

RED LIGHTS

Original Screenplay by
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Dr. Margaret Matheson (59) and her assistant Thomas Buckley (33) are driving along in silence in a large, white, old-fashioned Ford; he is at the wheel, concentrated on the old road ahead, while she leans against the window, eyes closed.

TOM
Margaret.

Dr. Matheson doesn't answer.

TOM (CONT'D)
Margaret.

Matheson slowly opens her eyes, without changing position.

TOM (CONT'D)
Margaret.

MATHESON
Yes?

TOM
You should get some sleep.

She turns slowly and looks at him for a beat, without replying. Tom looks back at her innocently, and nods.

The car carries on its way along the road.

The Ford pulls up outside an old three-story house in the middle of nowhere. Margaret Matheson gets out of the car and strides up towards the door. Tom hurries after her, carrying a couple of heavy bags over his shoulder. A middle-aged man with an anxious air greets them.

SIDGWICK
(offering hand to Tom)
Dr. Matheson, thanks for coming. You
can't imagine how pleased I am to
see you.

TOM
This is Dr. Matheson.

SIDGWICK
Oh, I'm sorry, please forgive me...
These last few days have been a bit
difficult. Please... Dr. Matheson...

Sidgwick stretches out his hand to shake, but Matheson doesn't take it.

MATHESON

Don't worry, I should have worn a lab coat I guess. This is Dr. Buckley.

Tom is quick to shake hands with Sidgwick.

TOM

Nice to meet you.

SIDGWICK

(going inside, nervous)
The pleasure's all mine, really. You can't begin to imagine what's been going on here, really. We haven't slept a wink in weeks, isn't that right, Sarah? Sarah's my wife.

A woman in her fifties with bags under her eyes barely musters a nod by way of reply, joining the group as they head upstairs.

SIDGWICK (CONT'D)

She isn't coping very well, you know? None of us are. Did I mention we haven't slept a wink in days?

A violent boom reverberates around the house now, an enormous thud which echoes out loudly from the walls. Sidgwick and his wife shrink back in terror.

SARAH

That's it. Did you hear? It's starting.

They reach the staircase landing and go into a large, empty room. Traci, a young woman (30), in a plain black dress, is looking calmly up at the ceiling.

TRACI

(without turning to them)
Did you hear him? He's a bit angry today.

TOM

Who's angry?

SIDGWICK

Traci's been a real help, you know? She's... she's been such a help.

Traci turns smiling and offers her hand to the doctor. Again, Matheson doesn't shake it.

MATHESON

I bet. Can I see the rest of the house?

SIDGWICK

Sure. This way, please.

(they head to next room)

It's an old house, but the price was great. We only moved in a while ago. We're still settling in and...

Tom is still the first room; now he takes out some equipment from one of the bags, a device which he begins to sweep across a wall. The girl looks on, intrigued.

TOM

Don't mind me, I'm a physicist. Please, carry on with what you were doing.

TRACI

I'm a physicist too. What did you think I was? A housewife, a hairdresser?

TOM

(embarrassed)

I'm sorry, I...

TRACI

Forget it. Actually, I am a hairdresser. Traci. Traci Northrop.

Tom walks across to her, hand outstretched, as Matheson and the Sidgwicks come back into the room.

MATHESON

Tom, please, enough canoodling. We're going upstairs.

Tom quickly puts the device back in his bag and hurries up the stairs after the doctor. Sidgwick looks at Matheson nervously, about to give an explanation. She gets in ahead of him before he can begin.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

I know, she's been a real help. Since when?

SIDGWICK

I don't know, a few days. Three or four, isn't that right, Sarah? You took so long. We didn't... know where to turn.

MATHESON

This isn't a public service, Mr. Sidgwick. We do what we can.

SIDGWICK

Sure. Excuse me a moment...
(goes on ahead, opens a
double door)
The girls' room.

A girl about seven is sitting on the floor, playing with a pile of different colored wooden blocks. Mrs. Sidgwick walks out from the others and goes over to her.

SARAH

Susan, how many times have I told you not to play on the floor until the heating is fixed?

Strange noises now rumble out, perhaps from the piping system, causing Sidgwick to look up at the ceiling uneasily.

SIDGWICK

We're still settling in, you know?
We still have some stuff to sort out. But the price was...

Sidgwick goes over and carefully closes a somewhat chipped closet door hanging open on its slightly slack hinges. He's obviously a man who likes things neat and tidy.

SARAH

Stand up and say hello, sweetheart.
(tidying the child's hair)
Say hi.

SUSAN

(to the doctor)
Hi.

Dr. Matheson looks back at her.

MATHESON

You said *the girls*.

SARAH

Julia is at her grandparents. She wasn't feeling so great, so we thought we'd just as soon as send her back to Vermont. For a few days.

SIDGWICK

(nodding)

A few days.

SARAH

(looking at her husband)

She's much better now.

Sidgwick hangs his head ever so slightly.

TRACI (O.S.)

Everything's ready.

They all turn to the door, where Traci is waiting politely in the background.

TRACI (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't mean to butt in.
Whenever you want...

3 INT. BIG HOUSE - EMPTY SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

3

Dr. Matheson, the Sidgwicks and Traci are sitting in the penumbra around a table illuminated by a red light, their hands joined at the fingertips. Tom is sitting apart at a small table, wearing a large set of earphones; he's recording the session on a laptop, at the same time as he checks the readings of some older looking measuring equipment. An infra-red camera records the proceedings. Traci is conducting the session. Except for the few pieces of furniture described above, the room is completely bare.

TRACI

Too much light...

Sidgwick quickly makes to follow her instructions, but Matheson grabs him by the arm. She shoots a look at Tom, who is concentrating on one of the readings. Tom looks back at her now and nods in silence.

MATHESON

Go ahead...

Sidgwick gets up and dims the red light. He looks over at Traci for approval.

TRACI

When I begin the session, no matter what happens, please don't break the circle. It can be dangerous.

Sidgwick listens apprehensively. Traci sits back in her chair and closes her eyes. Sidgwick completes the circle.

TOM

(whispers into small microphone)

Wednesday, October 22. 23:15.
Session participants from the north side, are: Mr. Sidgwick and his wife, Dr. Margaret Matheson and Miss Traci Northrop. The session is recorded by Dr. Thomas Buckley.

Tom leans back in the red gloom and watches as Traci begins to sway slightly from side to side. She moans softly, almost inaudible.

TOM (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Temperature is dropping slowly
...one, correction, two degrees...
spring scale pressure remains steady...

TRACI

(weakly)

I... I can hardly hear you. Speak up, please.

Traci continues to roll her head in silence for a bit. She nods gently, the trace of a smile appearing on her face.

TRACI (CONT'D)

I know... I know... But you have to speak louder.

An ENORMOUS CRASHING THUD REVERBERATES OUT NOW FROM THE WALLS, violent and brutal!

Sidgwick screams in terror, half rising out of his chair. Matheson grabs him firmly, pulling him back down.

The table begins to shake visibly under the hands of the participants. Tom studies the screen. He hits a key on the computer. The Sidgwicks' apprehension is palpable - he tightly shuts his eyes, undone, not daring even to look. Dr. Matheson, seemingly calm, watches impassive as the table moves. She shoots a look over at Tom.

He looks back at her, slowly shaking his head. She looks back at the table, which starts to tilt to one side.

TRACI (CONT'D)
Gently, please... We've come to help
you...

The table moves violently, almost forcing the participants to their feet; it shakes, drumming loudly on the floor. Now it suddenly comes to a halt with a dull thud. Sidgwick opens his eyes, terrified, demanding an explanation from Matheson, but she only looks closely at the top of the table and then Traci. Time stands still for a beat, nobody dares move a muscle.

The table starts to rise slowly off the floor.

Dr. Matheson looks at Tom again, now more urgently. Again she receives a negative gesture by way of response.

One inch, two inches: the table is still rising. Sidgwick's mouth gapes open, he's about to let out a scream. Sarah Sidgwick's eyes open wide, seeking eye contact with her husband, barely controlling her panic. Traci is locked in concentration, bathed in sweat, and clearly suffering. She grimaces as if she were about to be overwhelmed by terrible pain.

TRACI (CONT'D)
(crying)
It really hurts...

SIDGWICK
(terrified)
Stop it... Tell it to stop...

Mrs. Sidgwick looks at her husband, worried...

SARAH
Don't break the...

The table continues to rise very slowly; Sidgwick looks on in horror. Traci's expression crumples even more.

TRACI
It hurts... I... can't...

SIDGWICK
(panicking)
Stop, stop, I'm telling you! I
demand you to stop!

SARAH
(very alarmed)
Michael, don't break the circle...

TRACI
I can't take it...!

SIDGWICK
I DEMAND YOU TO STOP!!

Sidgwick jumps to his feet, knocking the chair over with a crash. Traci SCREAMS OUT LIKE A WOUNDED ANIMAL, piercing the air with a cry of pain.

THE DOOR NOW VIOLENTLY SWINGS OPEN, SLAMMING AGAINST THE WALL!

Everybody turns in terror to look. Sidgwick cries out. Now little Susan comes running into the room, screaming.

SUSAN
Mommy, mommy! I'm scared, mommy!

Tom switches on the light, the little girl throws herself into her mother's arms, in floods of tears. Traci passes out, collapsing on the table.

SARAH
(harshly to her husband)
I told you we shouldn't have left
her on her own!

SIDGWICK
(almost relieved)
You believe me now, doctor? See what
we're going through? You believe us,
right?

SUSAN
(sobbing)
Let's get out of here, mommy, let's
go away from here...!

4 EXT. BIG HOUSE - MORNING

4

Dr. Matheson is sitting beside little Susan on the steps of the back porch, looking out at the grass which sways in the breeze. It's a beautiful morning.

They sit in silence for a long beat.

MATHESON
(looking straight ahead)
Do you miss Vermont?

The little girl nods, playing with a blade of grass.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Where did you live?

SUSAN
In Bakersfield.

MATHESON
Nice?

SUSAN
Uh-huh...

MATHESON
Your sister like it too?

The little girl nods. They look at the countryside which sprawls out before them.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Who had the idea about the closet?
Was it you, or your sister?

SUSAN
(playing with the grass)
Julia.

Matheson looks at her quite naturally.

MATHESON
Did she show you how to bang it
against the wall like that?

SUSAN
It really scares my dad.

MATHESON
What about your mum?

SUSAN
Mom wants to leave too.

The woman and the girl talk in a straight forward fashion,
like adults.

MATHESON
... Let's make a deal, a deal
between you and me.

SUSAN
Do we have to shake hands?

MATHESON

No, we don't have to shake hands.

The girl looks at her and nods.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Here's the deal: if you promise not to do it again, I won't say anything to your dad. That's it.

The girl nods again.

SUSAN

I didn't do that thing with the table.

MATHESON

I know that, Susan. I didn't ask you about the table.

The girl nods, slowly.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

So, do we have a deal?

SUSAN

My sister's going to be real sad.

MATHESON

Yeah. Your sister's going to be real sad.

They both look out at the horizon.

5 EXT. BIG HOUSE - MORNING

5

Dr. Matheson and Thomas Buckley leave just as they arrived, walking with a sprightly step back towards the old white car.

MATHESON

It's my car, you drive. That's only fair.

TOM

(for the bags he's
carrying)

Is this fair?

Sidgwick shouts at them from the porch, running after them.

SIDGWICK

Where you going?! You still haven't gotten to the bottom of this!

TOM
 (turning)
 Mr. Sidgwick, don't worry about it.
 If the banging starts again, call
 us!

MATHESON
 (without looking back)
 And get rid of the hairdresser!

A helpless Sidgwick watches the two investigators head off,
 rooted to the ground a few meters from the house.

6 MAIN TITLE CREDITS

6

The main title credits run over images of paranormal phenomenology: telekinesis experiments, predictions, photos of stigmata, psychic surgery, weeping religious effigies, UFOs, spontaneous combustion cases, Zener cards for telepathic investigation, Ouija boards, levitation, late nineteenth century ectoplasmatic forms... The images in texture and composition have a scientific air: lab experiments records scrawled in black and white, Balkan investigators in white lab coats looking grimly out at the camera, television archive material, explanatory diagrams, handwritten mathematical notations, re-framed photographs taken from obscure publications, disturbing portraits of contactees and paragnostics...

The final credit appears over a five-pointed star inside a circle.

7 EXT. RUNWAY - DAWN

7

A private plane lands like a bird on the runway, blocking out the sun. The wheels screech as they hug the asphalt, gradually losing speed until coming to a complete standstill.

An elegant 60 year old man dressed in an immaculately cut suit and dark sunglasses gets up out of his seat and walks slowly along the aisle, touching the headrests of other seats as he advances. A blonde woman aged about 40 attired in impeccable executive cool follows just behind.

The captain of the private jet is waiting at the unopened aircraft door beside a perfect looking air hostess.

PILOT
 It's been an honor to fly you here
 today, Mr. Silver. I hope you had a
 pleasant flight.

Silver's only reply is a slight nod as he moves towards the door.

PILOT (CONT'D)
 (taking him by the arm)
 ... Allow me to help you...

SILVER
 Would you mind letting go of me?

Somewhat thrown, the pilot looks at Silver's companion; she reassures him with a nod. The pilot steps back.

The door of the jet opens with its familiar sound, revealing Silver, who takes a few steps forward, allowing the breeze to ruffle his hair. Silver takes a deep breath while the others wait inside the plane. He takes off his glasses to feel the air on his face.

His eyes are completely white, covered by an opaque film that leaves no room for doubt: Silver is blind.

He breathes deeply again, filling his lungs hungrily with the early morning air.

He puts on his glasses again and cocks his head slightly, without saying anything. His companion moves quickly to his side, taking his arm gently and helping him come down the steps.

A few feet away, on the runway, a black limousine awaits.

8 INT. UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

8

Dressed in a simple lab coat, Dr. Matheson is giving a lecture to class in an amphitheater-like hall where abundant daylight pours in through a number of large windows. Tom sitting close by, spreads his hands out across a wooden table.

MATHESON
 ... If you press down hard on the upper part of the table and draw your hands towards your body, the two outer table legs will rise like a schoolgirl's dress.

(Tom demonstrates)
 You can even put the edge of your shoe under the bottom of one of the legs. By pressing down firmly and lifting your foot at the same time, the table will rise without any of the legs touching the floor.

(Tom makes the table
 "levitate")
 (MORE)

MATHESON (CONT'D)

With the right partner in crime, you can reach the heights of choreography. The setting is everything. You need a little bit of muscle and a hell of a lot of practice. Avoid the light: if you want to make a living as a hustler, keep it dark; always, under any pretext whatsoever - you need to concentrate, the spirits demand it... What, it isn't scientific? You need darkness to develop a photograph, don't you?

A pretty, unassuming looking girl (Sally Owen, 22) puts her hand up.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Miss Owen...?

SALLY

(standing up)

Are you saying all paranormal phenomena are frauds without any exception?

MATHESON

Actually, no, I'm not. The majority simply have a natural explanation, or are the result of a subjective interpretation by a pre-disposed observer.

STUDENT

How do you establish proper controls?

MATHESON

That's not difficult. In a case like this one, right here, without any kind of special preparation,

(goes over to Tom)

...we sit our medium against a wall and make him hold two pieces of card under his elbows against it, okay? If he moves his arms to shift the table, the card will fall. If the card stays there, only the spirit of a particularly friendly teamster will be able to move that table. That's the idea. Or if you prefer you can mark out a security perimeter for the hands,...

Dr. Matheson points out a square on the table, over the legs, and then, at the blackboard, to a drawing of a square of broken lines inside a circle.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

... to ensure that no one is exerting any pressure outside the center of gravity. The table will only move if pressure is applied here...

(she draws a cross)

... or here...

Ben, a thin boy with red curly hair, intervenes.

BEN

Have you never come across a single case that couldn't be explained? The existence of an anomalous ability?

Tom, wide-eyed as a boy scout, looks over at Sally, who listens closely to the explanation, still standing.

MATHESON

An anomalous ability? Like what? Like running 100 meters in under ten seconds? Like composing a master piece when you're stone deaf? I don't rule out yours being an exception, but most brains carry out a fascinating complexity of mental processes every second: 100,000 million neurons in constant synaptic communication geared to generating and regulating our sensation and perception mechanisms; how we reason, the way we think, our emotions, our attention span, the form our mental images take, learning and memory ... Are those not merits enough for the brain, without it having other powers as well?

SALLY

So you're saying the existence of any kind of paranormal power is impossible..

MATHESON

(turning to her)

Miss Owen, what I'm saying is after thirty years investigating all kinds of phenomena, I never once witnessed a miracle when appropriate controls were in place, not a single one.

9 INT. UNIVERSITY - CORRIDORS - DAY

9

Dr. Matheson, a bundle of papers in her arms, walks along a long corridor with Tom. A middle-aged man with big glasses also wearing a white lab coat starts walking along beside her, forcing Tom to drop back a step or so.

SHACKLETON

I just sat in on your class. You were magnificent. Congratulations.

MATHESON

(scoffing)

Dr. Shackleton...

SHACKLETON

Margaret, I admire your skepticism, but you can't deny reality just because you can't explain it.

MATHESON

That's not exactly true. I mean, I can't explain why your department gets double our budget, but I don't deny it's the case.

SHACKLETON

So let's talk, join forces. We're taking big steps forward in the SPRC, stand-out experiments with highly promising results. A vision like yours could really help us...

MATHESON

Shackleton, I don't do superstition. My suggestion is you don't either.

Tom looks at Shackleton and raises his eyebrows slightly as he walks by.

10 INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - DAY

10

Images from a nineteen seventies television show, with lots of absurd hairstyles. A late night show host is interviewing Simon Silver (considerably younger here, about 25). Silver is wearing dark glasses, classic Wayfarers.

The host is looking closely at a small iron bar bent double inside a transparent cylinder, dumbfounded. Silver beams out a winning smile.

INTERVIEWER (TV)

You didn't even touch it. How do you do that?

(to the audience)

Isn't that incredible?

The audience agrees, bursting into a round of applause.

SILVER (TV)

It doesn't always work, Mike. I got lucky today, that's all. The fact is, all of us can do it.

INTERVIEWER (TV)

Frankly, I knew the blind had a more developed sense of smell. But what we've seen tonight...

The audience laughs. So does Silver; he nods, delighted.

A number of frozen images now appear on the screen, still photographs of various Simon Silver performances from the seventies, (levitating objects; Silver holding a mike, in front of a huge crowd; laying his hand on someone's forehead; squeezing a compass... or pictured alongside various celebrities). The interview forms part of a report.

COMMENTATOR (TV, V.O.)

Simon Silver became incredibly popular at the end of the sixties, and his fame continued to grow over the next decade... In 1975, he suddenly announced his retirement, stunning his legion of fans. Many linked his exit from the limelight with the death of veteran journalist Martin Will, a skeptical reporter who suffered a rare kind of heart attack while attending one of Silver's shows.

