top half.

Maya starts sifting through the papers on the desk. She can hear Peter's footsteps moving slowly above her. And the sound of doors opening.

She opens the desk drawers. The first one is stuffed with bills. The second has checkbooks, bank statements. The third is stuck shut.

Maya kneels down to get better leverage. From this perspective, we can see the open door to the dark hallway behind her...She pulls and pulls again. As the drawer pops open, a shadow falls across her. She WHIRLS.

REVERSE

It's Peter.

PETER

Not much upstairs. A couple of empty bedrooms and a bathroom. Anything here?

Maya looks at the contents of the drawer. It's full of Christian literature.

MAYA

Nothing yet.

PETER

I'll go outside and take a look in the garage.

Maya nods. Peter exits the room. She hears his footsteps fade away and a door slam. As she stands up, she knocks Townsend's jacket off the chair. A book falls out of a pocket. It's one of the books Townsend took from Lareaux's room. Maya opens it.

ECU

Tiny, cryptic notations are scrawled in the margins.

EXT. TOWNSEND'S HOUSE

Peter walks down the side steps and over to the large garage.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

An intrigued Maya turns another page.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Peter enters. Sees a switch. Flips it on and a fluorescent

light BUZZES ON. He peruses old boxes, two dusty, black filing cabinets. Ruston curtain rods, a box of broken appliances and an old stove covered with an orange tarp.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

As Maya reads, she hears a light, SCRAPING noise. She glances up. Silence. She waits. Nervous, Maya then goes back to her book. Excited, she spots something that's important. She hears another light SOUND.

MAYA

Peter?

INT. HALLWAY

Maya listens. She hears a few footsteps in the adjacent bathroom.

MAYA

(to herself)

Jesus, Peter, you scared me.

INT. HALLWAY

Book in hand, Maya walks over to the bathroom door and flings it open.

MAYA

(rushes in)

Look at this...

She steps into the bathroom and freezes.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Henry Birdson is standing in the corner, same green regulation drawstring pants and matching T-shirt. He has a fish-gutting knife in his hand. With an evil smile, he calmly steps forward, imitating the gesture Maya saw in the restroom at the seminary. He raises his knife, holding it out in front of her. Maya stands still. She wants to run more than anything in life, but she doesn't. Instead, she reaches out one hand and touches the knife ever so gently with the tips of her fingers. For a second, neither one moves. Maya's face registers great fear. Birdson slides the knife back. Maya sees blood on her hands coming from a cut on her fingers. She trembles, but doesn't run. Maya uses the humility and calm of an experienced exorcist.

MAYA

(a whisper)

Henry, Christ loves you.

Birdson looks at her with the impassive, malignant gaze of a snake.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Christ can save you, Henry.

Birdson shakes his head as Maya's dangling cross picks off particles of pure light.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Just say his name, say his name and
you'll be free.

Birdson, agitated, moves closer.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(soothing)
Say his name.

He slowly traverses the air in front of her face with his knife. Maya steps back, trapped, her eyes never leaving Birdson's.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(with love)
Christ loves you...

For a SPLIT SECOND, the real Henry Birdson appears, then he smiles grotesquely and in a new VOICE:

BIRDSON
(lascivious)
Yes, but does he swallow?

VERY FAST:

Maya dives out the door. With a SNARL, Birdson recovers and lunges for her.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maya throws herself back into the bedroom, SLAMMING the door shut behind her as Birdson's body smashes into it. Maya sees Birdson's shadowy form trying to break the glass with an animal-like fury. Scrambling against his mounting pressure, Maya tries but fails to get the lock to close. The door SHUDDERS, as Birdson pummels it with his body. Birdson CRACKS the glass. A spiderweb of shards rips through the window.

BIRDSON
(different VOICES)
Fucking bitch! Open the door!

Maya drops Lareaux's book, shouldering her weight against the door. He hits it so hard, it opens. Maya shoves it back and, straining, manages to lock it. At the same moment, she realizes there's no more pressure on the other side. She stops pushing.

POV

Over her shoulder, we see the door behind her slightly open. She turns and realizes this, takes two steps toward that door and then freezes. Maya's in the center of the room, equidistant from all the doors. She looks back at the door to the bathroom. No shadows block the light at its base. Ever so slowly, keeping her eyes on the bathroom door, she reaches over, unlocks and then pulls open the door to the hall. It swings open silently. She strains, listening as hard as she can. But the only sound she can hear is her own shallow breathing. She says a silent prayer. Then steps gingerly toward the door to the hallway. As she takes a second step:

Birdson BURSTS through the bathroom door behind her. He leaps and slashes at her, cutting her arm as she bolts through the door to the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

...flying into the:

INT. LIBRARY

Where - WHAM! - she collides full tilt with a body.

MAYA

AHHHH!!!

It's Peter. They hit the ground, groggy.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Get up!!

PETER

What's the...OH SHIT!

Birdson races in, knife held high. Peter grabs the small reading table and uses it as a shield as they scramble to their feet. Whipping the knife back and forth at lightening speed, Birdson corrals them into a corner. It takes all of Peter's skill to keep him at bay.

MAYA

(dawning realization)

Peter, let go of the chair!

PETER

What?

Birdson menacingly circles left, then right.

MAYA

LET GO OF THE CHAIR!

As Birdson makes another thrust towards them, Maya suddenly

jerks the chair away, clearing a path for Birdson's knife to hit Peter's abdomen.

