

JOHN LENNON'S HEAVEN

by

Anthony J. Russo

215-350-1289

ajrscreenworks@verizon.net

WGA# I287424

© 2016

SUPER (OVER BLACK):

"Concerning matter, we have been all wrong. What we have called matter is energy, whose vibration has been so lowered as to be perceptible to the senses. There is no matter." - Albert Einstein

FADE IN:**EXT. SKY - DAY**

A vast, cloudless backdrop of blue-white nothingness.

A turkey vulture emerges from the translucence...

It swoops in a grand arc.

The sun's rays pierce the sky like arrows...

The golden spears catch the scavenger bird.

The vulture rides the beams of light to the roof of...

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - DAY

An overbuilt, ostentatious colonial on a small plot of land. The driveway is empty.

A stone path skirts the manicured lawn. It winds past the evergreen shrubs to a mahogany entrance door.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - DAY

The wide foyer leads to the formal living room on the left and to the formal dining room on the right.

LIVING ROOM

Framed pictures adorn the fireplace mantle.

INSERT - PHOTOS

A family portrait - husband, wife, two boys and a girl, all dressed formally.

The older son accepting his college diploma.

The daughter in a ballet outfit.

The younger son at bat in a baseball game.

The husband in a blue suit preaching at a lectern. The banner behind him reads "EAST MEADOW MINISTRIES".

Embossed at the bottom of the ornate wood frame are the words "ALBERT MARTIGNETTI, MINISTER".

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A DOCTOR in white coat and a NURSE in blue scrubs double-time it down the hall. They arrive at room 427.

INT. ROOM - DAY

A dim, rectangular windowless chamber, reminiscent of a police interrogation room, pulses with energy.

Light inexplicably seeps in through the solid walls and from under and around the doorway.

The room is barren save for a long wooden table. An empty chair sits at one end.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

ALBERT MARTIGNETTI (50), the patriarch from the photos, lies in bed. His breathing is labored. His eyes close...

A shrill, continuous BEEP pierces the room.

His breaths become shallow and rapid... until they cease.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert, his body obfuscated by an amber light, sits at the other end of the table. He stares at the empty chair.

The hue of an electric arc surrounds him, causing him to twitch and shake.

The charge slowly envelops him. He begins to glow from the inside out. His twitches become uncontrollable.

He claws furiously at the arms of the chair... and a growling SCREAM escapes his clenched teeth.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Albert's daughter BIANCA (21), beautiful and fragile, sits bedside, holding Albert's hand. She weeps silent tears.

ANNA MARTIGNETTI (50), stout and stoic, stands behind her daughter, one hand under her chin, the other on her elbow.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert attempts to rise... but he's anchored to the chair.

He rocks side to side in a state of panic.

He perks up at the sound of FOOTSTEPS beyond the door.

The door slowly creaks open...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Older son A.J. (26), a stocky, nervous man, grabs Anna's shoulders. He and Anna eye Bianca with tremendous sympathy.

Younger son GERARD (24), a bespectacled hipster, sits in a chair near the window. He stares through the glass.

The nurse taps on Albert's morphine I.V. drip.

Albert opens his eyes and lets out a deep rasp...

INT. ROOM - DAY

Through the open door walks MARY.

Waifish and studious, her eyes have a far-away twinkle. Her body has the same amber glow that Albert's does.

Albert's laser-like gaze follows her.

A surging greenish-blue arc of electricity hits Albert. His face tightens with pain. His eyes close.

Albert arches his back as much as possible against the invisible constraints that bind him.

Mary takes the empty seat. She folds her hands on table.

The surge subsides. Albert slumps back into the chair. His breathing shifts from heavy and rapid to deep and relaxed.

Albert eyes the room with wonder. He examines the chair... and his body... and then re-focuses on Mary.

Mary points at Albert, her other hand near her mouth. She taps her thumb with her fingers as if to ask him to speak.

A smaller arc stings Albert. A shudder ripples through his body. He squeezes both arms of the chair with ferocity.

Albert's eyes are alight with terror.

Mary motions with her hands for Albert to remain calm.

Albert's eyes remain wide, beckoning for answers.

Mary manages a tiny yet reassuring smile. She once again gestures for Albert to speak.

Albert's body goes limp. He takes a deep breath. Then another. The fright in his eyes gradually drains.

Mary asks with her eyes if it's okay to begin.

Albert offers the slightest acknowledgement in a head nod.

MARY
Let's start with English. Do you
speak English?

Albert nods stiffly in the affirmative.

MARY (CONT'D)
Good. It's natural to be
frightened. Everyone is at first.

Albert looks up, hunting for a glimpse of anything familiar.

MARY (CONT'D)
Can you tell me your name?

Albert relaxes enough to unclench his jaw.

MARY (CONT'D)
Can you speak yet?

ALBERT
I can't move.

MARY
Yes I know.

Albert moves his body violently from side to side. He is
able to lift one arm... then the other.

He leans forward in the chair. He gets his feet flat on the
floor and pushes at the arms... however he cannot rise.

ALBERT
I can't get up.

Mary gestures for Albert to continue.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Where am I?

MARY
You're with me.

ALBERT
Who are you? Why am I trapped here?

MARY
We'll get to all that. Perhaps you
want to start by telling me what
you remember?

Albert stares quizzically at Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)
About your journey.

Albert's gaze becomes hazy.

Mary waves her hand and secures Albert's attention. She taps her forehead, encouraging him to focus.

Albert collects himself... and it all comes flooding back.

ALBERT

No... no, this isn't happening.

MARY

Take your time.

ALBERT

This is... this has to be a dream.
I'm still in my hospital bed.

Mary clasps her hands and leans over the table.

MARY

I know it's difficult. But try to
work through it.

Albert takes a cleansing breath.

MARY (CONT'D)

Tell me what you remember. I'll
answer all of your questions soon.

Mary meets Albert's gaze. She nods reassuringly.

Albert closes his eyes.

ALBERT

I see my wife... and my children.
My daughter is holding my hand.
She's crying. One of my sons just
walked out of the room...

Albert squeezes his eyes tightly in an attempt to focus.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

My wife is staring down at me.
Anna... I'm sorry. For everything.

Albert takes short sniffs of breath through his nose.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I don't want to leave yet... I
don't want to leave all of you.

Albert grips the chair arms and arches back. He shakes his head deliberately yet furiously.

MARY

It's all right. Get it sorted.

Albert opens his eyes.

ALBERT

They gave me something strong in the hospital. To help me sleep.

MARY

Good. Go on.

Albert puts his hands on his face and wipes them slowly down to his chin.

ALBERT

I remember hearing the doctor. There were complications after my second heart attack. My family... I could see their faces. They're trying to be brave. My daughter... my sweet Bianca.

Albert pushes timidly at the table. This time the chair moves backwards.

Albert looks at Mary... who nods yes. So he rises.

MARY

Do you still think you're dreaming?

ALBERT

Why was I in pain? When I woke up here I couldn't - I couldn't move.

MARY

Please, take a moment, and I'll get to all that. I'm sorry, and you are?

Albert cocks his head and turns up one palm in confusion.

Mary puts her fingers to her forehead and smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

Yes, I don't know your name. And before you say it, before you think it, I'm not who you believe I am.

Albert shakes his head in disbelief.

ALBERT

I have to introduce myself?

Mary's eyes beckon Albert to continue.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

This has to be a very vivid hallucination. An effect of the morphine. That's all this is.

Mary sits like a stone while Albert shakes his head rapidly from side to side.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

No. no... there's no other explanation. It's not supposed to be like this. Not at all.

MARY

It's not?

ALBERT

No. It's not.

MARY

What's it supposed to be like then?

ALBERT.

I'm not... and you... It can't be.

Mary waits patiently for Albert's disorientation and frustration to subside...

It does not.

So Mary rises. She paces like an attorney before a jury.

MARY

So, person whose name I do not know, you've just admitted that you were sick. Very sick. Likely in the throes of death. Hmm?

Albert nods in the affirmative.

MARY (CONT'D)

And now you're here.

Mary waits for a reaction... and gets only silence.

MARY (CONT'D)

So could I still be just a dream?

ALBERT

You have to be a dream.

Mary flashes a malevolent smile.

MARY

And why do I have to be dream?

Albert musters a heretofore unseen defiance.

ALBERT

Because if I was dead... I'd be elsewhere.

Now Mary's smile is as familiar as an old friend.

MARY

So after two heart attacks, the second of which landed you in the hospital, you dispute that you were on your way to dying?

Albert reflects on what seems to be inevitable.

ALBERT

Oh I don't dispute that I'm dying. I'm saying that I'm not dead yet. Not yet. Not here.

Mary squints. Her resignation shows.

MARY

You're quite religious, correct?

Albert laughs inaudibly.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hit a nerve?

Albert shakes his head in disgust.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well?

ALBERT

Fine. I'll play along. I'm not "religious" as you put it. I'm not some holiday churchgoer who doesn't eat meat during Lent and expects to be saved. I believe in the Lord God almighty as the Creator of all things, and I believe in his son Jesus Christ as my personal savior.

Mary's resignation deepens. Disappointment borne from hearing these protestations countless times.

MARY

Yes I realize. Look, you get sorted and once you're convinced that I'm no longer a dream, we can begin.

Mary motions for Albert to sit. He does. She follows suit.

Mary waits for Albert to speak...

He does not. So she fills the time.

MARY (CONT'D)

Right. Something very important before we begin. You must not under any circumstances attempt to touch me. I have good reason to believe the consequences would be more disastrous than you or I could even possibly imagine.

Albert's quizzical gaze elicits another squint from Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)

You'll have to trust me on that.

Albert stares at Mary...

And Mary stares back.

MARY (CONT'D)

So, you've dismissed me as a medically induced nightmare. And yet here I am. And here you are.

Albert crosses his arms.

MARY (CONT'D)

However I can assure you, I'm quite real. As is this experience. And since I'm not who you want me to be, I'm curious - I wonder what identity your very theological brain has assigned to me?

Still nothing from Albert. Mary sighs.

MARY (CONT'D)

Since you refuse to speak, let me ask you - how long have you been here? How long has it felt like?

Albert takes an exasperated breath.

ALBERT

It felt as if I woke up in this chair. I was in pain. It felt... it felt like I had electric current running through my entire body.

Albert sways in the chair while he ponders his experience.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Not just my body but - it's difficult to explain. All through me. Around my head, through my eyes... it almost felt as if I was turned into a hot liquid.

Albert pauses as he examines the weight of his words.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
I was alone for a while. A long
while. Then you came in.

Albert's countenance shifts as his words betray him.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
I suppose it's been over an hour.
Perhaps an hour and a half.

Mary points excitedly at Albert.

MARY
So your perception is that you've
been here, in this room, for ninety
minutes since you "woke up"?

Albert nods yes.

MARY (CONT'D)
And your entire being felt as if it
was transformed to a molten liquid?

Albert confirms again, doubt beginning to overtake him.

MARY (CONT'D)
And when else have you dreamed
about sitting in a chair, time
passing by the hour, without being
able to wake up? And why are you
unable to wake up now?

Albert slaps himself twice lightly on the cheek...

Nothing.

MARY (CONT'D)
And why would your very religious
dreaming brain conjure up someone
like me? How would your dying mind
even conceive of such a scenario?

The light goes on in Albert's eyes...

He takes several deep breaths...

ALBERT
My God.

Albert stands up. He spins wildly, searching for a way
out... but there is none.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
My God.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - LOBBY - DAY

White letters against a black felt board spell out the words "ALBERT MARTIGNETTI - CHAPEL A".

MOURNERS greet each other warmly, if only half somberly.

VIEWING ROOM

Albert's body, in the dark blue suit from the photograph by the mantle, lies in the open casket.

Dozens of floral arrangements line the room.

The larger arrangements near the coffin read "LOVING HUSBAND", "OUR BELOVED FATHER" and "DEAREST MINISTER".

MOURNERS fill just about every seat. Stray ones mill about on either side of the aisles.

Anna, in a tight black dress, sits in the front row. She disingenuously dabs at her eyes with a tissue.

A.J., in a black suit and tie, sits next to Anna. It seems as if his laser-like stare might bore a hole in the casket.

Bianca, in an elegant dark blue dress, sits on the other side of Anna. She looks down, weeping silently.

Gerard, resplendent in a fashionable blue suit, sits behind the three. He stares off, looking pleased in his daydream.

A.J. pats his mother's hand, then rises. He approaches the casket and kneels. He closes his eyes and bows his head.

Gerard eyes A.J. curiously... then looks at his sister with sympathy. He rises and heads toward the lobby.

Bianca leans against her mother, wrapping both her arms around her mother's arm.

BIANCA

Mom?

Anna turns to look at her daughter.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Daddy's happy now... right?

Anna looks lovingly at Bianca... then turns toward the casket. Her face goes blank.

ANNA

Yes baby. He's happy.

LOBBY

Gerard bums a cigarette from a male mourner near the door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Gerard walks to the corner of the building.

He gazes out onto the busy streets as cars WHIRR through the intersection of the two main roads.

Gerard ashes his cigarette. He checks his phone.

A car makes the left turn and pulls to the curb.

Gerard walks over. The DRIVER hands Gerard a large bag of marijuana through the passenger window.

Gerard checks it over... then hands the driver some bills. Gerard waves a quick thanks and heads back to the service.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert looks at Mary, incredulous. She nods yes.

He searches the room with his eyes... he's trapped.

Albert reluctantly sits, resigned... and defeated.

ALBERT

There was no white light.

MARY

Never is.

ALBERT

No... This is not... I'm only fifty! No. I could have recovered! I thought I would get more time. I know it's God's will, but I...

Mary's face contorts when she hears the words "God's will."

ALBERT (CONT'D)

No! I have three children. They still need me. No. It can't be!

Albert gets to the edge of tears...

And then composes himself.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

My faith - my faith will...

Albert's eyes squeeze tightly shut... his lips quiver. He loses control...

Albert sobs silently.

Albert pushes at his chair. He rises slowly. He rubs his eyes... then examines his hands... no tears.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Oh boy. This will be really tough
on my daughter.

He slowly regains his composure.

He touches the table with both hands and looks around.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

A weigh station of some sort.
Purgatory? It can't be. It
shouldn't be. I've confessed my
sins to the Lord. I should be saved.

Mary makes another face at the mention of a deity.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I've asked for forgiveness! I
should have died without sin.

Mary's tight-lipped smile and subtle head shakes show that she's struggling not to interrupt Albert's process.

Albert points at Mary.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

You. You have to know this! You
know that I dedicated my life to -
you know that I shouldn't be here!

Albert sits.

He looks down... self-examination overtakes him.

He rests an elbow on the table, his head in his hand.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

But where is this? Why haven't you
told me where I am yet?

Mary leans forward and stares directly into Albert's eyes.

MARY

Because you won't believe me.

Albert looks down, avoiding Mary's blistering gaze.

ALBERT

Why are you being deliberately
vague? What reason could you have
for hiding the truth from me?

Albert looks up. He peers deeply into Mary's eyes...
Mary sits stone-faced. Blank. Unsympathetic. Cold.
Albert recoils... a mixture of fear and anger on his face.
Mary recognizes the accusatory look.

MARY

Oh honestly, do I look like the
devil to you?

ALBERT

Satan takes many forms. A beautiful
woman is the perfect disguise.

Mary blushes at the compliment.

MARY

Sweet of you.

Albert composes himself... yet he eyes Mary warily.

ALBERT

Satan also wouldn't admit his
identity. Until it suited him.

Mary sighs resolutely... and gears up for another try.

