SAVING SATAN

EPISODE 1

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. LEEDS - DAY

Smoke permeates the sky covering the rubble strewn landscape.

CITY CENTRE - DAY

Churches and houses, tower blocks and offices, motor vehicles and trains, burned out and smouldering - the heart of a city lost to fire. The scene is reminiscent of London in the blitz.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE (BATHROOM) - DAY

Lifeless eyes of a naked middle-age couple who lie opposite each other in the crimson coloured water of their bath - an open cut-throat razor sits on the side.

INT. COTTAGE (BEDROOM) - DAY

A large black fly crawls across the arm of an old woman. The breeze through the open window rustles the veil of her white wedding dress. The corpse of her dark suited husband lies beside her, arm in arm, now and forever.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A terrified deer turns on the spot again and again, until it falls breathless and dying on the grass.

CLOSE:

On the dark lifeless eye of the deer, until all we see is black.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DREAM SEQUENCE - DAY

A NEWSREADER (Male 30's) sits nervously behind a desk in a cleared spot in the poorly lit studio - debris and damage everywhere.

A hand appears in our view - fingers counting down, three, two, one.

3RD FOOR APARTMENT - DAY

A modern apartment, deliberately sparse with expensive furniture.

The newsreader's image appears on a large PLASMA SCREEN.

NEWSREADER (V.O.) Governments around the world have declared a state of emergency. It's estimated that more than five percent of the planet's population has opted for suicide or assisted euthanasia in the last four weeks alone. The pope has appea...

The screen dies. Wisps of smoke drift up from the back of the set.

IAN JOHNSON (Late 20's) holding his pretty four year old daughter EMILY, turns from the set in alarm.

IAN We have to go. Now!

Ian places Emily on the floor and swings a large CANVAS RUCKSACK up onto his shoulders.

His wife SANDRA (Attractive 20's) stuffs the last few items into her own RUCKSACK and zips it up.

SANDRA

Are you sure about the car?

Ian turns, looking thoughtful.

IAN

We walk.

The couple look longingly at the modern surroundings of their spacious apartment.

Ian hugs Sandra then grabs his daughter's hand.

IAN

Let's go.

STAIRS - DAY

The family move stealthily down through the apartment block's stairwell.

A scream rings out somewhere in the building.

Emily looks up to her father, her bottom lip quivering, eyes brimming with tears.

IAN (Whispering) It's ok.

They quicken their pace.

FOYER - DAY

The foyer is deserted. Ian checks the area before beckoning to Sandra and Emily.

They move past the stainless steel surround of the lift and approach the sliding glass door at the entrance.

Sandra tentatively dabs her foot at the large mat in front of the door. The door slides open with a WHOOSH.

Ian and Sandra look at each other questioningly.

Ian shakes his head, removing his rucksack.

IAN

Move her back.

He picks up a large CERAMIC VASE holding an ornamental tree by the glass entrance and throws it through one of the side-panels.

The safety glass shatters into a thousand tiny pieces on the pavement outside.

Ian kicks the frame hard to loosen any remaining glass and stands back to check.

He picks up his rucksack.

IAN (CONT'D) Stay close.

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

SMOKE billows from windows in the surrounding buildings. The street is littered with smashed electrical goods, KETTLES, FRIDGES, TELEVISIONS - anything that could be thrown from a window or balcony.

A CAR on its side, still smouldering, has the blackened CORPSE of a man hanging out of the passenger door.

Sandra pulls Emily close, shielding her eyes from the devastation.

LATER:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

THUNDER booms overhead, the driving rain dowsing the last of the fires. No house has been spared.

A young BOY (7) wearing a filthy NIGHT-SHIRT, his bare feet bloodied and torn, picks his way through the rubble and cries for his mommy.

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

A slate roofed brick shed, siding the remains of a collapsed house.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

In between an old rusted BIKE and junk filled boxes, Sandra cradles the sleeping Emily. Sandra's fear filled eyes on Ian, who peers warily through the shattered remains of the door.

Every heart-wrenching cry from the boy makes him cringe.

IAN I... I can't just leave him.

Sandra nods - resigned.

SANDRA

I know.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ian runs flat out through the down pour, zigzagging every few seconds like he's dodging bullets as he leaps over the rubble towards the boy. A bolt of lightening strikes him square between the shoulder blades - his lifeless body hits the ground with hair and coat ablaze.

Screams from Sandra ring out in the darkness.

The sound of thunder is interwoven with a maniacal laughter.

END SEQUENCE

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - MORNING

PAUL AIKEN (50's) eyes bright and intelligent wakes with a start.

He leaps out of bed in his pale blue pyjamas, slips on his glasses and heads for the window.

Paul breathes a sigh of relief on seeing the normalcy of the suburban landscape below.

PAUL Thank God, for that.

A quick look at the digital-clock on a stand by the bed 5:45. Paul runs his hand over his bold pate - a concerned expression on his face.

He reaches for his mobile next to the clock.

INT. MARTY'S BAR & RESTERAUNT - DAY

A Glitzy all day diner, offering cheap meals and cheaper service - busy with the lunch-time crowd.

Paul is sat at the back. His companions, MARTINA (20's) a Goth with attitude, DUNCAN (20's) a short curly headed man with a cheeky face, and LISA a slightly built - tough as they come type, in her (30's).