Peter SCREAMS, bracing himself for the impact, an impact that never comes.

Birdson freezes, stopping the thrust millimeters from Peter's stomach. He's caught in an unseen trap, paralyzed.

MAYA (CONT'D)
(insistent)
He can't hurt you.

In that split second, Peter realizes Maya's right. He takes the chair and SMASHES Birdson in the head. Birdson goes down. Peter kicks him. He doesn't move. Peter grabs Birdson's knife.

PETER
(to Maya)
You okay?

MAYA (O.S.)
When's your birthday?

PETER
What?

He looks back at Maya, who's holding her upper arm. Blood begins to drip down her side. Peter immediately grabs hold of her hand, carefully pushing her arm up in the air.

PETER (CONT'D)
Hang on, get it up, go on, higher.

MAYA
Your 33rd birthday. The transformation will be a perversion of Christ's rising from the dead. Townsend discovered it in one of Lareaux's books.

Peter goes to the window, grabs one of the lightweight curtains and uses the knife to shred a piece. He takes it and bandages Maya's arm.

MAYA (CONT'D)
It'll happen at the exact time of your birth.

PETER
(he stops)
That can't be right.
(as he ties off the dressing)
My birthday's tomorrow.

With Peter and Maya in the foreground, we see, although they don't, that Birdson sits up, his eyes open, staring at a

point above Maya and Peter. A horrible rictus smile moves across his face. Birdson's eyes roll back into his head until only white remains. Then he begins to jerk uncontrollably, his face contorting into one frightening expression after the next. Peter grabs the fish knife, moving in front of Maya.

Birdson's limbs begin to torque out of control. He convulses on the floor then suddenly sits up closer to camera. His eyes roll back down into a normal position. His face becomes calm. He looks at Peter and Maya. A horrified look crosses Birdson's face as his arm rotates backwards, bones snapping and muscles ripping.

Involuntarily spewing from Birdson in ever-changing animal like voices.

BIRDSON

(in Latin)

My demon of anguish, help me create
confusion and suffering forever and
ever... and ever...(geni tormentorum,
mihi commoventi perturbationem
miseriamque in saecula saeculorum, in
saecula saeculorum, in saecula
saeculorum...)

ECU

Birdson's head turns on his neck in unnatural manner, his body still convulsing. As he stops speaking, his head snaps back around so he's facing Peter and Maya.

Suddenly, the chandelier above them flickers, the globes EXPLODING and showering them with shards of glass. Birdson's entire body begins to vibrate, urine seeping out from beneath him. Then, horrifyingly, a horn like protusion begins to push out from the upper edge of Birdson's head, growing, straining...until finally the horn BURSTS through blowing his head apart. Birdson falls back onto the floor. And as Birdson finally dies, Peter looks at the corpse, then drops heavily onto an arm of a chair. Drained, Maya sits next to him. They lean against one another, together in trauma.

MAYA

He couldn't stop us and that's how he
was punished.

(insistent)

Peter, what time were you born?

PETER

I don't know.

(pulls in a breath,
overwhelmed)

Probably have a copy of my birth
certificate...my apartment.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

Peter's Range Rover moves at a fast clip down side streets and back roads.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Highway's dark, except for Peter's headlights, as they roll up and down a hilly back road. Trees lean in on both sides. The effect is eerily like driving in another world.

Maya flips through Lareaux's book. A bible she took from Townsend's house sits on her lap. Looks over at Peter a moment.

MAYA

There's nothing else here.

PETER

What's the bible for?

MAYA

Comfort.

Peter shrugs. He starts to drive poorly. His fatigue is showing. Maya looks up as:

POV

Up ahead, the road begins to parallel a lake. Glimpses of black water can be seen through the trees. She powers down her window to get some air. Maya looks over at Peter. His face appears normal. Then, she seems to hear a soft sound - GASPING FOR BREATH. Then:

The car suddenly drifts into the other lane, heading straight for a guard rail which outlines the lake. Instinctively, Maya lunges for the steering wheel.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Watch it!

She manages to twist it just enough so the car misses the rail, but careens off the road. The car RIPS through the bushes with an EXPLOSIVE ROAR and SKIDS down the bank and plunges into the lake below. And we:

DISSOLVE TO:

An enormous SPLASH of water as Peter's car disappears into the lake, the water BUBBLING and as we go under, we see the windshield CRACK and SPLINTER and then we HEAR a ROUGH SCREECH of brakes. A horrendous long skid and...

MAYA (CONT'D)

PETER!

EXT. BACK ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The car has come to a final stop, sitting sideways in the middle of the road, leaving huge skid marks behind it. The windshield's untouched. The road empty.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Peter's breathing hard. Maya's trembling, her hands on the wheel.

PETER

What the hell's the matter with you?

EXT. RANGE ROVER

Maya pops her seat belt and bolts from the car, leaning against the door, her breathing still LABORED. Peter gets out, moving around to her. He sees she's having difficulty breathing. She chokes out a cough. His anger turns to concern.

PETER

Are you alright?

MAYA

(softly)

Sometimes, when I feel weak, I have these...visions.

PETER

What do you mean?

MAYA

I see things. My worst fears. You need to know something, Peter. I was possessed once. Like Birdson. It took Father Lareaux six days to pull me out of it.

Peter grabs hold of her, an impulsive move, ambiguous in its intent and unknown even the Peter, then:

MAYA (CONT'D)

I'm scared I'm slipping back.