An old black and white photo shows Will standing amongst the public, gesturing threateningly at Silver. A clip from a news programme shows Will being rushed along on a stretcher, an oxygen mask over his face.

...

(MORE)

COMMENTATOR (TV, V.O.) (CONT'D)
*the post-mortem concluded the heart
 attack was the result of natural
 causes, but Silver was never quite
 able to shake off the suspicion
 surrounding Will's death. He
 disappeared just as suddenly as he
 had become a star. Which is why his
 come-back announcement more than 30
 years after his last public
 appearance....*

An image appears of Silver in the present day, impeccably dressed, with the same smile. Tom is watching the report, paying no attention the electronic circuit on the table in front of him which he was in the process of repairing. The image suddenly morphs into a vanishing dot.

TOM
 (complaining)
 Hey, Margaret, why d'you turn it..?

He turns to see Sally, holding the remote control, quick to apologize.

SALLY
 (puts remote down on
 samples refrigerator)
 Sorry, I thought maybe you wouldn't
 hear me. Cause, like, you didn't
 hear me?
 (smiling)
 Is Dr. Matheson around?

Tom blinks childishly back at her for a beat, not knowing what to say. Sally holds up a thin white folder.

SALLY (CONT'D)
 Can I leave the assignment with you?

Tom offers no reply.

11 INT. DINER - NIGHT

11

Tom and Sally are sitting at a table in an nondescript diner, probably somewhere near the faculty.

Tom has ordered a strawberry milk-shake to Sally's chocolate. Tom is showing her a trick.

TOM
 ... Just watch the coin, okay?

She looks back, eyes wide as saucers. He switches the silver dollar about from one hand to the other, then blows on it, making it disappear. Sally smiles like a kid on Christmas morning.

SALLY
Where'd it go?

TOM
Lift your glass, please.
(impatient, does it for
her)
It's okay, I got it.

And the dollar is indeed there, under her glass.

SALLY
Where did you learn to do that?!

Tom smiles, almost uncomfortable.

TOM
You can't trust your eyes. You did
most of the magic looking in the
wrong place.

SALLY
Oh, great... you're really taking
the fun out of it.

Tom plays about with the coin again, placing it now in the palm of Sally's hand. Then he gently takes her hand in his and closes it.

TOM
Open it.

There's nothing there. Sally smiles back.

SALLY
It's in your left hand.

TOM
(surprised)
You saw it?

SALLY
(making light of it)
I got lucky. The course is really
great, you know? It makes you think.
Have you been working with Matheson
for long? Are you a psychologist
too? Or a magician?

TOM
A magician? No, actually, no, I'm a
physicist.

SALLY
(smiling)
Why do you do this?

TOM
(confused)
Do... what?

SALLY
Investigate fake paranormal stuff.
Don't you think it's a bit, weird?

TOM
I just try to help Margaret, I...

SALLY
I mean, what for? If somebody says
they have powers, when they actually
don't, who cares? Why would that
bother you?

TOM
Why would that bother me?

Sally nods naively back as she sucks on her straw. Tom thinks his answer over for a beat; his smile freezes now. He leans forward and looks closely at Sally, calmly and serenely addressing her.

TOM(CONT'D)
If... your mother was... one of
those people who went to see a
psychic because her stomach was
bothering her..., and that psychic
gave her a... "reading"..., told her
it was nothing, just a touch of
gastritis, and she believed him...,
and didn't do anything about it...,
and then later on, you find out she
has stomach cancer and it's too late
to treat..., do you think you'd say
"why would that bother you"?

Tom's looks back at Sally, unflinching. Sally feels terribly ashamed.

SALLY
(almost a whisper)
Did... that happen to you?

Tom doesn't so much as blink.

TOM

It bothers me. It's what I do.

Tom smiles at her, as if nothing untoward had just occurred, the big innocent boy scout he was once again.

TOM (CONT'D)

(taking out a pen)

Watch this...

He covers his bottom lip with a paper napkin and runs the pen through it. Sally looks on in horror. Tom removes the napkin for an instant; the pen seems to be stuck into his flesh. Then Tom covers it again and continues applying pressure, pulling faces as if in pain. He takes the napkin completely away now, tearing it; the pen has perforated his bottom lip, sticking out at both ends. Sally's face says it all.

SALLY

How did you do that?! Doesn't that hurt?

TOM

*A little bit. A tiny little bit...
Actually it hurts a lot, but after
a few times...*

Someone turns up the volume of the television in the diner.

FEMALE REPORTER (TV)

*... didn't want to go into details
about the extent of his come-back,
but rumor has it there are a dozen
interviews planned with all the
major networks and shows in some of
the main state capitals...*

A black female reporter, outside a local auditorium, is talking to camera, mike in hand.

FEMALE REPORTER (TV) (CONT'D)

*... The remarkable Simon Silver,
perhaps the most celebrated psychic
of all time, will visit us here in
just under three weeks; online
bookings have sky rocketed in just
six hours, and as soon as the
Ziegfield theatre box office
opens...*

Tom looks back from his seat at the television, the pen hanging grotesquely from his bottom lip.

12 INT. MATHESON'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY 12

Margaret is writing away on her computer, without looking at the keyboard. She looks troubled. After a while, she stops and takes off her reading glasses, rubbing her eye-lids. She puts her glasses down on the desk and opens a bottle of pills, shaking one onto her hand. When she stands up, her computer screen is revealed, showing several pages open with information about Silver.

13 INT. MATHESON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 13

Matheson takes a cup from the closet, pops in a tea bag and fills it with freshly boiled water. She adds half a spoonful of sugar, stirring it ceremoniously, without haste. Now she raises it to her lips, her mind miles away, and knocks back the pill. She looks over at the fridge.

She takes a photo stuck to the white refrigerator door which shows her AS A MUCH YOUNGER WOMAN HUGGING A SMILING THREE OR FOUR YEAR OLD KID. They both look very happy.

Now the phone rings. Margaret starts, splashing some tea onto her jacket.

INT. MATHESON'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Matheson comes back into the office wiping her clothes with some kitchen roll. She moves some sheets of paper out of the way, revealing a cordless telephone.

MATHESON
Margaret Matheson.

Nobody replies.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Hello?
(...)
Hello?
(...)
Margaret Matheson. Who's calling...?

INT. MATHESON'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Matheson throws the damp kitchen paper in the garbage. She tears off another piece, trying to clean herself better this time. Then she scrunches it up into a ball and throws it in the garbage can too.

Pensive, she turns and picks up her cup which she has left on the work-top. She takes a sip. Now she notices something.

The spoon sticking out of the cup is bent double.

Matheson draws the cup away from her lips and holds up the mangled spoon, puzzled.

She looks around, nerves jangling. She turns again and looks over at the back door.

14 EXT. HOUSE ON MAIN ROAD - NIGHT 14

Matheson's white Ford is parked outside a number of blue wooden houses. The crickets chirp leisurely in the night.

15 INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT 15

Matheson, Tom and a black couple aged about forty are sitting around a modest dining table with their eyes fixed on an adolescent holding a crayon who looks down at a blank sheet of paper. The wall of the room is covered with drawings, some framed, others stuck up with thumb tacks, depicting recognizable styles of different painters. Now and again, the sound of a car driving by can be heard outside.

Nothing happens for a beat. The mother, a little anxious, tries to encourage her son.

MOTHER
Are you okay, Stevie?

The adolescent raises his head listlessly and nods. Four adults looking at the boy clutching a crayon, waiting for something to happen.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
You want your music, Stevie? Want us
to put on your music?
(to Matheson)
Sometimes it helps him to listen to
music...

Matheson looks at her for a beat, and nods.

The mother gets up, almost excited, and turns on a music system. Her husband doesn't so much as say a word.

Some completely out of place track from the nineties - say something by Rick Astley - booms out at top volume, infesting the room with an unbearable racket. Tom shrinks back instinctively.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
(shouting wildly)
HE THINKS THIS IS REALLY COOL!! WE
DO TOO, BUT WE DON'T PAINT! ONLY
STEVIE PAINTS!! OR WHOEVER IT IS!!
(to the boy)
(MORE)

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 ISN'T THAT RIGHT, STEVIE? YOU PAINT,
 DON'T YOU?!!

Steve looks back at his mother for a beat, not even bothering to answer. Then he stares down at the blank sheet of paper again.

The mother smiles at Margaret.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 KIDS, HUH...?!!!

16 INT. CAR - NIGHT

16

Matheson and Tom laugh as they drive back.

MATHESON
 I'd have made him eat those crayons
 one by one. At least they'd have
 been useful that way.

TOM
 I'd have settled for a change in the
 music.

MATHESON
 "Automatic painting"... I'll cut his
 ear off whenever he wants..

Tom smiles. Margaret nods, looking out at the road; she puts her hand to her head now. Then she turns to Tom and takes him in with her gaze, as if asking a question, like she were laying eyes on him for the first time.

MATHESON (CONT'D) (
 If it was just me on my own..., I'd
 have thrown in the towel a long time
 ago. I'm getting old.

Tom offers no response; he just drives on. Margaret smiles.

MATHESON
 Where do you spring from, Tom? You
 could have a brilliant career in the
 physics department of any
 university. You know that, right?

TOM
 I like this.

MATHESON
 Why are you with me, Tom?

Margaret almost seems to be asking herself out loud. Tom just looks ahead at the road. He smiles innocently.

TOM
I like this... Where do you want me
to drop you? Want a ride home?

MATHESON
No. I'd like to look in on David.
Drop me there, please.

Tom puts on the radio; a Country & Western track is playing.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Turn that off, please. My head is
killing me.

Tom does as she asks.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
... Thanks.

Tom doubts whether it is the right time to say what is on his mind.

TOM
We... Maybe it would be a help if
somebody else joined the team? Did
you ever think about that? Maybe
if...

MATHESON
She's a bit young, don't you think?

TOM
(surprised)
Who?

Matheson, in spite of her pain, smirks back at him. Tom mulls this over for a beat.

TOM (CONT'D)
For what?

MATHESON
Right.

The car crosses a suspension bridge, entering the city.

17 INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - NIGHT

17

Electronic devices, an electrocardiograph, plastic catheters,
an artificial respirator...

Margaret stands with her arms wrapped around herself, alone, showing no overriding emotion, just looking on ahead. Now she leans forward and carefully pushes away the tousled hair from the forehead of a young man about 30, David, hooked up to all kinds of tubes, his mouth covered by an oxygen mask, lying as still as sleep itself.

Tom appears silently behind her; he stops at the door, keeping a respectful distance. Margaret doesn't turn, she carries on looking at David. She begins to talk, her gaze absent...

MATHESON

The reason... why so many people believe in ghosts is the same reason they believe in tunnels of light or haunted houses. Because it would mean there was something after death. I only wish there were.

Tom says nothing; he just listens.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

But I'm not prepared to let my beliefs be determined by hopes or demands, by needs or dreams or wishes.

She doesn't take her eyes off the bed, shakes her head almost imperceptibly, her face showing no emotion.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

If David woke up now and looked at himself in the mirror, he wouldn't even know who the adult looking back at him was....

(smiling bitterly)

But what's really terrifying is he might not recognize me either.

(slowly breathing in)

If I believed there was something... out there... I wouldn't think twice about pressing the button, I'd switch off that machine and let my son go.

TOM

Margaret...

MATHESON

(turning and smiling)

A contactee was visited and raped on a daily basis by an extraterrestrial being. Savagely possessed.

(MORE)

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Every night. She goes to see a hypnologist and the visits stop. So she goes back to the hypnologist and says: "Can't you make him come back once a week?"

Tom smiles tenderly at her. She smiles too. Then her expression becomes serious again, her face clouds over in determination.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

There are only two kinds of people out there with a special gift: the guys who really believe they have some kind of power, and the guys who think we can't figure them out. They're both wrong.

18 EXT. THEATER - PARKING LOT - DAY

18

Crowds of people are milling around the large parking lot of the Ziegfeld theater. The atmosphere is festive; families out on a bright afternoon, couples strolling arm in arm, little children holding balloons...

Dr. Matheson and Sally are inside the car, observing the scene. Tom, wearing a baseball cap, is outside mingling with the crowd; he turns and gestures towards them from a distance. Margaret looks up from the zoom lens she just used to take his photo.

MATHESON

(without looking at her)

Aren't you a bit young, Sally?

SALLY

(not understanding)

For what?

MATHESON

Right.

Matheson moves the camera away from Tom.

SALLY

What are we looking for?

MATHESON

Red lights...

SALLY

Red lights?

MATHESON

Things that shouldn't be there.

Through the lens we see a man about 50 next to the box office who seems to be looking into people's bags when they take out their purses to pay. Matheson takes a few photos.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

There's one over there...

The camera goes back to Tom, who is busy carefully scanning the surrounding area. The crowd carries on with its dance.

SALLY

There, behind us!

Sceptical, Margaret turns and aims the telephoto lens at a big guy holding a walkie-talkie, with a ponytail and large brown mustache, on his way over to a couple of elderly ladies. Matheson looks at Sally, somewhat surprised.

MATHESON

Well spotted.

The man stoops down to adjust his boots besides the ladies, taking in every detail of their conversation. The ladies set off again. The man writes something down in a notebook and says something into the walkie-talkie. Tom bumps into him now, knocking the walkie-talkie to the ground.

NOTEBOOK MAN

(annoyed)

What are you, blind? Watch where you're going.

TOM

(crouching down)

I'm real sorry, let me help you.

NOTEBOOK MAN

(snatching the walkie-talkie from him)

Give me that.

Tom sorts the man's clothes and dusts him down with his cap.

TOM

I'm real sorry, truly, let me...

NOTEBOOK MAN

Get your hands off me, why don't you?

TOM
 (holds up hands)
 I'm real sorry, I just wanted to
 help. Is there anything I can...?

NOTEBOOK MAN
 Just get lost, buddy, all right?

The man goes off grumbling, obviously annoyed.

TOM
 Sure. I'm sorry...

CUT TO:

Tom gets into the car, tossing off his cap and settling into the back seat. He hands the notebook to Margaret.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Candy from a baby.

Margaret puts the notebook away, without looking at it. Sally looks at her without understanding.

MATHESON
 (opening the door)
 That's time. In we go.

All three of them get out of the car.

19 INT. THEATER - FOYER - DAY

19

Matheson, Tom and Sally walk quickly through the theater foyer. A cop goes to shake Margaret's hand, but she doesn't take it. Tom offers his hand instead.

POLICEMAN
 Dr. Matheson...

The policeman falls in step beside them, followed, at a certain distance, by several other policemen.

MATHESON
 I take it you've been told I like my
 box all to myself.

POLICEMAN
 Sure, we know that, but I was
 thinking we could...

MATHESON
 And I guess you realize this kind of
 deployment isn't exactly what I
 meant when I said discreet.

POLICEMAN
(disconcerted)
I'll give orders to pull back.

He gestures to another policeman and follows Matheson upstairs to the corridor leading to the boxes.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)
Doctor, how come we're so sure this
guy's a fraud?

MATHESON
Ever heard of Occam's razor?

POLICEMAN
(confused)
Occam's razor?

MATHESON
When I hear the drumming of hooves,
I don't think unicorns... I think
horses.

Matheson opens the door for Tom and Sally, leading into a press box. Sally smiles sympathetically at the policeman. Matheson closes the door in his face.

20 INT. THEATER - STAGE / PRESS BOX

20

On stage, a very handsome Italian aged around 35 with a penetrating stare addresses the audience in a winning baritone voice. The theatre is almost totally shrouded in darkness, except for the overhead spotlight which shines down dramatically on him from above.

PALLADINO
(with Italian accent)
My name is Leonardo Palladino. I can
see things. Just like you. If not, I
would be blind. I am a mentalist. I
have got a mind, like you. I am a
clairvoyant. Because I can see
clearly. The only difference is I
see a little more clearly and a
little farther than other people.

In the press box, situated at the back of the theater, almost directly opposite the stage, Matheson presses a lamp-switch, lighting a single red light. She puts her feet up on a table, in front of a rectangular window looking out onto the theater. There is also an unplugged lighting table, an old microphone and several aluminium units with all kinds of electronic devices. Tom studies them briefly, then flicks a couple of switches.

MATHESON
 (observing Leonardo)
 He hasn't changed a single word...

SALLY
 You know Palladino from before?

TOM
 (making an adjustment)
 Not exactly. We knew Leonardo Borga,
 Leonardo Senatore and, for a while,
 we closely followed Leonardo Zarica.
 But Leonardo Palladino... it's our
 first time.

MATHESON
 Sure is. We're just thrilled.

Matheson leans forward. Tom connects two long red cables to a little box shaped device and puts it on the table, next to Matheson. Two potentiometers jump to attention on the unit from where the cables lead out.

SALLY
 He can't see us?

TOM
 Not with this light. It's polarized
 glass. No one can see anything.

MATHESON
 Unless they have special powers,
 that is. Watch this...

On stage, Palladino moves up towards the audience, followed by a spotlight. Matheson picks up a pair of small binoculars.

PALLADINO
 ... I tell you what I don't believe
 in. I don't believe in angels of
 light curing the good. I don't
 believe in extra-terrestrial beings
 coming down from the sky to guide
 the human race to an age of re-
 awakening...

MATHESON
 This is new.

PALLADINO
 (raising his voice)
 ...
 (MORE)

PALLADINO (CONT'D)

I don't believe in spiritual guides
of infinite wisdom floating over
your bed, I don't believe in magic
ancestral chants resounding with the
cosmos...

Margaret watches Tom as he hooks up the electronic device on
the table, which reacts, giving out a red light. He starts to
turn a small wheel... on the aluminium unit, a little
monophonic speaker starts to crackle.

MATHESON

(looking at small box)
Is that our one?

TOM

Yeah, I repaired it. Everything is
fine.

MATHESON

You repaired it? You should have
sent it out.

TOM

We don't have any money. It's fine.

MATHESON

We should have asked for...

TOM

I said I repaired it. It'll work.

Margaret looks at Tom, somewhat surprised. On the stage,
Palladino is now shouting, the microphone raised above.
Margaret turns to look at him.

PALLADINO

... I don't believe in the devil, I
don't believe in gods, I don't
believe in God himself! I only
believe in a primal, single,
powerful force, an essential
uncontainable flow, an explosion of
lucidity old like the world which
burns deep within me and explodes
with savage brutality only if I want
it to, only when I want it to! I
only believe in me!

MATHESON

Come on Tom, let's go.

TOM
(tracking a frequency)
Just a minute, I'm on to it.

PALLADINO
(raising his arms)
... I ONLY BELIEVE IN ME....!!

MATHESON
Tom...

TOM
Give me a second, I just need...

MATHESON
Tom...

TOM
Got it! That's it now.

The transmitter crackles. Sally starts. We hear the voice of a woman, with lots of static.

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
*Leo... can you hear me? Leo... If
you can't hear me, you're in
trouble...*

PALLADINO
(theatrically)
One moment, my head... my head...