MARY

Yes, I've heard that one countless
times. So tell me, what purpose
would it serve me by not revealing
that you're in Hell? Is this a form
of Satanic torture? Perhaps I'm
tempting you. In the market to sell
our soul, are we? To what end? To
return to Earth? Because I'm sure
you don't deserve to be in Hell.

Albert touches his chin. The questions have thrown him.

ALBERT

No, I don't deserve to go to Hell.
And I don't presume to know the
mind or the will of God. And He
must have sent you for a reason.

Mary gets to the edge of her seat, hardly able to contain
her delight. She touches the table and leans forward.

MARY

Ah, so "He" sent me. And how do you
know I'm not Him? Because I told
you I'm not who you think I am? Or
because "He" has to be a He?

Albert snickers.

MARY (CONT'D)

Did I say something funny?

Albert refuses to engage... then his eyes grow bigger.

A look of reverence crosses his face.

Albert clasps his hands, closes his eyes, and bows his head. He begins to slowly mouth the "Hail Mary".

Mary snaps her fingers.

Albert looks up. Mary raises her hand to stop him.

MARY (CONT'D)

You know it's nearly textbook with you religious lot. First I'm the devil. Then I can't be God because I'm a woman, so of course I'm your blessed virgin.

Albert's body language suggests umbrage with Mary's summary.

MARY (CONT'D)

Something wrong?

ALBERT

Why shouldn't I believe that I'm being tempted? You won't tell me who you are. And why I'm in this room with you.

MARY

Forgive me. Sometimes I lack the patience for this. I should get a pass though, as often as I've met your kind. It's a good thing I'm not your God then. Or your virgin.

The words seem to punch Albert in the stomach.

ALBERT

So you're not God. Or Mary.

MARY

Correct.

ALBERT

And you say you're not the devil.

MARY

Nope.

ALBERT
Saint Peter... or one of the angels?

Mary shakes her head no.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Nothing here makes sense...

Albert rises... he bangs his hands on the table.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Nothing here makes sense!

INT. FUNERAL HOME - VIEWING ROOM - DAY

A.J., Bianca and Anna are alone in the front row. Bianca jerks upright and releases her mother's arm.

BIANCA
He has an appointment with the cardiologist on Tuesday.

Anna pats Bianca's hand.

ANNA
Yes I know, baby. I'll cancel it.

Anna fixes her emotionless gaze on the coffin.

BIANCA
Oh no... what about the retreat?

Anna fights the urge to turn toward her daughter.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
He looked forward to it all year.

Bianca looks up at the coffin and is overcome.

A FEMALE MOURNER (35) enters the viewing room. She spots the casket and begins to sob.

A.J. approaches and hands her a tissue. He takes her arm.

A.J. leads her to the casket. Anna stares daggers at her the entire way. She kneels at Albert's body and prays.

A.J. takes the seat on the other side of Anna.

ANNA
Yes I know baby. Your father was all about helping people.

The female mourner rises. She looks toward the family. She approaches timidly. She bends down to hug Bianca.

She extends her hand to Anna, who hesitates... then reaches out for the tiniest of handshakes.

The woman finds a seat at the rear of the room.

Anna rises. A.J. slides over to comfort Bianca.

Anna slowly approaches the coffin.

Anna stares at her husband's body, emotionless...

ANNA (V.O.)

Your daughter's right, you know.
The retreat was always your
favorite time of year. I wonder
why? A week away from your kids,
and your wife... surrounded by all
the poor lost souls. Hanging on
your every sad, pathetic word.

Anna kneels at the coffin.

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

The great Albert Martignetti.
Everyone's rock.

A devilish grin replaces her stoicism.

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

Always willing to help others.
Especially if they wear a skirt.

Anna leans in close to Albert's ear.

ANNA

(whispering)

I hope it's hot where you are, you
son of a bitch.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mary observes Albert with pity as he attempts to process the information thrown at him.

MARY

Sorry mate. Really I am.

Albert falls into his seat.

MARY (CONT'D)

You can call me Mary though. It's
what I call myself. It's a small
bit of comfort to most people.

ALBERT

Mary.

MARY

Something wrong? Yes, I've adopted it. I've been away from my world for so long, does it matter what I was called?

ALBERT

What does that mean, your world? How can you - you call yourself Mary, you speak with this accent, and I'm supposed to believe that -

MARY

Oh honestly. I really wish you Evangelicals knew how dreadfully tedious your indignation is. Or perhaps you're Roman Catholic?

Albert bristles at the religious labels.

MARY (CONT'D)

Did I hit the nail?

ALBERT

I'm a minister. I run - I ran a non-denominational, bible-based church on Long Island. New York.

MARY

Course you are. All fire and brimstone with none of the spiritual conviction, are you? And an American on top of it all.

Albert turns up both palms in a show of exasperation.

ALBERT

And that means what?

MARY

"Why do you speak with a British accent?" So high an opinion of yourselves. You do realize that your iteration of the language is relatively new considering your geologic timetable, yes?

Mary pauses so her comments can sink in.

MARY (CONT'D)

You should hear my Mandarin. Flawless. Anyway, is my name and accent really that important?

All Albert can muster is a frustrated laugh.

ALBERT

You're making jokes. And I'm dead.
I'm dead! So where am I? And who
are you? Tell me! Now!

MARY

You're not ready. You won't believe
me. Can I ask you a question first?

Albert is infuriated... but doesn't protest.

MARY (CONT'D)

You still think my motives are
sinister, don't you?

Albert's body language suggests Mary is correct.

MARY (CONT'D)

Tell me, if you still believe I'm
Satan, why aren't you frightened of
me now like you were earlier?

ALBERT

You're hardly a frightening
creature.

MARY

You suddenly seem quite sure?

ALBERT

The devil has no power over God. I
lost my way before. Forgive me, but
dying is overwhelming. Now I know
there's no reason to be afraid.

MARY

Please, don't say you're walking
through the valley of shadow of
death. I'll gouge my eyes out.

Albert folds his arms, deliberately, in a show of strength.

ALBERT

It doesn't matter what your motives
are or how long you hide the truth.
You no longer hold any power over
me. And you will not break me.

MARY

No need for the dramatics. But all
right, let's try a curve then.
Since you're all on about spooky
action and such, would it shock you
to know that there's nothing
supernatural about me at all? That
I'm a dead person just like you?

INT. FUNERAL HOME - LOBBY - NIGHT

Dozens of mourners crowd the entrance to the viewing room.

VIEWING ROOM

Anna is flanked by Gerard and Bianca in the middle of the front row. The mourners have filled the rest of the seats.

A.J. stands to the left of the casket. He grips a podium tightly with both hands as he leans toward a microphone.

A.J.

(on microphone)

So many of you know me as A.J.
Today I'm proud to be known as
Albert Junior. In honor of my
father... who was the strongest
person I have ever known.

A.J. pauses to wipe a tear from his eye.

A.J. (CONT'D)

A man who was as sure and as steady
in his faith as anyone. I know my
father meant so much to so many of
you. He was more than a friend or a
family member. He was a leader. A
confidant. Someone who was not only
the rock of our congregation, but
the rock of so many of our lives.

A.J. makes eye contact with Bianca. Her lips quiver... she bows her head as steady sobs escape her.

A.J. fights against the emotion welling up in him...

A.J. (CONT'D)

We can honor this man by making the
word of God the ultimate source of
faith in our lives.

A.J.'s resolute stare returns.

A.J. (CONT'D)

And by extending the message of the
Bible to others. By being
missionaries of that message. By
living his example, which is the
example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A.J. closes his eyes and bows his head.

A.J. (CONT'D)

At this time I ask you all to bow
your heads as we pray.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert stares at Mary in disbelief.

ALBERT
That's not possible.

MARY
Course it's only theory. As for possible, how would it be possible for me to talk to you if I wasn't dead? After all, you are.

Albert starts to speak, but hesitates...

He tightens one hand into a fist.

ALBERT
No.

MARY
No?

ALBERT
No. You're trying to - you're still playing games with me. Feeding me information little by little. For some reason you want to see how far you can push me. I'm not going to do it. So, whoever you are, let's get whatever this is over with! Because I believe - no, I know, with all my heart and soul, once this charade is over I'll -

MARY
You'll what - go to Heaven? Meet long lost relatives and pets? Get a private audience with your supreme being and all his cohorts? I'm afraid it's not in the cards.

Mary waits for Albert to speak. He does not.

MARY (CONT'D)
You've begun to doubt yourself and you don't even know it. Doubts that likely have been creeping in for a while now. And that's why you're here. As for my reasons? I'm not toying with you. I'm trying to help you. To guide you. Because you're not ready yet. So, how about you tell me about you? Or would you prefer that we continue to argue?

ALBERT

I don't see why I should I have to
tell you anything.

Mary puts a hand to her forehead and takes a deep breath.

MARY

Right. I'm not your supreme being.
Therefore I'm not omniscient.
Everything I know about you must
come from you. Now you can
cooperate and share some
information? Or we can sit in
silence until the time comes.

Albert shifts forward anxiously.

ALBERT

The time? What time?

MARY

Don't fret about that just yet. But
sharing information will get you
better prepared for what's coming.

Mary's expression turns reassuring... So Albert leans back
in his chair.

MARY (CONT'D)

So what would you like to know?

ALBERT

Why am I here?

Mary manages a pleasant smile.

MARY

Want to skip that far ahead, do you?

ALBERT

This is exhausting. Why don't you
tell me what I'm ready to know?
What powers do you have? Is that
okay to ask? Can I know that yet?

MARY

Sure. Have none. I've told you, I'm
not omniscient. Or supernatural. At
least in the sense that you
understand it. Can't change the
course of events, human or
otherwise. Oh don't get me wrong, I
know quite a few things about your
kind, but it's only because I've
talked to a hundred billion of you.

ALBERT

You mentioned seeing doubt in me.

MARY

And?

ALBERT

You're wrong.

MARY

Ah, yes. I have a theory about that.

ALBERT

Of course you do. Another theory.

MARY

It's been borne out with a high degree of accuracy, I can assure you. It also explains why I don't meet everyone. Others have told me about beings that had long since passed on. Ones I had never met. A great many of them were well-known. Some were just plain folk. But they all had one thing in common. An unwavering faith in their belief system. Positive or negative.

Albert leans forward. He squints at Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)

In other words, persons with no doubt in their hearts. And those of you that still need answers? Well, you come to me. See, I've come to discover that only a rare few of you are truly sure about what you believe. The rest of you? Your energy is restless. It's like not being able to sleep. You can't do forever until you clear it up. And you stop here. For my counsel.

Albert pushes at the table in frustration.

ALBERT

You... all you have are theories. Preposterous ones at that. I have doubt? You must be joking. When are you going to tell me what I need to know! When do I get to know my fate! Tell me!

MARY

If you're so sure, why does the uncertainty of your fate bother you?

The question throws Albert. He stares at Mary with a false confidence as he crafts his response.

ALBERT

I'll say it again. My faith is steadfast. I believe in the Lord God as the creator of all things and in his son Jesus Christ as my personal savior. And in the Bible as the word of God. What other answers could there possibly be?

MARY

Apparently, the need to know where you are. And who I am.

Albert's slow boil reaches furious proportions...

ALBERT

Why are you doing this? Why are you torturing me? Do you do this to everyone? Before you asked why I thought your motives were sinister. What would you call it?

Albert gestures to his surroundings.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I'm in this barren place. With no one to speak to you but you. With no answers. It's cruel. There's no other word for it!

MARY

Cruelty has no part in it. But this is what there is. There is nothing else but for me to explain your existence to you. And no matter how many times you utter your mantras, I'm afraid things are not going to change for you.

Albert jumps out of his seat.

ALBERT

Why are you playing games with me? We're supposed to be saved! We're supposed to be welcomed into the arms of The Lord! I've devoted my life to you! To him... you know what I mean! What do you want from me? What does He want from me? Tell me! Now! There's no reason for this! There can't be a reason for any of this!

Mary scowls... she's losing her patience.

MARY

Fine. Have it your way. But you're not ready. Like many others who share your beliefs, you have messianic tendencies. And you're steadfastly holding to them. Why else would you believe that I'm the devil? Who are you to be tempted and tortured? Are you so special in the scheme of your world? You're a dime store preacher. A preacher of nothing, as you've now discovered. So here goes. But remember all that I've said to you. It will explain your presence here.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna stands at the podium. Her smile appears almost genuine.

ANNA

Once again, thank you all for coming. We have the unfortunate and very large task of paying our last respects to my husband, our minister. What can I say about Albert Martignetti? What is there to say that hasn't already been said so very eloquently by his eldest child?

Anna gestures to A.J., who nods.

ANNA (CONT'D)

And what hasn't already been so warmly expressed by all of you. We all know how Albert, your friend and loved one, would like to be remembered. Not with sadness or tears. But with faith that he's in a better place. With faith that he's experiencing the absolute joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. And with a belief that through God all things are possible. And that in the Lord's mercy we will be sustained in our time of sorrow. And with His guidance will always strive to reach out and help others.

Anna zeroes in on the female mourner in the back row...

ANNA (CONT'D)

No matter their sins.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mary lays her head on her outstretched arm.

MARY

Right, let's try again. One day I was working in my lab, and my experiment went wrong.

ALBERT

So now you're a scientist.

MARY

Essentially.

Albert smiles. Mary notices. She lifts her head.

MARY (CONT'D)

What now?

ALBERT

One thing I haven't tried yet.

Albert closes his eyes and clasps his hands.

MARY

You can't be serious.

ALBERT

Dear Lord... I believe you will reveal all in your own time, and I humbly ask that you take mercy on my soul. I who am not worthy to be in your sight. I know the fact that you haven't yet revealed yourself is not for me to understand, it is for me to accept, and to obey.

MARY

Oh for the love of Pete.

ALBERT

Please have mercy on me and forgive my anger and my impatience. I'm sure your emissary has a purpose.

Mary knocks her fist against her head several times.

MARY

No one's listening to you!

ALBERT

And if she is revealed to be the Dark One, I know it's your will to test my faith. The Lord is my shepherd and I shall fear no evil.

MARY

Didn't I ask you very nicely not to say that?

Albert opens his eyes and looks at Mary.

ALBERT

You haven't judged me. If you had, I'd be experiencing eternal salvation by now.

Mary sighs, as if a million pounds rests on her shoulders.

MARY

I think you're setting yourself up to be really disappointed. Didn't you suggest that your God would not be capable of such deliberate cruelty? So why would he allow this? What would be the point?

ALBERT

God allowed Satan to tempt Jesus in the desert for three days.

MARY

That's it? That's your answer.

ALBERT

Yes. That's the dime store preacher's answer. We are all unique in the eyes of the Lord. We are all created in His image.

Mary throws her hands in the air.

MARY

Honestly, you are one of the most maddening individuals I've ever met.

Mary gestures to their surroundings.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well? Look around. Did anything change? Or did your pleas fall on deaf ears like I said they would?

ALBERT

I'll wait for His response.

Mary puts a hand to her forehead and blows through her lips.

Albert studies her carefully. Her frustration is obvious.

Albert looks down in contemplation... and then back again at Mary. He momentarily drops his bravado.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Look, I realize I'm not a perfect man. I didn't always live my life in accordance with... even though I was absolved of my sins before I died... there might be some things I need to atone for. If this is Purgatory... then I'll accept it. And I know I need to show my God that I'm sorry. But no more lies... please? Just help me? Please?

Mary rolls her eyes.

MARY

Look, I'm glad that you've come to some sort of reckoning about this. However I keep telling you that I'm not in charge of your destiny! But I can't really show you that I'm powerless, now can I? And I'm not saying that I don't know a great deal about your kind. But it hasn't come from mystic powers. It's come from long and often painful interactions. Do you know how I communicated with the first humans?