PETER

(scared himself)

We're going to do this.

MAYA

You have to say that.

PETER

(a smile emerges)

That's true.

Maya smiles back.

EXT. COUNTRY MARKET - NIGHT

Just past midnight. A small, dirty white stucco and wood country mart. The only light is a stark, household flood.

TWO PEOPLE leave the market, carrying a six pack and a few munchies. They hop into their car and take off.

And at the edge of the lot, Peter's car is parked.

INT. COUNTRY MARKET

Peter and Maya SNAP the lids of their coffees. Somewhere a radio is ON. Maya moves to the AGING CASHIER as Peter walks over to a wall of generic first-aid remedies. HE grabs the largest band-aids there. And as he joins Maya at the counter, we see it's the cashier's radio.

DEEJAY
(filtered)
Two minutes.

Cashier looks them over as he turns up the volume.

DEEJAY (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Now this daylight thing is up to two minutes and scientists say sooner or later, we'll be losing like fifteen minutes a day.

OWNER
(rings them up)
Five-twelve.

Peter pays. Out of pennies, the cashier pulls out a new roll and bangs it open inside of the register.

DEEJAY
Now I'll never be on time for work.

EXT. MARKET

Peter and Maya sit on the edge of the curb, sipping coffee. Maya pulls out her cigarettes and lights up. She offers him the pack. He gratefully takes one, lights up and inhales.

PETER
Why did you lie to me about your parents' deaths?

MAYA
I was desperate. I knew you wrote about murders. I needed a way in.

Suddenly a car motors toward them. Just as a DEER decides to cross the two-lane road. The car's HIGH BEAMS startle the deer, it stops, snaps a stunned look at Peter and Maya. A moment of stillness, then it gallops to safety just as the car speeds by. Suddenly, quiet again.

PETER

Close call. For the first time in a long time, it's really hitting me. Life's tenuous.

MAYA

I know it is. Right after my parents died, I went to the beach...

(short intake of breath)

I was in the water. Everything was calm. And then one of those really big waves hit me. Hard. Pulled me straight to the bottom. I struggled and finally ran out of air.

(gulps air)

If it hadn't been for my sister who pulled me out, I would've drowned. Legally dead for a couple of minutes is what they told me.

PETER

No oxygen to the brain.

MAYA

Maybe that's my problem.

PETER

Why didn't you just go along with Townsend. Get rid of me. I would've...

MAYA

Until it happens, you're still a human being.

PETER

What about after?

MAYA

Only your body will remain. I believe your soul will be at peace. If we kill you, Satan can't stay.

She see him react to this.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

The door opens. It's dark, except for the luminescence of Peter's aquarium. We see some of the fish are listing and the aquarium still has a slow leak. The floor's wet.

PETER

Claire, are you home?

He SNAPS on the light. Silent. Stuffy. He opens a window.

MAYA

More air. Always a good thing.

INT. BEDROOM

Peter's box of records is on the bed where he left it. The ancient news articles are scattered. Some fallen onto the floor.

Peter picks everything up as Maya sifts the contents on the bed. We see passing glimpses of a passport, bankbooks, insurance policies, a will, a set of keys, and then a parchment copy of Peter's birth certificate. Maya picks it up.

CLOSE ON

Time of Peter's birth is 4:55 PM.

MAYA

Tomorrow afternoon. Four forty-five.

Peter absorbs this.

PETER

(false bravado)
Plenty of time.

MAYA

(fingers set of keys in box)
What are these?

PETER

I don't know. Extra apartment keys.
What's it matter?

MAYA

(desperate)
Maybe I should check Lareaux's book.
It's in the car. Be right back. Don't
go anywhere.

PETER

Sure.

Maya leaves the room. Moments later, Peter hears the front door open and close. Doesn't move, then, suddenly, in a flurry of anger, he knocks the phone off the bedside table. A lamp flies off with it. Then he stands and sweeps his arm across the top of his bureau, knocking off pictures, moments, a jewelry box. Turning, he flips over a chair and kicks it viciously.

Breathing hard, he slumps back on the bed. Across the room he sees a picture of Claire has slipped partially behind the bureau. Its glass has shattered and only half her face is visible.

Peter immediately picks it up. Stares down at this smiling girlfriend. He lays it carefully back on the bureau, trying to regain some control. He breathes deep, then begins gathering everything back on to the bed. He looks at the set of keys. Picks them up. Compares them with his own set.

Trying to think, he stares out his bedroom window at the building ledge across the way. He SEES the potted geraniums, now arranged, a simple red flourish.

Then a light snaps on in the apartment below and as he looks down, noticing it, his eyes shift, a momentary realization and he looks back down at the keys and leaves his apartment.

INT. ELEVATOR

Peter gets on. He looks at the unknown keys again. Then pushes the button for the fourth floor.

INT. APT. 4-A - NIGHT

Peter knocks softly on the door. Then more loudly. No response. He tries on of the new keys, slowly giving it a turn. It works. He tries the lower lock. The click of this key is audible as...

INT. APT. 4-A

The door swings open to a dark apartment. Peter stands warily at the door, then flips on the lights. Nothing there. No furniture. No occupance.

Peter steps in and closes the door. He looks around at the emptiness. A cockroach scurries across the floor in front of him.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He walks through the living room and...