DUNCAN

(Scottish accent) When I thought she was going to start whining on the stairs... I mean, I loved her - would have died for her. But at that moment, I just wanted her to shut the hell up.

PAUL I felt that. MARTINA It was a mistake to go after the boy. We new about the lightening.

PAUL Yet..., you let him go.

MARTINA I'd never have done that.

PAUL It was her persona. Not yours. (to Lisa) I have to ask...?

Duncan and Martina look on in amusement.

LISA The wife, of course... Being gay doesn't stop me being a woman.

Paul nods, apologetically - embarrassed.

DUNCAN From an anthropological point of view, we should test that.

Paul shakes his head.

LISA Dream on, sunshine.

DUNCAN Strangely enough, the other night, there was you and Martina...

A carefully aimed dig between the ribs by Martina cuts him off.

A waitress plants an enormous BURGER in front of Duncan. He picks it up and takes a big bite with gusto - bits of onion and cheese slip out the sides.

MARTINA Oh, you're not going to eat that?

DUNCAN I want this cow to know it died for a good cause.

PAUL At these prices, I doubt very much that it's bovine. DUNCAN I want this horse...

Lisa smiles wryly at him.

Duncan takes another big bite.

DUNCAN (CONT'D) Good doggie.

PAUL Why is he showing us this, assuming we all agree it's him?

The others nod.

LISA It was so real. First time I've been in love with a man. Quite an experience.

DUNCAN It's still only a dream. We should go ahead with the press conference. What harm...

INT. BATHROOM - VISION - DAY

A neglected bathroom with peeling yellow paint and grimy white tiles.

Duncan is sat in the bath rinsing shampoo from his hair with a SPONGE.

He stares at the sponge - surprised!

The bath water becomes agitated, boiling and frothing. Duncan stands - backing up to the end of the bath.

The head of the SHARK powers through the surface. Its huge head looming out of the water, rows of gleaming jagged teeth hungry for their prey.

Duncan screams.

END VISION

INT. MARTY'S BAR & RESTAURANT - DAY

All conversation in Marty's has stopped. All eyes on the strange little screaming man wiping his head with a burger.

Duncan is terrified, his chair half way across the restaurant.

DUNCAN (loud) You've made your point. PLEASE...! Don't ever do that again.

Paul stands.

PAUL I think it's time we were leaving.

DUNCAN The toilet first, I'm way past touching cloth here.

Martina and Lisa exchange a look, as customers turn away in disgust.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE (LOUNGE) - DAY

Expensively furnished with leather furniture and tall bookshelves, the room has the faintly neglected look of someone who's first priority isn't cleaning.

Paul is sat in an arm chair looking pensive. Lisa and Martina sit on the couch drinking coffee. Duncan enters in a dressing gown, towelling his hair.

PAUL

Better?

Duncan nods.

DUNCAN

Aye.

Martina hands him a coffee as he sits.

LISA Are we in danger? I mean, dreams are one thing. Invading our conscious mind...

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL

I don't think so. Everything we know about the late Malcolm Travis tells us he was an honourable man, a good man. DUNCAN

Try saying that when Jaws bites your bollocks off.

PAUL The dream..., Duncan's vision. He's warning us.

MARTINA

The conference?

PAUL The conference, my paper. We've been running with the delusion that we're calling the shots. I think we've just had a rude awakening.

LISA We need to communicate with him.

There are nods of agreement.

PAUL Meanwhile, I'll put the blocks on.

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (DEANS OFFICE) DAY

A large open office, furnished as much for entertaining as functionality.

Dean ERICA PAULTON, an attractive woman (40's) listens patiently to Paul's outburst.

Paul stands in frustration - shaking his hands.

PAUL You had no right.

ERICA I had every right.

PAUL It's my bloody paper.

ERICA

A paper we were both happy with a day ago. To get maximum exposure, we had to publish before the press conference.

PAUL He doesn't want this.

ERICA

<u>He</u>, or <u>you</u> Paul?

PAUL

You think this is just cold feet on my part?

ERICA

It's not so hard to believe. Absolute proof of life after death. The scientific community will go schizoid, never mind the major religions. Bigger men than you have wilted under less.

PAUL You've seen the evidence Erica.

ERICA

Exactly!

(pause) We owe the world the truth Paul.

PAUL

And if the profile of this university is raised a hundred fold, so much the better eh?

Erica looks Paul in the eye.

ERICA I neither deny, nor am ashamed of that fact. Neither should you be. (pause) Paul..., paranormal research is regarded as pseudo science at best. This is your chance to change all that. You'll be regarded as <u>the</u> foremost expert in your field.

PAUL I'm not sure I can do this Erica, handle the press...

ERICA I've brought in someone to help with that.

INT. CREMETORIUM - FLASBACK - DAY

A soulless interior of cherry-wood veneer and non denomination stained glass.

The music plays, the rollers roll, the conveyor carries the coffin slowly backwards.

Dressed in black, three rows of mourners stand in front of chairs, their heads bowed in respect.

The drapes close. Another life consigned to fire.

At the front, CARL TRAVIS 20's, tall and proud, fights back the tears. MARIE, his wheaten haired fiancée, reaches out and holds his hand.

ENTRANCE HALL

The mourners walk slowly past the floral tributes, stopping occasionally to read a card or admire an arrangement.