Albert shrugs.

MARY (CONT'D)

I guessed at it. And each time I met someone who spoke a new language I had to learn it. The first few hundred encounters were predictably difficult. Lots of sign language. And then over the eons my knowledge grew. And my speech pattern mimicked those with whom I'd spoken most frequently. Hence the accent that bothers you so. And in this dimension I do seem to have a knack for remembering most everything I'm told. I estimate that my intelligence would be about twelve hundred on your I.Q. scale. However I'm not omniscient. I can't tell you what's transpired unless I'm informed of it. And I can't tell you what's about to happen in any circumstance.

Albert's countenance gradually shifts from confused...

MARY (O.S.)

Something wrong?

to crestfallen...

ALBERT

I'm not sure. No matter what I do or say... I'm just met with more explanations.

MARY

Rational ones I hope?

ALBERT

No one's coming. How long is this supposed to take? I was angry. I was patient. I was repentant. I prayed. And I thought for sure I'd get a response. I don't know what I'm fighting against. And you're being evasive, and provocative... but you're right. You're not tempting me to do anything. Unless? Unless this is how Purgatory is. Unless we're meant to be here. For as long as it takes to purge ourselves. I can't let go of that. I can't let go of the hope that after I repent I will see the Lord. It can't be. It just can't be that you're the one I'm supposed to meet?

Mary takes a meditative breath.

MARY

As I've said, this is not a culling out process. You are here to see me. No one else. For good or bad. And I'll say it as many times as it takes. But I warn you - when the multiverse knocks on our door, then it's time. I leave, and whatever questions are unanswered for you leave with me.

Albert looks down, forlorn ... he shakes his head ruefully.

He closes his eyes tight. He's wracked with tearless sobs.

ALBERT

No! I need answers! You can't leave! I need to know about my salvation! Where is my God? Please!

Mary knocks on the table to get Albert's attention.

MARY

Then focus!

Albert looks up. His face gradually lets go of its contorted pain. He takes a deep breath... then another.

MARY (CONT'D)

Good. Remember when I said you mustn't attempt to touch me?

Albert manages to nod yes.

MARY (CONT'D)

There's a reason I believe we can't we come in contact with each other.

Mary leans forward.

MARY (CONT'D)

What do you know about physics?

ALBERT

Physics? Science has very little to do with my work.

Mary closes her eyes and smiles.

MARY

Course it doesn't.

Mary opens her eyes and stares dead center at Albert.

MARY (CONT'D)

Still, a man of your intelligence should grasp the gravity of this.

Albert feels her gaze. He looks up... and finally meets it.

MARY (CONT'D)

I have reason to believe you and I are matter and anti-matter.

Albert eyes Mary with a mix of curiousness and disbelief.

MARY (CONT'D)

You do realize what that means?

Albert slowly nods yes... and then shakes his head no.

MARY (CONT'D)

Near as I can figure, one of my experiments resulted in a splitting of sorts. A split that had the most profound effect on all that you and I have ever known. And from that split... I believe I created your world in my lab.

Albert's expression goes blank.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Dozens of mourners stand near Albert's gravesite. The family and a few others stand nearest to the casket.

A MINISTER reads from a book MOS.

Bianca dabs at her eyes with a tissue. Anna, to Bianca's right, puts an arm around her daughter's shoulder.

A.J., to Anna's right, has his hands clasped at his waist, his head down, eyes closed - the picture of solemnity.

Gerard, to Bianca's left, steals glances of his sister. He finally turns away and takes a deep, heavy breath.

Albert's casket is lowered into the ground.

Bianca's sobs overcome her and she begins to collapse toward the ground. Anna and Gerard catch her by the arms.

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - DAY

Cars clog the driveway and the street.

Visible through the bay window are guests in formal attire, balancing their food and beverages as they converse.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A.J. chats MOS with a distinguished older couple.

To A.J.'s right, a sullen Gerard sits in an easy chair.

KITCHEN / FAMILY ROOM

Anna and Bianca cross paths while carrying trays of food.

DINING ROOM

Bianca puts down her tray and heads toward the living room.

LIVING ROOM

JASON (22), a strapping, baby-faced African American man, stands near his parents.

Bianca sends a shy smile Jason's way.

Jason returns a beaming smile along with a wave.

A.J. witnesses the exchange. He excuses himself from his conversation and heads toward the kitchen.

Gerard notices A.J.'s departure. He rises and follows.

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Gerard emerges from the kitchen door. He finds A.J. on an Adirondack chair. Gerard sprawls in a nearby lounge chair.

Gerard produces a joint and a lighter from inside his suit jacket. He lights up and takes a deep drag.

A.J.'s disapproving look is met by Gerard's defiant one.

GERARD
(as he exhales)
Call the cops.

A.J.
It's your life, little brother.

GERARD
Glad to hear it. Don't start with Bianca today, all right?

A.J.
That's none of your business.

Gerard leans forward, a wide grin on his face.

GERARD
No, it's none of YOUR business.

Gerard takes another deep drag and puffs it toward A.J.

GERARD (CONT'D)
You know, your little niece or nephew would be gorgeous. Derek Jeter. Halle Berry. Hell, we even elected one of 'me President.

A.J.
Screw you Gerard.

Gerard sits up and leans toward A.J.

GERARD
No, it's "fuck you Gerard." Go ahead. Try it. It feels good. Avoiding the word doesn't score you points, you fucking hypocrite.

A.J. rises. He leans menacingly over the lounge chair. Gerard pushes A.J. back with one leg and rises.

Gerard puts his face uncomfortably close to A.J.'s.

A.J.
Yeah? Okay, you want it?

Gerard smiles and nods yes.

GERARD
What, mister high and mighty ready
to talk some shit?

Now it's A.J.'s turn to mock Gerard with a smile.

GERARD (CONT'D)
Something funny?

A.J.
You crack me up.

GERARD
Yeah, how's that?

A.J.
So how's your hippie bullshit
working out for you, huh? You kept
that last job, what, a whole eight
months? They're really lining up to
hire philosophy majors. Hey, here's
an idea, what about a civil service
job? Pay the bills until that dream
gig comes up? Oh yeah, you'd have
to pass a drug test. Big man, big
talk. And can't afford to move out
of mommy and daddy's house.

Gerard takes a long draw and puffs it into A.J.'s face.

GERARD
Well we're all not lucky enough to
be on daddy's payroll, are we?

A.J.
Some of us deserve it.

Gerard can't suppress a wide grin.

GERARD
"The unexamined life is not worth
living."

A.J.
Is that supposed to impress me?

GERARD
Yeah. Maybe it is. Some hippie
bullshitter said that. Named
Socrates. Figured you'd be smart
enough to know that. But hey, keep
doing what works for you. Walking
around clueless, and sponging off
of dad's empire of crap.

A.J. pushes Gerard onto the lawn chair. He pins his prone brother, his hand on Gerard's chest, his other fist cocked.

A.J.

Don't you ever disrespect that man again. Ever! You hear me?

A.J. looks at his clenched fist with surprise. His anger melts away. He relaxes his grip on Gerard.

Gerard looks up at A.J. with a cocky smile. He pushes A.J.'s hand away and struggles to his feet.

Gerard takes another drag on the joint and blows a last puff A.J.'s way, then tosses it and goes back inside.

A.J. sits on the Adirondack chair. He looks down... then slams his fist into the cushion.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert struggles against a wave of insecurity that threatens to overcome him.

ALBERT

That's not possible.

MARY

Which part?

ALBERT

Our entire universe is a lab experiment gone wrong. That's what you expect me to believe.

MARY

You're free to believe what you want. But it's only going to make things harder on you in the end.

Albert searches the room furiously with his eyes.

ALBERT

No... no. It can't be. How is this possible? It's not possible! I can see you! You can see me! This is real! How can we be... how can we -

Albert bangs his fist on the table.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Where is my God? Where is my afterlife? Where is my soul? Tell me where my soul is!

Mary clasps her hands and stares, doe-eyed, at Albert.

MARY

Your soul is here, isn't it?

Albert jumps out of his chair.

ALBERT

Why am I here? Why are you here?
What does this all mean? There's no
purpose here! This is nothing! If
there is nothing, why don't I just
return to nothing!

MARY

This is not nothing. But I'm afraid
it's all there is. We're all here
because the multiverse doesn't give
us much choice in the matter.

Albert steadies himself... and holds up one hand.

ALBERT

Wait a second. Multiverse. What
does that mean?

MARY

We'd be getting a bit ahead of
ourselves again. I don't want to
overwhelm you.

ALBERT

You don't want to - you're kidding,
right? What about this experience
is NOT overwhelming? I'm dead! And
you're telling me there's no God,
and we're all an accident! How can
I be calm about that?

Mary takes one of her deep, meditative breaths.

MARY

Yes. I know how difficult this is.
But do you really want to discuss
what your physicists define as the
multiverse, or do you want the
answers to your questions?

Albert takes a deep breath... Then another...

And, gradually, he regains control.

ALBERT

Fine. If I'm just a soul, why do I
still feel pain? Why am I still in
a physical body?

MARY

You're not in a physical body.
Though it may appear that way to
you. It's difficult to explain.

ALBERT

Try. Please.

Mary fidgets a bit. She proceeds gingerly.

MARY

You are - you're an energy imprint
now. You're in transition. You're
essentially in both places at the
same time. You're "dead" in the
sense that matter composing your
body is lying in a box. However
you're "alive" here, where your
energy has transitioned to another
speed. Geographically these places
are very near each other. However
they are in different dimensions.

Albert's confusion and panic are palpable.

Mary gestures for Albert to sit. He does.

MARY (CONT'D)

You must realize that all life -
all matter, actually - is just a
pile of vibrating atoms. Faceless.
Colorless. Shapeless. However, we
as living beings make an imprint on
the fabric of the multiverse.
You're viewing that imprint of me.
As I am viewing that imprint of
you. You made a comment that I
looked young. That's how I looked
when I was trapped here. So in one
sense you're seeing an imprint from
my distant past. However since time
has no meaning, what seems to us
now to take hours or days, or for
me even eons, actually happens in
milliseconds. Because our energy is
now free from the constraints of
time. Does that make sense?

ALBERT

No. It doesn't make sense. I'm a
person. Not a pile of atoms.

Mary breathes through a tight-lipped smile.

MARY

Look, you asked me before why you were in pain, yes? It's because your energy - what makes you "you" as it were - left your dimension and entered this one. Apparently it's a painful process. You all go through it. It's worse for some. I'm not sure why.

Albert rises. He takes a deep breath, and exhales slowly.
He paces... his gaze bouncing furiously from wall to wall.

ALBERT

This is too much. This is all too much to comprehend. I don't even know where to begin.

Albert places his hands on the table. He stares Mary directly in the eyes.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

This is too much! Too much! You understand that, right? You have to understand that!

Mary holds her forehead in frustration. She purses her lips and breathes, summoning all the patience she can.

MARY

Look, you're going to have to call on whatever strength you have in order to get through this. You need to mourn what you've left behind and go forward. This is your reality now. Can you do that?

Albert is surprised by the clarity of her request. He nods.
Mary motions for Albert to sit. He does.

MARY (CONT'D)

Good. So let's have a go again. What would you like to discuss?

ALBERT

You told me you were dead.

MARY

I am. At least I believe I am.

ALBERT

You're being vague again.

MARY

Not intentionally. As I said, I was a scientist. We had just figured out a way to isolate and safely store large quantities of matter. Or so we thought.

Albert holds up his hand.

ALBERT

Wait, isn't the goal of scientists on Earth to store anti-matter?

Mary is finally able to beam a warm smile Albert's way.

MARY

Says the gentleman who knows nothing about science?

ALBERT

My son watches the Science Channel.

MARY

Yes, it's your aim as well.

ALBERT

But you said matter.

MARY

Correct. Remember, my theory is you and I are matter and anti-matter. For some reason, your universe favored matter. Perhaps it's because ours, the one you were created from, favored anti-matter. We had discovered how to store matter, just as you have done the opposite. Hydrogen to be exact. Longer shelf life. Apparently it's extremely volatile. And our stabilizing field was not strong enough. Oopsie.

Albert shifts to the edge of his seat, captivated.

MARY (CONT'D)

The only way you and I can converse without annihilation is to be suspended in a magnetic field. And if it ever degrades for any reason... course I can't test the theory, but if I'm right? Poof.

The description of impending doom puts fresh panic in Albert's eyes.

ALBERT

What are you saying?

MARY

I'm saying my experiment went awry. It caused a catastrophic implosion. That's the understatement of all time actually. It caused a rip in the fabric of space-time.

ALBERT

You're getting too technical.

MARY

It's possible I caused the utter annihilation of all that I had ever known. I have no way of finding out the truth since I'll never be able to go back. The structure we're in? This is the remnants of my lab. Since I was at the vortex of the implosion, somehow my energy was trapped in your dimension, along with all that you see here.

ALBERT

So the explosion killed you.

MARY

The implosion trapped me. I assume I'm dead because I've forever left my world behind. Isn't that how you lot define death? You cross over to another dimension? I have no idea what became of all that I knew. I could have destroyed my entire universe. Or, it's possible that somehow the implosion was isolated. I'll never know.

ALBERT

So in the process of destroying your planet... you created ours?

MARY

Essentially.

ALBERT

But how are you trapped here? It doesn't make sense. The Earth wasn't always here. How did you exist in this building when the universe was just forming? How could you, and this building, just float out in space?

Mary smiles at the childlike description.

MARY

No one's floating in space. You're not going to get this because you're a linear thinker. You live on Earth, and when your life is over, you go up to the clouds and meet your maker. That's all you know. My building, as you put it, does not need a bedrock anchor to exist in your dimension. And yes, I've heard from your scientists about how your early universe formed. I'm sure my being was ushered along at your incredible expansion rate. Unbeknownst to me of course, because I'm not bound by your time. Before I knew it I was meeting your earliest sentient beings. As for my position in the cosmos, I've come to discover that space-time is very logical.

ALBERT

Logical. What is logical about any of this?

MARY

My planet was very Earth-like. There were many similarities. However we evolved differently than you. Atmospheric and geologic conditions. Our anatomies. If you think of Cartesian coordinate system it makes sense. Just imagine a precursor to your Earth giving birth to your entire multiverse.

Mary leans back, satisfied with her explanation.

ALBERT

This is where you lose me.

MARY

Right. Let's go again. It may help to think of existence, and time, as malleable concepts. You, your life, you're merely a path. A string of probabilities along a multiverse filled with universes. And now that you've died, you're not bound by time as it exists on your planet.

ALBERT

So we exist now... outside of time?

MARY

In a sense, yes. Here's a good example. Have you ever seen your program "Star Trek"?

Albert nods yes.

MARY (CONT'D)

Good! There was an episode where Kirk and his chums were sped up. They were able to move among the others, who looked frozen to them.

ALBERT

I think I remember seeing it.

MARY

Fantastic! So that's sort of what's happening to us. We exist interdimensionally now. Side by side with all those you've known throughout your life. However our energies are sped up so fast we can't be seen. Your mediums call us ghosts. And they believe they can communicate with us. It's not possible though. No being can slow down their atomic vibration once they've passed from your world. And no living being can increase their vision enough to see us. I suppose it's possible that one day you'll invent a camera with an aperture speed fast enough to capture our movement. If your civilization lasts that long. That's the sort of stuff we were working on in my lab.

Albert holds up his hand.

ALBERT

Hold on. How can you possibly know about "Star Trek"? Are you saying you can watch television here?