INT. BEDROOM

Only a small table and lamp have been left in the corner. Peter switches on the lamp. He notices the ceiling's been dropped. A grid of white tile panels, held by a lightweight metal frame. He stares at it.

Very slowly he raises the broom upward and pokes on of the panels. It moves easily. He pushes harder and manages to angle the panel, sliding it back, so that some of the original ceiling is visible. He sees:

A lurid splash of color, a tiny fragment of white line, and part of a strange design.

Peter stares hard at it. He grabs the small table from the corner and drags it to the center of the room. Standing on it, he can now easily reach the tiles with his hands.

He SMASHES the panels loose, KNOCKING THEM OUT and dropping them on the floor. Two, three, four more tiles. Then five.

TIME JUMP CUT TO:

The floor below him is littered with ceiling tiles. Peter looks up at:

CEILING

An enormous PENTACLE. Nine feet wide. It sprawls across the ceiling. Runic symbols crest its edges. For a moment, Peter's mesmerized.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY

The door of Apt. 4-A is thrown open. Peter takes off, leaving the door ajar behind him.

INT. PETER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The front door is thrown open. Peter steps in to see:

Maya, standing, slightly tense, talking to somebody. The other VOICE is obscured by the sound of a garbage truck moving down the street. And as Peter moves farther inside, past the door, he sees:

Claire, sitting on the overstuffed chair.

CLAIRE

(gets up)

There you are! My God, darling, I've been so worried. Are you alright?

PETER

Claire...

CLAIRE

This is the person...you were talking about?

MAYA

Where were you?

Peter holds out the keys to Claire, ignoring Maya.

PETER

What're these?

CLAIRE

I don't know. What are they?

PETER

I found them in your file box.

CLAIRE

Must be a spare set.

PETER

I thought the spare set was in the kitchen drawer.

PETER (CONT'D)

(to Claire)

You were hiding them.

Claire gets up, moving to Peter, and reaches to embrace him. He lets it happen, but doesn't reciprocate.

CLAIRE

Honey, you're exhausted. Do you want to lie down for a little while?

PETER

(moving across the room)

I found the pentacle.

Maya's eyes widen with alarm. She turns quickly toward Claire who's watching them. And as Peter follows Maya's stare, in one slow move, Claire pulls a Beretta from a drawer in the aquarium table. She points the gun directly at Maya.

CLAIRE

She's been stalking you, Peter.

PETER

So you're going to kill her? Put the gun down Claire.

Claire ignores him, but before she can make her move, Peter has grabbed her wrist, twisting her back into the living room, trying to pull the gun out of her hand. Claire wrests free of Peter.

CLAIRE

Listen to me, I love you, Peter, I'm trying to protect you!

PETER

You really had me going, Claire. I was finally ready to propose to you.

CLAIRE

We're still going to be together.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

There's nothing you can do about it.
(to Maya)
I've fucking had it with you.

She lunges at Maya, one powerful move, but as she does, Maya moves out of the way. And as Maya spins around, Claire goes for her again, but she trips on the wet floor, losing her balance. As Peter grabs to catch her, she crashes horribly through the glass shelves.

Peter is horrified.

Then he walks to Claire and pulls the gun from her lifeless hand. Maya and Peter stare at each other in shock for a moment. Then Maya's pager sounds. She checks the number and goes to the phone and dials. As she does, Peter pulls a blanket off the sofa and covers Claire's body.

MAYA

Hi, it's me. What's going on?

She listens, and her expression changes to one of relief. She hangs up the phone and turns to Peter.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Lareaux...he's coming out of it. Let's go.

INT. RANGE ROVER - NIGHT

The car passes through the nearly deserted streets. A STREET SWEEPER passes, brushes whirring.

EXT. SEMINARY - DAWN

As the sunlight prisms on dew-covered grass, Peter and Maya pull into the seminary parking lot.

INT. FATHER LAREAUX'S ROOM

A small crowd of priests, including Father Frank, is in the room. Several stand next to the bed, blocking a clear view of Father Lareaux. Soft CLASSICAL MUSIC plays. The mood is upbeat. As the door opens, Father Frank sees Maya lead Peter in by the arm like a puppet or a lost soul.

FATHER FRANK

(vindictively)
I'm glad you're here. There's something you need to see.

With only a cursory glance at Peter, he leads Maya to the bed. The other priests move away. Father Lareaux is sitting up against his pillows. He looks good, rosy cheeked - almost back to normal.

LAREAUX

(happy to see her)
Miette...

Maya throws her arms around his neck, smiling for the first time in a long time.

MAYA
Father! Thank God you're better! I really need your help. We've only got a few more hours.

LAREAUX
Don't worry...about the transformation, Maya.

MAYA
What do you mean "don't worry?"

LAREAUX
(being careful not to wound her)
Well, in my prayers, I realized we've been fooling ourselves and probably... blown this all out of proportion. God would never allow anything like that to happen.

Maya is floored. Father Frank looks at her scornfully.

FATHER FRANK
I told you this was myth all along.

PETER
(confused)
Does that mean it's over?

Lareaux nods a "yes" at Peter, as Maya sits on the old priest's bed. Peter stands beside her.

MAYA
So...we won?

LAREAUX
(sweet smile)
Yes. We won, that's right.

Maya plays with her cross, distractedly, rocking it back and forth between her fingers. Lareaux re-fluffs his pillows, looking away from Maya, moving slightly, making himself more comfortable.

MAYA
We won because Christ...triumphed over Satan?