Carl and Marie are stood in front of a wreath that spells out BEST DAD EVER in white carnations. STEVE (20's) handsomely rugged, comes over with JENNIFER his girlfriend.

Steve's been crying.

STEVE Sorry... I let you down.

The two men embrace.

CARL

Never!

A look on Marie's face - she resents their closeness.

STEVE I loved your old man.

CARL

(Choked) Me too.

EXT. TRAVIS HOUSE - DAY

A comfortable semi, in a quiet street.

INT. TRAVIS HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

The last few mourners are finishing their drinks and leaving. Marie and Jennifer are clearing up.

KITCHEN

PETE 50's, drunk, has his hand on Carl's shoulder.

PETE Just cuz your dad didn't get on with the family, doesn't mean <u>you</u> have to be a stranger.

Carl nods, barely containing his anger.

Steve steps in.

STEVE Yeah, he needs time for Christ sake. ...Come on let's go.

Steve ushers Pete out of the kitchen, then out of the house.

PETE (O.S.) See y'.

STEVE (O.S.)

Bye.

A door closes (0.S.)

Steve enters the kitchen.

STEVE What a wanker.

Steve pours out two finger of whiskey into a shot glass and hands it to Carl.

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STEVE (CONT'D) Drink this!
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Carl downs it in one - barely holding it together.

CARL (Shaking his head) I can't... STEVE Go. I'll talk to Marie.

HALLWAY

Carl heads up the stairs. Marie turns to go after him, when Steve stalls her.

STEVE (CONT'D) Leave him Marie. He's had enough.

Marie hesitates - not happy.

MARIE Should I stay?

Steve shakes his head.

STEVE He needs to be alone.

CARL'S BEDROOM

Carl lies full stretch face down on the bed, muffling his grief with a pillow.

LATER:

KITCHEN - DAY

Carl stuffs clothes into an already crammed laundry basket. Opening the fridge, he shuffles a few items.

CARL

Where are you when I need you dad?

Carl stops - sadness creeps over his face.

1st FLOOR STUDY - DAY

A switch is activated. The bright green light on the COMPUTER comes on under the desk - the SCREEN on top comes to life.

KITCHEN - DAY

Carl is pouring beans from a pot onto a plate when the smoke alarm sounds. He jumps, startled - spilling the beans onto the floor.

CARL

Shit.

1st FLOOR STUDY - DAY

Carl bursts into the smoke filled room - a flame ignites on the KEY BOARD.

CARL (CONT'D) What the fu...

He pulls the plug out of the socket and blows the flame out. Coughing, he opens a window.

LATER:

CARL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carl lies asleep next to Marie who is sat up in bed typing a letter on her lap-top by the light of a bedside lamp.

Her eyes widen. She starts to hit the delete key over and over.

She leans over and shakes Carl.

MARIE Carl... Carl.

Carl sits up, bleary eyed.

CARL

What?

Marie turns the screen towards him.

At the end of her sentence, rows of random letters, dots and numbers appear and begin to fill page after page.

The couple turn to each other, puzzled expressions on both their faces.

LATER:

STAIRS - NIGHT

Carl creeps down the stairs in his BOXER SHORTS - The sound of a TV drifting up from below.

Carl enters the...

LIVING ROOM

The lights are on - an episode of FRASIER plays out on the television.

Carl looks around the room.

CARL

Dad...?

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (WAITING AREA) - DAY

Carl and Steve are sat looking nervous when Duncan comes to greet them.

OFFICE

Martina and Duncan take notes as Carl answers questions.

PAUL (V.O.) Carl Travis came to us a little over six weeks ago.

LABORATORY

Carl is sat in front of a computer terminal as Lisa attaches sensors to his hands and head. Duncan and Martina make adjustments to equipment. Steve stands - watching. Cameras record everything.

> PAUL (V.O.) There had been some disturbances.

Carl types in few words; the screen is quickly filled with random letters, numbers and punctuation.

Lisa turns to Martina and Duncan, who are monitoring the equipment. They both shake their heads and give gestures - nothing.

PAUL (V.O.) The activity seemed to be centred on electrical equipment...,

The Key board, computer and monitor start to smoke.

PAUL (V.O.) televisions, computers, lights.

Everyone dives to turn off switches and sockets, as flames engulf the monitor. Duncan dowses the fire with a nearby extinguisher.

LATER:

LABORATORY - NIGHT

Duncan works alone. Studying the print out from the screen. He walks over to a keyboard and looks to and from the keyboard and the page.

PAUL (V.O.)

It was Duncan who first realised that it was inaccuracy rather than malevolence, which was causing the problems

Duncan places the thumb of his right hand just above the keys - a look of realisation on his face.

I.T. DEPARTMENT - DAY

Computers, servers, monitors, all in varying stages of repair - leads and wire everywhere.

Duncan has his arms wide apart, gesturing to two of the TECHNICIANS, like a fisherman bragging about his catch.

PAUL (V.O.) He got the boys down in the tech department to build a new keyboard...

LABORATORY - DAY

Duncan and Martina are in close attendance as two technicians make final adjustments to a huge wireless keyboard, with keys separated by spaces the size of coasters.

> PAUL (V.O.) Without my permission, I might add. Cost the university nearly two thousand pounds.