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
Judi Cale.

PALLADINO
I can feel it...

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
I repeat: Judi Cale.

PALLADINO
(looking up suddenly)
Judi...! Judi Cale!

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
To your right.

Palladino immediately turns in that direction.

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED) (CONT'D)
*She should be in the fourth row,
next to...*

The sound goes, constant static makes it inaudible.

TOM
They're using inhibitors. They know
what they're doing.

MATHESON
Can't you do something?

TOM
I think so. Just a minute.

PALLADINO
Judi Cale, stand up right now, in
the name of God!!

MATHESON
(looking through
binoculars again)
Hallelujah, Leonardo believes again.

Tom takes a small device from his pocket and connects it to the scanner with a short, thick double cable. Some red numbers start to dance rapidly on the tracker screen.

A young woman wearing a head-scarf gets timidly to her feet. A man and woman accompany her to the stage; the man is guy number one from the theater parking lot.

The red numbers stabilize. The voice can be heard once more:

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
*... lives with her parents at 3154
Greenwich.*

PALLADINO
(receiving girl)
3-1-5-4 Greenwich..., I can see a
ring of white fire protecting your
home...

The young woman smiles, somewhere between frightened and moved, on the verge of tears. Leonardo puts his hand on her forehead.

PALLADINO (CONT'D)
Don't be scared, Judi, I know what's
wrong with you...

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
*... The girl's got stomach cancer,
Leo. Stomach...*
(MORE)

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED) (CONT'D)
 (the sound disappears and
 comes back unclear)
... Everything all right down there?

MATHESON
 Everything's wonderful. Thank you
 for asking.

Sally leans over towards the glass, incredulous and admiring.

SALLY
 Is it always like this?

MATHESON
 No, not always. We got lucky.

TOM
 (Fine tuning reception)
 The signal scrambles randomly every
 40 or 50 seconds. Incredible. If I
 can just work out the...

Palladino pushes the girl's forehead with great force.

PALLADINO
 Get out, get out of there!! Abandon
 Judi's stomach, she doesn't need you
 anymore!!

Tom opens a laptop and connects it up to the second device.

TOM
 They're not usually this careful...

Screaming, Judy falls back like a dead weight, and is caught
 by the man and the woman. She cries uncontrollably.

PALLADINO
 Judi, you're cured!! Shout it out!!

JUDI
 (very nervous)
 I'm... cured?

PALLADINO
 Shout it out, in the name of God!!

JUDI
 I'm cured!

MATHESON
 Hallelujah.

PALLADINO
Hallelujah!!

TOM
(shaking his head)
I got it!

Tom stands up and looks out at the stage.

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
(very clearly)
*All right, Leo: Richard Brunvand. I
repeat: Richard Brunvand.*

Palladino walks along the aisle.

PALLADINO
I'm calling Richard Brunvand in the
name of God!!

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
*No, Leo, correct your position. He
should be on your left.*

PALLADINO
(going back to center)
I'm calling Richard Brunvand in the
name of God!! Don't be afraid on
account of your sins, Richard, stand
up and accept the light of
salvation!!

A man gets to his feet, full of trepidation. A couple stand
up, quickly flanking him, ready to accompany him. In the box,
Sally's enthusiasm is growing by the minute.

SALLY
He really knows his moves, doesn't
he?

MATHESON
Oh, yeah, he's very good.
(adjusts focus on
binoculars)
He had a good teacher...

Matheson sweeps across the stalls with the binoculars; every
fifteen feet, a couple equipped with earphones sit awaiting
instructions. Sally looks at Matheson, waiting for her to
complete her sentence.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
He worked with Silver for almost a
year.

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
*He's here with his sister,
 Christine, and his mother... hang
 on... Dorina.*

SALLY
 Simon Silver? The blind guy?

Tom raises his eyebrows every time he hears Silver's name.

PALLADINO
 Richard, don't be afraid. Dorina and
 Christine aren't afraid. Listen to
 them! They want you to come to the
 light!

The women encourage Richard, who walks forward slowly.

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
*Watch out, Leo! Don't get in line
 with...!*

We hear the sound of feedback and a loud thud as the
 microphone bangs into something. Palladino shrinks back.
 Matheson turns her head to one side.

MATHESON
 (getting up slowly)
 You gotta be shitting me...

WOMAN ON RADIO (FILTERED)
 (annoyed)
*I'm sorry, my fault. I think
 everything's all right. Everything
 okay? Do you copy me? Let me know
 you're still there, Leo. Everything
 okay down there?*

MATHESON
 (pressing ear to the wall)
 You... gotta... be... shitting me.

PALLADINO
 I'm with you, Richard! Don't be
 afraid!
 (hand on man's forehead)
 I'm still here, with you!

From outside the private box, the camera tracks slowly along
 to one side, revealing the adjoining box, where a smartly
 dressed forty year old woman with a blonde pony tail is
 giving instructions as she consults two state-of-the-art lap-
 tops. Beside her, several video monitors show the theater
 from various angles.

Arms folded, nailed to the spot like an Indian war chief, the man from the parking lot Tom bumped into watches the performance.

WOMAN ON RADIO

423 Wilbur. I repeat. Four two three Wilbur.

(hits a switch and speaks
to someone else)

You guys go position yourselves in the center block now. We're going with the woman on crutches. Row 32.

She throws the switch again and presses a button that turns off a red light. She turns to her accomplice.

WOMAN ON RADIO (CONT'D)

That was close. Did you check the auxiliary control?

The man nods, very serious. The woman presses the button again: the red light comes back on.

WOMAN ON RADIO (CONT'D)

Leo, stop touching his chest, please. His arm's the problem.

(pressing button again)

One of these days somebody's going to work out he's Argentinean and then we'll be in real shit.

The sound of knocking on the door cause the man and woman to turn in surprise, as Dr. Matheson appears, her cheery air loaded with irony. Several policemen follow close behind.

MATHESON

(holding up notebook)

Hey, any of you guys lose this?

21 INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - DAY

21

Television images. A day time television audience applauds wildly. Silver spreads out his arms, as if showing himself.

SILVER (TV)

... I'm here, amn't I? There's no doubt about that. I'm here. I'm back!

NINA (TV)

(amused)

You know what I'm talking about, Simon. Are you going back on stage?

(MORE)

NINA (TV) (CONT'D)
Are we going to see you in action soon?

SILVER (TV)
(laughing)
Who knows, Nina. I heard it's a distinct possibility.

NINA (TV)
I know it's a delicate subject, but your last show didn't turn out so great, according to some people...

SILVER (TV)
That was a long time ago. I said all I had to say about it back then, Nina. I had nothing to do with it. It was a just a tragic and unfortunate thing that happened.

NINA (TV)
You gotta admit it was weird, your biggest detractor attacks you at your own show, and you...

SILVER (TV)
It was unpleasant for everybody.

NINA (TV)
The rumor at the time was that Martin Will was writing a book to demonstrate you were... well, a fake.

SILVER (TV)
That's the kind of stuff I mean that doesn't stack up. The same folks out there who say I have no powers also say I induced a heart attack in...

NINA (TV)
... your biggest enemy?

SILVER (TV)
(smiling)
You're safe with me, Nina.

NINA (TV)
(with a big smile)
Know what I think? I think you're getting everybody to talk about you without even going out there again.

SILVER (TV)
 (laughing)
Wouldn't that just confirm my powers?

NINA (TV)
You bet it would! You know, Silver? I've been wanting to do this for thirty years.
 (putting hand in her jacket pocket)
You know what I've brought with me?

SILVER (TV)
Sure. A spoon.

NINA (TV)
 (amazed)
How did you know that? Did you just read my mind?

SILVER (TV)
 (laughing)
No, Nina, the handle's been sticking out your pocket for the last five minutes.

NINA (TV)
So you...

A colleague points to his eyes, reminding her that he's blind. Nina slaps Silver gently, pretending to be angry:

NINA (TV) (CONT'D)
You're just a big kid, you know that?

The audience laughs heartily.

NINA (TV) (CONT'D)
What do you guys say? Should we ask him to bend it?

The audience roars their approval.

Somebody switches off the television.

TOM
 (can't believe it)
Why does everyone try to stop me watching....?

Margaret tosses him the remote control.

MATHESON
Because only housewives watch that
show.

TOM
(gathering stuff together)
I've got nothing against housewives.
My mum happens to be one.

MATHESON
Housewives knit, get boozed up in
front of the tv and paint pictures
of flowers. We should...

TOM
We should take a shot at Silver...

Margaret is surprised by this, but carries on as before.

22 INT. UNIVERSITY - CORRIDORS - DAY

22

Matheson and Tom walk along the corridor...

MATHESON
Forget about Silver, there's nothing
interesting for us there.
(searches among papers)
This arrived this morning...

She hands him a photo of a young man sitting crossed legged,
apparently suspended in mid-air. They get into the elevator.

TOM
(studying it)
An elastic bed?

MATHESON
That's what I thought. Are there no
real challenges left out there?

TOM
(Almost angry)
We should take a shot at Silver!

Margaret tries to come over as indifferent to the idea.

MATHESON
Silver's already been investigated.

TOM
Yeah, like thirty years ago. We
should investigate him now.

MATHESON

Forget him, Tom. Nothing good will come of it.

TOM

Silver's our shot, he could be our big break! He'll be here in just under ten days, we should...

MATHESON

(firmly)

Stay away from Silver.

TOM

(losing patience)

What the hell is it with you, Margaret? Are you scared of him or something?

Margaret turns and looks at him in disbelief. Tom holds her stare.

The elevator doors open now . Dr. Shackleton is talking with two colleagues in the corridor. He sees Matheson, trying to regain her composure.

SHACKLETON

Margaret, I was looking for you...!
I heard about Palladino, everyone's talking about it...

MATHESON

(pauses, tries to be nice)

Shackleton...

Tom reluctantly stands back.

SHACKLETON

Congratulations. It's people like him who give us bad press.

Matheson forces an impatient smile.

MATHESON

I doubt it.

SHACKLETON

Can we talk as we walk?

MATHESON

(not moving)

Why? What is this? Television?

Shackleton signals to his two colleagues, a man and a woman, both in white coats, who move a few steps closer. Margaret sets off on her way again.

SHACKLETON

Come on, Margaret, don't be so condescending, we're doing some serious work up there. We started with scores of 2.1, nothing serious, I know. But for the last two weeks we've been scoring 3.4, 4, 4.6. The chances the difference is just down to coincidence is 2 in 100!

MATHESON

Paul, there's never been a single properly conducted experiment that proved the existence of any paranormal power. Not ever. The results only appear when there are significant methodological defects, defective experimental controls or relevant data is inadvertently included. I don't know what you're doing *up there*, but you're doing it wrong.

SHACKLETON

(pointing to his team)

She's a doctor in toxicology, he's is doctor in engineering and information technology, and I'm an expert in clinical psychology and psychophysiology. What makes you think we don't know what we're doing?

MATHESON

Do you want an honest answer?

Margaret stops.

SHACKLETON

Two in a hundred, Margaret.

MATHESON

Paul...

SHACKLETON

Two in a hundred.

Dr. Matheson looks at him for a long beat, hesitant. She takes a long, slow breath.

MATHESON

Alright.

(to Tom)

Tom, please, go ahead and start class without me, will you? I won't be long. Take this.

(hands him several files)

And this. And this... Show them that photo. It'll keep them happy. We'll talk later.

Tom walks off, glancing back uneasily at them as he goes.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

(to Shackleton)

So what's it this time? Psychic photography, retrocognition, remote vision?

SHACKLETON

(raising his eyebrows)

Telepathy.

MATHESON

Drawings, closed envelopes, cards?

SHACKLETON

Zener cards.

MATHESON

Double blind, triple blind, simple blind?

SHACKLETON

Simple blind. I did it myself.

MATHESON

I take it from your enthusiasm you just did a test right now...

SHACKLETON

Exactly. That's right.

MATHESON

Were you facing the subject?

SHACKLETON

Sure.

Matheson nods to Haynes and Campbell.

MATHESON

What about them?

SHACKLETON
In a control booth, monitoring the
subject.

MATHESON
Who was monitoring you?

SHACKLETON
(rattled)
Me? Why would they have to...?

MATHESON
It's a joke, Paul. Were you both at
the same eye level?

SHACKLETON
Approximately. Yes.

MATHESON
Under a light, I guess.

SHACKLETON
Yes.

MATHESON
Like we are now.

SHACKLETON
(looking upwards)
Well, yes; more or less.

MATHESON
Do you have the cards here?

SHACKLETON
The cards?
(patting his coat)
No, I don't think...

Dr. Haynes hands him a pack.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)
Yeah, here they are...

Matheson carefully studies the thick cards, made of stiff
cardboard. She takes one and holds it up against the light.
She turns it around several times. She gives it back to
Shackleton.

MATHESON
Go ahead, shoot...

SHACKLETON
What do you mean, "shoot"?

MATHESON
Shoot, do it.

Shackleton looks at his colleagues, hesitating. They also seem disconcerted.

SHACKLETON
To you?
(dubious)
Okay...

He holds up a card which, of course, she can't see.

MATHESON
Square.

Shackleton holds up another card.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Cross.

Another card. And another. And another.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Square... Square... Star... Wave...
Circle...

Shackleton, surprised, holds the cards up to the light.

SHACKLETON
How do you do that? They're not...
they're not transparent... we made
sure of that. They can't be!

Margaret removes Shackleton's glasses.

MATHESON
Methodological defects, defective
controls, inadvertent inclusion of
relevant data... or all three things
at the same time, like this case.
Congratulations.

As she speaks, she folds away the glasses and, with two little taps, puts them back in Shackleton's breast pocket.

MATHESON (CONT'D)
Next time, try taking them off
first.

Shackleton, stunned, takes the glasses from his pocket and now sees they reflect perfectly, like two mirrors. Margaret walks off along the corridor. Shackleton reacts, rattled.

SHACKLETON
So why did you test the cards
against the light?!

MATHESON
(without looking back)
So you wouldn't think of your
glasses!

23 INT. UNIVERSITY - LECTURE HALL - DAY

23

Dr. Matheson comes silently into the lecture hall. Tom is screening some silent black and white images of a slight woman moving her hands over a glass receptacle. Inside the receptacle, several small things begin moving about.

TOM
... These images appeared during the
Cold War, under conditions
controlled by the Soviet
authorities. There were no
independent investigations.

The images now show a live frog with its abdomen cut open.
Its exposed heart is beating rapidly.

TOM (CONT'D)
Leningrad, 1970. Katia Novikova is
carrying out one of her most
controversial experiments: she
concentrates intensely on a frog's
heart; apparently she can make it
beat faster... slower... and
finally, stop it beating
altogether...

The students look disgusted. Margaret rubs her eyes in pain;
she takes a pill from a bottle, knocks it back, and listens
to the explanation without drawing attention to her presence.

TOM (CONT'D)
Katia affirmed she had inherited the
same powers her mother had. During
childhood, she claimed she could see
objects moving around of their own
accord whenever she got angry, but
there's no way of demonstrating
it...

CUT TO:

24 EXT. THEATER - PARKING LOT - DAY 24

Outside the theater where Leonardo Palladino performed a few days earlier, a group of workers are unfolding an enormous tarpaulin announcing Silver's forthcoming performance. Preparations for his arrival at the auditorium are underway.

25 INT. TOM'S LOFT - OPEN PLAN AREA / TV SET - DAY 25

A heated debate is underway on television. There are four guests, as well as Jim Carroll (50), the host: a psychic (Benedict Cosell, 35), tall and slim, dressed in black, a parapsychologist (Howard McCollm, 50) who looks like an English professor, and Silver's cold, attractive companion (Monica B. Hansen, 40) along with Dr. Matheson. Superimposed captions identify them when they speak.

PSYCHIC (TV)

*... Only God is right all the time,
Dr. Matheson! And yes, there are
sensitives who are impostors, just
like there are skeptics. Even
scientists make mistakes every day!
But you, the professional skeptics,
also seem to be experts in rhetoric.
Don't bite off my finger, doctor,
look where I'm pointing!*

MATHESON (TV)

*Scientists' mistakes are usually
random, Cosell; pseudo-scientists'
mistakes tend to be directional.*

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST (TV)

*Dr. Matheson seems to forget she set
out her stall on this over 30 years
ago. Most investigators are aware of
the dangers of fakes and design
their experiments with every
imaginable precaution. We're
believers, doctor, not simply
credulous.*

MATHESON (TV)

*The erudite are often the ones who
give credibility to the most absurd
phenomena; they're easy victims
because they think logically.
Professional magicians base their
tricks precisely on that
supposition.*

(addressing B. Hansen)

Your client knows that all too well.

(MORE)

MATHESON (TV) (CONT'D)

(Hansen offers a faint,
icy smile)

*Why does every parapsychological
phenomenon vanish when there's a
qualified skeptic present?*

HOST (TV)

*Three out of every four Americans
say they've had some kind of meta-
psychic experience, and an even
higher percentage say official
science should study these phenomena
properly. Don't you think there's a
lot out there still to be explained?*

Tom, a pasta salad laid out before of him, shifts around on the couch of his industrial loft beside Sally, his eyes glued to the television screen:

TOM

Even the host is in on it too....
you can see it, can't you? The whole
thing is a set-up. Get out of there,
Margaret, they're boxing you in...

MATHESON (TV)

*I'm afraid my colleagues, the
experimental psychologists, also
tend to be sadly prosaic in their
approaches to strange experiences,
as well as decidedly skeptical about
unusual powers.*

PSYCHIC (TV)

(to the host)

*That's what I was saying - pure
rhetoric, just talking the talk. Yet
to refute the rule all crows are
black, all you need is a single
white one...*

HOST (TV)

(to Monica B. Hansen)

*Miss Hansen, you're Simon Silver's
agent. I guess that means you've
gotten to know him pretty well?*

MONICA (TV)

*And I feel privileged. He's a
constant source of inspiration for
all of us who work with him...*

HOST (TV)

(to camera)

Silver's come-back, as you all know, has turned into a social event; his recent sell-out performances in Atlanta and Dallas can only be described as an unbelievable success. Today he'll be performing in our city, in the Ziegfield theater, less than 500 yards from this studio. Is "performing" the right word for it, Miss Hansen?

MONICA (TV)

Why not? Simon has never been ashamed of sharing his extraordinary abilities with other people...

MATHESON (TV)

Why allow for a rigorous study when the noble distraction of the mass spectacle is there to be embraced?

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST (TV)

Mr. Silver has been... Between 1970 and 1973, Simon Silver was subjected to rigorous studies by at least two different universities of unquestionable renown. I guess you know that, doctor, because you were on one of those committees...

Tom rolls his eyes, spluttering out the milk he was drinking. Sally looks at him, not understanding.

SALLY

(slapping his back)

Tom! Are you all right?.

Tom waves at her to be silent.