LAREAUX
Um hm. That's right, Maya.

MAYA

So, if Christ won, that means, what does that mean, Father? That Satan...

LAREAUX

(tenderly, swallowing back)
Would you like to rest, Miette? You must be exhausted.

Maya picks up a scapular from the dresser and moves in closer to Lareaux.

MAYA

(insistent)
So I guess Satan lost. Satan is the weak one.

LAREAUX

(breath coming in shorter bursts)
Miette, come here and relax.

Maya is crowding Lareaux now, the scapular thrust almost directly in his face.

MAYA

(repeating, monotone)
I can relax, because Satan the coward, trembles before Christ, right?

Father Frank moves over to Maya with another Priest. Sees Lareaux is having trouble breathing.

FATHER FRANK

All right. That's enough for now. He's just recovering. Take it easy, Maya.

But Maya resists their tugging arms, leaning closer to Lareaux.

MAYA

But doesn't he tremble, Father? Doesn't he cower, like a frightened jackal? Satan, the half-wit...

Maya continues, taunting, her cross dangling over Lareaux.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(as slowly as she can)
The whimpering slave of Christ! The impotent dog on God's leash!

Maya thrusts the scapular onto Father Lareaux's forehead. He recoils violently, as though burned.

LAREAUX

(vicious, another voice)
HE'LL MAKE CHRIST CRAWL!

The entire room stares, transfixed, at Lareaux. Maya look at peter, then Father Frank, as she moves carefully off the bed.

INT. FATHER LAREAUX'S ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

A nervous Father Frank is supervising the Jesuits as they empty Lareaux's room of its extraneous contents. He avoids looking at Maya. Father Lareaux sits calmly in a chair at the center of the room. None of the Jesuits meet his eye. One Priest tapes the curtains closed over the window. A lamp provides the only light.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE LAREAUX'S ROOM - DAY

Peter and Maya stand anxiously near the door, waiting...

MAYA
He's our best chance. If we can get him
back.

Without realizing it, she's touching her shirt cuffs.

PETER
What can I do?

MAYA
(emphatically)
You have to be experienced to do this.
Just wait outside. Otherwise, you risk
killing him.

Maya looks at him, then clasps his hand briefly. She breaks off and walks over to Father Frank.

MAYA (CONT'D)
You'll do it?

FATHER FRANK
I don't have the experience. Father
Thomas should officiate.

Father Thomas, a tall Jesuit in his forties, strides down the hall.

He's dressed in a long black cassock, with surplice and purple stole. He's resolute. Two other Jesuits, Father Malcolm and Father Jeremy, follow him.

DISSOLVE TO:

MAYA AND FATHER JEREMY STAND CLOSE TOGETHER IN THE HALLWAY.
WE HEAR HER WHISPERED MURMUR.

MAYA
Forgive me Father, for I have sinned.

INT. FATHER LAREAUX'S ROOM

The priests enter and begin to prep the room. Father Malcolm goes to the closet and takes out the briefcase we saw at Birdson's exorcism. He opens it and takes out a bible, a cross a vial of Holy Water.

We see Father Thomas don his cassock and scapular in the partitioned dressing area of Father Lareaux's room. Maya enters. Peter, from the doorway, sees her lock eyes with Lareaux. Finally, she turns away. Lareaux's smile widens. Father Thomas steps out from Behind the partition.

FATHER THOMAS

Tie him to the chair.

Father Thomas makes the Sign of the Cross. Then, he places the tip of his stole on Lareaux's neck, and his right hand on Lareaux's head. Lareaux flinches. Father Thomas places relics of the Saints on Lareaux's chest. He writhes as if in pain. Father Thomas sprinkles Lareaux with Holy Water. Lareaux reacts as though it were burning oil. Finally, Father Thomas kneels, beginning the Litanies of the Saints, in Latin.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE LAREAUX'S ROOM

The last thing Peter sees as the door closes is Maya. Serious, tight, professional and outside the door, Father Frank is already mouthing his rosary:

PETER

(to Father Frank)

Now what?

FATHER FRANK

There's nothing we can do but pray.
We'll be in the church.

Father Frank leads the other Jesuits down the hall. Within seconds, Peter's alone. He looks at the door. Then he slowly moves closer to it, until he's a foot away. He tries to listen. Nothing. He leans even closer.

FATHER THOMAS (O.S.)

(in Latin)

Behold the Cross of the Lord. Depart, enemies! Unclean spirits, and all your companions, I command you. Tell me your name!

Peter moves closer.

FATHER THOMAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...by the love and power of Christ, who has redeemed man from your grasp, I

command you.

Peter moves away and sits down on a bench in the hallway.

INT. SMALL CHAPEL - DAY

Fourteen Jesuits of mixed race, including Father Frank.
Chant prayers in Latin.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE LAREAUX'S ROOM

Peter is sitting on the bench. He HEARS:

VOICES (O.S.)

Peter, Peter...

He looks down the corridor. He sees no one. He looks in the other direction and sees a JANITOR eating a sandwich and pouring a container of MILK into a large glass. Once again, he hears:

VOICES (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Peter, Peter...

He looks at the door to Lareaux's room and sees the WALL BREATH IN AND OUT AS IF IT'S ALIVE. He runs to the door and puts his ear against it.

FATHER THOMAS (O.S.)

...be gone and leave this child of the
Lord God almighty. Be gone, by the
power of Christ. Be gone, by the power
of the Holy Spirit.