LATER:

LABORATORY - DAY

Carl is stood in front of the keyboard laughing with Steve and Lisa. Martina and Duncan wait patiently to start.

Before anyone switches on the equipment, the computer and screen come to life. WORD is quickly selected from the menu. The cursor moves across the screen.

The message reads...

I AM HERE. THANK YOU.

HELLO SON.

Carl turns - a look somewhere between amazement and fear on his face.

END FLASHBACK

INT. PAULS'S HOUSE (LOUNGE) - NIGHT

Paul is sat opposite PENNY BANKS (30's), slim, tall and very attractive.

We now see that Paul's (V.O.) is for the benefit of the digital recorder Penny holds in her hand.

PAUL You see, the late Malcolm Travis is still learning; learning how to control electricity, electromagnetic fields. Like a baby getting used to their fingers and hands. The fires were accidental.

Penny shakes her head, astounded by what she's hearing.

PENNY Did you believe any of this?

Paul takes a sip of his tea.

PAUL At the time... No. I thought it was an elaborate hoax. (pause) You have to understand that the department's primary objective was to disprove the existence of the supernatural. Imagination, hysteria. The mind is more easily fooled than you may think. (pause) Now... Now there's no question. The spirit of Malcolm Travis exists.

Penny nods.

Penny widens her eyes, adding enthuses to her words.

PENNY (CONT'D) Erica's right. You do need my help.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The sunlight shines through the stained-glass windows of this impressive gothic structure.

Marie is sat opposite the confessional talking quietly to FATHER DONAHUE, a priest in his 60's,

DONAHUE

(Irish accent) Absolution isn't a panacea Lisa. The act of contrition requires an end to sin. Contraception and sex out of marriage are sins.

Marie looks down - guilty.

DONAHUE (CONT'D)

I know you're a good Catholic. How long have you been engaged to this young man of yours?

MARIE

Carl... Two years father.

The priest nods.

DONAHUE He's not of the faith?

Marie shakes her head.

MARIE No. But if I asked, I think he would...

DONAHUE What's stopping you?

MARIE He hasn't... We haven't set a date.

The priest smiles.

DONAHUE There's no sin in giving him a nudge.

Marie looks up - determination on her face.

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (LABORATORY) - DAY

The team fuss around adjusting cameras and equipment. Penny is bent over, lending a hand with cables.

Duncan gives her butt an admiring glance.

LISA Forget it, she's taken.

DUNCAN How do you know?

MARTINA

She asked.

Duncan has a huge grin on his face.

DUNCAN I feel another trip to the toilet coming on.

LISA You always were a wan...

Paul interrupts.

PAUL Ok. We're about ready. Any sign of Carl?

MARTINA I'll ring him. He may be stuck in traffic.

As Martina turns to pick up her mobile, Carl barges past her. He looks ready to throw punches, as he approaches Paul.

> CARL This is over. We trusted you.

Paul is taken aback.

PAUL I don't understa... Carl cuts him off mid-sentence.

CARL He showed you what could happen... Warned you. Now leave us the fuck alone.

Carl catches Duncan's eye as he walks out and points to the Over sized keyboard.

CARL (CONT'D) He doesn't need your monkey-boy tricks anymore.

The team look to each other in shock, as the door slams.

LATER:

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (DEANS OFFICE) - DAY

Paul is sat, distraught - Penny next to him. Erica sits behind her desk, a determined look on her face.

ERICA Do we have enough?

Paul shakes his head.

PENNY

Yes.

ERICA I'm sorry Paul. If it's a case of saving this university's reputation, your reputation, and upsetting the Travis's sensibilities.

PAUL We're missing something. Something ..., fundamental.

ERICA

What?

Paul doesn't respond - he has no answers.

EXT. ROME (ARIAL) - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Fountains and museums the Coliseum and Vatican.

Through the pouring rain a car pulls into the near deserted lot and parks next to a large black LIMOUSINE.

MARIC (30's) tall and powerful, steps out of his car and looks up to the overcast skies. He lets the rain wash over his face and turns up the collar of his raincoat.

He opens the rear door of the Limousine and gets in.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

MARIC drops to one knee, kissing the RING on the hand that is held out to him.

MARIC

Father.

An old man dressed in the crimson robes of a CARDINAL, face hidden in shadows, answers.

BAJALICA

(heavily accented)

Maric.

Maric sits opposite the Cardinal

MARIC It's been a long time father.

BAJALICA By necessity, too long.

Maric nods.

BAJALICA (CONT'D) You've read the documents I sent you.

MARIC

I have.

BAJALICA

Impressions?

Maric opens his hands.

MARIC Parlour tricks. No one takes these things seriously.

BAJALICA This is an established university. MARIC Through history the sciences have disputed the word. We have always triumphed.

BAJALICA

Another time, you may be right. But not now. The publicity of abuses in America, Ireland. Our very calling is questioned.

MARIC

There have always been those who doubt.

Bajalica nods.

BAJALICA Prove to me this carries no threat.

MARIC

As you wish.

Maric kneels and kisses Bajalica's hand.

BAJALICA

Go with God.

Maric opens the car door and steps out.

BAJALICA (CONT'D) Maric... There can be but one ghost.

Maric nods as he closes the door.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE (LOUNGE) - NIGHT

Paul presses the remote and the television goes off.