A hearty belly-laugh escapes Mary.

MARY

Hardly. Thanks for the laugh though. You've heard of Gene Roddenberry I assume?

Albert nods yes.

ALBERT

He's the creator of the show.

MARY

So we had a fabulous chat when he came through. He was thrilled actually. So glad to know he just about spot on nailed it. Lots of you were happy to meet me. Sartre. Existence before essence. Einstein. Nietzsche. All very pleased to know they were virtually correct.

Albert has long since tuned out Mary.

ALBERT

Side by side with those I've known... so we're still on Earth?

MARY

Yes and no. Like I said, if you plot our existence on a graph... Well, for your purposes, let's go with yes. Much less complicated that way.

ALBERT

And my family is close by?

Albert gets to the edge of his chair in anticipation.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I just can't see them?

Mary allows a smile to escape.

MARY

Oh why not... if that makes you feel better. Sure.

Albert smiles. It's the reassurance he's sought up to now.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - FOYER - NIGHT

Anna waves to a departing guest and closes the front door. Bianca, A.J. and Gerard stand behind her.

A CAR ENGINE starts... and idles... then shifts into gear... and gradually trails off from loud to silent.

Anna surveys the house with her eyes.

Bianca breaks down. Gerard takes her by the arm and guides her toward the staircase.

Anna looks at her daughter with a heartrending anguish.

A.J. grabs Anna's shoulders in a gesture of comfort. He guides her toward the living room.

INT. CHURCH HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A.J., in khakis and a polo shirt, walks past the receptionist and the three people seated in cubicles.

He stares at Albert's nameplate on the office wall.

He reaches for the knob and slowly opens the door.

ALBERT'S OFFICE

A.J. slips into Albert's leather chair as if he's dipping his toe into freezing cold water.

ANNA'S OFFICE

Anna gets up from her desk and walks to her open door.

From her entranceway she can see A.J. at Albert's desk.

She caresses the door frame, eyeing A.J. with a mixture of pride and dread.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Bianca and Jason walk hand in hand across a courtyard.

They stop at a fork in the path. Bianca gets on her tiptoes to kiss Jason goodbye... then they go their separate ways.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - GERARD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Gerard sits at his computer desk. He takes a long drag on a joint, then puts it in an ashtray.

He navigates the New York State unemployment website.

Gerard comes to the question "have you searched for employment this week?" He clicks YES.

INT. CHURCH HEADQUARTERS - ALBERT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A.J. sits at Albert's desk in the dark, his face illuminated by the laptop screen.

The blank document titled "SUNDAY'S SERMON" mocks him.

A.J. taps his fingers on his temple. His leg moves up and down like a piston. He's got nothing.

A.J. closes the document. He shuts the computer down and puts it into his briefcase.

He grabs his coat from behind the office door. He looks around the dark office once more... and exits.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - KITCHEN / FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Gerard lounges on the couch, absorbed by the television.

A.J. enters, carrying a manila file. He eyes Gerard for a moment, who continues to stare at the screen.

GERARD

Don't you have your own apartment?

A.J.

I needed something of dad's.

A.J. looks at the television, then sits in the easy chair.

A.J. (CONT'D)

Can I ask you a question? Why do you hate me?

Gerard shifts so he can look at A.J.

GERARD

One day I came home from school all excited. Dad was sitting right where you are. He had just finished gushing over the flower collage Bee made that day. I said "hey dad, guess what? My class has a field trip to the aquarium tomorrow!" Know what he said? He said "So?"

A.J.

I don't get it.

GERARD

I was ten A.J. I didn't know every story was supposed to have a point. But he showed me, boy. The man was a prick. And you get the keys to his kingdom. And Bee's his little baby who can do no wrong.

A.J.

Oh please. So he had a tough moment with you. That gives you the right to be a criminal? Grow up.

Gerard turns back to face the television.

GERARD

Easy for you to say. Never had to do a hard day's work in your life.

A.J.

That's because I believe in Dad's work. And you don't.

GERARD

So why do you hate me?

A.J.

Because you're a cliché, Gerard. Middle child, everyone gets what they want and you get nothing. You have every complaint in the book but no solutions. Why didn't you ever put in just a little effort?

Gerard turns toward A.J. again.

GERARD

Hey, I didn't need tough love. Maybe I just needed... you know what, never mind. Who cares.

Gerard turns back toward the television.

A.J.

And believe me, I didn't have a picnic in this house.

GERARD

Coulda fooled me.

A.J. gets between Gerard and the television and points.

A.J.

Hey! There are things you don't know! It's nice walking around with blinders on, being the victim. Nothing's ever your fault, right? It's all his fault. Or mine.

Gerard waves his hand at A.J.

GERARD

Just leave, okay? Do me a favor. Once again you're failing in your role as big brother.

A.J. walks past Gerard... then turns as if to speak...

But he doesn't. He turns toward the door... and reconsiders.

A.J.

I don't hate you Gerard.

A.J. exits the room.

A.J. (O.S.)

I don't hate you.

Gerard puts a hand to his head and closes his eyes.

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Bianca and Jason sit on a porch swing, Bianca's head resting on Jason's shoulder.

Jason tenderly puts his arm around Bianca, gently pulling her closer to him. Bianca pulls away.

JASON
What's wrong baby?

BIANCA
I can't.

JASON
You can't what?

Bianca shrugs and shakes her head.

BIANCA
Not now.

Jason removes his arm from Bianca's shoulder.

JASON
C'mon Bee. That's the furthest thing from my mind.

BIANCA
I'm sorry. I know it is. It's just that - it would be really nice to feel closer to you. I just... I can't. Not right now.

JASON
I'm not asking you to.

BIANCA
I know you're not. I'm sorry, I know I'm not making any sense.

Bianca becomes sullen.

JASON
What baby?

BIANCA
I have to tell you something.

JASON
Okay. Tell me.

BIANCA
I've been thinking. That things have changed.

JASON

Okay baby, now you're scaring me.
What things?

BIANCA

There are some things we can't do
any more. You know? That thing...
that I would do for you. I can't.

Jason leans away from Bianca.

JASON

Baby trust me, we don't need to
have this conversation now. I just
said I wasn't -

BIANCA

I know, I know! It's just that - we
need to talk about this eventually.

JASON

Baby, where this is coming from?
You know I would never pressure you
to sleep with me! Especially now.

BIANCA

I know! I know you wouldn't. It's
about... the other stuff.

JASON

I don't know where you're going
with all this. But it's okay. We
can take a break for a while! I
know you're hurting. I know how
hard this has been for you. I'm
here! I'm here for you.

Bianca becomes agitated.

BIANCA

No, you don't understand! We can't
do things like that any more!

Bianca gets a wild look in her eye. She looks up at the
sky... then back at Jason.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

He can see me now. Do you
understand? He can see me now!

JASON

Who, baby, your dad?

Bianca bursts into tears at the mention of Albert.

Jason pulls Bianca close. He hugs her tightly.

JASON (CONT'D)
I'm sorry baby. I'm sorry. It's
okay... it's okay baby.

Bianca pulls away.

BIANCA
You don't understand! I can't - he
can see me now! He knows everything
that we do! He can see us right
now! Everything's changed!

JASON
Hold it, hold on, please baby. This
is not the time to worry about that.

Bianca grows increasingly agitated.

BIANCA
Jason please! You don't understand!
He knows everything now! We can't -
why don't you understand me!

JASON
Hold it, hold it, hold it baby.
Please, calm down.

Bianca takes a deep breath. Then another...

JASON (CONT'D)
You calm?

Bianca nods. Jason rubs her back.

JASON (CONT'D)
Hey. I know you're worried about
this. But you have to give yourself
a chance to grieve for him and not
worry about this other stuff.

Bianca's eyes light up, her mouth agape.

JASON (CONT'D)
What?

BIANCA
I know how we can fix it!

JASON
Fix what baby? Ain't nothing that
needs fixing.

BIANCA
We can get married.

Jason removes his hand and leans away.

JASON

Wait... what?

BIANCA

We can get married! We love each other, and you're going to graduate soon, and I know you'll get a good job. And I could leave school and raise the kids. And I can go back when they're older. Right? Right?

JASON

Wait, wait, hold on. First off, our parents don't even know that we're serious. And I'm pretty sure A.J. still thinks we're just friends.

Bianca looks down... then looks away from Jason. He takes her by the chin and turns her face towards him.

JASON (CONT'D)

Bee. Look at me. I know you miss him. I know you think this is the answer. But it isn't.

BIANCA

Yes it is! Then he won't care what we do! It will all be okay! It will be okay in the eyes of God!

JASON

Baby please, we can't get married just because -

BIANCA

Because what? Say it.

JASON

Just because you think your father can see us fooling around.

Bianca gets out of the swing. She crosses her arms.

BIANCA

You think I'm crazy.

Jason gets up. He touches Bianca's shoulders.

JASON

Bee, I don't think you're crazy. I think you're grieving and you're trying to process it.

BIANCA

You believe the same things I do! Don't you?

JASON

Yes. I do. I just don't think about it in those terms. Like, I don't worry about if my dead grandmother is in the room with me!

BIANCA

Like I said. You think I'm crazy.

Jason turns Bianca to face him.

JASON

No, I don't think you're crazy. You loved your dad. I know it was the most special relationship in your life. Baby my heart breaks for you. But I also don't think it's a reason to get married. Look, I love you... but neither of us are ready.

BIANCA

Tell the truth! You're going to leave me now! I know it! For someone who will do things for you.

Bianca breaks free of his grasp and runs aimlessly.

JASON

Bee, I'm not going to leave you!

Jason pursues Bianca. He catches up easily. He spins her around to face him.

JASON (CONT'D)

Look at me. I'm not going to leave you. I promise. Okay?

Bianca looks up at Jason.

JASON (CONT'D)

C'mon. You've had a very long and emotional week. We'll work this all out tomorrow. You need to get out of your head for a while and get some sleep. Can you do that?

Bianca looks away. Jason turns her face towards him.

JASON (CONT'D)

Can you do that for me please?

Bianca reluctantly agrees.

JASON (CONT'D)

Get some sleep. If you need me, text me. Okay?

Bianca nods yes. Jason takes her hand.

JASON (CONT'D)
You're gonna text me, right?

Bianca nods yes.

Jason and Bianca head toward the kitchen door.

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Bianca waves from the curb as Jason's car pulls away.

A.J. comes down the walkway.

Bianca sees A.J. and waves. She half-skips over to her brother and gives him a big hug.

A.J.
He stayed pretty late, huh?
Everything okay?

BIANCA
Please. Don't. Not today, okay?

A.J.
Okay. Sorry. How are you holding up?

Bianca puts a tissue to her nose and sniffs.

BIANCA
I'm not. A.J.?

A.J.
Yeah Bee?

BIANCA
I'm afraid.

A.J. puts his hand on Bianca's shoulder.

A.J.
Oh no, don't be afraid, Bee.
Everything's going to be okay. I
promise you.

BIANCA
Do you believe Dad can see us?

A.J.
Well... yeah. Yes I do. He's going
to watch over you. He's going to
watch over all of us.

BIANCA
Yeah. I think so too.

A.J.
Why do you ask?

BIANCA
I think we all need to be on our
best behavior now. He's watching.

Bianca leans in and kisses A.J. on the cheek.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
Night big brother.

A.J.
Night Bee.

Bianca heads up the walkway. She stops and turns toward A.J.

BIANCA
I know you'll do a great job as our
new minister.

A.J. manages a half-hearted smile. Bianca smiles back, then turns and enters the house.

A.J. CHIRPS open his vehicle lock and walks to the street.

A.J. opens the driver's side door. He pauses... as he sees the living room light go out.

He stands motionless. Paralyzed. With fear.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert's smile gradually fades... and he begins to sob.

MARY
Why the sudden tears?

ALBERT
I was just thinking about my
daughter. I can't believe I'll
never see her again. I mean, it
feels good to know I'm near her...
but not to be there for her? To
comfort her? To protect her?

Mary looks at Albert with genuine sympathy.

MARY
Never much choice in the matter.

Albert rubs his face with his hands as he collects himself.

ALBERT
I just hope it gets easier. For
both of us. So what happens now?

MARY

Well, usually, you lot are brimming with questions. And I answer them. Are we good on "where are we"?

Albert is careful not to acknowledge the question.

MARY (CONT'D)

I see. Still reserving that sliver of hope. And we're definitely not sold on who I am, yes?

Albert folds his arms. The defiance has returned.

ALBERT

Even if everything you've told me is true, God can still exist. Who created you, for instance?

Fresh resignation crosses Mary's face.

MARY

Ah yes. Let me guess - you have a problem with infinity.

ALBERT

I don't follow.

MARY

You need a beginning. A cause. You need Aquinas' unmoved mover. Because anything else is illogical.

ALBERT

Of course it's illogical! How could something come from nothing? Why else would The Bible tell us that -

Mary's glee is unrestrained, and her response bursts forth.

MARY

Ah yes, the Bible. Wondering when you were going to get 'round to it. Found it when I got here. Sent it down straight away. Pretty lucky, isn't it? If I'd have found a copy of Playboy you'd all have been worshipping Hugh Hefner.

Albert is visibly displeased by the prurient reference.

MARY (CONT'D)

Gets screams from the agnostics.

ALBERT

None of this is funny.

Mary's playful smile fades.

MARY

I know. Believe me, I know. Could be worse though. You could be me. I can't count how many times I've given these same speeches. How many times I've said the exact same things I've said to you. Like a barrister trying to convince a jury. Do you know how maddening it is to endlessly repeat myself? Never knowing when it will end for me? Hell doesn't exist for you!

Mary stands and puts her hands on the table.

MARY (CONT'D)

It exists for me! I'm in hell! Eons upon eons of hell! I'm Sisyphus! Up the hill endlessly! With no hope of getting out from under my boulder! Do you understand? Can you comprehend how that feels! Can you?

Albert visibly recoils in response to Mary's outburst.

Mary gathers her composure. She sits.

MARY (CONT'D)

Sorry. Right. Getting back, your Bible is just a collection of stories. Morality tales used to control the masses. You've been sold a bill of goods your whole life, unfortunately.

Albert simmers with anger.

ALBERT

The Bible is not a children's book. It was written by divinely inspired prophets, and by those who witnessed the life of Christ. And no one will ever be able to convince me otherwise!

MARY

Hmm. Could be. Or, another way to look at it? Is that it was written by semi-nomadic tribesmen who couldn't distinguish between a sandstorm and the wrath of some all-powerful mythical being.

Albert's gaze becomes curious. He leans forward.

MARY (CONT'D)

Your Bible was assembled after
Christianity had become the
religion of the establishment.
Remember, I've met them all.
Constantine? Never saw a cross.
Helena? Never found a cross. Saul
of Tarses? Your Saint Paul? His
vision in the desert? Heat stroke.

Albert slumps back into the chair as if hit by a punch.

He looks around in stunned silence... then looks at Mary.

ALBERT

What about Christ?

MARY

What about him?

ALBERT

Did you meet him?

Mary gives Albert a cheeky grin.

MARY

That assumes he exists.

ALBERT

I know he exists.

Mary clasps her fingers and rests them on the desk.

MARY

You seem quite sure? That's an
awful lot of confidence for someone
who's been wrong every step until
now. However... in this case you're
correct. But no, I did not meet
him. Met folks who knew him though.

ALBERT

Tell me about him.

MARY

Well... he was not my son.

ALBERT

Please. Be serious.

MARY

Are you sure you want the answers
to these questions?

ALBERT

I need to know.

Mary lowers her eyes and sighs. She then looks up at Albert.