Suddenly the imprint of a chair pushes against the wall as it will burst right through. Peter jumps away. He approaches the door.

FATHER THOMAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

In the name of Christ, I command you.
Tell me your name!

Suddenly a body slams into the wall which starts to ripple as if a subterranean shape were moving through it. The body appears to be climbing straight up the wall.

There's an explosion of NOISE, shrieking and shouting, the sounds of furniture being violently overturned. Peter is mesmerized and scared. Hateful VOICES SWELL UP.

VOICES (O.S.)

Too late, too late, too late, too late.

Peter touches the door knob to Lareaux's room. It is FREEZING COLD, so cold it burns. He pulls his hand away and wraps his jacket around his hand.

MAYA (O.S.)

Please, no!

Peter is torn. His hand again moves to the doorknob. Another body SLAMS into the wall. More NOISE cries of PANIC, ANGER...and pain.

FATHER THOMAS (O.S.)

Move, move!

A GROWLING ANIMAL is heard, like a BABOON SHRIEKING. Peter starts to turn the knob, then stops. He's caught, unsure until Maya calls out in agony.

MAYA (O.S.)

Peter, help me. Oh God!

Peter flings the door open and steps inside.

INT. LAREAUX'S ROOM - DAY

AND THEN VERY FAST. The door SLAMS behind Peter and Locks itself tight. Then, Peter sees:

The room is not destroyed. The room is FREEZING COLD, breath is visible. Lareaux is tied to the chair. Father Thomas is standing over him, with a crucifix in hand, the Eucharist on Lareaux's head. Maya and the younger Priests are kneeling just behind Father Thomas, overwhelmed.

LAREAUX

Gotcha!

The lamp immediately goes out. Room is pitch black.

FATHER THOMAS

Jeremy, the door!

We hear FUMBLING grunting.

FATHER JEREMY

It...I can't!

FATHER THOMAS

(continue subbing, in Latin)
Lowly beast, through the power of
Christ. Let the door re-open.

VOICES begin. MOCKING, speeded up versions of sentences we've heard before, LATIN and ENGLISH.

LAREAUX

(in Peter's voice)
Go on. Do something. Show me.
(in Maya's voice)
I'm scared I'm slipping back...

A beat. Then a normal voice.

PETER

Maya?

A TORRENT OF PROFANITY drowns him out. A thousand voices, young and old, crying, cursing, filling the air with hatred and spite. Amidst this hurricane of sound, the lights begin to flicker at ultra-high speed, creating a strobe effect. The window bursts open, flooding the room with light. Father Jeremy races over and struggles to close it, but cannot. Maya is revealed praying, eyes open. Peter and Father Malcolm are crouched near the door. A terrified Father Thomas is bravely standing, holding his crucifix in front of himself, facing Lareaux. Or where Lareaux was. The chair is empty. Amid the deafening noise, Peter sees:

Lareaux rise up behind Maya and encircle her throat with his hands as the HELLISH VOICES reach a crescendo. Lareaux begins to sing softly:

LAREAUX

Rock-a-bye baby, on a tree top...

Peter leaps to pull Lareaux off her, but the aging priest surprised Peter by grabbing him and hold him at bay.

As Peter struggles, Lareaux's expression shifts. His confidence vanishes and pain distorts his features. Lareaux falls to the floor in agony.

Maya and Peter bend down to help him, but the noise makes it impossible for them to hear one another. Maya pulls open Lareaux's collar to try to get him more air and in that instant, the VOICES STOP. The lights POP on. Maya leans close to Lareaux, who's dying on the floor, MUMBLING incoherently. And on Lareaux's forehead, we see incisions resembling strange, unknown letters. Like they've been cut from within. The incisions are repeated on the backs of Lareaux's hands. The room is so cold, steam pops off the breath. Father Thomas moves fast, beginning the last rites in Latin. He makes the sign of the Cross on Lareaux's forehead, then:

FATHER THOMAS

(to Lareaux, in Latin)

Confiterisne vitia tua ante omnipotentem
deum? (Do you confess your sins before
almighty God?)

LAREAUX

...the ark sank, the sun set, the ark
sank again...

MAYA

(desperately)

Father, please don't die.

LAREAUX
(in great suffering)
...art sank, sun set, ark sank again...

Maya leans down, inches from the dying priest. Peter moves beside her.

MAYA
Father!

For a split second, Lareaux surfaces from his confusion and looks at her with a great kindness.

LAREAUX
Ensemble pour toujours quoi qu'il
arrive.

As he dies, Maya is momentarily inert, tears of exhaustion. She's devastated. And we HEAR a single GRACE NOTE laced with an intake of BREATH as we

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE LAREAUX'S ROOM

It's CHAOS as Jesuits rush in and out of the cell, helping the exorcism participants. Father Frank glares at Maya, as he helps clear the room.

PETER
(looking down at Maya)
I thought you were in danger.

Maya backs away from Lareaux, who is being covered with a white sheet. A last glance and then she takes off with Peter.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Maya looks straight ahead, trying to shake off her fear. Peter looks at Maya, moved by her. Puts an arm around her shoulder, a momentary intimacy, then he pulls away. Finally, Maya looks at Peter.

MAYA
I'll be all right.
(reflective)
Peter, at the very end, I think Father
was back. I saw it in his eyes.

PETER
So, what does it mean. The ark sank and
the sun set?

