

# THE FINAL BROADCAST



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The Final Broadcast is set in a small unnamed city -- a forgotten place like Terra Haute, Indiana or Cheyenne, Wyoming. A religious community where the image of Christ or a crucifix is never far away. The Final Broadcast takes place in an era neither here nor there. It could be 2012 as easily as 1952. It's a vacuum; an America that exists only in our collective unconscious. The kind of place Edward Hopper might have painted. A parallel universe where things are just a bit different; a bit odd. There's a sense of déjà vu that hangs over everything like a lonesome, bad dream. A lonesome, bad dream you just can't shake.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An old tube television plays to no one in the musty living room of a cozy ranch home. It is tuned into this week's episode of The Stars And You.

CLOSE ON TV

HENRY CARNEGIE (65) stands amid the blinking, technicolor lights and retro outfittings of a gaudy, intergalactic spaceship. Beyond that, nothing but pitch black. Charlie Rose meets 2001: A Space Odyssey.

Henry's sharp blue eyes penetrate us. He's a forcefield of age-old intelligence in an ugly cardigan and beige turtleneck.

HENRY

What does it all add up to?  
Consciousness? Happiness? Love? Why  
is there something as opposed to  
nothing? What does it mean to be  
alive?

CUT TO:

THE STARS AND YOU - CLOSING MONTAGE

A celebration of existence -- from the origin of the cosmos to modern society -- barrels across the screen at a steady, metronome pace. This is what Earth's life would look like flashing before its eyes.

Supernovas. Black Holes. Eclipses. Dinosaurs. Asteroids. Extinction. Bacteria. Water. Cavemen. Civilization. America. Birth. Death. Home runs. Hitler. Gandhi. Elvis. Ali.

A tacky, synth SCORE lilts in the background, undercutting the poignancy of the images.

Then --

BLACK.

HENRY (V.O.)

The unknown. Us humans are obsessed with the unknown. We're in awe of it. We fear it. Is there life on other planets? Will they ever make contact? Does God exist? Is there a heaven? Or . . . is this all there is? Just us? Just us amid an infinite sea of blackness.

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT [ANIMATED]

BOOM.

An explosion of planets, suns and stardust rush toward us from an animated rendering of the big bang.

HENRY (V.O.)

Imagine all the other planets out there -- billions of light years away -- orbiting around suns in different galaxies for no one.

We watch as the remnants of the blast find order among the boundless macrocosms. Galaxies form, planets orbit suns, moons orbit planets, etc.

HENRY (V.O.)

A cosmic ballet with no audience and no purpose. Intergalactic clockwork measuring our mortality -- second by second, year by year -- until we are dead.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Through a vast and darkened soundstage, we rapidly push in on Henry as he concludes this week's episode.

HENRY

And sorry folks, but the truth is we're all going to die. You, me and everyone that has ever been. And when the time comes to greet the unknown, all the good intentions -- all the could-ofs and would-ofs and might have beens -- will be exactly that. And the person you hoped you would be someday; the person who stayed with diets and read all the books you said you'd read -- the person who would love and live and seize the day -- will be but a distant mirage. It will be gone. And the person you really are -- the one you thought you'd shed like snakeskin -- is the person that everyone will always remember you as; the person that will be etched forever into infinity.

The camera stops pushing forward and we end our dolly on a close-up of Henry. The set is dead still. Dead quiet.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Keep that in mind throughout the next week. Because there is no tomorrow. Not really. Not as far as the cosmos are concerned.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT [ON TV]

Once more, Henry's face infiltrates the anonymous homeowner's living room. He signs off this week's episode.

HENRY

I'm Henry Carnegie and this has been another episode of The Stars And You. Thank you and goodnight.

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TITLE CARD:    T H E       F I N A L       B R O A D C A S T

Note: A Saul Bass-esque TITLE SEQUENCE plays over the following string of scenes.

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EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

From high-up above, we track a vintage BMW snaking through a desert road. Massive power lines BUZZ around the small sedan and recede forever toward the horizon -- the arteries of our modern world.

The rising sun and a Hank Williams SONG on the radio imbue the strange wasteland with an eerie forboding; a ghostly electricity.

INT. BMW - DAY

The driver of the vehicle, GARY GLOSSUP (40), chews a handful of sunflower seeds and spits the shells into an empty can of OLD MILWAUKEE.

He was once a very handsome twenty-five year old, however many years and many six-packs have softened his features a bit; softened everything but his old school heritage and sense of resolve. He's a man cut from the same cloth as Newman or McQueen. The kind of guy they just don't make anymore.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Gary drives down the city's main drag. Although there are a number of skyscrapers and various storefronts surrounding him, at this early hour the city is completely empty. Spooky. Dead. You half expect a tumbleweed to cross the street.

A nearby billboard asks: "When Was The Last Time You Spoke To God?"