MARY

All right. He was a political revolutionary. And he was crucified like one. And he did not rise from the dead. But you, you already suspected that. Because I'm sure you've studied your religious history. Haven't you? You'd be even more of a fraud otherwise. So you'd know that the earliest versions of your Gospel of Mark leave off with an empty tomb. Grave robbers, apparently. And it's a silly narrative, isn't it? God loved you lot so much that he sent His Son to die for your sins. Why? Assuming your God has ever existed, why would his mercy come along with conditions? And why did he not just continue to be the vengeful God of your Old Testament?

Albert sways like a dazed fighter sitting in his corner.

ALBERT

He took human form to remove the sins of humanity. To give us the example of a perfect life.

MARY

And how many of your garden variety Christians are living that example? Oh sure, you have churches that minister to the poor and that's admirable. Assuming a society must have poor people in the first place. But on balance, what really changes? Doesn't it make more sense that Jesus was an Essene, living with a fringe group in the desert, who studied the Old Testament and made its prophecies come true in order to spark a political revolution?

ALBERT

No. You're wrong. You're lying.

MARY

What reason would I have to lie?

Albert bows his head, desperately trying to choke back a vicious wave of emotion.

MARY (CONT'D)

The writing's been on the wall for you all along. You only needed to look at it. Jesus was a man. Of the oppressed population. A Jew fighting against Roman domination. He chose to be a provocateur and ride into Jerusalem on a donkey during Passover. He miscalculated. And he paid with his life.

ALBERT

No. It's not possible.

MARY

And his followers proclaimed him the Messiah and used him as a weapon against the oppressor. The rumors of his divinity came long after his death. And then Saul of Tarsus split the Jewish religion in two. Christianity eventually won out with the Romans. And history is written by the winners. You see the irony in it, don't you? A Jew who wanted to spark a Jewish uprising becoming the symbol of a religion he never intended to establish?

Albert lifts his head. His lack of focus is palpable.

ALBERT

It was God's will to send him. It was God's plan. To become human for us. He did it for us.

MARY

Doesn't that make your God cruel? That his son would suffer so?

ALBERT

No it doesn't. Because his Son WAS God. So HE would suffer. So we wouldn't have to.

MARY

So humanity is no longer suffering?

Albert blinks his eyes rapidly. He's flailing wildly now.

ALBERT

We now have access to the Kingdom of Heaven. Where all suffering is abandoned. Because of what Jesus did for us. Because God loves us.

MARY

The pre-requisite of His son's death is still illogical. And have you ever considered how your God can be benevolent, all-powerful and all-knowing all at once, and still allow evil to be present in your world? It's logically impossible. Your philosophers have wrestled with this for centuries. You've got to give one up for it to work.

Albert is nearly catatonic.

ALBERT

Wha - why?

MARY

If he permits evil, then he's cruel. Or he is powerless to stop it and thus he's not omnipotent. Either way, he's not the God of your religion. The Buddhists come the closest. They give up evil. It's a state resulting from the conditions that humans create.

Albert throws out his arms, as if to physically beat away the onrushing torrent of unpleasant realizations.

ALBERT

So there's nothing here for me?

Albert's eyes plead for a different answer. Mary responds with silence.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

All that I've done. All I've devoted my life to.

MARY

It's okay. Let it sink in.

Albert's eyes fall... He buries his face in his hands.

ALBERT

This is a nightmare. Why are you telling me this? What are you trying to do to me?

MARY

Look, haven't you always wanted to know why you lot suffer all sorts of horrors? Why five-year-olds get cancer and babies are born without limbs and such things?

Albert fights the absolute fog threatening to envelop him.

ALBERT

I... I don't know. It's always been
God's will. Or your will? I don't
know. I don't know!

MARY

Well now you know.

Albert looks down. He's shattered. Devastated beyond words.

ALBERT

What am I doing here! What's going
to happen to me? What is my fate!
What about judgment day?

Mary's face beams. She reaches into her pocket and produces
a small illuminated object. She slides it near Albert.

She reaches in again and puts a small silver object into
her ear. She taps her ear a few times until she's satisfied.

MARY

I was waiting for that. Surprised
it took you so long actually.

Albert fingers the illuminated object.

ALBERT

What is this?

MARY

The magic you've been waiting for.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A.J. enters. He throws his keys on a table near the door.

He takes off his coat and lays it on a chair. He opens the
refrigerator. Nothing catches his fancy.

He sits at the kitchen table. He retrieves the laptop from
his briefcase. He logs on and opens the Word document.

"SUNDAY'S SERMON" is still the only entry on the page.

A.J. stares at the screen, waiting for inspiration...

He types out the words "God is watching... God is watching
our family..."

He hits the backspace button and erases all of it.

He squeezes his eyes shut and runs his fingers through his
hair over and over again.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - KITCHEN / FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Anna, in a revealing blouse and tight black skirt, enters.

She slinks to the kitchen counter. She moves the big cookie jar out of the way, exposing a weekly pill caddy.

She goes to the entrance and peaks out the doorway. The coast is clear.

She examines the caddy... then crosses to the trash.

She opens the lid and stuffs the caddy all the way to the bottom of the trash bag.

FOYER

Anna leans on the handrail and looks up the stairs.

ANNA
Gerard? Bianca?

GERARD'S BEDROOM

Gerard reclines on his bed, headphones on, joint in hand.

FOYER

Anna waits for a reply... and hears nothing.

ANNA
I'm going to Marjorie's. I'll be
back in a couple of hours.

No reply... so she heads for the door.

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

The automatic garage door opens, and Anna's car pulls away.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A.J., now dressed in jeans, grabs his jacket and exits.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Anna pulls into a spot in front of a row of rooms.

She exits the car. She looks over both shoulders.

She knocks on the door of one of the rooms. The door flings open, and a hairy male hand grabs her arm.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ANNA'S LOVER pulls her into the darkened room and slams the door shut.

The man presses Anna to the wall. They violently lock lips.

Anna pushes him away... she tears at her blouse while the man removes his shirt.

They embrace again. Anna gets a hand free, then the other, and undoes the man's belt. He helps her slide his pants off.

The man drops to his knees. He snakes his hands under Anna's skirt, and slowly removes her panties... and then presses his face between Anna's legs.

Anna moans her approval... then grabs the man by the hair and yanks him towards her mouth. They kiss passionately, roughly, like animals ready to devour their mates.

The man begins to thrust, forcing Anna against the wall. She closes her eyes and throws her head back in ecstasy.

The man spins around with Anna in his arms. He bends her over the bed and takes her from behind.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - KITCHEN / FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Gerard pulls the white trash bag out of the container.

As the bag hits the rim of the container, Gerard notices a large square object with pointed edges inside it.

Gerard presses the bag against the outline of the object, revealing a hard cover book.

Gerard puts the bag on the floor and snakes his hand through to retrieve it.

Gerard wipes some garbage off the cover.

INSERT - BOOK COVER

"The Physics of Immortality" by Frank Tipler.

GERARD (O.S.)
That son of a bitch.

BIANCA'S BEDROOM

Bianca, in pink bathrobe, sits cross-legged on her bed, holding a pillow to her chest. She's been crying.

BIANCA
Daddy...

She vaults off the bed, onto her knees. She bows her head and closes her eyes, hands clasped atop the mattress.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Daddy, I know you can hear me. Now that God is taking care of you. I need to tell you something.

Bianca manages a measure of composure.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Daddy I can't lose Jason. I can't be alone now. Now that I don't have you. I love him very much... I know you didn't know that. I'm sorry for keeping it from you. He's very nice. He's kind... he treats me well. I just worry that he... well, he expects things. Like any other guy. Things that other girls will do for him. I told him we have to wait until we're married but... I'm not sure he'll wait. He says he will but... guys say it. And then things happen. Things they don't mean. And now that we can't do what we used to... he might get bored with me. It was different when you were here. I had you. But now he's all I have! I can't lose him!

Bianca buries her face in the mattress...

Then she raises her head, her eyes suddenly shining.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

I know! We can make a promise! To love each other forever! Maybe we can't get married now, because we're both in school, and we need jobs, and an apartment... but if we make a promise before God? That should be enough! Right daddy? Then I can give myself to him without sin. And he'll stay with me... forever. Daddy, I hope you understand. I hope you're not disappointed in me. I have to. It has to be this way.

Bianca begins to cry.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Daddy I miss you so much! Please don't judge me. Please ask Jesus to forgive me. I love you! Amen.

Bianca springs to her feet.

She rummages through her "good girl" closet. It's filled with tasteful pants and tops and dainty dresses.

MASTER BEDROOM

Bianca raids her mother's closet. She picks out the shortest skirt and the lowest-cut blouse she can find.

BIANCA'S BEDROOM

Bianca throws the clothes on her bed. She takes eyeliner from her dresser and begins to apply it.

KITCHEN / FAMILY ROOM

Gerard's rooting in the trash bag has exposed the pill caddy that Anna so carefully buried. He fishes it out.

He holds it up to the light, examining it closely.

GERARD

What the hell?

Gerard puts the pill caddy on the counter. He flings open the breadbox, exposing several full pill bottles.

He opens each day of the week of the caddy. There are seven pills in each slot.

He opens each pill bottle one by one.

Small white pill - it's in the caddy. Small red one - check. Large white, large blue, small blue - all present.

That leaves two bottles - one with large yellow pills and one with small yellow pills.

Each day in the caddy has two of the small yellows.

And none of the large yellow pills.

Gerard looks up, attempting to digest his discovery.

GERARD (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

GERARD'S BEDROOM

Gerard slams himself into his computer chair.

He opens an Internet browser. He searches for "OVERDOSE OF HYPERTENSION MEDICATION."

His eyes widen as he reads the information on the screen.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mary cups her ear. She smiles coyly.

MARY

Amazing what we're doing with
computers nowadays.

Mary cocks her head as if she's receiving a signal.

MARY (CONT'D)

The device you're holding will
translate whatever you're thinking
into electrical impulses and send
them to this receiver.

ALBERT

You're kidding. You need some gizmo
to find out about me?

MARY

Remember, I don't know anything
about you that you haven't told me.
You wanted to be judged? This is
how I judge you.

Mary cocks her head in the opposite direction.

MARY (CONT'D)

Wife, Anna... three children.
Albert Junior. Gerard. Bianca. Your
daughter is your favorite.

Albert shifts uncomfortably at the suggestion.

ALBERT

I love all my children equally.

MARY

You tolerate your older son because
he's loyal. You hate your other son.

ALBERT

That's not true.

MARY

My dear boy. Everything we discuss
here is the truth.

Albert drops the device. Mary gestures for him to pick it
up. He slowly reaches for it... and reluctantly complies.

MARY (CONT'D)

You hate your wife too. You've had
affairs. Multiple dalliances. One
of the women you actually love.

ALBERT
That's enough!

MARY
Problem? Remember it's you who
wanted to be judged. It's not like
any of this can be a shock.

Albert clenches his fists in frustration... and lets Mary
continue her examination.

MARY (CONT'D)
You told the married lady church
members that if they ever went
public you'd scandalize them.

ALBERT
They were in loveless marriages.

MARY
Yes, I'm certain that made all the
difference.

Albert folds his arms and stares at Mary.

ALBERT
I don't hate my wife.

Mary raises her eyebrows.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
That's a distortion.

Mary puts her hands to her face and spreads her fingers.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
It's complicated.

MARY
Marriage usually is.

ALBERT
How would you know? Have you ever
been married?

Mary blows a long breath through her lips.

MARY
Yes. I was. In another lifetime.

Albert is surprised by Mary's candor. His hard shell melts.

ALBERT
I had no idea. You must miss him.

Mary sighs.

MARY

I don't know what I feel. I know I loved him. With all my heart and soul is an understatement. We didn't know where each other began and ended. I know that cognitively now. But I can't feel it. Too much... I'd call it time, but that's not accurate. Too much captivity has transpired.

ALBERT

I'm sorry.

MARY

Thanks. And the irony of it all is that I may have killed him.

Mary gets to the verge of tears... and pulls herself back.

ALBERT

You don't know that for certain.

Mary is surprised by Albert's attempt at comfort.

MARY

I've thought about it. He was in another part of the building at the time. I was at the epicenter. Which is why I'm here and he's... well. Nice try. No evidence his fate is any different from all the others.

ALBERT

If you had a God to pray to, He would be a comfort to you.

MARY

And our bible thumper is back.

ALBERT

You still haven't told me what you what you believe. Who created you?

MARY

All right. I'll tell you. As you can see, we're very similar. However we evolved differently. For example, we never worshipped a deity. Like you we started out as sun worshippers. Some of us never got past it. And for others it turned into something else. Do you know what Pantheism is?

Albert shakes his head no.

ALBERT

I didn't have time to study the Eastern religions.

MARY

Not quite. It's a belief that a life force informs everything. The universe and everything alive in it. God is that force. God is present in everything... IS everything. That's your definition, mind you. We didn't feel the need to label it. We just believed. We knew there was a positive energy guiding things. We were happy. We worked together. We treated each other with respect. We shared all the beauty in our world. But we didn't pray to it. And we certainly didn't kill for it. It never occurred to us to mistreat others. Why would we take something that belonged to someone else? Because we could? Because we were stronger? It's illogical. Never mind taking someone's life. Not even a concept. But nature always poses challenges. Death, disease, disasters. Things beyond our control, that simply occur, irrespective of reason. So we scientists set about discovering how we could improve our lives. We, the researchers, were the ones respected. In charge, if there was ever such a thing as a ruling class, which there wasn't. Not politicians, entertainers or athletes. We were most like the utopian socialism described in the writings of Plato. Each doing for the good of society based on their specific talents. No greed. No lust. No short cuts of any kind. Einstein was a Pantheist. Smart man.

The shame he bears for all mankind is too much for Albert. He body language shifts back into confident minister mode.

ALBERT

We want that too. Our scientists and leaders are working toward it. We want peace. For all mankind. We want everyone to experience the joy of God's unconditional love.

Hearty laughter mixed with shock explodes from Mary.

MARY

You're joking, right? Is that why all the rape and murder and war and the cheating on spouses? Funny way round to it.

Albert's confidence is short-lived. He slumps in the chair.

Albert takes a long, introspective pause...

ALBERT

It's not our fault. Our God taught us that. He was a vengeful God. He tempted Eve. He tested Abraham. He heaped misery on Job.

Mary claps her hands, slowly, deliberately, three times.

MARY

I have to admit it mate, you are quite the piece of work. So ashamed of your behavior you're willing to sell the God you so claim to love down the river in exchange for a clear conscience. Your God was a vengeful God because your ancestors were vengeful people. Not the other way round.

Fresh fear crosses Albert's face. He clasps his hands.

ALBERT

I don't know where that came from. I'm sorry. My God I am sorry for...

Albert points at Mary.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

It's you. You're tempting me again! No. You're not tempting me. You're confusing me. Making me doubt my faith. By embarrassing me. I'm not responsible for all of man's evils!

Mary's running out of flabbergasted looks.

MARY

Honestly. I pity you. I really do. To have to live with yourself for all eternity. Quite ominous actually. Can we get back to your family then?

Albert's expression suggests relief at the course change.

He turns wistful.

ALBERT

I don't hate my wife. We met in college. She was a free spirit. I was uptight. In control all the time. She was the relief valve.

MARY

And?

ALBERT

And then we got married. Had our children. Formed our church. And here I am. In the blink of an eye.

Mary taps her ear as if she's getting a signal.

MARY

Hang on a tick. Rewind a bit to three little babies and stressful jobs. You both turn to drugs. Then a friend conducts an intervention, gets you both clean and invites you to join his prayer group. Not long after you break away, go it on your own, and sell religion for profit. Seen it more times than I can count.