MAYA
He's been repeating that since Birdson's
exorcism. I looked in every passage in

the Bible and there's nothing about an ark or a sunset that tells us anything.

PETER

What did he say to you in French?

MAYA

That's his, I don't know, his 'grounding' phrase for me, "together, no matter what."

PETER

(deep sigh)
Terrific.

EXT. NEWARK NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The Range Rover enters a blue-collar residential part of the city, old townhouses on both sides of the street. The traffic is heavy and the Rover slows, pulling to the curb.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Peter studies Maya, admiring her in some new way.

MAYA

He was trying to tell me something.

PETER

(cynical)
And his message was "Together, no matter what?"

A car pulls up alongside them. The driver, a middle-aged WOMAN, rolls down her window and calls out to Peter.

WOMAN

Helloooo - do you live around here?
(Peter ignores her)
How do I get to the turnpike?

The car behind her HONKS impatiently.

IRKED MOTORIST

THERE'S FIVE FUCKING CARS BEHIND YOU,
ASSHOLE!

Peter turns to the woman.

PETER

(doesn't give a shit)
Lady, I don't know.

Offended, the woman drives off. Peter turns back to Maya, who's suddenly grabbed Townsend's Bible and furiously flips through it.

MAYA

Wait a minute. The message. He used French, he knew he couldn't say it directly. The arc "sank" or "cinq" c-i n-q. It's French for five. The sun "set" or pronounced like "sept". The French word for seven. The arc "sank" again.

(then)

It's five-seven-five. Book chapter and verse!

She finally stops at a specific section she was looking for.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Book five, Deuteronomy, chapter seven, verse five.

(reads)

"But this shall you deal with them. You shall break down their altars and burn their graven images with fire."

PETER

And what's that mean?

She knows.

EXT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

The Range Rover pulls up. Peter gets out. He's got a five gallon gas can. Maya enters the gas station MINI-MART. A clock reads 4:05. Afternoon NEWS plays on a TV.

NEWSCASTER

An international group of scientists will assemble in Geneva later this week in an attempt to determine the cause of diminishing daylight, a phenomenon which has baffled the world's finest scientific minds. In local news, the case of accused killer George Viznick ended in a mistrial today. Prosecutors vowed to press for a new trial immediately.

Maya hands the clerk some money and glances outside at Peter filling the gas can.

EXT. SAINT BENEDICTUS - AFTERNOON

It looks quiet and serene in the afternoon light. Peter and Maya approach carefully. They see a collection of cars in front of the church. Unkempt and dirty, a few pedestrians stare at them. The gas bumps conspicuously against Maya's thigh.

EXT. SAINT BENEDICTUS - SIDE ENTRANCE

Peter pulls out Claire's gun. They step inside.

INT. SAINT BENEDICTUS - CONTINUOUS

Peter and Maya pass through the vestry and edge their way into the main cathedral. A MASS is in progress. A lay READER has memorized the text.

READER

God appears and God is light to those
pour souls who dwell in night.

Peter and Maya move in suddenly from the vestry, onto the altar, behind the reader. Maya's shocked by the packed-to capacity church. The crowd inside immediately switch their focus to Maya and then to Peter, who's just moved up onto the altar, standing unknowingly directly under the CROSS.

READER (CONT'D)

But does a human form display...

The reader sees the stares from the crowd, stops, and turns to Maya and Peter. The reader is wearing a small inverted cross around her neck.

READER (CONT'D)

Welcome!

In the crowd, Maya sees the little girl from the diner. Maya is stunned. The little girl catches Maya's glance, giving her a sly smile and then looks away. Her mother appears beside her. Unnerved, Maya looks at Peter, desperate.

MAYA

Eight minutes...

Then, the priest at the front of the church, standing quietly next to the reader, turns slowly toward Peter, oddly very calm. And we see it's Father James. He smiles. Charming, gracious.

FATHER JAMES

(looking at gas can)

Did you really think you could just burn
the church down. That some ritualistic
hocus pocus could just end this?

Alarmed, Peter looks at Maya, but her gaze is locked on James. Then Peter glances down at the dripping gasoline can in Maya's hand and as she sets it down.

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)

Lareaux was never free of us. He led
you here.

(he starts to sing softly)

"Get me to the church on time."

Peter moves toward James, putting the gun to his uncle's head.

PETER
(barely able to stand it)
You fucking bastard.

FATHER JAMES
Don't you get it?
(re: Maya)
They had their 2,000 years. Now it's
our turn.

PETER
So all that bullshit about God and
faith.

FATHER JAMES
It was perfect. The harder I pushed,
the more you pulled away.

PETER
(beyond anger, beyond tears)
You lied to me my whole life.
Everything you said, everything you did.

FATHER JAMES
Everything I did, I did for you. I love
you, Peter. Think of it. I'm giving
you a gift, absolute power and
knowledge.

PETER
You raised me, like a son.

FATHER JAMES
You are my son. Don't you see the
opportunity that lies before you?

PETER
(putting it together)
You killed my parents.

FATHER JAMES
I had to. There was no other way.
Their deaths were part of the greatest
legacy I could have given you.

Peter moves the muzzle of the gun into James' carotid artery.

CLOSE ON MAYA

The realization floods her.

MAYA
Don't! That's what they want.

FATHER JAMES

It will be my ultimate sacrifice!

MAYA

If you commit murder, you accept evil.