The images are now seen directly from inside the TV studio...

MATHESON

I didn't sign off on those findings, Howard, we both know that. The experiments weren't carried out under minimum control conditions.

PSYCHIC

Yeah, control conditions... Those of us born a little different feel so safe in your hands...

(MORE)

PSYCHIC (CONT'D)

Thorough inspection of bodily orifices, leotards, Faraday cages to lock us away like animals... Are you surprised Silver refused to subject himself to that?

MATHESON

Now you come to mention it, no I'm not surprised he refused to follow the only protocol that would have guaranteed the effective elimination of any possibility of fraud.

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

All that sounds very convincing, Doctor, but in actual fact, telepathic experiments carried out in line with your instructions came up with an indisputable 60% accuracy score.

MATHESON

That is absolutely false. Yes, my indications were very precise, but no one seemed willing to follow them, and I'm hardly surprised: parapsychology is an area famous for tricks and fantastic get-out clauses. Eliminating biased evaluations, Silver correctly identified only 3 of the 17 objectives presented to him, and it isn't hard to work out how he figured two of these. Given the unacceptable flexibility of the conditions, the real mystery is why he didn't get them all right.

HOST

If I'm not mistaken, doctor, and please correct me if I am, Silver was also tested with an enormous magnetometer set up to register the declination rate of a magnetic field...

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

Two Nobel prize winners backed those studies!

MATHESON

Two Nobel prize winners who might know everything there is about neurosurgery or developmental biology, but not much about magnetic currents. A professional conjurer would have been more useful given the circumstances.

PSYCHIC

It's obvious, doctor, all you care about is clinging on to your prejudices at all cost. Who are the real impostors? The selfless people born with a special gift or the skeptics who attack us, so convinced of their own infallibility they don't have it in them even to study the evidence properly?

Dr. Matheson breathes deeply, trying to keep her patience.

Tom shifts around on the couch:

TOM

What are you doing Margaret! Don't go on the defensive, Margaret.

(to Sally)

She's going on the defensive, can't you see it?

MATHESON

The psychology department at my university doesn't deny that such phenomena may exist, and neither do I personally. Nevertheless, in light of my considerable experience based on the examination of the phenomena, I would say the chances of the existence of paranormal powers comes pretty close to zero.

TOM

(despairing)

What are you doing? Don't give them an inch...

(to Sally, without looking at her)

She's going to mention the bone, just wait. Don't get onto the bone...

Sally is looking at the television, almost hypnotized.

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

(aggressively)

Bla bla bla, doctor... Bla bla bla!
You're just hiding behind academic
talk and text book sarcasm. But
what's behind it all? I've spoken to
some of those supposed fraud victims
whose eyes you claim to have opened
and, believe me, they don't have
very nice things to say about you.

MATHESON

Trying to take dumb ideas away from
victims is often kind of like trying
to take a bone away from a dog.

TOM

(hanging his head)

Shit, Margaret...

SALLY

(to Tom)

How did you know?

TOM

Because I'm psychic...

The host reacts with a slightly feigned air of self-righteousness.

MODERATOR

Excuse me, doctor, I'm just hosting
this debate, I know my place, but
did you just describe those who have
different beliefs to you as dogs?

PSYCHIC

That's what we are to you! Animals!

MATHESON

That's just ridiculous, I said no
such thing! All I'm saying is if
someone says they're capable of
moving an object with the power of
their mind, we have to establish a
situation whereby we can be sure the
individual remains at a certain
distance from the object and can't
move it by physical means,
controlling all the elements that
might lead to deception.

(MORE)

MATHESON (CONT'D)

If that person manages to move the object and what's more repeats it in different situations, then that would prove telekinesis exists. The same goes for other supposed mental powers. Is that asking so much?

PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

That's exactly what Silver did!

MATHESON

Give me proof that a photon of light can pass through a human body and I'll start to believe in invisibility. Until that happens, we're just talking about simple beliefs.

MONICA

What do you believe in, Dr. Matheson? Do you have a transcendent view of life?

MATHESON

(taken aback)

What?

MONICA

You talk about belief; is there anything you believe in?

MATHESON

I don't think that's got...

MONICA

Do you believe in something or not?

Matheson looks disconcerted by the firmness of Silver's agent...

On the couch, Tom shakes his head. He knows something is going wrong.

We see the images on a television screen once more.

MATHESON (TV)

The fact of the matter is I'm agnostic. I guess.

MONICA (TV)

Then you accept it is possible there's something out there...

MATHESON (TV)
No. I don't know, I...

MONICA (TV)
You're not a religious person?

Matheson takes a deep breath.

The camera pulls slowly back, showing the whole television set now; little by little we reveal what looks like a nondescript hotel room.

MATHESON (TV)
Actually I was. Some time ago.

MONICA (TV)
*And what happened? What happened to
 turn you into such a... lonely
 woman?*

The doctor stares into space. She reacts now, quickly standing up.

MATHESON (TV)
We're done.

HOST (TV)
Dr. Matheson...

MATHESON (TV)
 (heading off)
We're done!

HOST (TV)
*Dr. Matheson, please, if there's
 anything...*

Silver is sitting on the edge of a large hotel bed impassively listening to the debate on the television a few feet away to his right.

He gets up in silence and leaves the room, gently closing the door.

26

INT. MATHESON'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

26

Margaret is working away in her office, writing something by hand. A newspaper falls with a thump onto her desk. She looks up, startled.

TOM
This is one of the kinder ones.

Tom, furious, points to the front page of the newspaper which shows a split image of an exultant Silver and a vanquished looking Margaret below a headline in large black letters: MATHESON TURNS SILVER INTO GOLD.

TOM (CONT'D)
What the hell were you thinking?

MATHESON
(shocked)
Tom!

TOM
Do you have any idea the advantage he has over us now? In one minute we've gone back decades. We've gotta investigate Silver, RIGHT AWAY!

MATHESON
Tom, I can see you're angry, but...

TOM
That's enough! You've been trying to keep me away from him for weeks! I ain't stupid, Margaret, stop pretending I am!

MATHESON
Tom, Silver is a bad guy, I just...

TOM
That's enough! We have to expose him! Right away! If you won't, I'll do it on my own!

Margaret is stunned into silence by Tom's determination. He makes an effort to calm down, tries to change his tone.

TOM (CONT'D)
Margaret..., I know they did a job on you, I know it wasn't fair, that slave of Silver's played dirty. But she did it. They took you by surprise, I understand, I don't know what I'd have done in your place. But here's where we are: we look like idiots, it's been over two years since we received a lousy private dollar and the university department funding is so ridiculously low, only a marching band could make it clearer they want rid of us. I'm not waiting another second...

MATHESON
This has nothing to do with the
university, Tom.

TOM
... maybe you don't have anything to
lose any more, but...

MATHESON
It's got nothing to do with...

TOM
(thumping the table)
That's enough!! We've gotta - nail -
Silver!!

Time stands still for a beat; Margaret tries to work out
what's going on inside Tom's head. Normally he would never
act like this.

MATHESON
Sit down, Tom.

TOM
(exhausted)
Margaret...

MATHESON
Tom.
(kind)
Sit down.

Tom sits down very slowly. Margaret slowly takes a deep
breath...

MATHESON (CONT'D)
This is how he does it, Tom. He did
it to me. And now he's doing it to
you.

TOM
Margaret, I don't know what
you're...

MATHESON
(very calm)
It's not the first time. He knows
what he's doing. Human nature is
weak, Tom. We want to be strong. But
we're not. You're not angry with me.

Margaret smiles very sweetly. She shuts her eyes.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Every time I close my eyes, I see David that day... so small, so... fragile. He fell, just like that, where you are now. He just keeled over one day. I thought he was playing, I carried on working. But he wasn't. He was four years old.

TOM

Margaret, I'm real sorry if...

MATHESON

(very sweetly)

Shhhhhhh. Everything's all right.

(smiling sadly)

Sometimes I write letters to him, did you know that? I know he can't hear me, but even so I write to him. "Dear David"...

Margaret looks down, remembering something buried deep down inside.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Silver and I appeared together on a TV show. Like the one today. He was shouting, I was shouting... We were young. And suddenly he started staring... Not at me... Just beside me... He was staring at something beside me, as if he could see someone, you understand? Like... mediums do when they say they see an angel or some dead relative, or..., you know... the disembodied. I wasn't surprised, I was expecting theatrics. I was prepared.

She takes a deep breath and her expression gradually changes.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

I see a boy by your side. A... blonde boy... by your side. Do you know who it might be, Margaret? Has a boy close to you died?

Her expression gradually clouds over with rage and grief...

MATHESON (CONT'D)

I didn't answer. I couldn't say a word. Suddenly I was terrified, my legs were shaking.

(MORE)

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Silver didn't get upset, he just kept talking, looking steadily at me, like he wouldn't hurt a fly.

Tom looks at Margaret not daring to breathe.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

The boy... is asking... you to let him go. He says you have to let him go, his time has come and you won't let him... go.

(looking icily at Tom)

Do you think I told him David was still alive, that he was an unscrupulous phoney? You think I confronted him in front of everyone and told him he should feel ashamed of himself? I didn't say a word... Fifteen million homes waiting for my answer and... I didn't say a word...

(stony-faced now)

And you know the only thing I can't forgive him?

Tom doesn't even nod.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

... I hate myself every day for feeling this, I hate myself from the moment I open my eyes in the morning until I close them again at night. What I can't forgive... What I can't forgive him is not that he dared to mention David..., not that he dared use my son... my sleeping... sick, son... like that...

Her expression hardens with something like hatred.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

... What I can't forgive him is, for a second, just for a second, and it didn't last more than a second... I thought he might just be right...

(pauses for a long beat)

He made me doubt. And everyone could see it.

She seems to come back to herself from some far away place.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

Stay away from him, Tom.

Tom looks at her in silence, holding her stare.

27 INT. THEATER - NIGHT

27

Illuminated from above, Simon Silver defies the darkness of the stage with his powerful voice; dressed entirely in black, his milky white sightless eyes are visible without the protection of sunglasses.

SILVER

What do you really know? What can you trust? What are your doubts, what are your certainties? What do you call... truth?

Silver speaks very calmly, controlling his words to hypnotic effect. He washes his hands in a glass bowl, following a calculated ritual.

SILVER (CONT'D)

When you look at the sky, what do you see? Shadows? Reflections, distant echoes...?

(nods slowly)

You see the moon as it was more than a second ago. You see the sun as it was shining eight minutes ago.

The camera pulls back and shows Silver standing over a heavily built man lying on a table, a glass bowl and several white towels beside him. Silver uncovers the man's stomach. He raises his hand, very dramatically, like a surgeon, as his voice resounds around the auditorium.

SILVER (CONT'D)

What do you really see? Can you trust your eyes? Can you trust... me?

To the audience's horror, Silver sinks his fingers into the man as if he were made of butter. Blood pours everywhere.

SILVER (CONT'D)

We can go forward with lies. But we can't go back.

Silver moves his hands around inside the man's body, defying all logic, extracting revolting bloodied tumors, which he deposits on a tray.

28 INT. THEATER - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

28

Tom strides along an empty corridor in the theater; his footsteps echo around its convex walls.

29

INT. THEATER - PRESS BOX / STAGE - DAY

29

Tom switches on the red light and opens all the closets, throwing switches two at a time. The red lights come awake, the pontentiometers hit the glass with their needles and swing back again, the speakers crackle expectantly.

Below, the audience bursts into applause. Silver pours water over the man's stomach, cleaning away the blood; there is no trace of any mark or wound on the man's body.

SILVER
(without raising his
voice)
You are cured. Go in peace...

The man exits the stage accompanied by two other young men. Silver makes a slight gesture, requesting silence.

SILVER (CONT'D)
I've never felt proud of being what
I am. I didn't choose it. I didn't
ask for anything. Why was I chosen?
Who singled me out?

Tom takes a cable and connects it to the scanner, on the table.

SILVER (CONT'D)
... You're asking yourselves the
same questions. Right now. At this
very instant.
(tapping his head)
I can hear you.

Smiling to himself, Tom tightly grasps the wheel that activates it, about to put the tracker into action.

SILVER (CONT'D)
(shouting)
James Liddenbrock! James Herbert
Liddenbrock! Stand up!

In the darkness of the press box, Tom connects the scanner which lights up like a Christmas tree.

SILVER VIOLENTLY TURNS AROUND, his empty stare shooting fifty yards across the theater, fastening onto Tom's incredulous eyes. Tom takes a step back, almost stumbling. What the hell's going on?

The scanner starts to crackle and emit strange sparks. NOW IT EXPLODES SPECTACULARLY!

The ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE PRESS BOX EXPLODE ONE BY ONE, bursting into flames. The PRESS BOX GLASS SCREEN SHATTERS; Tom takes cover as best he can as shards of glass fly through the air, cutting into his flesh.

The LIGHTS ON THE CEILING EXPLODE IN A ROW, enveloped in a cloud of sparks. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The spectators look around, taken aback, instinctively covering themselves.

We start to hear an unbearable noise, something like a feedback loop, getting louder and louder.

With an enormous bang, the theater is plunged into darkness.
The maddening high-pitched whistle continues.

Tom, in total darkness, plugs his ears with his fingers, moving back into a corner of the box. The sharp penetrating sound cuts through everything like a laser beam. Tom screams in pain, but the noise drowns out his cries. His ears start bleeding. He crumples to the floor in the press box like a cornered animal.

The flames which lick out from the empty insides of two large speakers are reflected back in Silver's white, menacing eyes.

CUT:

30 BLACK SCREEN 30

The screen remains black for several long seconds...

31 INT. MATHESON'S HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT 31

Establishing shot of Matheson's office.

A prolonged ringing sounds out now. The camera starts to move forward around the room while the telephone rings and rings, unanswered. The house seems to be empty. Not the slightest movement can be seen. Not the slightest sound can be heard, save the insistent ringing.

Then the ringing stops and, with it, the camera.

32 INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - NIGHT 32

The lab seems deserted, though we can hear the buzzing of a cell phone. Which stops ringing now.

Footsteps begin to echo far away in the distance. For a few long seconds, the steps grow louder; the sound of doors opening and closing echo in the night.

On the other side of the glass door, a light goes on. Tom, looking much the worse for wear, comes into the lab.

TOM
Margaret?

He looks around. Everything seems to be in order, although a light is still on next to a laptop.

Tom dials a number on his cell, advancing cautiously into the room. The call makes the table vibrate again. Tom goes over. And then he sees her, lying on the floor.

TOM (CONT'D)
Margaret!

Alarmed, he goes down and shakes her, putting his head to her chest.

TOM (CONT'D)
Margaret, what happened to you?!
Margaret, say something!

Tom unbuttons her blouse, with an expression of dread, puts his head to her chest again, this time directly onto her flesh.

33 INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDORS - NIGHT

33

A male nurse quickly pushes an unconscious Matheson along on a stretcher, an oxygen mask over her face. Tom and a female doctor follow on behind.

DOCTOR
(to Tom)
You gotta wait here. As soon as we know anything, I'll tell you. Does she have any relatives?

TOM
No, no. A son, but...

DOCTOR
Can you let him know?

TOM
Let him...?

The trolley disappears through a door. The male nurse gestures to Tom to go no further.

DOCTOR
As soon as we know something, I'll come find you.

The door closes behind the trolley.

34

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - NIGHT

34

It's very late. Tom sits staring into space as he waits on the couch in the hospital room where Margaret son lies. Tom plays around with a coin, absentmindedly switching it about between his fingers. He looks at David and hears the sound of the artificial respirator.

Tom has looked in better shape; he's covered in tiny little cuts, his faces shows traces of blood.

Sally walks slowly into the room, looking very worried.

SALLY

They told me you were here.

She sits down beside Tom and touches his face tenderly.

SALLY (CONT'D)

How's the doctor? Is she all right?

TOM

(shaking his head)

I don't know... They haven't told me anything.

SALLY

What happened to you? You're hurt.

TOM

We weren't together. I was in the theater, with Silver...

SALLY

With Silver? Why?

TOM

Margaret asked me not to go. I said some terrible things to her, Sally.

Sally consoles him sweetly.

SALLY

What happened?

Tom doesn't answer, he just shakes his head slowly. He closes his eyes. She caresses him like a kid who needs comforting, respecting his silence. They sit like that for a while, without talking.

Sally looks at the bed, pensive.

SALLY (CONT'D)
 What's the point in keeping him here
 like that after all this time?

Tom opens his eyes and looks absently at David. The artificial respirator keeps its beat in perfect time, indifferent to the world.

35 EXT. PRISON - DAY

35

Establishing shot of a state prison from outside the perimeter fence.

36 INT. PRISON - DAY

36

A prison officer leads Tom through prison corridors, occasionally requesting various door be opened.

Tom and the prison officer reach the visiting room. Tom sits down on a chair and waits. On the other side of the thick glass, a guard brings in Leonardo Palladino, dressed in an orange uniform.

Palladino smiles and slumps down lazily on a chair. He picks up the phone in his cubicle. Tom does the same.

PALLADINO
 This isn't my first time inside.
 Know that?

Tom nods silently, his gaze steely.

PALLADINO (CONT'D)
 (looking around)
 It isn't even a federal prison.
 They can't humiliate me any more,
 what else is left.
 (smiles again)
 Ever tried prison food?

Tom looks at him steadily. Finally, he shakes his head.

PALLADINO (CONT'D)
 ... They put hot pepper into
 everything.

TOM
 Leonardo...

PALLADINO
 Yes, Buckley: Leonardo. What,
 butting in already? Don't you want
 to find out some more about where
 you've landed me?

Palladino stares at him until he's ready.

PALLADINO (CONT'D)

At 5:00 a.m. they give you a little carton of milk... I don't eat breakfast, I wait until lunch at eleven. Elbow macaroni with hot pepper, frijoles, rice. Hardly ever meat. Maybe sometimes you get a spicy hamburger. They think we're all Mexicans...

Tom looks back at him blankly.

PALLADINO (CONT'D)

At five, you get the same thing again. And that's it until the next day. So at night I take out my carton of milk.

TOM

Leonardo...

PALLADINO

I've lost fifteen pounds in less than four weeks.

TOM

Leonardo...

PALLADINO

(with ironic concern)

Yes?

TOM

When did you tell Silver we'd be there?

Palladino seems surprised. He looks at Tom with interest.

TOM (CONT'D)

When did you tell him how we nailed you?

Palladino smiles as he puts two and two together.

PALLADINO

Did the blind guy spook us then, Buckley? Did the blind guy see us when we were up to no good...?

TOM

When did you talk to him, Leonardo?

Palladino looks serious for the first time.

PALLADINO

Buckley, you've come to the wrong place. Silver doesn't need me to know whatever he wants to know, get it? He doesn't need anyone.

TOM

Look around you, this isn't one of your shows. I'm the guy who landed your ass here, remember?

(leaning towards him)

When did you tell Silver I'd be there?