ALBERT

Gee, thanks for making me sound like a monster.

MARY

No worries. Constantine did the same thing. Instead of spending time and resources persecuting Christians, he legalized it and then sold it back to them. He made it a corporation. You Americans are having the same debate about narcotics. If you legalize it, crime goes down, and tax revenue goes up. Except your politicians know it won't pass. So no one wants to back it... Oh dear.

Mary taps her ear again. Her face becomes a mixture of smugness and disappointment.

Albert shifts nervously.

ALBERT

What? What is it now?

MARY

I'm sure you know this already. But you're not a very nice man.

INT./EXT. A.J.'S CAR - STREET OUTSIDE THEATER - NIGHT

A.J. stares at a gay-themed movie theater from across the street. Men, some in pairs, others solo, enter and exit.

MEMORY FLASH

A.J. and CRAIG, a lithe, muscular man, are stuffed in a video booth, locked in a passionate embrace.

BIANCA (V.O.)
Do you believe Dad can see us?

BACK TO SCENE

A.J. shakes his head as if to clear cobwebs. He opens the glove compartment.

He pulls out a gun. He turns it over, eyeing it curiously.

BIANCA (V.O.)
I think we all need to be on our
best behavior now. He's watching.

A.J. observes Craig enter the theater. He levels the gun toward him through the closed passenger window.

BIANCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I know you'll do a great job as our
new minister.

A.J. squeezes his eyes tight. He attempts to fight back tears... unsuccessfully.

A.J.
No I won't.

He retracts his arm... and brings the gun to his head.

A.J. (CONT'D)
(crying)
No I won't! No I won't!

Through his choking sobs... A.J. pulls the gun away from his head. He lays it on the passenger seat.

INT./EXT. BIANCA'S CAR - CAMPUS STREET - NIGHT

Bianca sits parked in front of a campus dormitory building.

She reaches into her handbag and pulls out a pill. "XANAX 10" is embossed on the tablet.

Bianca stares at the pill, and then at the water bottle in her cup holder. She impulsively slams her hand to her mouth and takes a huge gulp of water.

INT. DORMITORY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bianca winds her way down a corridor lined with apartments.

Bianca stumbles. She leans against the wall. She feels her forehead. She retrieves her phone from her bag.

Bianca texts Jason... "where r u, I'm on your floor. Knocked, u didn't open."

Jason texts back... "Surprise visit? Awesome. Carl's apt 309. Had to leave, Mike needed our room. You know... (0:"

Bianca replies... "k, where should I meet u?"

Bianca takes a step forward, and wobbles again. So she sits.

LARRY, a muscular frat boy with a buzz cut, notices Bianca.

LARRY

Hey, are you okay?

BIANCA

Oh, yes, thank you.

Bianca points to her phone. She tries to get to her feet, but is still a bit woozy. Larry grabs her arm.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

I'm here to see my boyfriend.

LARRY

Who's your boyfriend?

BIANCA

Jason DuBois. Do you know him? He said he was in Carl's room.

Larry's friend KURT, tall and dark-skinned, approaches. Larry grabs Kurt by the arm to slow him down.

He thumbs toward Bianca and makes a drinking motion, as if to indicate she is not in control of her faculties.

LARRY

Yeah, I don't think I know him, but we can take you to Carl's room. They're having a little get together over there. Is that cool? I'm Larry and this is Kurt.

BIANCA

Thank you, that would be great!

The men each take one of Bianca's arms and lead her down the hallway.

Bianca's phone - on the hallway floor - BUZZES...

A text from Jason: "meet u in the lounge."

INT. DORMITORY APARTMENT - NIGHT

A dorm party in *room 305* in full swing.

Ten students in boy-girl pairs grind to the music in pulsating semi-darkness.

Male students stand in small groups, pounding beers and shots, vying for the attention of the single women.

Bianca and Larry find a spot near the keg and the big bowl of spiked punch, while Kurt goes off to mingle.

Bianca shields her ears against the loud music. She wobbles again. Larry catches her by the arm.

LARRY
Hey, steady there!

BIANCA
I'm sorry. I took a pill and it's making me dizzy.

LARRY
What kind of pill?

BIANCA
Something to help me relax. I'm going to have sex for the first time tonight. It's a surprise.

Larry looks at Bianca as if he's hit the jackpot.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
We're going to promise to love each other forever.

LARRY
Aww, that's sweet. So... you've never had sex before?

BIANCA
No. I'm pretty nervous. I want it to be perfect. I should text Jason.

Bianca reaches into her purse. Larry thinks quickly.

LARRY
Hey, you know, it's good to be relaxed. But you don't want to be too relaxed. Here, this may help.

Larry dips a cup in the punch bowl and hands it to Bianca. She looks skeptically at him.

LARRY (CONT'D)
The sugar will make you feel better.

Bianca hesitates... then takes a sip. She makes a face.

BIANCA
Is there alcohol in this? I don't really drink.

LARRY
Only a little to balance out the sweetness. C'mon, take another sip.

Bianca does so absentmindedly.

LARRY (CONT'D)
There you go. That will help you loosen up and get into it.

BIANCA
What do you mean get into it? What do I have to do?

LARRY
Well, you know. You do know, right? Be a little... sexy.

BIANCA
Sexy. How?

LARRY
Well you just move... like this. Can I show you?

Bianca nods yes. Larry takes her cup and sets it down. He grabs Bianca at the waist and grinds into her.

LARRY (CONT'D)
See, and now you move back when I move forward.

The SONG "Paris (Ooh La La)" by Grace Potter begins to play.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Hear this? This is a sexy song. Just move to it.

Bianca breaks free from Larry grasp and reaches for her handbag.

BIANCA
I'm not sure I should be doing this. I have to call Jason.

She rummages for the phone... but comes up empty.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
I can't find it.

Larry hands her back the glass of punch.

LARRY
Don't worry, I'm sure he's here
somewhere. Have one more sip and
then we'll go find him.

Bianca takes a healthy sip from the cup.

Bianca begins to feel the music... and in her drug-fueled haze, she starts to slowly sway to it.

Larry takes Bianca's hand and moves her toward the center of the room. Larry waves to Kurt, who begins his trek back.

Bianca gyrates seductively, the beat controlling her.

Larry presses in close to Bianca, throwing his torso into her while she lets the music inhabit her.

Over Larry's shoulder, in the distance but getting closer, Bianca sees a blurry outline of the dark-skinned Kurt.

BIANCA
Jason?

Kurt walks up to Bianca while Larry moves behind her.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
Jason!

Bianca grabs Kurt and kisses him. He's taken aback, but doesn't resist.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
I missed you. I'm here for you.
Let's promise before God to love
each other. Then we can be together.

Kurt nods yes. Larry indicates to Kurt that they should dance Bianca over toward one of the bedrooms.

Bianca's hands hang on Kurt's neck as he backs up and pulls her forward with him. Larry follows from behind, his hands on Bianca's waist.

The two men orchestrate Bianca over to a bedroom door. They move past a MALE STUDENT and through the doorway.

The student peeks in as the door closes. A look of recognition crosses his face.

He tries the doorknob, but it's locked. He hastily retrieves his phone and dials.

DORMITORY APARTMENT BEDROOM

Bianca and Kurt kiss each other over to the bed. Bianca pushes him down and gets on top of him.

Larry, his back to the door, observes in delight, waiting for his moment to join in.

Bianca throws her head back as she straddles Kurt, as he works the buttons of her blouse open.

INT. DORMITORY - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jason's phone rings.

JASON

Yo.

Jason listens... and his face fills with anger and fear.

JASON (CONT'D)

Don't move, I'm on my way!

INT. DORMITORY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bianca, down to her bra, sits atop Kurt. She kisses him while he works his hands under her skirt.

BIANCA

Jason... I love you.

Larry moves closer to the bed. Kurt unhooks and slides off Bianca's bra. He fondles her breasts.

Larry removes his jeans and kneels on the bed.

Kurt spins Bianca onto her back. He works her underwear down with one hand while he kisses her neck.

Then Kurt works his pants down. Larry, on his knees and down to his underwear, moves closer to Bianca's face.

Kurt begins to thrust. Bianca puts her hands on his chest... and gradually... her haze begins to lift.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Wha - wha? What's happening?

LARRY

Shhh - don't worry. We'll take good care of you.

Bianca SCREAMS.

INT. DORMITORY APARTMENT - NIGHT

The male student that phoned Jason inserts a key and opens the bedroom door. Jason, in a full sprint, flies past him.

EXT. CAMPUS STREET - NIGHT

A crowd has gathered as Kurt and Larry are led from the dormitory in handcuffs and placed in a police cruiser.

Bianca, wrapped in a blanket, is barely coherent. Jason holds her while he gives information MOS to an officer.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - NIGHT

The doorknob moves to the left.

FOYER

The door opens. Anna enters the dark house. She treads gingerly toward the staircase.

GERARD (O.S.)

Hi mom.

LIVING ROOM

Gerard sits in an easy chair in the darkened room.

ANNA (O.S.)

Honey? What are you doing there?
Are you okay?

Gerard leans forward in his chair.

GERARD

I'm fine mom. How are you doing?

Anna enters the room. She eyes Gerard curiously.

ANNA

Why are you sitting in the dark?

GERARD

Oh, I don't know. Just thinking.

Anna takes a seat in the Queen Anne chair next to Gerard, her trepidation evident.

ANNA

Are you sure you're okay? Is there something bothering you?

Gerard holds up the pill caddy.

Anna peers in, doing her best to feign surprise.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Are those your father's pills? I thought I threw those away.

GERARD

You know mom, I have to hand it to you. You knew dad like a book. Rushing in, rushing out. Never paid attention to the little things. Needed you to keep him organized. Of course he'd pop open Monday and swallow it without thinking.

ANNA

Honey, I have no idea what you're talking about.

GERARD

See, there are two doses of his high blood pressure medication in each slot. And he was only supposed to take one.

Anna freezes in a veneer of calm.

ANNA

Really? I must have made a mistake. Here, let me see that.

Anna reaches out her hand. Gerard pulls the caddy back and tucks it under his arm.

GERARD

And curiously? No heart medication. In any of these. So I looked it up. Blood pressure too low? You run the risk of another heart attack. Only a matter of time. Seeing as he was also one medication short. The one that would have prevented it. So stuff him full of salami sandwiches and wait. Right?

Anna goes into full attack mode.

ANNA

Are you serious? Are you accusing me of something?

GERARD

Really mom? That's the best you can do? You caused his second heart attack, and that's the best you got?

Anna points at Gerard, her face a venomous twist of anger.

ANNA

How dare you. How dare you! You better be careful. I'm still your mother goddammit!

Gerard folds his arms in a show of impenetrable confidence.

GERARD

So you wouldn't mind if I called the cops and told them what I found?

Anna goes limp. All the fight has been beaten out of her.

ANNA

He hated you. He hated all of us. Except for Bianca.

Gerard leaps out of the chair and crouches over Anna.

GERARD

Are you nuts? He hated us? That's your excuse? You killed him!

Anna rises.

ANNA

And suddenly you care? You hated him too! You couldn't wait for him to go!

Gerard makes two fists and shakes them violently.

GERARD

God, what does that mean? I care because you killed a man, mom! You killed your husband!

Anna attempts to put a hand over Gerard's mouth. He pushes her away.

ANNA

Please, don't let your sister hear.

GERARD

Is that all you're concerned about? Don't worry, no one's home.

ANNA

I didn't kill him! I didn't!

GERARD

Well tell me then, mom! What do you call it? Huh? Tell me!

Anna takes a seat. She holds her face in her hands and starts to cry.

ANNA

It was a mistake! I didn't mean to... You don't know what it was like. What it was like to be in a marriage with him. Where that man - all he cared about was... that damn church. And his women. God, he wasn't even careful at the end! He flaunted them in my face. Bullying everyone. Letting them think they would be part of something great. And they'd miss out... they wouldn't be a part of the birth of the next great preacher if they said anything. You think you know... but you don't know anything.

GERARD

I know more than you think.

ANNA

You think you know more than you think! He told you nothing. Everything went through A.J.

Gerard looks down, a ponderous look on his face.

GERARD

Unbelievable. You know? The way you all condescend to me? The way you look at me. Except for Bee.

Gerard looks up. He points at Anna in anger.

GERARD (CONT'D)

Yeah, I deal pot. And I don't believe in God. But you're a fucking murderer, mom!

ANNA

It wasn't my fault! You can't prove it! Your father was not going to get better. His doctors even told him if he kept up that pace, he'd be right back there... where he eventually ended up.

GERARD

Great mom. Great excuse. I'm sure it helps you sleep at night. I mean, I know you hated him but... why? What made you do this?

Anna explodes in a flurry of tears and sobs.

ANNA

I had to! I had to protect my babies! He did something terrible! To all of us! I tried to talk him out of it. But his mind was made up.

GERARD

What, mom? What was he going to do that was so bad?

Anna opens her purse. She flings a piece of paper at Gerard.

ANNA

This! This.

Gerard rises. He turns on a lamp and picks the paper up off the floor.

GERARD

What is this?

ANNA

You remember the meeting we had with the cable network last year.

GERARD

Yeah? They turned him down.

ANNA

That's not where it ended. You wanted to know. Read it.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert clutches the device against his will. Mary cocks her head while trying to sort out the signals she's receiving.

MARY

So many juicy things coming through. But why are you thinking about a book you threw away?

Albert drops the device in shock... and then retrieves it.

MARY (CONT'D)

Gerard gave it to you. This book claimed to have scientific proof of the existence of God. Huh, that's a laugh, isn't it?

ALBERT

My son was trying to connect with me. I respected him for that. But the book was trash.

Mary pauses... as an ironic smile takes form.

MARY

"The Physics of Immortality" by Doctor Frank Tipler. Know it well. Lucky for you I've met physicists who've mentioned it. I won't bore you with the math, however he talks about the universe eventually being able to replicate every logical possibility via computing power, and all existence eventually converging into an Omega Point. Which would be your God. There all the answers would be, as all past and present consciousness merges with the infinite intelligence that has been hard-wired into the fabric of the cosmos. I must say it's a very powerful theory. I think he got some minor bits wrong, however his essential premise is strong.

ALBERT

I didn't understand most of it. All I know is it said God would be created in the future. And that's -

MARY

Rubbish? Course it is, preacher. So you admit to reading some of it?

Albert does his best to avoid Mary's eyes.

ALBERT

Out of a morbid curiosity.

MARY

Well this makes much more sense now. The book made you doubt your faith. Added to the questions you already had. I told you that doubt always explains one's presence here. And here you sit.

Albert removes his hand from the device. His face reddens. His eyes narrow.

ALBERT

No... here I dream! I am not here! You are not here! This is nothing but a vivid hallucination! I will accept no other explanation!

MARY

Fantastic. Square one again, is it? Believe what you want. You'll just find it harder than it has to be.

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gerard eyes the paper... then looks at Anna.

GERARD

Where did you get this?

ANNA

When they rejected the simulcast...
they pitched him on a reality show.

GERARD

You're kidding.

INT. ROOM - DAY

A mocking laugh escapes Mary.

MARY

So would you like know all the
naughty bits I found?

Albert covers his shame with bravado.

ALBERT

You said you've met everyone,
right? So you must have seen all
sorts of horrible people. I can't
imagine you're all that shocked by
anything I've done.