Martina, Lisa and Duncan are sat with pensive expressions on their faces

DUNCAN I wanted this. More than anything, I wanted it. So why do I feel like I'm walking to the gallows?

PAUL Does everybody feel that way?

Lisa and Martina both nod.

PAUL

Me too.

MARTINA There's no going back is there? We're on the news.

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL It was just a matter of time.

LISA Do we have any idea who's coming to the press conference. I mean, apart from reporters.

Paul reaches for a glass of scotch and takes a large sip.

PAUL

Everyone... Most, hoping to see me crash and burn.

DUNCAN That won't happen. Even without the Travis's cooperation, we have enough evidence.

MARTINA

He's right Paul. We have over 200 hours on film. Independent verification of our equipment, a list of reputable eye-witnesses. Our investigation will stand up.

PAUL

I know. You've all done an amazing job.

LISA What about the Travis's?

PAUL

For the moment, we're managing to maintain their anonymity. Penny's quaintly named Carl subject zero. But these things have a habit of outing themselves.

DUNCAN

I wonder how his old man'll feel about that.

Paul stands - draining the last of his scotch.

PAUL

So what are we missing? What's changed? One minute the spirit of Malcolm Travis is fully cooperative, the next...

MARTINA It all changed after the dream.

PAUL

But why? (pause) The newsreader in the dream announced that more than five percent of the planet's population had either killed themselves, or had help doing it. Surely he can't believe that, its nonsense.

Duncan shakes his head.

DUNCAN Malcolm Travis was, <u>is</u>, no fool.

Paul nods his head.

PAUL I agree. So what the hell's this all about?

Paul's question is met by shakes of heads and blank expressions.

PAUL (CONT'D) We have two days before the press conference; we need to know before then.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE (STREET) - NIGHT

A black saloon with tinted windows is parked a few feet down from Paul's front garden.

INT. BLACK SALOON - NIGHT

Maric lifts the head-phones from his ears - we catch Paul's voice giving goodbyes to his team.

MARIC (sotto) Perhaps you were right father.

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (DEANS OFFICE) - DAY

Penny and Erica stare at a list.

ERICA Impressive. Very impressive.

Penny smiles.

PENNY Thought you'd like it.

ERICA We're ready.

PENNY

I think so.

Erica gives her a quizzical look.

PENNY (CONT'D) This university, Paul and his team, everyone's going to be under the spotlight.

ERICA We've nothing to hide.

PENNY

Why then, twelve years ago, did the head of this university's human behaviour and psychology department, turn his attention to parapsychology and the paranormal?

Erica closes her eyes and shakes her head.

PENNY (CONT'D) Erica, I can't prepare..., protect you, unless I know everything. If it can be found, the press will find it.

A deep sadness creeps over Erica's face...

ERICA Paul doesn't drive. Did you know that? Penny shakes her head.

ERICA (CONT'D) It was a party. My stupid, stupid, party. Erica stands and walks to the window - back turned. ERICA (CONT'D) I'd just been made head of department. (pause) Paul and Anne, Paul's wife, were there. It was getting late and Paul had to prepare for a lecture the next morning. Erica shakes her head. ERICA (CONT'D) There were functions all over Leeds. He would've had to wait an hour for a taxi. Erica returns to her seat, her eyes red, mascara smudged. ERICA (CONT'D) He asked her to drive. Penny slumps - she knows what's coming. PENNY Oh' no. Erica nods. ERICA The autopsy revealed she was nearly twice the limit. PENNY Paul...? ERICA Barely a scratch. PENNY Oh' my God. Erica smiles, ironically.

27.

ERICA It's worse than that. You see..., we were having an affair.

EXT. TRAVIS HOUSE - DAY

Carl locks the front door and picks up a SUITCASE, Steve carries a second. The men place the cases into the opened boot of Carl's car.

CARL I'll call Marie tonight. Only the two of you will know where I'm going.

STEVE You going to be ok?

Carl nods.

CARL Apart from aunt Cath's cooking. She's worse than me.

Both men laugh. Carl grasps Steve's hand.

CARL (CONT'D) I'll see you soon mate. If anyone asks, you hardly know me.

STEVE

Got it.

Steve waves as his friend pulls away. He turns, staring at the empty Travis house.

STEVE (CONT'D) I hope you know what you're doing.

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (LABORATORY) - DAY

The laboratory is a train wreck. Computers, camera equipment, file cabinets - everything turned upside down or smashed.

Paul and his team sift through the wreckage. Erica and Penny are stood by the door.

DUNCAN Vandals, religious fanatics, nothing's really missing; just smashed.

PAUL Except our recordings of the Travis case.

ERICA

This wasn't vandals. The security cameras were bypassed last night. Despite popular opinion, the security personnel are very efficient.

PAUL

Then the wreckage is to cover up a professional robbery.

PENNY

They must know we'd back up everything.

ERICA The paparazzi? Jumping the gun to get an exclusive?

Penny shakes her head.

PENNY

Possibly, but the real story is how the scientific and religious communities will react to the evidence. The press conference is tomorrow. It doesn't make sense.

ERICA If our recordings turn up in a paper or on the evening news, we'll know.

EXT. THE DOLPHIN HOTEL - DAY

A four star hotel in a busy street.

INT. DOLPHIN HOTEL (ROOM) - DAY

A comfortable room with a double bed. An open lap-top and a dozen discs sit on the dressing table.