EXT. KXRT - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

A modest, two-story building sits on a barren plot of desert land just outside the city. Bold, art-deco lettering from the fifties advertises the station's ID: K.X.R.T.

In the distance, behind the station, a towering radio antenna is erected.

INT. BMW - KXRT PARKING LOT - DAY

Gary gargles mouth wash and applies deodorant. He combs his hair and ties a tie around his wrinkly collar. He checks himself out in the reflection of his visor's mirror.

Rubber-banded around the shield is a PHOTOGRAPH of a little GIRL. A freckly redhead. She dances in a field of poppies, frozen in mid-spin.

Gary slams the visor shut.

INT. KXRT - DAY

Gary enters the station and strolls through the lobby. He is greeted by the smiling face of HELEN COOPER (44), KXRT's buoyant, overweight secretary.

HELEN

Well hi-ya there, Gary!

Gary grabs a handful of multi-colored Chiclets from a tray on Helen's desk.

GARY

Morning, Helen. Love that new perfume you've been wearing.

HELEN

Oh, Gary! It's just Chico's No. 5.

GARY

Reminds me of a girl I used to know.

Helen GIGGLES as Gary walks to a nearby bulletin board and peruses the clippings. There's a lost dog advertisement, a basketball league sign-up sheet and a save the date reminding those of the coming LUNAR ECLIPSE.

Moments later, KIRBY LANGER (52) -- director of programming -- appears in the lobby. He pours himself a cup of coffee.

KIRBY

Glossup, we're getting fined for that little remark you made about Cardinal Felsen and the alter boys last night. Thank you very much.

Kirby is a no-nonsense, nine-to-five kind of guy. He married his high school sweetheart, drives an Infiniti and is home early every night for family dinner.

GARY

You're sympathizing with that pederast preacher?

Kirby brings Gary a cup of coffee and they stand toe-to-toe.

KIRBY

Listen, it's not the preacher I have an opinion about, it's the twenty-five hundred dollar checks I have to write on account of your pontifications.

GARY

The only reason anyone tunes into this station anymore is on account my pontifications.

KIRBY

Pontificate until the cows come home. Just don't incriminate clergymen in the process. They sue.

Gary takes a sip of his coffee.

GARY

What is this coffee?

KIRBY

I don't know.

GARY  
Helen, what is this coffee?

Helen chimes in cheerfully. She lives for these moments.

HELEN  
It's the new Folgers Tuscany roast!

GARY  
It's good.

KIRBY  
Very good. Buy more Tuscany roast,  
Helen.

INT. CENTRAL WING - KXRT - DAY

Kirby and Gary march down a never-ending corridor of cubicles and commotion. The place is cozy but frenetic. The decor, dated to the point of retro-cool.

KXRT's surprisingly hefty STAFF of editors, reporters and interns bustle to and fro like ants in an ant farm. The SOUND of typewriters, telephones and fax machines sing in unison.

KIRBY  
Listen, you know how much we all respect your credentials and appreciate your veracity here. That being said, this isn't San Francisco. This isn't the kind of network where you can just stand on a soap box, expound poppycock and think that our sister station in Phoenix isn't gonna hear about it.

GARY  
Hear ya loud and clear, Langer. Never again will I deviate from the holy feeds.

KIRBY  
Also, Sophie in accounting said you didn't turn in your updated W-4 worksheet.

Kirby and Gary waltz into a corner office at the end of the wing.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - KXRT - DAY

Gary's office is decorated like a famous explorer's headquarters. Vintage radio equipment clutters the shelves next to globes, knickknacks and a back catalogue of National Geographic. Amid it all are framed award certificates from his long, storied career in journalism.

GARY

You've been giving me a ration of shit since I walked in the Goddamn door, Kirb. HR, W-4, FCC. I get it.

MARK (O.S.)

Dudes, check out these gorillas!

We pan to the opposite corner of the office and toward the voice of MARK FUNK (29), an ex-metalhead burnout who still exhibits the lingering effects of a few too many bad trips.

His long greasy hair reaches the back of his Toto shirt and he squints to see his laptop screen through his drugstore eye-glasses.

KIRBY

What's goin' on here, Mark?

Kirby huddles around Mark's computer and reads through the news brief. Gary, disinterested, lays down on the couch.

MARK

A buncha silverbacks offed themselves yesterday at a zoo in Alabama. Just started jumpin' from the trees.

KIRBY

Does it say why?

MARK

They went totally kamikaze. Suicide pact, man. Written in banana peels. I don't know.

A grainy, pixilated photo embedded in the article shows a large, black MASS falling from the sky.

KIRBY

Well that's odd.

GARY

Makes sense. The world is going to shit. Gorillas are pissed.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

Can you blame 'em? Maybe their baboon boss was riding their ass too hard.

Mark turns to Kirby and gives his two cents.