One by one, people in the congregation begin to rise. Peter can't believe what he sees. Susan and Mrs. Quintana.

Stunned, Peter lets the gun lower a moment and then, as he turns back to Maya, he's too late.

James has moved behind Maya, holding a long-bladed knife at her throat. James anchors it at her neck, forming a shimmering upside down Cross, Runic symbols carved into the Sterling handle.

Peter pivots, pulling up the gun again, aiming it back at James.

PETER

Drop the knife.

He cocks the gun.

FATHER JAMES

She's going to die right in front of you.

Peter looks at Maya. Her expression gives him the permission to do the unthinkable.

MAYA

(softly)

Let him kill me.

Peter's thrown off. Maya lets her eyes blink closed. For a moment, no one moves. The knife glints off the stained glass.

CLOSE ON

Peter. Thinking. Unraveling.

FATHER JAMES

(big smile)

You have no idea how much you look like your mother right now.

Peter FIRES, an ECHOING REPORT, bouncing from the Cathedral ceiling to the Travertine floor. Father James falls, mortally wounded.

WILLIAM

And you thought I was the family fuck up.

Peter sees William approaching from the pews.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Thank you, Maya. You served us well.

Stunned, Peter gulps a mouthful of air, lifts his gun and shoots William in the eye. Immediate. The bullet powers through William, lodging in Mrs. Quintana. She COUGHS up a GURGLING choke, eyes wide. And as she dies gripping her neck, she doubles over the back of a wooden pew.

The crowd reacts. Maya grabs hold of Peter edging him back toward the vestry and out of the church. As the Congregation starts to press forward, Peter swings the gun back up and out toward them. It glistens off the Chalices. They stop, wary and as Maya and Peter finally turn their backs on the crowd, they take off past the sacred Eucharistic relics.

INT. VESTRY/SAINT BENEDICTUS

Through the vestry and out the back door.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Peter and Maya sprint for the Rover.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Peter and Maya speed up the street. They turn the corner and continue up a street undergoing construction. Fenced by sawhorse barricades, it's equipped with flashing warning lights.

PETER

How much time do we have?

MAYA

Not a lot.

Peter races past the barricades, side-swiping the steel sawhorses, then suddenly he slams on the brakes, skidding to a rough stop, nowhere to go.

INT. RANGE ROVER

Peter looks at Maya, then at the gun in his lap and back at her. Conflicted emotions. He picks up the revolver. Maya stares at Peter. A huge fear rips through her body. Peter hesitates. Then hands her the gun.

PETER

If you can do it...go ahead.

Maya puts the gun down. Leans over and embraces him. They hold onto each other. A shared intimacy, unknown to either of them.

MAYA

(a desperate whisper)

I'm not strong enough for this.

Peter reaches over and tenderly brushes the hair away from Maya's face. Then Maya pulls away, raising the tiny gun and TIME slows to a crawl.

Maya holds the Beretta. The strain etched on her face, her hands shake, her eyes well up. Peter waits, watching her. She's unsure. We HEAR a choked back breath. Gasping, lungs looking for air. The struggle for life.

The car clock seems frozen on 4:54. Finally, it turns over and...

Nothing happens.

Peter's looking at her. He knows. He's sure of it.

PETER

It didn't work! Maya, I'm okay.

Peter reaches for her, his face radiant, joyful, alive. She doesn't move a muscle. The gun barrel doesn't quiver.

MAYA

Oh, Peter.

PETER

(changed tone)

It's me. Put the gun down. Maya...

Tears roll down her face, as she cocks the Beretta.

PETER (CONT'D)

If you really think I'm the Devil, then shoot me.

Out of the corner of her eye, Maya sees the clock - its hands rapidly spin backward.

EXT. RANGE ROVER

A HIGH ANGLE of the car from above. A SHOT RIPS through the air. Then one more. Maya exits the car. She's unsteady on her feet. The camera pans up into the night sky.

SILENCE.

Followed by a low-pitched, disturbing rumble. A kind of GROTESQUE GROAN. Then some HUM is heard. Static. A not quite-tuned in radio station becomes audible.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

I love this, now scientists are saying

the days have suddenly stopped getting shorter. It makes you wonder. Do these guys know anything?

The station fades out. There's a FRAGMENT of POP MUSIC, more STATIC, then the RADIO'S SNAPPED OFF. And we hear the sound of breathing, light and steady.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

An aerial shot of a steel blue car as it cruises down a two lane highway. Passing fields of cotton.

INT. BLUE CAR - DAY

Inside the car, Maya is driving. Windows down. She looks serene, at peace, carrying her wound well as we:

FADE OUT.

ALTERNATE ENDING:

INT. RANGE ROVER

Maya aims at Peter's head and pulls the trigger. Peter's thrown back against the seat. She fires again into his heart. Maya lets the gun down slowly. Tears streak her cheeks, as she cups his face in her hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

SILENCE

Followed by a LOW-PITCHED, DISTURBING RUMBLE, a kind of GROTESQUE GROAN. Then some HUM is heard. STATIC. A not quite-tuned-in radio station becomes audible.

DEEJAY (V.O.)

I love this, now scientists are saying the days have suddenly stopped getting shorter. It makes you wonder. Do these guys know anything?

The station fades out. There's a FRAGMENT of POP MUSIC, more STATIC, then the RADIO'S SNAPPED OFF. And we hear the sound of breathing, light and steady.

FADE OUT.