PALLADINO

I hardly know Silver, you fucking shit for brains!

TOM

You worked with him for a year!

PALLADINO

Like, twenty years ago! Nobody tell you that? I'm 35, Buckley, I was just a fucking kid back then. He used me for... I just had to cry and shut up whenever he told me. Cry and shut up. What, you think he spilled his fucking heart out to me?!

Palladino's words echo around the room, as Tom tries to work him out.

TOM

(getting up)

I'm wasting my time.

PALLADINO

You got no idea what you're getting yourself into, do you?

TOM

It was a pleasure seeing you again, Leonardo. Look after yourself.

PALLADINO

You've got no idea what you're getting yourself into!

37 EXT. HOTEL - DAY

37

Tom is crouched down inside Margaret's white Ford, scanning the main entrance of a luxury hotel with a pair of binoculars, where a crowd including a couple of television crew are waiting at the main door. It's like they're fucking waiting for Brad Pitt.

Now the crew springs into action, as Silver appears through the door, led by Monica, his ice-cold rep. A security team accompany them, gesturing to cars parked in the vicinity. A reporter tries to get a sound-bite from Silver, but it's impossible to make anything out from this distance.

Tom sits up, all eyes. One of the security guys helps Silver and Monica into a black car with tinted glass windows. Tom ducks down as the car drives by; then he starts up the Ford.

38 INT. CAR - DAY

38

Tom, looking tense, drives the white Ford along busy streets, hot on Silver's tail. On either side of the street, people go about their business like clockwork ants, as if executing a pre-determined choreography

The upmarket area of town soon begins to give way into a less salubrious neighbourhood. Tom tries to keep his distance from Silver, allowing other cars to go by him, waving other cars ahead. The black car now turns at a junction, heading down a street lined by run-down looking bars, small stores and garbage cans. A van now cuts in front of Tom, stopping to unload its goods, and forcing Tom to put the car into reverse, before then screeching out and around the van with a quick turn of the steering wheel...

TOM

Come on, come on...

...but just as he does so, Tom is forced to SLAM DOWN HARD ON THE BRAKES: a strange, old, black lady walks across the street, forcing him to come to a sudden halt.

The woman points a long bony finger at him; her eyes look back at him, as wide and deep and black as the ocean, sending a shudder down Tom's spine.

Still recovering from the fright, Tom watches the woman as she reaches the pavement on the other side.

The street is empty now - there's no sign of the black car. THE CAR RADIO NOW BOOMS OUT AT FULL BLAST, suddenly turning on. Tom shrinks back. HIS CELLULAR PHONE NOW BEGINS TO RING, STARTLING HIM.

Trying to pull himself together, Tom turns off the radio and stretches down to the floor, where his phone has fallen with the emergency stop. He gropes around for it.

When he straightens back up, THE OLD LADY'S FACE IS PRESSED UP AGAINST THE CAR WINDOW.

Tom jumps back, startled. The old woman glares at him, full of reproach. Tom hurries to wind down the window, as his phone begins to ring.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, please, forgive me. I
didn't see you, it was my fault. Can
I help you with something? Can...
can I give you a ride somewhere?

BLACK WOMAN
(deadly serious)
You don't look well.

TOM
(taken aback)
What?

The old woman's profound gaze runs straight through him.

BLACK WOMAN
No, you don't look well at all...

Intimidated by the woman's stare, Tom says nothing. She looks at him unblinking. Finally she moves back.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)
You're going to have to stay awake.
You don't have as much time as you
think...

Tom, totally disconcerted, doesn't know what to make of her words at all. He looks at the screen of his cellular which reads: MISSED CALL: UNKNOWN NUMBER.

39 INT. CAR - DAY

39

Tom drives the white Ford about the surrounding streets at a leisurely pace, looking left and right as he goes.

About to give up the ghost, Tom now sees Monica Hansen come out through the metal doors of a nondescript looking entrance with fly-posters above the threshold; she gets into the black car which waits nearby.

Tom looks at the door, and then looks at the car.

40

EXT. / INT. BUILDING. SUBURBS. - DAY

40

Tom puts on a baseball cap and goes in through the doorway, making sure no one sees him; inside, a narrow staircase leads up to the floor above.

Nobody is around. Not a sound can be heard.

On the first floor, a landing space leads onto two apparently identical, run-down corridors with worn carpets and identical doorways on either side which disappear into the greenish gloom which seems to envelop everything.

Two elevators with steel doors command the landing area; the doors of one of them stand open and Tom goes inside and tries it, but it doesn't work. Then he comes back out of the elevator and summons the second, unsuccessfully. Tom looks up now - the number 3 shines in red above the door.

Tom checks the square staircase which leads up to the floors above. It looks deserted. He hears a noise in the distance, perhaps a door, or a creak echoing. Tom, not at all sure about what he's doing, adjusts his cap and begins to walk up the stairs cautiously.

Tom has reached another corridor, identical to the one downstairs. He advances along cautiously, looking closely at the doors of simple apartments on either side, each one with its number, on the look-out for any kind of a sign. Somewhere in the distance, children laugh and run. Tom turns, on edge. More distant laughter and the sound of a door slamming.

Tom reaches the end of the corridor, where it crosses another corridor. Very cautiously, he puts his head round the corner and pulls it back immediately. He peeps out again, slowly. Tom is scared. There's no one out there, only a dark wooden bench sits next to one of the doors almost at the end of the corridor. On the wall, a security camera with a red pilot light is pointing at him. Tom draws back again and checks behind him. There's nobody there either. He walks out now, keeping his head down so that the peak of his cap covers his face.

The door next to the bench opens suddenly. Tom freezes.

A black woman with a haunted expression comes out the door next to the bench and walks by Tom, without looking at him. Tom shudders inwardly to himself as he watches her go.

Turning with her, Tom see an enormous black man behind him, who seems to have appeared out of nowhere.

ENORMOUS BLACK MAN

(deep voice)

Do you have an appointment, sir? Can
I help you with something?

Tom looks up, intimidated.

TOM

No, I was just...

Tom looks round again, then at the camera, without looking up. The black guy stares at him as if he had all the time in the world.

TOM (CONT'D)

I was just looking for the way out.

The black man moves to one side like a granite door. Tom walks off, glancing nervously over his shoulder as he goes.

41 EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

41

The morning light shows the outline of the campus. We hear Tom's voice:

TOM (O.S.)

Every science has its corresponding
pseudoscience.

42 INT. UNIVERSITY - SMALL LECTURE HALL - DAY

42

Tom is walking about a class of about thirty students, lined in four rows, at individual desks. He hands each student a large envelope. Each envelope has a name written on it. He looks at the students strangely distant, his mind elsewhere.

TOM

... psychology has parapsychology as
its reverse, scientific medicine has
homeopathy or acupuncture,
astronomy... astrology..

Tom has dark bags under his eyes; a certain innocence seems to have left him.

An elderly female janitor tries to attract his attention from outside, rapping on the glass pane of the door. She makes a gesture, indicating he has a telephone call. Tom nods back.

TOM (CONT'D)

... I asked for personalized birth
charts for each one of you based on
your dates of birth.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
Open the envelopes, please, and
study them carefully.

Tom leaves the room as the students open their envelopes.

43 INT. UNIVERSITY - CORRIDOR - DAY

43

Tom walks along a corridor to a public phone; the handset
dangles from the wire, like a pendulum. Tom picks it up.

TOM
Hello?

Through the window in the distance behind Tom, a dot
approaches, getting bigger and bigger.

TOM (CONT'D)
Hello? Thomas Buckley speaking.
Who's calling, please?

The dot is rapidly getting bigger. No one answers at the
other end. Tom seems to have a strange intuition...

TOM (CONT'D)
(questioning)
Silver?

A bird comes crashing violently into the window, cracking the
glass. Tom shields himself instinctively.

44 INT. UNIVERSITY - SMALL LECTURE HALL - DAY

44

Tom carries on with the class, his mind elsewhere and a small
cut on his cheek now.

TOM
... You've had time to study your
chart closely. Now we're going to
grade them from one to five: one for
a poor level of coincidence, five
for maximum correlation. One...

Nobody puts their hand up.

TOM (CONT'D)
Two... Three...

Nobody puts their hand up. Tom's lack of interest is obvious;
he's miles away.

TOM (CONT'D)
Four...

Almost half the class members raise their hands, smiling.

TOM (CONT'D)
Five...

All the others raise their hand. The students exchange glances, impressed. Tom nods lazily.

TOM (CONT'D)
Great... now give your birth chart
to the person behind you please.
Those in the back row, come up and
give them to...

The janitor calls him again through the window.

TOM (CONT'D)
(irritated)
WHAT?!

The students, puzzled by Tom's attitude, follow instructions; now they all have another classmate's chart.

The woman comes discreetly into the room. She looks worried.

TOM (CONT'D)
(walking towards her)
Go ahead. Read them.

They all do as he says.

Tom goes up to the woman, who says something to him in a very low voice. Tom doesn't respond to her, he just stands there, quite still. She looks up at him. After a few seconds, Tom nods slowly and goes back to the class.

The students, unaware of events, read the charts and exchange glances, amused and embarrassed.

One of them, Ben, the red haired boy, holds up his chart and that of his classmate.

BEN
(smiling)
They're all the same!

Tom, leaning on the table as if weighed down by some terrible burden, is unable to muster any enthusiasm; he just nods, very tired. He looks like he's just going through the motions.

TOM
Class is over. Thanks for coming...
We'll carry on tomorrow.

The students, surprised, gather up their things and start to leave the room.

The janitor looks at Tom's crumpled face, as if waiting for instructions of some sort. Tom gestures to her to go.

The last student closes the door behind him. Tom stands there in silence, leaning on the desk, his head hanging.

He breathes deeply and then lets out A CRY OF SORROW WHICH RIPS THROUGH THE AIR, a frightening, primitive howl of terrible suffering.

His voice breaks up as he gasps for air. He takes another deep breath and breaks inside again, with a lacerating, pathetic cry, his eyes filled with infinite pain; HE LIFTS THE TABLE AND VIOLENTLY OVERTURNS IT, sending its contents to the floor, scattering books, pens, papers...

He stands there, motionless, sobbing.

45 INT. CREMATORIUM - DAY

45

Flames.

The purifying orange of fire fills the screen.

A hatch opens. A wooden coffin adorned with a small black and white photo of Margaret slides into the flames on a conveyor belt.

Tom, showing no expression, looks on at the flames through a thick glass partition. Sally puts her arm around him. Tom offers no reaction, he merely looks blankly at the scene.

The fire begins to consume the wood, pitiless, hypnotic.

46 INT. TOM'S LOFT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

46

A extreme close up of Tom's eyes which are closed; a creepy voice now whispers out a warning to him.

MAN'S VOICE (WHISPERED)

Tom... Tom... open your eyes.

Tom opens his eyes, blinking, adjusting to the faint light. Finally he focusses.

He sees his room from above: the empty bed, the bedside table... now panic overcomes his expression. He is on the ceiling, arms outstretched, defying gravity. Terrified, he looks down at himself in bed, arms folded over his chest, as if he were dead.

The Tom on the ceiling starts to descend slowly, floating until the two faces are less than half a dozen inches apart. The floating Tom observes the sleeping Tom...

...who opens his eyes and smiles.

Tom wakens up, exhausted and soaked in sweat, next to Sally who is fast asleep, her arms wrapped around a pillow. He leans up on one side and reaches for the alarm clock. Three red figures gleam out in the dark: it's 2:00 a.m. He puts down the clock and settles back down, lying face up.

SILVER STARES AT HIM FROM THE FOOT OF THE BED.

Tom bolts up, terrified. But there's nobody there. Sally wakens and sees him shaking uncontrollably. She sits up beside him.

SALLY

What's the matter? Did you shout?

TOM

(holding his head)

I don't know... I don't know...

MAN'S VOICE (WHISPER)

Tom...

Tom stops now, looks up, alert.

TOM

(To Sally)

Did you hear that?

SALLY

Tom, you're scaring me...

Tom gets up to his feet all of a sudden, causing Sally to start; she watches him dart out of the room, not knowing what to do.

47 INT. TOM'S LOFT - OPEN PLAN AREA - NIGHT

47

Tom moves frantically about the house, turning on all the lights. He looks around, on guard.

Suddenly all the lights go out at once with a bang. Sally screams. Tom gestures to her to be quiet.

TOM

(cautiously)

Silver?...

(shouting)

Silver! Show your face!

Just then, a loud thud resounds against the front door. Sally screams again; Tom races over to the metal door, opens it, and almost stands on a dead bird lying on the stairs leading down to the sidewalk. He bends down to pick up the dead bird and looks around. Nobody is about.

48

EXT/INT. OPEN PLAN AREA TOM'S LOFT / STREET - NIGHT

48

TOM
(shouting)
Heyeeeeeyy!!

SALLY
(coming over, scared)
Tom, what's going on?... Don't leave
me here.

Tom, barefoot, runs out onto the street to a nearby junction.

He doesn't know what he's looking for, there's nothing out there save the red tail-lights of some car as lost as he is, and a gang of youths who look at him like he's mad. He lifts his bare foot and picks out a sliver of glass embedded deep in his sole. He removes the shard of glass carefully, taking the pain, blood pouring out over his fingers.

He goes back to the house. Sally, sitting on the steps, is looking apprehensively at the dead bird.

SALLY (CONT'D)
You left me on my own. I told you
not to leave me on my own.

Tom says nothing. He picks up the bird, holding it by one leg, and climbs up the staircase.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(getting to her feet)
What's going on?

Sally follows behind, weak, angry. Tom leaves a trail of blood red footprints behind him. He opens the door.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Tom, you're bleeding. What happened?
You need to get that disinfected,
you can't...

The house is completely destroyed - the furniture overturned, the drawers emptied out, books and papers scattered across the floor. Nothing moves except white curtains, which move in the breeze blowing in through an open window.

SALLY (CONT'D)
 (in a weak, shaky voice)
 I didn't... I didn't hear anything.

Unable to say anything else, they slowly move through the room, stunned.

Suddenly, the television bursts into life and the lights come on. Sally screams again.

On the television, a photo of Shackleton:

DANA (TV)
... confirm that Simon Silver has accepted the invitation from Paul Shackleton, head of the Scientific Paranormal Research Center, to be submitted to an exhaustive scientific study of his extrasensory abilities. Isn't that right, Dick?

DICK (TV)
Yes, that's the way it is, Dana. For two weeks, Simon Silver, who was repeatedly called into question in this very University by the late Margaret Matheson, will put himself through all kinds of tests designed by a committee of experts from the SPRC... University sources confirm Dr. Matheson had been suffering from a rare and long-standing vascular condition which had worsened recently, but that still doesn't explain the way her heart...

Tom and Sally look silently at the screen.

49

INT. UNIVERSITY - CORRIDORS - DAY

49

Shackleton is talking calmly to a student in the faculty corridors, checking some notes. Tom appears out of nowhere, limping slightly, grabs Shackleton by the lapels of his lab coat, and slams him against the wall.

TOM
 (furious)
 Why didn't you tell me?

The student looks on in shock. Shackleton gestures to him to stay out of it. Other students pause in the corridor.

SHACKLETON

I don't know what you're talking about.

Tom slams him against the wall again.

TOM

Why didn't you tell me?!

SHACKLETON

Dr. Buckley, why don't we go to my office and...?

Tom lifts him up, turns 180 degrees, drags him across the corridor and slams him against the opposite wall. Shackleton is winded by the impact.

TOM

I want to be on that committee. Do whatever it takes, I don't care what. But make sure I'm on it.

SHACKLETON

That's impossible, Buckley, the team has already been officially presented. There's nothing I can do, your studies...

TOM

Shackleton, don't give me explanations: just fucking do it.

Tom lets go of his lapels and, turning away, walks off.

SHACKLETON

The committee was approved by Silver! Do you know what that means?! It's a once in a life time opportunity! We can't risk...!

Tom spins round and walks quickly back to Shackleton. As he does so, he grabs some books from a surprised student, and throws them one by one at Shackleton who tries to protect himself as they rain down on him.

TOM

Whatever it takes, Shackleton! No more whining, no more complaining, just do it...!

He smears some class notes, custard pie like, into his face. Shackleton is now ridiculously dishevelled, his glasses hanging by one ear.

TOM (CONT'D)
 (half an inch from his
 face)
 ... Ask for more observers, invent
 whatever story you want, get that
 over-privileged, subsidized brain of
 yours working...
 (messing up his hair)
 I wanna be there. I'll be waiting
 for your call.

He lets go of Shackleton and strides off again, returning a
 book - split down the spine - to a student as he goes.

Shackleton holds onto the wall, his lab coat torn, and puts
 his glasses back on. A couple of students go over to help
 him.

50

EXT. OWEN FAMILY HOUSHOLD - AFTERNOON

50

Sally leans sadly into the window of Margaret's white Ford,
 two suitcases resting beside her on the ground.

Sally's parents wait just behind her at the door of a
 beautiful country house.

Sally gestures for Tom to lower the car window.

SALLY
 Don't do this to me. At least let me
 help, you know I can.

TOM
 It's better this way. I don't want
 to take any risks. It'll just be for
 a short while.

SALLY
 Look at you, Tom. This thing is
 going to destroy you, can't you see
 it? It's eating you up inside.

TOM
 I need to... know how he does it.

SALLY
 Forget about Silver, Tom, he isn't
 worth it. Can't you see what he's
 doing to you? I can't stand here and
 do nothing while you...

TOM

Sally.
 (firmly)
 I need to know.

Sally nods, barely holding back the tears, then gives him a kiss.

Tom winds up the window as Sally heads up the path towards her folks.

Tom drives off without looking back.

51

TV IMAGES

51

Images of scientific tests being prepared in a report with shots of the SPRC department during the commentary:

PRESENTER (TV)

... Meters have been installed to detect the exertion of any physical force or the use of irregular chemical compounds such as mercuric chloride, known to alter the resistance level of metals. Each piece has been specially marked to prevent the possibility of any swap during the tests. Thermoelectric heat meters, voltmeters, radiation monitors..., everything in the Scientific Paranormal Research Center lab is in place to test Simon Silver, who this morning may have just cancelled a number of his public appearances.

Images of the indignant and/or despondent public waiting in a line outside theatre box offices in various cities. One young couple complains to the camera:

GUY (TV)

This just isn't fair. We've been waiting in line for two days, eating and sleeping here. Who stands up for our rights? We've got rights too, man.

Images of another city. A woman in a wheel-chair:

WOMAN (TV)

(shaking head, close to tears)

It wasn't just a show, for me. For me it was more important. And now...

Another city. A girl with piercings looks at the camera scornfully.

GIRL WITH PIERCINGS (TV)
Shit, what the hell are all these people doing here anyway? Like, they put on the TV for fifteen minutes and obey like sheep. What's this guy done that's so incredible? Like, has nobody checked out Criss Angel?

A big guy who looks something like a Hell's Angel, smiles happily at the camera, tearing up a ticket.