Maric has a mobile pressed to his ear.

MARIC They will have more. (pause) Genuine, father. (pause) Without the spirit, their evidence can be questioned. (pause) They've lost contact. We can denounce them as fakes, heretics. There is no real proof without it.

Maric picks up a print-out of an old newspaper story. The headline reads - TRAGIC DEATH - a picture of a younger Paul and Anne beneath.

MARIC (CONT'D) I will destroy him, his reputation. (pause) The son may have to be reunited with his father. (pause) As you wish.

Maric closes the phone - his face devoid of emotion.

INT. THE CROWN PUB (BAR) - DAY

Paul and the team sit at a table, drinks in front of them.

PAUL How do you feel about tomorrow?

MARTINA

Nervous.

DUNCAN Bloody nervous.

Lisa shakes her head and downs her drink.

LISA It's too late now.

Paul smiles.

PAUL We could always run? PAUL No..., we couldn't.

DUNCAN Who's round is it?

LISA Well it's never yours. You know, you're a living cliché.

DUNCAN Says the manly lesbian. Don't get me wrong. I mean, I still would.

Martina pours the remains of Duncan's drink over his head. Paul and Lisa both laugh.

Paul pulls a twenty from his pocket and shoves it towards Duncan.

PAUL

Go.

Duncan grabs the front of his saturated shirt.

DUNCAN

Like this?

All three of his companions nod - big smiles on their faces.

PAUL

You deserved it.

As Duncan heads for the bar, Martina watches him go.

LISA You like..., more than like him, don't you?

Martina closes her eyes and shakes her head.

MARTINA I need locking up.

PAUL (serious) Duncan's a fine lad.

Lisa rocks back in her chair - laughing.

LISA God help me. I'm drinking with the criminally insane.

EXT. TRAVIS HOUSE - NIGHT

The black saloon drives by the house.

INT. THE BLACK SALOON (MOVING) - NIGHT

Maric's eyes flick up to the rear-view mirror - the Travis house erupts in a huge fireball.

MARIC Consider that your final warning.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

Paul switches on the kettle and reaches for his notes on the table.

The kettle switches off.

Paul flicks the switch back on - the kettle switches off. The lights flicker.

The kitchen light goes off. The hallway light comes on.

PAUL You're here, aren't you?

Paul steps out into the...

HALLWAY

The light goes off. The light in the lounge comes on. Paul follows the light into the...

LOUNGE

At the far end of the lounge the COMPUTER is on, a white page fills the screen - the cursor ready.

Paul nods.

PAUL

Ok...

Paul sits in front of his computer.

Hello Paul.

PAUL Hello Malcolm.

You ignored my warning. Why?

PAUL

I tried to stop it. It was too late. Once they'd published my paper...

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL (CONT'D) What's changed?

Everything!

PAUL I don't understand.

You will.

INT. TRAVIS HOUSE (BEDROOM) - VISION - NIGHT

MALCOLM TRAVIS (30's) lies asleep with his wife MARGRET in the moonlit room.

Margret looks ghastly; eyes and cheeks drawn. Her sleep troubled by the pain and fear the sedatives can't keep at bay.

> MALCOLM (V.O.) What you're seeing is my memory of a night a little over 20 years ago. The woman next to me was my wife Margret. We both already knew she was going to die.

From Malcolm's body a translucent shape of a man appears and rises towards the ceiling. The figure twists and turns, face contorted by his futile attempts to scream.

> MALCOLM (V.O.) I was afraid, lost. Already grieving for my wife, before her death.

Like elastic, the translucent figure snaps back into Malcolm Travis - who wakes instantly. He sits up in bed with a puzzled expression, eyes all around the room. MALCOLM (V.O.) It wasn't a dream. I knew that. I remember those moments with perfect clarity. More important, I remember everything leading up to them.

Malcolm reaches over and brushes the lank hair from Margret's face. He kisses her gently on the forehead then lies back down and cries.

EXT. CREMETORIUM - DAY

Malcolm holds a (4) year old Carl in his arms, both crying unashamedly - relatives try to console them.

MALCOLM (V.O.) The loss... I couldn't let go.

INT. TRAVIS HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

The lone Malcolm lies awake - his eyes staring towards the ceiling.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

I tried to repeat the events leading up to leaving my body. Every action, every thought, every feeling, over and over; hoping I would somehow see my wife again.

The translucent figure emerges from Malcolm's body.

MALCOLM (V.O. CONT'D) Eventually, I succeeded.

END VISION.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE (LOUNGE) - NIGHT

Paul's vacant eyes refocus.

PAUL You managed to repeat it?

Yes, many times.

Paul sits, staring - trying to process the information.

PAUL

Did you see your wife?

No. My wife is dead Paul. So is yours.

Paul silently mouth's the word Anne.

PAUL

How...?

You carry the guilt.

The statement hits Paul like a sledgehammer. He nods, dropping his head forward.

PAUL You can see that?

I can feel it.

PAUL Our wives are both dead, but so are you.

You're wrong. If you're ready, I will show you?

PAUL

I'm ready.

INT. HOSPITAL (ONCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT) - VISION - DAY

We pass along a sterile corridor, through a wall and into a...