MARK

I agree with Gary. I think it's like a sign to mankind, man. Be cool, dudes. Chill on the carbon footprints. Chill on the emissions and stuff. Pollution.

Mark's theory falls on deaf ears.

KIRBY

Alright, enough of this. We understand each other, Glossup?

Gary delivers the following monologue with false bravado.

GARY

Kirby, believe it or not there were once journalists in this country. Good ones. I was among them. That being said, I will try my absolute hardest to please you and this great organization. Forthright, I will read the news feeds with as little personality as I can humanly muster and count down the days until I am replaced by a machine with no soul. Now get the fuck out of my office.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - KXRT - DAY

The "On-Air" LIGHT blinks red as Gary dictates the morning news into his classic ribbon microphone. Mark adjusts dials and listens intently through his headphones in the outer room.

GARY

The women's triple-A softball team won the conference title last night with a high-scoring game of fifteen to twelve. Fire fighters were called to action yesterday at the Grover Springs trailer park when a five hundred pound woman had to be emergency airlifted to the hospital.

Gary makes a finger pistol with his right hand and pretends to shoot himself. Mark CACKLES with laughter.

GARY (CONT'D)

Luckily, the brave men of ladder thirteen successfully used the jaws of life to cut open the victim's Winnebago and rescue her from within. She is currently recovering at St. Mary's General from third degree cooking burns.

Mark shoots Gary an encouraging thumbs-up. He's been working at KXRT so long, he's forgotten just how mind-numbing these newscasts can be.

GARY (CONT'D)

Here's some interesting news, and it's ripped right from the pages of a sci-fi novel. To the shock and horror of families and tourists gathered at the Birmingham, Alabama Zoo yesterday -- eight large, silverback gorillas committed suicide in their habitat. Bystanders watched helplessly as gorillas jumped, one after another, from their homes in the trees. They were killed instantly upon impact. Officials don't yet have a cause for the phenomenon but are looking into a number of possible scenarios. Alright folks, that's it for KXRT's rush hour news broadcast. I'm your host, Gary Glossup, and I'll see you tomorrow.

The "On-Air" light turns off and Gary throws his headphones onto the countertop. He speaks through the intercom to Mark.

GARY (CONT'D)

Funk, how about a beer or twelve?

EXT. THRUWAY LANES - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

A large neon sign outside a squat beige building, advertises Thruway Lanes. It's a portal to the past in an otherwise depressing stretch of town.

INT. BAR - THRUWAY LANES - NIGHT

Gary and Mark sit across from one another in the bowling alley's darkened, adjacent bar. Cigarette smoke blankets the room and the muted sound of bowled over PINS punctuates the silence between OLDIES from the jukebox.

Both men are several beers into the evening.

GARY

I am so sick of fat chicks and softball scores, man.

MARK

Yeah, well what about the silverbacks?

They each take a sip from their beers.

GARY

Story of the century.

MARK

Hey, who asked you to work here? You knew what you were getting involved in. This is the like the capitol of fat chicks and softball, man.

Gary shakes his head. He's not sure he remembers anymore.

GARY

I don't know. I was bored. I thought some old school nine to five action would be kinda cool. Have a drink here every night. Mow the lawn on Sundays. Follow baseball again.

Gary takes a sip from his beer before he continues spinning his life's imaginary narrative.

GARY (CONT'D)

Maybe I'd find a lady somewhere down the line. Like a Susie or Rayette or something. Makes good casseroles. Likes Neil Diamond. Nice ass. No such luck.

MARK

What are you saying, Gary? You're gonna quit, huh? Because you know what happens if you quit, man? You become a bum.

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

I was in on the meetings to hire your sorry ass. Kirby stuck his neck out big. No one in Phoenix wanted you. And no network will if you quit. You'll be a bum. Capitol B. U. M.

The truth hurts.

GARY

Hell, maybe you're right. Maybe I just need to get laid.

Gary makes eyes at a MYSTERY WOMAN (28) in the corner of the establishment. Unlike the rest of the female bar flies, this woman is beautiful and alluring; dark and exotic. She smiles at Gary. He smiles back.

GARY (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, who's the Veronica Lake babe at your six o'clock?

Mark sneaks a peek at the mystery woman.

MARK

Never seen her before, dude. Fuckin' foxy. Although I'd say she's more of an Elizabeth Taylor, Natalie Wood type. Veronica Lake was a fair-skinned blonde.

Gary finishes his beer and advertises the empty at a passing WAITRESS.

GARY

Lemme show you how it's done, Marky.

A SONG by Bobby Gentry is cued over the jukebox; the reverberating string section casts a spooky spell on the lonely bar.

Moments later, the waitress arrives with Gary's drink.

GARY (CONT'D)

Thank you, hun. Also, can you get a refill for the miss over there?

Gary indicates the mystery woman.

GARY (CONT'D)

On me.