MARY

Yes, I've met more than my share of
unsavory characters. Some truly
frightening people. And no, after
the stories I've heard about the
atrocities your kind has committed,
nothing shocks me any longer. Some
of you were sorry. And some
weren't. Some were mentally ill and
thus not responsible. They couldn't
understand the hurt they caused.
But in my book there's nothing
worse than a hypocrite. Someone who
deludes himself into thinking he's
committed crimes on the side of
right. The moral relativist who
chides others for the same
behaviors in which he feels
justified, because somehow he's
special. Because those people never
learn. And their evils perpetuate,
and they go unpunished. And your
planet churns them out in droves.

ALBERT

Are you actually saying that I'm worse than a murderer because you consider me to be a hypocrite?

MARY

It's the difference between sick or deluded, and entitled.

ALBERT

Wait, tap your ear again. Does that speaker tell you we had an outstanding missionary program? That we went overseas to deliver food and to build homes and to clean up the water system?

MARY

And came back with paying customers in the form of converts, no doubt.

ALBERT

And how does any of this make me a moral - what did you call it?

MARY

Moral relativist. So here's how. You get angry if a rich person like Donald Trump cheats on his taxes. And you get angry if a struggling person works the system for food stamps. However for you? A little cheating is okay, because it's justified. In your case, in the name of your God and your church. Donald Trump feels the same way. The tax code is unfair, so why not cheat it, and the struggling worker needs the extra money so he can buy his children shoes. However it's not any less wrong in one scenario over the other. Actually I've met very few humans who don't think this way. You all think the rules apply to others, but not to yourselves. And all of you berate the other lawbreaker, yet you never turn that scrutiny on yourself.

The words hit Albert like a two by four across the forehead.

ALBERT

I may not have been a boy scout, but I respected... I had respect... I was a good person. Not perfect. But I was a good person.

MARY

My dear boy, denial is not what this process is about. I assume you've never heard of Kant?

Albert shakes his head no.

MARY (CONT'D)

One of your German philosophers. Came up with a rule of ethics called the Categorical Imperative. Act as if your behavior was a universal law. You know why liars like yourself are successful? Because others tell the truth. If everyone lied? Lies would be the norm, and the opposite of the lie would by rule be the truth. It's because honest people exist that deceptive people can thrive.

ALBERT

That's no different than Matthew seven-twelve. Do unto others.

MARY

Oh but it's much deeper than that. If you're a creep, and you're okay with others treating you as such, then you'd be doing unto others in your creepy way, and expecting no less in return.

Albert looks at the device in his hand. He opens and closes his fingers... then again... then makes a fist around it.

ALBERT

Fine. You want me to say it? Fine! I was a fraud. My wife and I... we started out with good intentions. We truly believed in what we were doing. And then it was so easy. To take the shortcuts. She became seduced first though. She'll tell you it was me, but... she loved the life. The power. And then it captured us both. She was fine with what we needed to do. Until...

MARY

Until your lust got the best of you?

Albert glares daggers at Mary.

ALBERT

What? You want me to say I was weak? Okay! I was weak!

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna gestures for Gerard to read from the paper.

GERARD

"Since you are not going forward with the services simulcast we have begun the investigation..."

Gerard's eyes move from left to right and back again.

GERARD (CONT'D)

This is from one of the office staff to the network. And the reply is from a private investigator?

ANNA

They got one of the employees to turn on us. For money. Fortunately she checked her home e-mail online while she was at work. And your father, paranoid bastard that he was, had screen capture software on all the office computers.

GERARD

This is unbelievable.

Gerard returns to reading. His jaw slowly drops open.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert bangs his fist on the table and yells MOS at Mary.

GERARD (V.O.)

"Martignetti's message is not differentiated enough. He is a classic bible-thumper, a find God through faith preacher."

Mary folds her hands and speaks MOS to Albert.

GERARD (V.O.)

"His church does perform outreach through ministry programs, however not enough to make him sympathetic. He is not another Joel Osteen and he is not a Southern Baptist, so no one will care about his message. Appeal will be in the difficulties of his home life, combined with the stresses of running a ministry."

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gerard stares at the paper while Anna watches in terror.

GERARD (V.O.)

"Martignetti has a mistress he sees on a regular basis.... a member of the congregation. Also observed in the company of other females."

GERARD

Dad was fooling around?

Gerard looks up at Anna. She looks away. So he continues.

GERARD (CONT'D)

"The wife also has regular lover. Another church member." Mom?

Anna looks down, as tears stream down her cheeks.

ANNA

Don't you dare judge me. You have no room to judge. You don't know what it was like. You have no idea!

INT./EXT. A.J.'S CAR - STREET OUTSIDE THEATER - NIGHT

A.J. is now parked a few feet from the theater entrance.

GERARD (V.O.)

"Two sons... older son observed visiting areas of New York City known for homosexual activity."

EXT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Jason walks Bianca from the curb to the driveway apron. An orderly meets them with a wheelchair.

GERARD (V.O.)

"Daughter is involved in an interracial relationship. Appears to have social problems... exhibits an unhealthy devotion to the church and her father."

Jason wheels Bianca through the automatic doors.

INT./EXT. A.J.'S CAR - STREET OUTSIDE THEATER - NIGHT

A.J. watches Craig exit the theater.

GERARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 "Church activities. Financials do not show breakdowns... unclear what Martignetti pays himself."

Craig notices A.J., and stops in his tracks.

GERARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 "Real estate... Church outbid a 501(c)(3) organization that was evaluating purchase for food bank or homeless shelter. Likely bid rigging, with other examples in background... obviously Martignetti is a member of NIMBY."

A.J. lowers the passenger window and waives Craig over.

A.J.
 Hey old buddy, where you headed?

GERARD (V.O.)
 "Older son seems to be aware of all nefarious activities."

Craig slowly approaches the vehicle. He sees the gun on the passenger seat. A.J.'s hand moves over top of it.

GERARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 "Congregation known to include several high ranking Lucchese members... informant believes Martignetti is laundering funds."

Craig leans his face into the window. He feigns affability.

CRAIG
 Hey stranger! You know you're not going to need that... right?

GERARD (V.O.)
 "Family is a train wreck. You can pull the plug on Martignetti anytime with an indictment down the road. Will be a ratings coup."

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gerard hunts for the easy chair while staring at the paper. He parks himself, while Anna sobs silently from her seat.

Gerard looks up, shocked... and then looks at Anna.

Anna can no longer look at her son. She holds a tissue to her face as absolute sorrow continues to possess her.

ANNA

It's true. It's all true.

Gerard looks back down.

ANNA (CONT'D)

You see? Do you see why I did what I did? I had to protect you. I had to protect my babies!

GERARD

I don't understand. Why?

ANNA

Because your father was an idiot! A.J. found out about the e-mail. We never told your father about the informant. He would have panicked and done something stupid. He and A.J. had already signed for the show before we knew! They just assumed the rest of us would sign on for it. They didn't see the harm. They played on your father's vanity. They told him it was going to be tasteful. Mostly church activities. Some of his sermons. And then some home life. He had no idea what they were planning. What they already knew. And when he got sick it bought us some time. If we backed out of the deal the network would have sued him for breach of contract. They could have taken everything from us!

Gerard rises. He goes to the window, and stares out.

GERARD

So this was about money. Like everything else in this family.

Anna rises and moves toward Gerard. He turns to face her.

ANNA

This was about me protecting this family! He would have wrecked everyone's lives. Can't you see that? I did it for all of you!

GERARD

And for you too, huh? So you can continue to fuck your boyfriend?

Anna levels her index finger with purpose at Gerard.

ANNA

You watch your mouth when you speak to me! I'm not going to discuss my marriage with my children. I'm far from perfect. But don't you ever, EVER question my love for you three!

Gerard looks back down at the paper... and something he reads startles him.

GERARD

You're fucking kidding me. Mrs. Donoghue was the rat? The one who moved back to Arizona after her house was firebombed?

Anna clutches her chest.

ANNA

You see? You see what I have to do now because of your father? I have to figure out how to keep my other son out of prison!

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert puts the device on the table. He looks at Mary. She acknowledges that this time he's allowed to leave it there.

MARY

You seem fairly at ease with it all. Are you sorry for anything?

ALBERT

Yes I am. Does it make a difference to you? You're the one that said there's no God. And there's no punishment. There's just you and me.

MARY

And you're the one who doesn't believe any of it.

Albert rises from the chair in a storm of anger.

ALBERT

You're playing games with me again! Great, now you know all my dirty secrets. I am who I am! And I did what I did! What happens now?

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gerard sits alone in darkened room.

He labors to his feet. He surveys the cold, empty house.

A BUZZ emanates from his pocket. He retrieves his phone. A MISSED CALL from JASON.

Gerard puts the phone to his ear...

GERARD

Oh shit.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert pounds the table, still foaming in anger.

ALBERT

If you're not going to tell me what happens to me, then I'm leaving!

MARY

That's simply not possible.

ALBERT

And nothing you say can be verified!

MARY

That's true. However? There aren't any cherubs with tiny horns fluttering around beside you, are there? No blue-robed virgins? No holy men with halos? And if I understand your religious narrative correctly, your Purgatory can last centuries, can it not?

Albert excitedly points at Mary.

ALBERT

So you admit it! That's where I am!

MARY

No. That's not what I'm saying at all. I'm merely pointing out that even within your own narrative, your impatience reveals you as what you are - a petulant, unrepentant, vile human being.

Albert is not only stung by the words, but by Mary's matter-of-fact delivery.

ALBERT

You're wrong. I've reflected on my behavior. I've repented! I've said I'm sorry! I'll do whatever it takes to make amends to my God. I just need to see him! I've confessed my sins. What more can I do? What more do you want from me!

MARY

I don't want anything from you.

ALBERT

That's it! I've had enough.

MARY

Sit down. Please.

ALBERT

And what if I don't want to sit?
What if I decide I want to touch
you and test this ridiculous,
exploding theory of yours?

Mary stares pointedly at Albert. She slowly claps her hands.

MARY

Wow. Fantastic. So you're so upset
that you'd like to obliterate all
you've ever known? Cause the
premature demise of billions?

ALBERT

There's no danger of that. Because
it's a lie!

Mary raises her hand... and an unseen force returns Albert
to his seat against his will.

Shock spreads across Albert's face. He struggles to rise
from the chair... and he cannot.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

What's happening? I thought you
said you didn't have any powers?

MARY

I don't.

ALBERT

Then why can't I get up?

MARY

That's the multiverse acting
against you. I've seen it happen
before. Call it a built-in
preservation system. But the energy
I spoke of earlier? It won't let
you destroy everything. Maybe
that's your God at work. Or mine.

Albert twists at the torso in an attempt to free himself.

ALBERT

Make it stop. Please!

MARY

Can't do it. I told you, I'm not in charge. And don't bother with the struggle. No one's ever gotten out of that chair. Ever.

INT. GERARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gerard drives. Bianca, belted into the passenger seat, does her best to struggle into the fetal position.

NEWSCASTER (ON RADIO)

"An earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter Scale has killed an estimated twelve hundred people in the city of Quetta in Pakistan."

Gerard shuts the radio. He rubs his eyes with his free hand.

GERARD

Man. Have to wonder why God lets these things happen.

BIANCA

You don't believe in God.

Bianca touches her forehead and winces.

Gerard sniffs. He's successfully suppressing his tears.

GERARD

Bee... are you okay?

BIANCA

I don't want to talk about it.

GERARD

I want to help.

Bianca struggles to sit up.

BIANCA

You can't help.

GERARD

Bee, please. You know I love you.

BIANCA

Don't worry big brother. I'm still a virgin.

Gerard puts his hand to his forehead.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door opens. Gerard and Bianca enter.

Gerard flicks on the kitchen light.

GERARD

A.J.?

No answer. Bianca collapses onto the couch.

GERARD (CONT'D)

I didn't see his car.

BIANCA

I want to go home.

GERARD

Bee, I told you. I can't take you there right now.

BIANCA

When?

GERARD

Just get some sleep here. I'll stay with you. I promise.

INT./EXT. A.J.'S CAR - ALLEY BEHIND THEATER - NIGHT

A.J. sits in the driver's seat, his head back, eyes closed.

Craig's head bobs up and down in A.J.'s lap.

A.J. squints, and lets out a long, deep breath.

Craig lifts his head and runs his sleeve across his mouth. He sits upright in the passenger seat while A.J. zips up.

CRAIG

I told you that you weren't going to need that gun.

A.J.

Don't test me Craig.

Craig waives his hand and laughs.

CRAIG

Oh please. If you had any sort of stomach I'd be dead already. And you wouldn't have needed my help in the first place.

Craig holds out his hand. A.J. goes into his pocket and pulls out a wad of bills. He slaps it into Craig's hand.

A.J.

You're a disgrace.

CRAIG

Hah! Pot and kettle, sweetie.

Craig pats A.J. on the knee.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Look, no worries. I'll keep all your secrets for you. And look at it this way, you learned the most important lesson someone can learn. Never go into business with the guy you're fucking.

A.J. wraps his hand around the gun, now located between the driver's side door and his chair.

A.J.

You were supposed to be low key.

CRAIG

Well, don't blame me honey. Sometimes fires get out of control.

A.J. takes his right hand and puts it around Craig's head. He pulls Craig close and plants a hard kiss on his lips.

A.J. begins to sob, softly... Craig notices and tries to pull away. A.J. tightens his grip on Craig's head.

A.J. produces the gun with his left hand. He levels it at Craig while keeping his death grip around his neck.

Craig's eyes light up in fear. He pushes at A.J.'s chest, desperately trying to free himself.

A.J.'s sobs grow more intense... and audible... and he lets Craig go. Craig inhales and exhales deeply.

A.J. is inconsolable... he rubs at his eyes with his right hand, while lazily waiving the gun with his left.

A.J.

It's not my fault! This is not my fault! I didn't ask for this!

Fright inhabits Craig's entire being. A.J. vulnerably extends his arms, gun still present in his left hand. Craig fights through his terror and gives A.J. a hug.

CRAIG

I know sweetie. I know.

A.J.

What am I supposed to do now?

CRAIG

Don't worry. You keep opening
daddy's checkbook and all your
secrets are safe with me.

Craig forcefully extricates himself from the clench, while
A.J. composes himself.

A.J.

I'm not paying you any more.

CRAIG

Look, this has been... fun, I
guess? In a twisted way. And it's
always great doing business with
you. But I gotta go. Kay?

Craig opens the passenger door.

A.J. swings the gun around with his left hand. He levels it
atop his right arm. He mimics gunshot sounds.

A.J.

Pyew! Pyew!

Craig exits the vehicle and slams the door. He slowly
retreats without turning his back on A.J.

A.J. takes the gun off his right arm and holds it upright.

Craig is spooked by the sound of a POLICE SIREN. He takes
off running.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

Gun!

A.J. pivots to the left in an attempt to ascertain the
source of the sound... and in the process, he carelessly
swings the gun into full view through the driver's window.

A POLICE OFFICER empties his weapon, shattering the window
and the windshield...

A.J. is hit several times in the back, shoulder and chest.

A.J.'s eyes grow wide in utter shock... his head wobbles...
and his body sways... as the life drains out of him.

A.J.'s head hits the steering wheel... with finality.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gerard, asleep on a chair, awakens fitfully.

He looks at Bianca, who's still asleep on the couch.

Gerard checks his cell phone. It's 4:34 AM. He walks to the window and lifts a slat of the blinds.

He presses a button on his phone and puts it to his ear.

INT./EXT. A.J.'S CAR - ALLEY BEHIND THEATER - NIGHT

A.J.'s lifeless body slumps toward the door. His car is surrounded by FIVE POLICEMEN with weapons drawn.

A.J.'s cell phone RINGS.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Anna sits on the edge of the bed and buttons her blouse. Her lover is still asleep.