BIKER (TV)
I don't care.
 (laughing)
Hell, no, I really don't. If he thinks it's cool, I think it's cool. I hope he shows those smart-ass college know-it-alls...

Silver, surrounded by microphones and flashes, walks into the building of the SPRC on Monica's arm. He speaks to a female reporter as he makes his way through the crowd:

SILVER (TV)
It's a matter of absolute priority that science begins to learn all it can about these forces; we can't wait any longer. The aim of my public appearances is to generate the necessary conditions so that our purblind society will open its eyes to the existence of other forms of energy. These forces can't be ignored any longer; they have to be verified and accepted once and for all.

FEMALE REPORTER (TV)
Is it true you're going to cancel some of your shows?!

Silver makes his way through the crowd with difficulty.

MONICA (TV)
 (trying to turn)
Nothing's been cancelled! We're re-scheduling, that's all!

FEMALE REPORTER (TV)
Mr. Silver!... One more question, Mr. Silver!...

The reporter stretches out the microphone, desperate, like everyone else, for a sound-bite, but Silver has gone.

The TV presenter in the studio is on camera again.

PRESENTER (TV)
*More than one hundred journalists
 have requested accreditation to
 cover the SPRC experiments, more
 like the numbers we expect at a
 political summit or a major sporting
 event than a scientific
 investigation...*

We see a few shots of the make-shift facilities set up in the faculty gym.

PRESENTER (TV) (CONT'D)
*... However, only a handful of media
 outlets have been granted access to
 the inside of the building and none
 can remain there while the tests are
 taking place.*

Paul Shackleton inside the SPRC. The laboratory facilities behind him.

SHACKLETON (TV)
 (to camera)
*We're trying to guarantee control
 conditions; we're scientists, for
 the first time in history we might
 just obtain conclusive results about
 the reality of extrasensory
 perception and the power of mind
 over matter. Our priority is to
 ensure the veracity of the results.
 Today is a great day, ladies and
 gentlemen, we could be about to go
 beyond a... beyond a point of no
 return.*

52 INT. GYM-LAB - DAY

52

REPORTER
 Great, we got it.

In the make-shift lab, Shackleton shakes hands with the reporter. A cameraman switches off the light of his camera whilst the other reporters begin to put their gear away. All kinds of equipment have been set out next to the basketball court, in order to ensure maximum space.

SHACKLETON

... Thanks very much for coming, thank you, everyone; from now on, no cameras, except the university's, will be allowed in the lab. Thank you again for your cooperation.

He turns away as several members of the organization escort the reporters out of the building. Shackleton walks over to Tom.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

Remember, Buckley. You don't form part of the committee: you're just an observer. You'll make no contribution to the design of the tests or the control protocols. You can look, you can listen, and, above all, you can keep your god damned mouth shut. Don't think you scare me. If I'm putting up with you it's out of respect for Margaret. Try to honor her in the same way.

A door opens and all heads turn. Simon Silver comes into the gym, accompanied by Miss Hansen and two bodyguards. Tom looks on distrustfully as a beaming Shackleton welcomes Silver.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

Mr. Silver, allow me to express our gratitude for your agreeing to be submitted to our little torture chamber. Let me apologize in advance for any inconvenience we might cause you. Science will be so grateful.

SILVER

(shaking his hand)

That is my sole objective. It's me who should be grateful to you.

SHACKLETON

You already know Dr. Haynes, Dr. Campbell...

The doctors nod by way of greeting, Miss Hansen acknowledging them with a polite smile.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

... Dr. Conrad Jennings, from the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Leeds has been kind enough to join us..

Silver moves forward slowly, greeting everyone.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)
... and Professor Franklin,
Professor of Physics at Case Western
University, Ohio. And now, if you
don't mind...

SILVER
There's another guest here with us,
isn't that right?

Shackleton looks at Tom suspiciously. They stop in their
tracks.

SHACKLETON
Eh... yeah, that's right. Excuse me.
I didn't formally introduce you
because he isn't actually part of...

Silver turns his smiling sightless eyes to Tom and holds out
his hand.

SILVER
Doctor...

SHACKLETON
Sorry, have you met before?

TOM
(blankly)
I don't know. Have we?

Tom doesn't shake his hand. Just like Margaret.

SHACKLETON
Dr. Buckley, of the University's
Psychology Department. He used to
work with...

Silver takes Tom's face with both hands and feels it,
exploring it. Tom makes a slight gesture, but doesn't react
otherwise.

SILVER
I take great interest in Doctor
Buckley, I follow his progress very
closely. These are difficult times
for all of us, Tom. (lets go of his
face)
How are you getting along?

Tom offers no response, despite Shackleton urging him to do so with a look. The subtext almost drowns out the text. Silver withdraws his hand and walks on.

SILVER (CONT'D)
I was so sorry to hear about Dr.
Matheson.

Silver seems to smirk. Tom glares over at Silver, openly hostile, as Shackleton once again takes over proceedings.

SHACKLETON
Of course... we can begin whenever
you feel ready. We know this isn't
an exact science. Take your time,
whatever you need. We thought of
beginning with something straight
forward. You know, like an
icebreaker.

SILVER
Sure. Psychic photography?

SHACKLETON
(surprised, helping him
sit down)
Thoughtography... yeah. How did you
know?

Silver gropes around on the table and picks up one of three cameras lying there.

SILVER
It's been a long time since I did
this. A very long time indeed...
(grappling the camera)
Digital, isn't it?

SHACKLETON
Yeah, exactly. That's right.

SILVER
I never tried before with a digital
camera.

SHACKLETON
Yeah, right, anyway... it'll be
interesting to see how it turns out,
don't you think? Do you need...?

SILVER
I don't want my fingers smudging the
lens. A simple piece of cardboard
will do.

SHACKLETON

We opted to prepare a plastic cylinder, I hope you don't mind. It's half an inch in diameter.

(handing it to him)

Is that okay, will it do?

SILVER

(examining it with his fingers)

One never knows, Dr. Shackleton. As you just said yourself, this isn't an exact science.

Tom anxiously follows his every move.

SHACKLETON

Do you mind?

SILVER

Go ahead...

Silver hands the little tube back and holds out his arms, with his palms facing upwards. Two of the professors meticulously examine his hands for any possible hidden folds or false thumbs.

SILVER (CONT'D)

Please, be careful with my watch, there's no glass on the face. It's easy to move the hands.

The men take off Silver's watch very carefully and run the detector over him. They put the watch down on the table. The men help Silver take off his jacket, and roll up his shirt sleeves. Meanwhile, the doctor attaches small, unobtrusive electrodes to his head. Then the doctors check all of their devices and controls, ensuring that everything is working properly. The session is recorded on video and with a 16mm camera. One by one, the scientists nod their approval to Shackleton.

SHACKLETON

From now on, you will not be able to withdraw your hands from the table unless it is for the purposes of another control. You understand that, don't you?

Silver nods, his pleasant disposition never flagging.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

If you do so, the test will be declared invalid.

The blind man takes the camera, studying it with his fingers. He holds out his hand, requesting the small cylinder, and fits it onto the lens.

Tom is following everything on the screens, analyzing each gesture, dissecting each image.

The lights in the room dim suddenly, the power dropping noticeably and then immediately returning. The monitors flicker and are knocked out of synch for a moment. Everyone looks up at the ceiling, surprised.

Silver, unaware of all this, makes a few small adjustments until he seems satisfied.

SILVER
(with a big smile)
Ready when you are.

53

INT. GYM-LAB - DAY - DOCUMENTARY MONTAGE

53

Images of a departmental documentary; the composition of each shot betrays a rather unprofessional eye, the lighting is no more than functional, and the people who appear in the film look at the camera with furtive eyes. The images are silent, there is no live sound, no music and no effects; the only sound accompanying the images is Shackleton dryly describing the various experiments underway. The overall effect is basic and visually neutral, very "scientific", with a style reminiscent of the experiments carried out on Uri Geller in 1972 at the Stanford Research Institute.

The images of the various experiments are divided by title cards of yellow letters on a black background, very basic stuff edited in by simple cuts.

Caption 1: EXPERIMENTS WITH SIMON SILVER AT THE SCIENTIFIC PARANORMAL RESEARCH CENTER. OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009.

Caption 2: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: PAUL SHACKLETON, VIRGINIA HAYNES AND PRESTON CAMPBELL. SCIENTIFIC PARANORMAL RESEARCH CENTER.

Caption 3: WITH CONRAD JENNINGS. LEEDS UNIVERSITY, UK.

Added to the same caption: AND SEBASTIAN FRANKLIN. CASE WESTERN UNIVERSITY, OHIO.

Caption 4: NARRATED by PAUL SHACKLETON.

While the captions roll, we hear Shackleton's voice...

SHACKLETON (V.O.)

This film shows the first eight days of investigation carried out in the Scientific Paranormal Research Center with Mr. Simon Silver. All the images correspond to the filming of real experiments; no scene has been recreated. This is Simon Silver...

A poorly framed medium shot is cut in of Simon Silver "looking" at camera. The camera zooms in onto Silver for a close-up.

Caption 5: PSYCHIC PHOTOGRAPHY EXPERIMENTS (THOUGHTOGRAPHY).

SHACKLETON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For the following experiment, Silver received three different models of still camera: a middle range digital camera with a fixed lens, focussed on infinity, a conventional analogical camera with a 50 mm lens focussed on infinity, and an instant Polaroid camera, also focussed on infinity.

The images show each concept as defined by Shackleton. Often there are long silences between his interventions, making the sound of the microphone in the background more intense.

SHACKLETON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Silver's attempts with the digital camera did not produce any positive result. The second camera registered only partial results, insufficient for a positive evaluation. Only the Polaroid camera allowed the apparent projection of Silver's thoughts onto the photographic plate. There is no scientific explanation for these results.

One of the scientists holds up strange photos depicting details of buildings or fragments of apparently distant landscapes to the camera.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)

The cylinder or gizmo which Silver was provided with in order to concentrate the flow of his thoughts was carefully checked before and after each experiment in order to rule out any possible manipulation.

Caption 6: METAL BENDING EXPERIMENTS.

Silver is feeling a metal spoon.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
Silver claims to be capable of bending metal at a distance without needing to touch it. However, during the course of these tests, this could not be experimentally confirmed. Following a more relaxed protocol, Silver was allowed to touch the metal which, as can be seen in the film, was indeed bent. Visual analysis of the film is insufficient to determine whether Silver possesses extremely strong fingers and great control of micro-manipulation movements, or whether the distortion is in fact caused by a paranormal ability, as he claims.

A slow pan shows a dozen spoons all bent to varying degrees.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
These are the spoons which were bent during the experiments. The only doubt lies in how they were actually twisted.

Shot of a pile of completely bent rings and bracelets, along with an old watch.

Caption 7: WEIGHT EXPERIMENTS.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is the first of two psychokinesis experiments conducted. A one gram weight is placed on the pan of an electronic scale. It is then covered by an aluminium receptacle placed upside down, and then immediately with a glass cover, to avoid distortions attributable to possible air turbulence.

Monica helps Silver put his hands near the glass cover, without touching it. Silver moves his hands energetically over the glass, at times spreading out his palms, at others clenching his fists tightly. Occasionally, when Silver clenches his hands and screws up his face, the recording instruments register strange fluctuations.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
The measuring monitors in this experiment suffered strange electromagnetic anomalies during the course of the test...

The camera shows Tom looking closely at one of the monitors. Finally, a screen shows the readings of the precision scales, which come in between 0.45 (-0.55 g) and 1.60 grams (+0.6 g).

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
The scales registered inexplicable fluctuations of up to 600 milligrams. In a second test, two vanadium carbide discs were each put into transparent plastic capsules. Silver then made these jump by placing his hand at a certain distance. There are no images of this test because the 16mm negative film stock was overexposed and ruined and the cameras stopped working for no apparent reason. Later, Simon Silver held his hand out to the continuous flow of a running tap...

Silver puts his hand close to a jet of water, clearly diverting its course. When he takes his hand away, the jet flows normally again, and when he moves his hand closer, it changes course once more.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
As the images show, the flow of water was notably deviated by some kind of external stimulus around Silver's hand. The difficulty in measuring this distortion in a conclusive manner means this demonstration has been excluded from any experimental evaluation.

Caption 8: HIDDEN OBJECT EXPERIMENTS (DOUBLE-BLIND).

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)
In this double-blind experiment, a subject subsequently absent during the course of the test places an object in an aluminium receptacle chosen at random from several others identical to it. Then the subject places the receptacle back amongst the other receptacles, also in a random fashion.

A stern looking young woman handles a dozen small metallic cans, putting lids on all of them. Then she puts them in a rectangular box.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)

In the experiment area, neither Simon Silver nor any of the investigators knows where the object, in this case a three quarter inch steel ball, is located. Experimental protocol determines the receptacles must be discarded one by one in the order in which Silver points them out, without touching them. The protocol allows for the possibility that Silver may touch one of the containers accidentally, in which case the result is considered erroneous.

While Shackleton's narration is heard, Silver points to the cans which he believes to be empty, one by one; an investigator removes them very carefully. Silver takes the last receptacle and opens it, emptying its contents into the palm of his hand.

SHACKLETON (FILT'D, V.O.) (CONT'D)

In subsequent repetitions of the experiment, Silver was able to speed up the prediction process to the point where he could tell the exact location of the object on simply walking into the room.

Caption 9: COPYRIGHT MMIX by SPRC.

With a sharp "beep", the final caption appears.

54

INT. CAR - NIGHT

54

Tom is driving Margaret's car through the night. The city lights are reflected in the windshield, turning slowly with him when the car drives down another street. Tom looks nervous and terribly tired.

Two young presenters are laughing on the radio:

PRESENTER #1 (RADIO)

... Things are getting tough for the skeptics out there, Frank. Almost all the tests are finished and there aren't many opportunities left for...

PRESENTER #2 (RADIO)
*Did you know Silver cancelled his
 last performances in Denver to do
 one more here?*

PRESENTER #1 (RADIO)
 (laughing)
*I guess he's afraid of flying... I
 hope the people at the Ziegfield got
 themselves some insurance. The last
 show there almost put them out of
 business.*

PRESENTER #2 (RADIO)
*My nephew bends spoons all the time
 and all he's gotten for his troubles
 is to make my sister hide them away.*

PRESENTER #1 (RADIO)
 (laughing)
*If your nephew was blind, and I'm
 not saying he isn't...*

PRESENTER #2 (RADIO)
 (laughing)
*If my nephew was blind, my sister
 wouldn't need to hide the spoons.*

PRESENTER #1 (RADIO)
That sure would be cruel.

PRESENTER #2 (RADIO)
*You bet. What do you say we open the
 phone lines so people can call?
 Maybe there's someone listening...
 anybody blind out there who wants to
 sue us?*

PRESENTER #1 (RADIO)
*Don't do it, you'll leave us without
 any aim in life!*

Tom turns into the street leading to his house and sees that
 THE LIGHTS INSIDE HIS LOFT ARE ON. He stops the car. The
 lights up in the loft abruptly go out.

55 INT. TOM'S LOFT - MAIN LIVING AREA / BEDROOM - NIGHT 55

Tom comes into his house very slowly.

TOM
 Sally?

He flicks on the switch beside the front door, but it isn't working. He tries again - CLICK-CLACK-CLICK. Nothing doing.

Tom thinks he hears the whispering of men's voices. He tenses up once more.

TOM HEARS A CLICK BEHIND HIM. He spins round, but there's nobody there. He turns slowly back now to the inside of the house. THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT BEHIND HIM. It's almost pitch black.

TOM (CONT'D)
Who's there?

The sound of faint laughter can be heard; then a whisper, a long drawn out, indeterminate syllable, coming from everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

The door through to the bedroom begins to CREAK open, stirred by a draft. Tom peers into the gloom.

THE LIGHT IN THE BEDROOM GOES ON, clearly illuminating the rectangle of the doorway. Tom starts back.

Tom advances now, wary. The door starts creaking again, swinging back on its hinges. Then it opens again. Beads of sweat form on Tom forehead.

TOM (CONT'D)
(To himself)
How do you do it?

Tom goes over to the bedroom and looks slowly inside. He takes a few steps forward. There's nobody there. The doors creaks again now... Tom turns to look at it, puzzled.

He pushes it gently; the door slowly gives way, and then with a groan, it slowly swings back towards him. Tom pushes it again now.

NOW THE DOOR COMES VIOLENTLY FLYING BACK, whacking Tom and sending him to the floor, slamming shut.

Recovering now, Tom flies at the door, trying to turn the handle open again and again, to no avail. He starts banging on the door now.

TOM (cont.) (CONT'D)
Silver! Who did you send this time,
Silver?!

Suddenly the DOOR BEGINS TO ROAR LIKE THUNDER, as if dozens of people were banging on it from the other side. Dozens. Tom stands back, scared. The roar is tremendous.

The door begins to open, and Tom throws himself against it. If a minute ago Tom was trying to get the door open, now he's trying to keep it shut with all his might.

Overcoming the resistance, Tom grits his teeth and just manages to get the door back far enough so that it clicks shut. Tom suffers a deep cut on his hand, but he manages to lock the door. The banging from the other side is unbearable. He props a chair up under the door handle and walks back, his heart in his mouth.

TOM (cont.) (CONT'D)
SILVEEEEEER!!!

THE BANGING STOPS AT ONCE. Tom gasps for breath, greedily gulping down mouthfuls of air.

TOM (cont.) (CONT'D)
Silver?

The lights in his room now explode, then begin to burn. Panic-stricken, Tom turns and looks at the flames, wide eyed. The door behind him begins to groan again. Then it opens.

Tom turns around slowly, very slowly...

He can't believe his eyes.

THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE. The whole of the house.

TOM (cont.) (CONT'D)
(very weakly)
Silver...

Tom walks through the main area of the loft like a sleep-walker, seeing the flames devour the lights, the television, the electrical appliances, the curtains, licking their way up the walls now. Tom leans right back on himself and screams in fury:

TOM (cont.) (CONT'D)
SIIIIILVEEEEEERRRR!!

Sirens begin to sound as the fire brigade approach in the distance, getting closer now and drowning out everything else.

The camera moves through the psychology lab, full of cables and monitors installed in an apparently haphazard way. Light filters in through the blinds.

BEN (O.S.)
 I think I've got it, doctor; I was
 trying with the second adapter, but
 if I can just join...

One of the machines lights up with a flash as the camera
 continues on its way until we come to Tom and Ben, the
 redheaded student, in front of a switch box. Smoke emerges
 from the plug; Tom tries to keep a lid on his temper.

TOM
 Concentrate, Ben! I'm grateful for
 your help with all this, but we
 don't have any margin for more
 mistakes.

BEN
 I'm sorry, doctor, I promise...

TOM
 Don't promise anything. Just plug it
 in. Please.