SIDE WARD

A man 50's, but looks older, lies in a hospital bed with his eyes slightly open, mouth agape - struggling to draw short painful breaths. The wires and tubes feeding into his body look unnatural - undignified.

> MALCOLM (V.O.) After my passing, I waited. Waited for blackness and peace. Heavenly quires of Angels. A Tunnel with white light and welcoming arms...

The man stops breathing, his monitor flat lines. A nurse, unhurried, checks his pulse.

MALCOLM (V.O.) There was nothing. Eventually, I went looking for answers... I came here. A translucent figure emerges from the body, thrashing, struggling - like a new born child. The figure dissipates and is gone, like dust on the wind.

> MALCOLM (V.O.) I have seen many deaths now. The young and old. The righteous and the damned. They all end the same.

END VISION

INT. LEEDS UNIVERSITY (AUDITORIUM) - DAY

Inside the auditorium the 300 seats that have been set out for the press, scientific dignitaries and visiting academics, are filling up fast.

An International news team tries and muscle the locals for prime location.

The lectern on the stage has been fitted with a dozen MICROPHONES and the PROJECTOR stands ready to light up the university's own CINEMA SCREEN.

BACKSTAGE

Lisa and Martina are dressed for the occasion, even Duncan has made an effort.

Erica and Penny are frantic.

ERICA Where the hell is he?

Paul's team respond with shakes of head and nervous glances.

Penny looks at her watch.

PENNY

Five minutes.

Erica peeks through a tiny gap in the curtains. The auditorium has filled - academics shake hands and exchange notes.

ERICA

(sotto) Fuck!

Paul enters.

Erica greets him with a mixture of anger and relief.

Paul gives her a wan smile.

PAUL

No.

Paul walks straight over to his team, who sigh with relief. He casts his eyes over Martina and Lisa and kisses them both on the cheek.

> PAUL (CONT) You both look beautiful. If I were younger.

LISA I'd still be gay.

All three laugh nervously.

DUNCAN What about me?

PAUL You're not my type.

There are more nervous laughs.

Paul gently grabs Duncan by the arm and leads him to one side. He places his hands on Duncan's shoulders and looks him straight in the eye.

> PAUL I'm proud of you Duncan, I always have been.

Paul gazes towards Lisa and Martina.

PAUL (CONT'D) Look after them.

Paul walks over to Erica.

PENNY

Two minutes.

Penny approaches the team.

Erica will do the welcome, then introduce Paul. Paul will introduce you.

Lisa and Martina nod. Duncan stands - a puzzled expression on his face.

ERICA

You scared me Paul.

Paul grabs Erica's hand and holds it to his lips.

PAUL I still love you Erica. That's never changed.

Erica is totally thrown; professional façade - lost.

PENNY

One minute.

Paul releases her hand. Erica's eyes are wide - staring at him.

PENNY

Thirty, twenty nine, twenty eight...

Penny signals to Erica.

Still staring towards Paul, Erica steps through the curtain.

Paul gives his team an awkward smile, as a loud round of applause greets Erica.

ERICA (O.S.) For those of you who don't know me, my name is Erica Paulton, I am proud to be Dean of this university and welcome you.

Duncan turns to Lisa and Martina.

DUNCAN (whispered) Something's wrong. ERICA (O.S.) It is with great privilege I introduce the man whose paper has brought you all here today. I give you Professor Paul Aiken.

With one last look at his team, Paul steps through the curtain.

The applause is more muted this time.

LISA Tough crowd.

PAUL (O.S.)

Thank you Erica. (pause) First I would like to thank you all for coming. I am honoured by your presence. I only wish it was under better circumstances.

DUNCAN

Oh' my God.

Lisa raises her hand to her mouth. Martina's eyes widen.

PAUL (O.S.) It is with deep regret that I must inform you that my department, a department that I am solely responsible for, has been the subject of a well planned and extremely complicated hoax.

The curtains do little to stifle the uproar from the auditorium.

Penny turns to the team, totally nonplussed.

PENNY

What's happening?

Her question is met by shakes of head and sobs from Martina.

Paul falters.

PAUL (O.S.)

I... I

Lisa steps forward, a determined look on her face.

Duncan puts his hand on her shoulder.

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DUNCAN
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When a man... Sorry. When a person falls on their sword, they do it alone.

Tears well up in Lisa's eyes. Martina throws her arms around Duncan's neck and cries on his shoulder.

LATER:

INT. THE CROWN PUB (BAR) - NIGHT

The team sit in a quiet corner, looking like refugees from the Rocky horror show.

Lisa sports Panda-eyes. Martina's gothic makeup has run, leaving thick black lines down both sides of her face, her black lipstick smudged - Duncan's white shirt and collar taking the brunt.

The three sit in silence, staring into space.

Duncan finishes the remainder of a scotch and shudders.

DUNCAN I don't even like this stuff.

LISA I'll get you a pint. (to Martina) Same again?

Martina nods, still trying to compose herself. Duncan pulls her close.

DUNCAN It'll be ok.

MARTINA Why...? Why did he do it?

DUNCAN He'll a had his reasons. You know that.

BAR

Lisa has caught the attention of three men, who are sat at the bar drinking.

One of them leans back and takes a good long look at her figure as she waits for drinks.

MAN You look upset darlin...' I bet I could cheer you up.

His companions laugh.

Duncan steps up from behind.

DUNCAN Why don't you leave her the fuck alone?