Anna slips into her heels and picks up her purse. She looks back at the bed... and then leaves without saying goodbye.

INT. A.J.'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bianca, asleep on the couch, stirs... then awakens.

BIANCA

Gerard?

Gerard goes to the couch and touches Bianca on the shoulder.

GERARD

I'm here.

Bianca looks around the apartment, trying to orient herself.

BIANCA

Why are we in A.J.'s apartment?

GERARD

Don't you remember? I couldn't take you home last night.

BIANCA

But why?

GERARD

Look, you had a rough night. I promise I'll tell you soon.

BIANCA

Where is A.J.?

Gerard sighs as he thoughtfully ponders the question.

GERARD

I don't know Bee. I called him but he didn't answer.

Bianca swings her legs off the couch and sits up.

BIANCA

I want to go home. I want to sleep
in my own bed.

Gerard looks at his sister with deep concern.

GERARD

I know you do. We can't right now.
You have to trust me.

BIANCA

No Gerard. Take me home.

GERARD

Bee, I can't. Where did you get the
Xanax? Was it mom's?

Bianca sheepishly nods yes. Gerard throws up his hands in
frustration.

BIANCA

What Gerard? I did it. It was my
fault. You should be upset with me.

Gerard finds the nearest wall and throws a jab into it.

GERARD

Gerard! Stop! What are you doing?
Why, did mom do something?

Bianca can see by Gerard's silence that the answer is yes.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Albert gradually tires of the struggle to free himself.

Mary stares at him with almost pure hate.

MARY

You know what fascinates me about
your kind? The utter wastefulness
of it all. You build your
civilizations on the backs of the
oppressed. Your greed and savagery
has followed you throughout the
ages. And now, with the world at
your fingertips, you do nothing
with it. You spend your time
watching your telly and playing on
your computers. You want nothing
more than to be entertained.

Mary stands and places her hands on the desk.

MARY (CONT'D)

Why do you still have the hungry and the homeless? So you can pay your athletes to hit a ball over a fence? And why all the war? Why all the division? Why do you not all speak the same language? Oh no mate, our country is better than yours, and we've got the bombs to prove it! Just like your God is better than the others, right?

Albert manages to free an arm, and point his finger at Mary.

ALBERT

Now you listen here -

MARY

No, you listen! You know who my favorite was out of all of your kind? John Lennon. Fantastic guy. Respectful. Peaceful. And you know what? He got it. He was right. About everything. And not only didn't you listen to him? You shot him. I tell you, sometimes... sometimes I hate you. Sometimes I hate all of you! You know it never fails to amaze me. That you would think you have a direct pipeline to your God. Why should you? What makes you so special? I created you! And I don't have the slightest inkling of who my God is!

Mary clasps her hands together. She breathes deeply.

MARY (CONT'D)

Now sit there and listen, Alfred.

ALBERT

It's Albert.

Mary waves her hand dismissively at Albert.

Then her attention is captured by the sound of FOOTSTEPS.

Mary turns toward the sound, then turns back to Albert. Her controlled exterior is gone, replaced by genuine surprise.

Albert sees Mary's panic and reacts with delight.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I knew it! You've been lying to me! My God is coming to judge me. He knows I've dedicated my life to him.

Mary's fright dissipates... and is replaced by curiosity.

MARY

No he's not. At least if everything I know about this experience is true. I can honestly say that in the billions of years I've been here, this has never happened.

Albert closes his eyes.

ALBERT

Thank you Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for coming for me. I know I have sinned and I am heartily sorry.

The door creaks open...

And in walks PETER.

Curly-haired, very proper yet deferential, his amber glow is brighter and sharper than Mary's or Albert's.

His eyes meet Mary's. They recognize each other.

First there's shock... then they each shudder with happiness. Both possessed by tearless, joyous sobs.

Then there's love. An incredible love that could only be borne from absence and heartache over millions of millennia.

Mary and Peter beam that love toward each other in their eyes... and in their smiles.

Mary leaps forward as if she wants to run to Peter. He furrows his brow, and cautions her with his hands.

Mary tilts her head in contemplation.

Mary nods. She moves her lips, however nothing audible emanates. Peter does the same... and again, nothing.

Albert opens his eyes. He watches the exchange in exasperated helplessness.

PETER

As I suspected.

MARY

We can't communicate in our language any longer. It's on a different frequency than theirs.

ALBERT

What's going on? Who is this?

Albert's plea temporarily breaks the couple's love spell.
Mary gulps and swallows... and finally composes herself.

MARY

This is my... I can't believe I'm
saying this! This is my husband!

Peter beams. He waves a quick and polite hello to Albert.

PETER

Learned their languages, have we?

MARY

You too?

PETER

Of course.

MARY

My darling! I can't - I don't know
what to say! How? How is this
possible? I thought I killed you!

PETER

Semantics. None of that matters now
my love.

MARY

But - how - how are you here? Oh my
darling, I want to hold you!

PETER

Just a bit longer. It should be
possible. However, I think we
should share some information
first. Have you come to the
conclusion that we're anti-matter
and the Earthlings are matter?

Mary nods yes.

PETER (CONT'D)

So we should be in no danger?

Mary can barely contain her delight. Peter returns a smile.

MARY

Only one way to find out?

Mary approaches Peter timidly. They each extend an arm...
then a finger... and ever so gently... allow them to touch.

They are both safe. Albert exhales loudly.

Mary leaps into Peter's arms. They bury their faces in each other's bodies. They embrace as if the world didn't exist.

They release each other reluctantly. Peter drinks in Mary's essence... and she his.

MARY (CONT'D)

You don't seem surprised to see me?

PETER

I would have been. Except I've met several thousand people who told me about a woman called Mary. From their description... I just knew.

MARY

But I still don't understand - how?

PETER

I'm sure by now you've realized everything I have. And the only explanation is that for whatever reason, my energy is moving slightly faster than yours.

MARY

But that means that -

Peter puts a finger vertical to his nose.

PETER

Don't worry my darling. I've waited for what seemed like countless lifetimes for this moment. And now it is here. And it is real.

Mary smiles at Peter through her sobs.

PETER (CONT'D)

What's wrong, my sweet?

MARY

I did this to you! I condemned you to an eternity of capture! Moving among these ungrateful humans. Hearing the same stories. Giving the same explanations. For infinity! I did this to you! I know what it's like. I know! I've done it. It's their hell incarnate. Our hell! Oh my love! I'm so sorry! I wish I'd incinerated you in the accident! I'm so, so sorry!

Peter caresses Mary's cheek.

PETER

Oh my darling. You have nothing for which to apologize.

MARY

But I do! I know I do.

PETER

We were in that lab together. We were partners. Just like life. My love, I'm so glad I found you. I've waited so long to tell you that I've loved you for all eternity.

MARY

I have so much to say to you!

PETER

And I to you. However I fear that there is not much time. For some reason, I'm moving faster than you. Soon I will be gone. Gone in a way that none of us can yet comprehend. Yet more present than ever. I will experience whatever infinite existence is in store for us.

Mary's face is an equitable mixture of pure happiness and ultimate sadness. She launches herself into Peter's arms.

INT. GERARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gerard drives. Bianca is belted into the passenger seat, reclined in the fetal position, asleep.

Gerard hits a bump, which wakes up Bianca. She straightens up enough to get a look out the window.

BIANCA

Why are you heading West?

GERARD

Don't worry about it.

BIANCA

This is not the way home.

GERARD

I know.

BIANCA

Where are we going?

Gerard grips the wheel with both hands.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
Gerard, tell me what she did. I
want to go home!

A tear forms and slowly makes it down Gerard's cheek.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
What are you doing Gerard? I want
to see Mom!

Gerard sniffs, as he battles to choke back his emotions.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
I wasn't raped, you know. If that's
what you're worried about.

Gerard's losing his fight... tears are coming faster now.

BIANCA (CONT'D)
Are you ashamed of me now? It was a
mistake, Gerard. I made a mistake.

GERARD
Bee, it's not you. Something
happened at home. I don't think you
should be there right now. I'm
going to take you to my friend's
place for a while. We can stay
there until things calm down.

BIANCA
No! Gerard! I want to go home!

Gerard removes his left hand from the wheel. He feels for
the e-mail and the pill caddy, both underneath his seat.

EXT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Anna's car pulls into the driveway. She notices a police
cruiser parked at the curb with its lights flashing.

She exits the driver's side. She eyes the vehicle curiously
as she begins her way up the path.

She is met halfway by TWO POLICE OFFICERS who had been
standing at the front door.

The officers speak to Anna MOS for a few seconds... and
then Anna covers her mouth.

Her legs buckle... one of the officers catches her, yet she
continues to slide to the ground...

She crawls onto her knees and clutches at her chest,
wrecked with grief... shrieking uncontrollably.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mary and Peter peel themselves off each other. Mary takes her seat as Peter sizes up Albert.

PETER

Sorry, quite rude of me. I'm Mary's husband. I call myself Peter.

Albert closes his eyes. He inhales and exhales slowly.

MARY

My darling, Albert is a minister. Who's led a less than exemplary existence, let's just say.

Peter looks at Albert, then at Mary, and shakes his head knowingly and ruefully.

Mary's amber glow surges... and crests... and then returns to its former state. Albert, almost in awe, points at her.

MARY (CONT'D)

Yes. It's time. I must go see the next person.

ALBERT

No. You can't. We're not done yet. You can't leave me here alone. I still have more questions!

Mary looks at Albert sympathetically.

MARY

I'm truly sorry, mate. I know this is toughest on people like you.

Albert is able to stand. He starts to move forward...

then remembers the invisible barrier... and stays put.

ALBERT

No. What happens now? What happens to me? You have to tell me what happens to me!

MARY

Honestly? I've no idea. I go to meet with someone else. You? Can't say, really.

ALBERT

What! Is that all you can give me?

MARY

Your fate is your fate. I've no part in it. When I leave this room, I never see you again. And I don't know what happens to you.

Mary stands. She looks at Peter... and takes his hand.

MARY (CONT'D)

My guess is you merge with all of your possible trajectories throughout history. All the Alberts that have ever been will come together in a total compilation of life force. And in that light, maybe you'll find all your answers. Sort of like Tipler says. There's some comfort in that, isn't there?

Albert shakes his head furiously.

ALBERT

No. No, this can't be happening. Please! This can't be happening!

MARY

Course I don't know how long that will take once I leave. Could feel like the blink of an eye. Or it could feel like billions of years.

Albert pinches himself violently on the arm.

ALBERT

Wake up! Wake up! No. No, don't go! Please! A few more questions?

MARY

You know, time's a funny thing. We're not bound by it now. So all the other Alberts should be dead too. Yet here you sit. I've never figured that one out. All the choices you didn't make? All the roads you didn't travel? There's an Albert who did. I guess there are countless Marys meeting with countless Alberts as we speak. And they should all be released very soon. Or? Perhaps the multiverse is stranger than any of us can imagine.

ALBERT

No... please don't go... One more minute! PLEASE!

INT. GERARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gerard drives while holding the pill caddy and e-mail in his left hand. Bianca is shaking, near hysterics.

GERARD

Bee, please calm down. I will tell you. But I can't do it now. We have to wait. Trust me. Please?

BIANCA

No! Tell me now. What's going on at home? Why can't I know? Take me home! I don't want to go with you!

Gerard drops the caddy and the e-mail and puts his left hand to his head.

GERARD

Bee please. Mom... she did something. Something not so great. I don't think home is the best place for you right now.

BIANCA

Why? Because I'm crazy? Because I made a mistake? You all think I'm crazy now!

GERARD

No, I don't think you're crazy. Please, I have to take you -

BIANCA

No! Either you tell me what mom did, or you bring me home! Now!

The choice seems simple to Gerard... yet impossible.

He reaches for the caddy and the e-mail again... when his PHONE RINGS.

The Bluetooth screen says one word: HOME.

A second RING... and Gerard does nothing.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Answer it.

A third RING...

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Answer it!

Gerard pushes the button mid-fourth RING.

GERARD

Mom.

ANNA

(on speaker, crying)

Gerard! Where are you? Where is

Bianca? Where are my babies?

Gerard! Where are my babies!

Gerard fishes his phone out of his pocket and disconnects the Bluetooth. He holds the phone to his ear.

GERARD

(on phone)

Mom, what's wrong?

INT. MARTIGNETTI HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Anna sits on the floor, her back propped up by the couch, phone receiver to her ear. She's in shock.

ANNA

(quietly sobbing)

Gerard... Come home. Please! It's your brother. I'm sorry! I'm sorry for what I did! Please... it's your brother... you need to come home.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mary and Peter turn and head toward the door.

Albert is frozen in fear.

ALBERT

Wait. Isn't there something?

Anything you can give me? Please?

INT./EXT. GERARD'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Gerard holds the phone to his ear. Tears stream down his face in torrents.

BIANCA

Gerard! What's wrong? What's happening!

Gerard disconnects the call. Bianca punches him in the arm.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Why are you crying? What did mom say? Tell me!

Gerard wipes his tears. He grips the wheel with both hands... knitting his brow in steely-eyed concentration.

Bianca breaks down. She returns to the fetal position... crying out of sheer helplessness.

Gerard fights every impulse he has to turn around...

And then gives in. He breaks the car sharply... and gets it into a left turn lane... and makes a U-turn.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Gerard's car heads in the opposite direction. He and Bianca are going home.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Mary stops at the door... and turns to face Albert.

MARY

Have you ever heard of Solipsism?

Albert manages to shake his head no.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's the outlandish theory that we're all a dream of some giant sleeping being. That only you exist, and the rest of us are conjured up by your imagination. Rubbish of course. However some of you have theorized that what passes for a near death experience, or the experience of Heaven, is actually a dying brain's coping mechanism. You experience a rush of chemicals as the body dies. And the brain fights against its own annihilation. So it conjures up images. Icons. Myths. Stories handed down to you through Jungian collective consciousness. And just perhaps? That moment of death? That takes a second on Earth? Once released from your corporeal time, it could seem like days, or thousands of years, or perhaps even an eternity to the brain that's dying. Maybe that's your afterlife. Maybe that's your Heaven. Maybe THIS is your Heaven. It's kind of a good reason to be a good person... isn't it?

Albert stares at Mary and Peter... eyes wide... mouth agape.

MARY (CONT'D)

Course I don't believe that.
Because I know I'm not a dream.

Mary and Peter step into the doorway.

MARY (CONT'D)
Best of luck to you. And again, I'm
truly sorry.

ALBERT
Nooooo!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mary shuts the door to the room that Albert still inhabits.

The hallway leads to dozens of rooms on either side... and
seems to stretch into infinity.

Mary and Peter begin toward the next door.

ALBERT (O.S.)
Nooooo! Nooooo! Please! Someone
help me! Please! Oh God, please!

Mary freezes as Albert's guttural SOBS and WAILS echo down
the hallway.

Mary looks down. Peter puts a finger under her chin and
lifts her face to his. He smiles.

INT. ADJACENT ROOM - DAY

An identical room - a long table, an empty chair...

And at the other end of the table...

In glowing amber... amidst huge surges of electricity...

There is A.J.

MARY (V.O.)
As long as I live, I'll never get
used to that sound.

FADE OUT.

SUPER (OVER BLACK):

*"I believe in God, but not as one thing, not as an old man
in the sky. I believe that what people call God is
something in all of us. I believe that what Jesus and
Mohammed and Buddha and all the rest said was right. It's
just that the translations have gone wrong." - John Lennon*

SUPER (OVER BLACK):

*For Tony "Butchie" Russo, who either knows all the secrets
to the universe, or knows nothing. Hope it's the first one.*