Tom looks stern and anxious; he has heavy bags under his
 eyes. Ben starts up a little monitor connected to a laptop.
 The SPRC laboratory appears on both screens, as filmed by the
 cameras during the experiments. Silver, accompanied by
 various members of the investigation committee, is walking
 over to a large metal booth.

BEN
 What, black and white?

TOM
 It doesn't matter, it's fine. Stop
 there.

Ben hits a key on the computer and the image freezes.

TOM (CONT'D)
 This was the last test. Telepathy
 booths. In the whole two weeks, they
 didn't let me within six feet of
 him. But you and I know the whole
 thing is a farce.

BEN
 Actually, Dr. Buckley, I...

TOM
 (cutting him off)
We just know. Rewind. Go to the
 other side of the gym...

Ben, wondering what he's doing here, does as Tom says, hitting a different key. The images rewind. A time code on the upper part of the screen shows that they've gone back twenty seconds.

TOM (CONT'D)

Stop! Stop, will you? What are you doing?

Ben, intimidated, tries to weather the storm. Tom, irascible, hits a key with his bandaged hand, and shows the paused image of a second booth - a second man is in here. Tom lets the images run on, coming up closer to the individual, who is listening carefully to the scientists' instructions.

TOM (CONT'D)

Great. While you and I are sitting here talking, the committee is analyzing the data, getting ready to publish its positive finding in two days, coinciding with Silver's last show, which just happens to take place right here in this city by some strange coincidence. It's the climax he's been after all along.

BEN

But why all this pressure? If we find out something afterwards, they'll have to change the findings.

TOM

Change the findings? It's a bombshell. Nothing that happens afterwards will matter. Ben, you're the guy separating the world from stupidity at this moment in time. See this key?

Ben looks at it and nods warily, while Tom hits the key rhythmically.

TOM (CONT'D)

I've spent two days loading the images from all the cameras, synching them frame by frame. We've got all the angles in here, okay?

A small electronic gadget explodes noisily a few feet away. The television suddenly comes alive. Ben is startled. But not Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)
(firmly)
Okay, Ben?!

Tom turns off the television with the remote control and presses the key again, showing different angles of the SPRC. The first booth appears again; Silver goes inside. Tom elects to show the action from inside the booth. With a little joystick he enlarges an area of the screen. He presses another key.

TOM (CONT'D)
This is the reception booth; Silver is the receiver. The instrument panel is there.
(pointing to it)
It's got ten luminous buttons. Normally they place a poker card on each one; in this case, given Silver is blind, they've just numbered each one.

The buttons are numbered from 1 to 10.

BEN
And what's supposed to...?

TOM
Silence. Second booth.

A heavy object thuds into the window, causing the blinds to rattle and Ben to jump again, his face a picture.

TOM (CONT'D)
(without batting an eye)
Don't worry, it's just a dead bird.

Ben doesn't know how to react. He quickly follows instructions, pressing the key a couple of times, passing through a fleeting wide shot to the inside of the booth, where a second person is sitting.

TOM (CONT'D)
This is the transmission booth. See the monitor? It's a closed circuit.

Above the panel there is a television screen that shows a panel with ten buttons.

BEN
Is he seeing his own panel?

TOM

No. That's Silver's panel. It's supposed to help him concentrate. A computer randomly switches on one of the lights. The guy in the transmission booth concentrates on the number that's been chosen. When he's ready, he presses the red button, and a signal is heard in Silver's booth.

With the joystick, Tom illustrates his explanation graphically. He quickly types three times and goes back to Silver.

TOM (CONT'D)

Silver, obviously, hasn't got a monitor. When he hears the signal, he clears his mind and concentrates. When he thinks he sees the answer in his mind, he presses the corresponding number he thinks the guy has picked. Is that all clear?

Ben nods. Tom puts the image on pause and turns to Ben.

TOM (CONT'D)

The experiment lasted for over seven hours, including breaks. It was repeated a total of nine times, in blocks of ten. The results were simply spectacular, with a deviation rate eight times higher than could be explained by chance. What does that mean?

BEN

That Silver's powers...?

TOM

(furious)

It means Silver is pulling a fast one! And do you know how I know? Because telepathy does not exist!

(Tom tries to calm down)

The protocol, in theory, is sound, but Silver has found a way to trick us.

(getting up)

Don't bother looking for radio-transmitters. The booths work like Faraday chambers. They're isolated.

BEN
And what if he's not cheating?

Tom, despite himself, pauses to consider, staring off into space. Finally, he reacts as he picks up his overcoat.

TOM
You've got four and a half hours of recordings. Seven different cameras. That's over 30 hours.

BEN
And what exactly am I supposed to be looking for?

TOM
An explanation, Ben, just an explanation.
(as he goes out)
Try to make it rational.

57 EXT. CITY - DAY / EVENING / NIGHT 57

Expressionist shots of the city changing at top speed. The clouds move quickly. The sun makes its way across the sky and hides behind the buildings. Night envelopes the city.

58 EXT. BUILDING IN THE SUBURBS - DUSK 58

Tom is parked opposite the building where he saw Silver's car a few days before; he's playing about with a coin, sliding it about between his fingers. Pensive, Tom puts the coin away now and picks up his cellular, looks at it for a beat, and decides to write a message. After a bit, he adds a few more words to the message.

A distant flash of lightning briefly lights up the street. Tom puts on his baseball cap and gets out of the car.

59 INT. THE OWEN HOUSEHOLD. - DUSK 59

Sally looks at her cell phone, worried. "TONIGHT. I LOVE YOU."

The rain begins to patter down on the windows. Sally looks out at the dark sky with a kind of fatalism in her eyes. Her father is watching television listlessly behind her.

FATHER
Everything okay, darling?

Sally turns and nods absently.

60 INT. BUILDING IN SUBURBS - NIGHT

60

Tom walks along the dark corridor with an air of determination. The rain patters down dully from above. He reaches the final bend in the corridor.

He decides to take a look. He takes his hands out of his pockets.

An old man, perhaps 80, dressed like an English gentleman, is sitting on the wooden bench, his air severe and intimidating beside an eighteen year old, who keeps herself to herself. Waiting. They both look at Tom without a word.

Just then, THE DOOR NEXT TO THE BENCH OPENS. Tom stops in his tracks. The SAME BLACK WOMAN WE PREVIOUSLY SAW EMERGES FROM THE APARTMENT, her face as haunted as on the first occasion. A flash of lightning faintly lights up her features. The woman walks slowly past him, ghost-like. Tom watches her go in disbelief, not knowing what to think.

He watches the woman disappear down the hallway and points at her, looking at the old man on the bench who looks back with wild, flashing eyes. Tom decides to say nothing and approaches the bench.

TOM
(shaking rain off)
It's raining...

The English gentleman offers no reply. Tom, somewhat intimidated, sits down on the bench beside the girl.

A buzzing sounds out now, like the sound of an automatic door; the door clicks open again; a red light on the wall goes on. The old man gets up but Tom restrains him with a hand on his shoulder. The old man flashes his teeth and growls, feral. But Tom darts into the apartment ahead of him.

61 INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

61

Tom walks along a narrow concrete passageway, lit by a row of faint lamps on the wall. Half way along the corridor, light spills out from an open door. Tom walks slowly over to the door and cautiously goes inside.

The room is of simple concrete too, fairly big and bare enough to be unsettling. It contains a green synthetic couch, a standard tall lamp and a red curtain on the opposite wall which would appear to separate off an interior space in the room. A simple wooden chair sits in front of the curtain; about five feet away from the chair, a line of salt runs across the floor.

The room is illuminated from three or four different sources, enough to discern a tacky painting of a stag which hangs on the wall, completing the strange surroundings. A voice emerges from behind the curtain:

SILVER (MUFFLED)
Sit down, please. I'll be with you
in just a minute.

Tom shrinks back, doubting for a beat. He looks warily over at the couch. Then he goes and sits down slowly, without uttering a word. The distant pitter-patter of the rain is unsettling.

Silver emerges from behind the curtain, drying his hands with a white cloth.

SILVER (CONT'D)
I'm not a very accessible person, I
suppose you've realized that by now.
Only somebody who really wants to
can get to me.
(sighing slightly)
I won't talk to anybody else today.
Maybe I will do so tomorrow, in some
other city. Maybe I won't ever
again.

He goes over to the wall. Groping, he grabs hold of the painting which is attached to the wall by hinges, and pulls it open, revealing a safe behind it.

SILVER (CONT'D)
As for me, I live each day as if it
were my last. And I'm starting to
feel tired. Very tired indeed...

He spins the dial one way and then the other. Delicately. The safe would appear to be empty. He puts the damp cloth inside and closes it again. Tom watches, uneasy, perplexed.

SILVER (CONT'D)
I don't always demand payment for my
services, did you know that? At
least, not in money. There are other
ways of paying for things. But you
know that already.
(turning to him)
You do know that, don't you?

Tom remains motionless; he glances over at the door.

Silver sits on the wooden chair, "looking" at the floor.

SILVER (CONT'D)

To be or to appear to be, that is the question. It always is. We all try to be something we're not...

Tom's nerves are jangling; he doesn't know if Silver thinks he's somebody else, or if he's just playing with him. Silver takes a deep breath and stands up, now positioning himself next to one of the bare walls. Tom is ready to spring into action at any given moment, but he can't help looking at him in fascination. Silver stretches out a hand and rests it delicately against the concrete wall.

SILVER (CONT'D)

We dream 27 times a night. An intricate neurological protection mechanism makes us forget. What protects you?

(turning round to him)

A line of salt?...

Tom shoots a furtive look down at the floor; fear and dread well up inside him.

SILVER (CONT'D)

What do you believe in?

Silver takes his hand away from the wall and touches his own face now, feeling it intensely. He closes his eyes.

SILVER (CONT'D)

From the time of ancient Greece to the present day, philosophers and scholars have argued that people are essentially rational. I don't happen to agree...

Silver takes his hand away from his face, as if doing so amounted to something like a sacrifice, and goes slowly over to his chair again. He stands there, one hand resting on the back of the chair, his head hanging.

SILVER (CONT'D)

If one observes and studies another person without first having studied oneself, how do we know whether our instruments are appropriately set? How do we know we are reliable? There is no proof...

Silver pauses for a long time.

SILVER (CONT'D)
 There's only one way of gaining
 access to the truth: without
 expecting anything.

Silver turns his sightless eyes to Tom, who tenses up.

SILVER (CONT'D)
 If our intentions are not pure, we
 might end up creating monsters...

Tom is about to say something, but regains control. As if
 sensing something, Silver "looks" away and goes over to the
 curtain.

SILVER (CONT'D)
 Please excuse me. It's getting late.
 For you too...
 (shakes his head slowly)
 Don't worry, we'll see each other
 again.

He pulls the curtain back with one arm and turns to Tom. Then
 Silver makes a gesture of indifference, twice.

SILVER (CONT'D)
 Oh yes. We'll see each other again.

Tom watches breathless as Silver is swallowed up by the red
 cloth.

62 EXT. THEATER - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

62

It is raining heavily outside the Ziegfield theater, a crowd
 of television journalists are recording live reports, under
 umbrellas; the camera tracks across them, one by one, picking
 up random snippets of conversation:

FEMALE REPORTER #1
 ... Silver is in the final stages of
 his countdown, only 12 hours after
 the announcement of his most recent
 retirement. This unexpected news has
 caused commotion...

MALE REPORTER #1
 ... all kinds of contradictory
 reactions. Those who predicted
 Silver had come back to stay, have
 had no option but to accept...

MALE REPORTER #2

... his critics' cautionary words, who estimate that Silver may well have pocketed more than four million dollars in less than one month, a figure that would confirm...

FEMALE REPORTER #2

... most immediate consequences, with prices of up to 2,000 dollars being asked by scalpers for seats, a more than dubious...

MALE REPORTER #3

... completely packed out an hour and a half before the start of what will be his last appearance. It's impossible to predict...

FEMALE REPORTER #3

... with great expectation the verdict from the Scientific Paranormal Research Center, to be announced officially tonight. If the leaks...

MALE REPORTER #4

... maybe thereby silencing more than one skeptical voice, and transcending once and for all the area of mystification and the study of frontier sciences...

63 INT. SALLY'S CAR - NIGHT

63

Sally is driving her father's Dodge in the rain as she listens to the last reporter on the radio.

MALE REPORTER #5 (RADIO)

... Science has rarely had the chance to study at close hand such controversial manifestations as those which have made Simon Silver famous. We really have to wonder if the spectators presently witnessing the final chance to...

Sally turns off the radio and turns on the wipers as the car crosses the bridge into the city.

64

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

64

Silver is sitting on a wooden chair in the middle of the stage, without saying a word. That's all he's doing, nothing else. He's just there. His presence is overwhelming.

Silver looks up.

SILVER

(calm, grave)

Why have you come here tonight? What are you hoping to see? Do you think I should surprise you, do you think I should... entertain you? What are you looking at so closely?

Silver remains in complete silence, allowing expectation to build. He stands up and starts to walk very slowly towards the audience.

SILVER (CONT'D)

What have you heard about me? How much of it do you believe? How much do you want to believe?

Silver stops, raises the palms of his hands like a priest and holds them out towards the audience.

SILVER (CONT'D)

I can feel your desires, your longings... I can feel your demands...

(raising his voice more and more)

... It is the deep, painful urgency of the animal forced to live in darkness which finally opens its eyes and voraciously demands light with a howl of rage.

(shouting)

What is it you've come to see?! This?!!

His feet start to rise slowly from the stage. His arms outstretched. His legs together. Silver's body rises dramatically above the stage while the public watch gob-smacked, afraid.

Silver glows with a shine that seems to emanate from his skin.

SILVER (CONT'D)

(throwing his head back)

Have you come to see this?!!

After slowly tracking up, the camera now flies over the heads of the spectators, who looks in amazement like one single being. A shining light illuminates the faces of the spectators; 5,000 eyes blink wide in puerile innocence. We can make out Tom some way back amongst the crowd; he looks tense and sombre, as if carrying a terrible burden. The camera moves closer to him, ignoring Silver. The light stops shining and the audience, after a long stunned beat, bursts into a round of applause; people clap energetically, others laugh as they do so.

SILVER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I feel my veins burning with the
fire of a new understanding!...

Something scares the crowd, some people cover their faces. They burst into applause again. They seem to have surrendered to a roller-coaster of emotions.

Only Tom shows no sign of being affected by the collective vibration building all around.

65 INT. SHACKLETON'S OFFICE - NIGHT 65

A serious looking Shackleton finishes reading a thick dossier, closing it now and putting it down on the desk in his office. He swivels around in his chair and, pensive, watches the rain beat down on the office windows.

66 INT. THEATER - NIGHT 66

SILVER (O.S.)
(serious)
We called Ptolemy insane, we spat in
the face of Galileo, we burned
Giordano Bruno... What did we need?
What do we need in order to learn?

Silver's feet rest on the stage.

From the wings of the stage, A SERIOUS LOOKING MONICA HANSEN STUDIES TOM AS HE LOOKS ON IMPASSIVE.

SILVER (CONT'D)
What makes us be what we are? What
makes us finally come to accept?
What makes us believe? The question
is... Why did you come here today?

Silver looks out, sad and weary.

67 INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - NIGHT 67

Ben is talking on the phone, jumpy, almost scared.

BEN

... Are you crazy? I shouldn't even be talking to you.

In his office, Shackleton tries to sound conciliatory.

SHACKLETON

Ben, you gotta calm down. I'm not against you, you gotta believe me. I just want to know if you've got anything. You're my student too, right?

BEN

Dr. Shackleton, you know I can't talk...

SHACKLETON

Ben... I respect Buckley's work, like I always respected Dr. Matheson. Don't think of me as the enemy.

BEN

I'm sorry, doctor. I'm going to hang up.

SHACKLETON

(firmly)

Ben. I've got the definitive findings of twelve days of experiments sitting right here in front of me. The only thing missing is my signature. I'm talking about the scientific verification of extrasensory perception and forces only accepted by para-science until today.

BEN

I can imagine...

SHACKLETON

Do you have any idea what the publication of these results will mean for Dr. Buckley and his department?

BEN

(weakening)

Yeah, I guess.

SHACKLETON

Ben. If there's anything we've done wrong, I want to know.

Ben remains silent, struggling internally.

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

... What have you got, Ben?

Ben closes his eyes tightly. Finally he decides to say it...

BEN

Nothing.

SHACKLETON

What do you mean?

BEN

(beat)

We got nothing.

68 INT. THEATER - WASHROOMS - NIGHT

68

Tom splashes cold water on his face, looking up at his exhausted reflection in the washroom mirror. He seems to be taking stock of himself. Behind him, some guys make their way out of the bathroom. A buzz now sounds out, the lights dim and come back up now.

MAN #1

Final call, let's get moving.

MAN #2

I hope the second half is more fun.
I didn't pay 300 bucks to see
Hamlet...

The washroom is now empty. Through the open door, men and women can be seen coming and going, increasingly scattered. A boy hurries out of a toilet compartment, slamming the door, and racing along the passageway.

Silence.

Tom dries his face with a paper towel; he throws it in the waste paper basket. He goes over to the urinals.

A balding man comes into the washroom, whistling. He goes over to a urinal, not far from Tom, who glances over at him. The man goes about his business, whistling, carefree; he zips up his pants, washes his hands and goes out of the washroom. His whistling fades into the corridor until it melts away completely.

Alone again, Tom goes over to the washbasin. He runs his fingers through his hair, somewhat disheveled like the rest of his appearance; he bends down to turn on the tap and washes up listlessly.

When he straightens up, he sees the whistling man standing right behind him, looking very unfriendly. The man shakes his head in silence.

69

INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - NIGHT

69

Ben, exhausted, is still typing away desperately. He hears the lab door opening and now Sally comes in, soaking wet. Ben gives a start.

BEN

Sally!

SALLY

(confused)

Ben? What are you doing here?

BEN

Shit, Sally, you don't know how pleased I am to see you. Tom told me you'd be here. You should be doing this, not me.

SALLY

Tom told you? What are you doing here? Where's Tom? Has something happened to him?

Sally sees something on the screen which grabs her attention.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Is that the SPCR?

BEN

Telepathy booths. I've been watching the same images again and again. If you want my opinion...

SALLY

Ben, I don't. Where's Tom?

Ben blinks, trying to take her answer on board.

BEN

With Silver, I think.

SALLY

(startled)

What do you mean with Silver?

BEN

At the theater, I mean, he's fine,
don't worry. He told me you were to
wait for him here. Sit down and help
me. He's perfectly fine.

70

INT. THEATER - WASHROOMS - NIGHT

70

The stranger is strangling Tom, an arm locked around his neck. Tom tries to break free with his bandaged hand; it's useless, he can barely move his fingers. His face is flushed, growing redder by the moment, as is his aggressor's. Tom lashes back wildly with his elbow, whacking it into the man's side. He tries again, this time forcing a grunt from the man, whose grip doesn't loosen.