The man, a good foot taller than Duncan, gets off his stool.

MAN Alright half-pint, calm down. I'm only joking.

DUNCAN Well nobody's fucking laughing.

Duncan stands his ground.

MAN

Jesus!

Sitting back on his stool, the man picks up his drink and turns back to the bar.

Duncan returns to his seat. Lisa brings over the drinks.

LISA I can take care of myself.

DUNCAN I know that, but you shouldn't have to.

Lisa shakes her head - an ironic smile on her face.

LISA

The world's gone mad.

The chimes on Lisa's mobile indicate a text message. She opens it.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

Martina and Duncan walk down the path and ring Paul's door. Lisa opens it.

> LISA Go on through, he's in the kitchen.

INT. PAUL'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAY

Paul stands by the sink, an icepack held to his blackened eye.

DUNCAN

Who did that?

PAUL

Erica.

Martina and Duncan exchange a look as Lisa enters.

PAUL (CONT'D) Help yourselves to tea or coffee.

MARTINA Are you alright?

Paul nods - an ironic smile on his face.

PAUL I can hardly blame her.

Paul points to the kitchen table.

PAUL

Please take a seat. There's a lot to get through and I don't know how much time we have.

The doorbell rings.

LISA

I'll go.

PAUL Lisa... Let me. Paul heads out to answer the door.

PAUL O.S.

Come in.

Paul and Erica step into the kitchen.

PAUL I asked Erica to join us. It's the least I could do. (to Erica) Can I get you anything?

Erica leans against the sink, arms folded - coat still on.

ERICA

A job, a career.

Paul nods - acknowledging the acid tone.

PAUL I owe you all an explanation for yesterday. Before I begin I want you to understand something.

Paul looks around those assembled.

PAUL (CONT'D) I trust the four of you more than anyone else on this earth. We wouldn't be having this conversation if I didn't.

Paul's team look to each other, Erica still looks like she's ready to kill.

PAUL (CONT'D) Malcolm Travis is not dead.

Erica is the first to react.

ERICA Are you saying it really was a hoax?

PAUL

No.

DUNCAN They cremated him.

PAUL I said the same thing. Paul holds his hands up to stall any more questions.

PAUL (CONT'D) I'm not saying his body didn't die. He had a cerebral haemorrhage, death occurred in minutes. I'm saying he missed it. He wasn't there.

Paul's statement is met by perplexed looks.

PAUL (CONT'D)

20 years ago Malcolm Travis's wife was dying of cervical cancer. His distress caused him to have an out of body experience. Later..., after her death, he tried to repeat the experience. Eventually, he was successful.

LISA

Near death..., out of body experiences, aren't uncommon. It's widely accepted that death of neurons and the release of endorphins causes the effect. It's the brain's way of protecting us from the pain.

Paul nods.

PAUL Except Malcolm Travis wasn't hurt or dying.

DUNCAN He really did leave his body?

PAUL

Not once, many times. He developed a technique, he could do it at will.

MARTINA

He was out of his body when he died?

PAUL

Yes.

DUNCAN

So he could..., what? Travel around, go see the sights?

PAUL

Not far. He said it was like being held back by a thick piece of elastic. It wasn't until the body died he was able to travel freely.

ERICA Sounds like a ghost to me.

PAUL

Exactly. Our terminology ghost, spirit, soul, are all used to express our perception of life after death; some vain hope that something survives. Well I've got news for you; it doesn't. When we die, we die. The soul, for the want of a better word, loses cohesion - evaporates!

ERICA

Surely the existence of Malcolm Travis proves the contrary?

Paul shakes his head.

PAUL

Malcolm Travis had left his body many times in life. He was used to it; unafraid. The technique he'd developed allowed him to hold his essence together after his body ceased to function. It had become..., second nature.

ERICA

What exactly are you saying Paul?

PAUL

Malcolm Travis isn't a phantom or spectre, he's a completely new life form.

For a few moments there is silence.

DUNCAN I'm going to echo Erica. What does it mean? Everyone but Paul is shocked.

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ERICA
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You're saying Malcolm Travis holds the key to life after death?

PAUL

More... We're talking about a being that is capable of affecting our lives, our dreams and more importantly, our future development.

DUNCAN

Evolution?

Paul nods.

DUNCAN (CONT'D) That would be..., <u>biblical.</u> Bigger than Moses.

PAUL On the down side, you've seen what he can do with electrical and magnetic fields; thought projection. (pause) Now try and imagine that power in the wrong hands.

MARTINA

The dream?

PAUL Now you know.

INT. BLACK SALOON - DAY

Paul's house is visible through the windscreen.

Maric takes off the head-phones and places them on the passenger seat. He leans forward and runs his hands through his hair.

MARIC (serbian) My God.

INT. THE VATICAN (APOSTALIC PALACE) - NIGHT

Surrounded by the religious antiquity of the palace, Bajalica sits in a quiet alcove.

He dabs the tears from his eyes with a handkerchief and raises his mobile.

BAJALICA This creature that calls itself Malcolm Travis may be Satan himself. It must be destroyed. (pause) <u>FIND A WAY!</u> Bring in whomever, whatever you need, no matter the cost. (pause) No one. Nothing must survive. Do you understand Maric? Kill all of them. They are damned to hell.

END OF EPISODE 1