Tom makes a grotesque gurgling sound; his eyes bulge almost completely white. He summons all his energy and tries to see again, looking desperately around for something with which to defend himself. He can't see anything. He clenches his teeth and hurls his body backwards, taking his attacker by surprise, forcing him to walk backwards until he crashes against the wall. The man lets out a muffled grunt. Tom hits him again. And again. And again. He can't break free. He turns on one side, making an incredible effort, and throws himself against another wall. The impact shatters some of the tiles. He turns again and rams his attacker's back against a metal towel rail, which is left hanging from the wall, dripping blood.

The man tries to fight the pain, but his grip loosens a bit. Tom breaks free, gasping desperately for breath; he lands a desperate punch to the man's stomach. The man, taken by surprise, falls against a wash basin, breaking it in half. Water gushes out.

Tom also falls, coughing desperately, sucking in air desperately to revive his lungs. He grabs hold of his bandaged hand, now tinged with blood and probably broken. The man looks up at him from the floor. His expression is terrifying. So is his smile.

71

INT. TOM'S LOFT - OPEN PLAN AREA - NIGHT

71

Sally is concentrating on the screen.

SALLY

(moving the joystick)

What's that?

BEN

What's what?

SALLY

That. There.

Sally enlarges the shot of Silver's booth. She closes in on Silver's hand.

BEN

His watch?

SALLY

Why would Silver wear a watch?

BEN

Blind people wear watches too, Sally. They can tell the time touching the hands. Relax, they checked it, it's clean.

SALLY

Can you split that image in two?

72

INT. - THEATER - WASHROOMS - NIGHT

72

Furious, the man grabs Tom by the scruff of his jacket and lifts him up like a sack, throwing him against the wooden cubicle door. Tom tries to protect himself, but smashes through the panel, head first, and comes crashing down against the toilet. Bleeding heavily from his nose and an open gash on his cheek, he turns helpless and clumsy, raising his hands, leaning back against the toilet. The man forcefully grabs hold of him, turning him around and pushing his head down the toilet pan. Tom tries to resist, hanging on to the rim. But he can't. His strength is fading and his fingers slip down the porcelain. The man pushes his head down even farther. As Tom's movements grow weaker, he pulls him out, lifts him up again, and throws him against the washbasins, which shatter instantly with a painful thud. Another stream of water gushes out. The floor of the washroom is now covered in water. Tom splashes around without the strength to look up. His blood mixes in with the water.

The stranger lifts Tom, now no more than an exhausted lump of raw meat, and forces Tom to look at him in the eye. He delivers a powerful punch square in the middle of his face, breaking his nose. Then, when it's obvious the pain can't get any worse, he lands another punch. Tom doesn't even have the strength to protect himself. His arms dangle uselessly by his side, like a rag doll.

Tom slowly opens his eyes, swollen like tennis balls. The stranger shakes his head again, slowly, in silence. He releases his grip and lets go of Tom, who goes crashing down to the wet floor.

The man goes over to one of the mirrors; he sorts his blood stained clothes, runs his fingers through his sparse hair, straightens his tie. He looks over at the wreck which is Tom and goes out of the washroom, whistling sprightly.

Tom makes a slight effort to get up but collapses again onto the wet tiled floor.

73

INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - NIGHT

73

Ben is typing away quickly. Sally closely studies every millimeter of image. The screen divides in two.

BEN

What are you looking for?

SALLY

I don't know yet. Put the sender on the left and Silver on the right, please.

BEN

Okay, Okay... there, that's it.

SALLY

Move in on the two watches. Can you do that?

BEN

On the two watches? I think so. Just a second.

The electronic zoom amplifies the two wrists, although Silver's is blocked by his head.

BEN (CONT'D)

I can't get an angle. Let me try it with another camera.

Ben locates a wider angled shot and amplifies the image until he finds the watch. The image is so pixilated it's impossible to make anything out.

SALLY

Can you improve the quality?

BEN

Sure, I can amplify a single pixel, magically clean it up and frame it in silver... This ain't a movie, Sally; that's a middle of the range laptop and we're in the psychology department.

SALLY

All right. Go back to the other camera.

BEN

I'd like to know what the hell you're...

Silver tilts his head slightly, revealing his wrist.

SALLY

There. Stop!

Ben, startled, presses a key and both images freeze instantly, showing both watches.

BEN

Shit, Sally. It's a recording, you know? We can go back and forward as much as you want. You can chill out a bit.

SALLY

Are you sure the two images are synchronized?

BEN

Yes, I'm sure.

SALLY

Completely?

Ben points to the time codes on both sides of the screen which show the real time with a precision of minutes, seconds, frames and video fields

BEN

Completely. What are you looking for? They don't even show the same time.

Indeed there is a five minute difference between the two watches.

SALLY

What are the chances Silver and the sender are both wearing analogical watches and that both are synchronized second by second to millimetric precision?

BEN
Synchronized? Didn't you hear what I
just said? The watches don't tell
the same time.

SALLY
Second... by... second.

Sally presses a button. The watch faces are amplified even
more; the second hands advance together, beating like the
hearts of identical twins.

BEN
Shit... It's a code.

74 INT. THEATER - PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT 74

Tom, bruised, bleeding and completely soaked, limps along the
passageways of the theater. He looks as if he's about to pass
out. One of his eyes is so swollen he can barely see. He
breathes with difficulty, but he keeps on walking, clutching
his injured hand.

75 INT. SHACKLETON'S OFFICE - NIGHT 75

In his office, Shackleton signs the report with an elegant
fountain pen. He lifts his glasses and rubs his eyes, staring
ahead.

He stands up. He picks up the report with a firm grasp and
goes over to the door.

76 INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - NIGHT 76

BEN
They divide... They just have to
divide the dial of the watch into
ten sections, one for each number;
when the second hand reaches the
corresponding section...

SALLY
... The sender presses the button.
Silver just has to know where the
second hand is when he hears the
signal and translate it to the
position.

BEN
(putting down keyboard)
They're in it together! Dr. Buckley
was right. He's a fraud!
(doubting again)
But Silver never touches the hands.

77 INT. THEATER - CORRIDOR - NIGHT 77

Tom, about to keel over at any moment, advances step by step up to the door leading into the theater.

78 INT. UNIVERSITY - PSYCHOLOGY LAB - NIGHT 78

SALLY

Hold on a second, it's here right in front of us, we only have to... what was it Matheson always said? "Results appear when there is defective methodology, important data is inadvertently included..."

BEN

... or defective controls are in place. They've taken something for granted...

(eyes flashing)

Shit.

Sally looks up.

SALLY

Silver can see.

79 INT. SHACKLETON'S OFFICE - NIGHT 79

Shackleton opens the door of his office and is met with a blinding volley of flashes. In the SPCR, several dozen journalists are waiting in front of a little lectern with a mike. Shackleton steps into the light.

80 INT. THEATER - NIGHT 80

Tom pushes one of the doors leading into the theater, interrupting the show.

TOM

(shouting, desperate)

SIMON SILVER!!

On the stage, Silver turns, surprised. A guy is standing in the stalls, one arm outstretched, undoubtedly part of the performance.

Tom, shaking, holds up the palms of his hands, emotionally naked; he speaks in a sad, sincere tone.

TOM (CONT'D)

Simon Silver...

(shaking his head)

Did you need to go this far?

Tom shows himself. Beaten, bloodied, with a broken nose and thoroughly soaked. His eyes flash furiously.

Backstage, the man who just thrashed the life out of Tom moves as if to go for him again, but Monica holds him back.

Silver almost seems to smile.

SILVER

You will know the truth and the truth will make you furious...

(holding out hand to

"feel" Tom)

Ladies and gentlemen. I don't think I'm wrong when I say we have a distinguished guest amongst us.

The public start to applaud hesitantly.

SILVER (CONT'D)

The young and persistent Thomas Buckley, as many of you may know, decided some time ago to devote part of his life to making mine as difficult as possible. Am I going too far if I say he seems somewhat out of sorts?

Tom hobbles along a passageway of the theater towards the central aisle.

TOM

It's over, Silver. I wasn't able to. In the end I just wasn't able to do it. You know that, don't you?

(hurting)

I'm so sorry... you can't... you can't deny yourself... you can't live in denial forever.

Tom shakes his head in sorrow, as if hearing his own words with sadness. Silver looks surprised; he doesn't know what's going on exactly.

TOM (CONT'D)

I tried. I tried with all my strength... Today it will all be over. For me. And for you. I hope we're both ready.

SILVER

You're a fool, Buckley. Are you threatening me in front of everyone? I'm not like you, you can't hurt me.

(MORE)

SILVER (CONT'D)

I am the life force! I come with the wind and I go with the wind. Do you want me to hurt you? Get out of here now while you can.

Tom seems to listen to him. He inadvertently puts his hand to his chest and stops. He turns to one side, addressing the audience.

TOM

It's funny, you spend your life with a blindfold on, not knowing, not understanding. And things happen. Strange things. You think you wake up?

(shaking his head)

You don't wake up, you carry on sleeping... For some reason you can't, you won't accept what's going on. You don't want to open your eyes.

(lowers his arms sadly)

... You don't listen.

STANDING SPECTATOR

(very nervous)

I don't want to interrupt anything, but I'd really like to sit down. My arm is hurting.

The situation is ridiculous. Tom speaks to him gently.

TOM

Then put it down. What's stopping you?

STANDING SPECTATOR

It's just... I simply can't.

Silver is following all of this on the stage. He seems about to say something, but he holds back.

TOM

(smiling)

Don't believe everything they tell you. You'd be better off sitting down. Believe me.

The man, surprised, lowers his arm and sits down, just like that. Silver takes a step forward.

SILVER

Are you trying to challenge me,
Buckley?! Are you questioning my
power?!

TOM

(to audience)
We fill our heads with noise. We
renounce ever knowing ourselves. But
you can't deny yourself forever.
(points at Silver, without
looking at him)
Isn't that right?!

SILVER

Buckley, don't you dare ignore me!

Tom keeps walking up the central aisle, raising his voice
more and more. He addresses Silver again.

TOM

And time goes by... You think you've
got all the time in the world, that
nothing is final. But the fact is,
time goes by...

SILVER

Stay where you are, Buckley, don't
take another step, you're playing
with fire!

Tom becomes more and more heated as he gets ever closer to
Silver.

TOM

...you figure so much time has gone
by that you should have reacted, you
should be at the damn climax of the
movie, and then you wake up.

SILVER

I don't think you know the kind of
force you're up against.

Silver is shaking, as if trying to hold back something
inside.

A strange hum starts to sound in the hall. Tom, pays no heed,
raising his voice even more, growing furious.

TOM

... But by then, it's all over! Do
you understand?!
(shouting)
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Margaret never knew! I never told her, so it turns out everything is a lie, and we have to stop the music because everything ended before it even got started...!

Silver screws up his eyes. He looks like he's in great pain. The hum is growing louder. The people in the audience, scared, look around. The theater starts to vibrate.

SILVER

Don't come any closer, Buckley, I'm warning you!

TOM

(pointing to him in rage)
Did you know, Silver? Are you really gifted? Did you know from the start?! That's all I want to know...!!! Did you know all along...?!!

SILVER

(searing cry, spreading his arms)

BUCKLEYYYYYYYY!!

THE THEATER SHAKES AS IF HIT BY AN EARTHQUAKE; a violent discharge makes the walls, the seats, the ceiling, vibrate. THE ROAR IS DEAFENING.

People cling to their seats, their muscles painfully tensed. Some cover their ears with their hands. THE LIGHTS ABOVE SHAKE ALARMINGLY, THE LIGHT FLICKERS AND THEN GOES OUT. The darkness which ensues is almost complete.

The earthquake reaches its climax and starts to recede little by little.

Little by little...

Plaster falls from the ceiling. People look at each other, without daring to speak. A light fixture comes crashing down to the floor. The light comes back now.

Tom and Silver stand motionless face to face, with unflinching expressions. Unaffected by the earthquake, they stand like two men in a wild Wild West shoot-out. The silence that reigns is total, solid.

They remain in silence for a few very long seconds.

Silver's jaw starts to tremble.

SILVER (CONT'D)

(weak)

How did you do that?...

Tom slowly looks down at the palms of his hands, one of them bandaged.

TOM

(weak)

God... once... told me....: you're condemned, beyond the slightest doubt, accept it.

Tom looks in desperation at Silver.

A solitary chair goes flying across the stage at top speed for no explicable reason, breaking the silence. It crashes against a wall.

TOM (CONT'D)

I've been struggling for years, trying not to think, not to accept it. Do you have the right to judge me? If I were to accept it, I couldn't live, but it's always there. So I'm condemned here between two worlds, unable to really live or to consume myself until He wills it.

Disoriented, Tom turns slowly around, as if he really doesn't know where he is. He undoes the bandage from his hand and sees that it is in perfect shape, with no cuts on it at all. He flexes his hand a few times. He takes one last look at Silver, while a single tear trickles down his expressionless face. Silver takes a step back, trembling. Tom takes the silver dollar from his pocket and throws it at him. Silver, in a reflex action, catches it.

TOM (CONT'D)

(flatly)

Phoney.

Tom turns round and walks back up the central aisle to the exit. Silver shouts at him, demanding and despairing:

SILVER

How did you do that?!

Tom walks on alone. It's all over for him. Silver's rep goes over to him, concerned, trying to help him stay on his feet. He pushes her roughly away.

SILVER (CONT'D)
 (shouting)
 How did you do it?!!

Tom offers no response. The theater doors open of their own accord, and swing shut behind him.

81 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

81

In a shot from above, Tom come limping out of the theater through the main door and walks off into the pouring rain. There is no sound of the rain hitting the sidewalk. There is no sound of Tom's footsteps strutting along the sidewalk. We hear nothing.

Lights reflect on the wet ground of the parking lot. Tom walks across it and carries on his way.

For the first time, his voice is heard off screen:

TOM (V.O.)
 Dear Margaret... Even today I'm not sure exactly when everything ended. Time washes so many things away... I didn't feel anything. I wanted to cry, to feel anger, grief, self-pity, feel, like I used to.

Tom, in a medium shot, limps along under the rain in silence, not caring about his clothes or his health. He just walks. Bit by bit, he straightens up, his leg is growing stronger.

TOM (V.O.)
 ... I wanted to sleep again, to dream again, dream and stop seeing. To be unaware. Just like before.

Silent image of Tom, carrying a flash light, investigating alongside Margaret in a dark house. Margaret is smiling.

TOM (V.O.)
 ... A whole life denying myself, fighting my own nature, searching in silence for someone like me so I could look in the mirror and forgive myself.

We track slowly up to Silver, standing with his back to camera; he is alone in a hotel room. Silver turns slowly, but we cut before he has turned around completely.

TOM (V.O.)
 ... A whole life looking for an answer... Without finding it...

Silent television quality images in black and white, in extreme slow motion: Silver, in an interview, is joking with a spoon.

Tom stops in the middle of the rain and looks around. The camera moves around him too.

TOM (V.O.)
... I learned so many things from you. I learned everything. But I forgot the most essential thing. It was me all along, wasn't it, Margaret?...

Soundless images of the explosions in the theater cubicle, Tom's body floating in his bedroom, the lights flickering, the wrecked house...

TOM (V.O.)
... It was me all along. You can't deny yourself forever.

Image of a dead bird lying on the asphalt in the daylight.

Sally pulls up in her father's small Dodge, jumps out, and runs over to Tom in the rain, hugging and kissing him desperately. Tom just looks at her. His expression shows no emotion.

82 INT. HOSPITAL / MONTAGE - NIGHT

82

Tom and Sally look on in silence at the motionless body of David, Matheson's son.

TOM (V.O.)
I did what you'd have wanted to do. I'll never forgive myself for not revealing myself... for not having at least given you the consolation of knowing... there is something else.

Tom disconnects the machine. Sally smiles sweetly.

TOM (V.O.)
Closing my eyes once more, would be like making you die all over again, Margaret. But you deserve more.

Tom puts his hand on David's forehead.

TOM (V.O.)
Today you deserve everything.

David opens his eyes.

A tableaux vivant of Sally and David embracing. Tom just stands there looking on, soaked through.

TOM (V.O.)
It's not so hard to be happy when
you look inside and accept what you
see there.

Tom and Sally are getting married. Sally is dressed in white, he is still soaking wet, in the same torn clothes. She is radiant, the guests smile, full of life. Tom stands there, inexpressive. The scene overflows with naturalness, but he seems to belong to a different time.

TOM (V.O.)
The good. And the bad.

In a park, Sally and Tom play with a little boy; their son. The three of them are sitting on a bench. Tom is soaked through, in the same clothes. In each image, everything changes, except Tom. Everything feels natural, except his presence. Sally speaks to him, lively, smiling. Tom looks straight ahead, immutable, as if he did not form part of the scene.

Sally is in tears in their bedroom, shouting something at Tom, feeling betrayed. Tom is soaked through, wearing the same clothes. Sally lets fly with all her anger and starts crying again bitterly. Tom is there, but nothing else.

Sally is older. Tom hasn't aged. He is there, but nothing more. Soaked through. In his torn clothes. His son is a soldier who puts on his backpack and says goodbye. Sally says goodbye to him with a big smile. Tom is there.

Tom and Sally are lying in bed. She is an old woman. He is a young man. Soaked through. Sally, still tender, leans on his chest, smiling.

TOM (V.O.)
It's not hard to be happy if you're
brave, if you open your eyes. We
don't have much time. So that's what
I did, Margaret.

Tom disconnects the artificial respirator. The monitor goes off. The bellows of the respirator stop.

TOM (V.O.)
That's... what I did.

Tom puts his hand on David's forehead.

TOM (V.O.)
For you.

David opens his eyes. Sally and him embrace on the hospital bed in a tableaux vivant as Tom looks at them.

FADE OUT.

Over the black screen:

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Except that I'm not brave, am I,
Margaret?... I never was.

CUT TO:

Tom is in the street again. Alone. Soaked through. Nobody else is there. No car pulls up beside him. There's no Sally.

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It would have been a good way to
start...

CUT TO:

Tom looks at the hospital bed. Alone, soaking wet, his matted wet hair covering his blank eyes.

David is sleeping a living death in the silence of the night.

None of it all has really happened.

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Dear Margaret... Even today I'm not
sure exactly when everything ended.
Time washes everything away...

Tom looks at David for a long beat and turns slowly. The respirator keeps pumping along at its unalterable rhythm.

Tom, leaves the room, alone.

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I don't feel anything. I'd like to
cry, to feel anger, grief, self-
pity, feel, like I used to before.

Tom walks along the long, empty hospital corridor leading to the exit. His body grows smaller and smaller in the distance.

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You can't deny yourself forever.

The camera holds the shot. In the distance, Tom goes out into the street. He looks one way. He looks the other.

TOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You can't deny yourself forever.

Tom walks off, disappearing from view.

Cut to BLACK.

The screen silences the cinema theater, announcing...

THE END