WAITRESS

Sure.

The waitress leaves and Gary nonchalantly gazes out the window.

GARY

Fifty bucks says I bag this chick.

Mark looks back toward the mystery woman. He watches as the waitress serves her a new drink and points to Gary. The mystery woman isn't exactly charmed by the offering.

MARK

Fifty bucks says you eat crow, man.

The mystery woman packs her belongings into her purse, grabs her drink and makes for the door. As she approaches Gary's table she puts the drink down and says:

MYSTERY WOMAN

I appreciate the offer, but no thank you.

Gary watches her, dumbfounded, as she struts past their table. He sulks in the smell of her perfume. Mark calls out:

MARK

Hey, why not, lady?!

The mystery woman turns around. She walks backward toward the door.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't date men twice my age.

She smiles as she exits the bar. Mark howls with LAUGHTER.

GARY

(to himself)  
Twice my age?

Gary is toppled over. He hasn't been rejected like that since high school.

MARK

Oh brother, you owe me fifty big ones. You just got freezed out. That was raw, man. That was old school.

Gary looks down at the outlandish drink she left for him in her wake: a Sex On the Beach, complete with miniature umbrella and two crazy straws.

He throws down a fifty.

GARY

I'm gonna fork over a Grant because I'm a man of my word, Funk. Tell you the truth, I just feel bad for the broad -- she doesn't know what she's missing.

MARK

Yeah, a limp dick and bifocals, grandpa Glossup.

Gary and Mark both smile. Gary takes a sip from the tropical drink.

GARY

Well I guess you're right Mark. You can't say *nothing* interesting happens around here.

EXT. DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

A graveyard of slanted intercoms and a dozen AUTOMOBILES sit before a giant film screen in an antique drive-in movie theater. A forgotten relic of yesteryear.

CLOSE ON SCREEN

A black and white MARTIAN chases a scantily clad BIMBO through a dark, winding forest. She SCREAMS. The Alien MOANS. The score CRESCENDOS.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

TERESA CARNEGIE (17) and her best friend, KATHARINE NAGEL (18) sit beneath an old comforter in Teresa's hand-me-down Oldsmobile.

Both girls are pretty and petite; Teresa especially is beautiful. Straight from the pages of Seventeen magazine. Beneath her delicate exterior (red hair and a fair complexion) there's a latent darkness that surrounds her, an undercurrent of volatility.

The two friends casually watch the drama above while gossiping with one another and sipping spiked soda pop.

KATHERINE

Did you hear about Freddy and Scott?

TERESA

Freddy and Scott from school? What happened?

KATHERINE

Well you know how they're like butt-buddies, right?

TERESA

Yeah.

KATHERINE

So, Freddy was dating Victoria Ross and Scott was, like, hooking up with Kelsey Conner.

TERESA

Eww. Hate her.

KATHERINE

Please. Preaching to the choir. Her bangs? Anyway, neither couple was exclusive-exclusive but they kinda were, you know? Like everyone thought they were.

TERESA

Is there any vodka left?

Katherine pulls an empty vodka bottle out of the glovebox.

KATHERINE

Oh my God, we drank it all. Is that bad?

TERESA

Please. No.

KATHERINE

Wait, where was I? Oh, so it turns out Freddy and Scott were having an affair with each other's girlfriends. And neither were hip to it.

TERESA

Oh my God. That is disgusting.

Both girls burst into a fit of LAUGHTER.

KATHERINE

I know, right?! Tyrone was the one who found out 'cause he walked in on them at two different parties in the same night. He's got a car.

Both girls direct their attention back at the screen. A suspenseful chase scene is in full effect. They whisper.

TERESA

So are Freddy and Scott cool?

KATHERINE

Yeah, same as always. They just traded. Now Freddy's with Kelsey and Scott's with Victoria.

TERESA

So weird. So wrong.

The girls make eye-contact and smile at one another.

KATHERINE

It's really nice to be hanging out with you again, Teresa. I'm really sorry about Billy.

The mention of Billy strikes a raw nerve with Teresa.

TERESA

Yeah. Me too.

Just then, a scare on screen sends the girls into a frenzy of terrified LAUGHTER. Katherine spills her popcorn all over the car's interior.

KATHERINE

Oh my God, I can't watch this anymore.

Katherine motions for the door.

TERESA

Where are you going?

KATHERINE

Bathroom. You want some candy or something?

TERESA

See if they have any alcohol.

KATHERINE

Yeah right. In our dreams.

Katherine exits the vehicle and Teresa immediately locks the door. She is uneasy. And the cause of that unease is more than just the retro sci-fi movie.

EXT. DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

We follow Katherine's swaying hips as she struts through the barren blacktop and toward the drive-in's washrooms. Hundreds of unoccupied intercoms blast the film's haunting SCORE to no one.

A Hell's Angels-esque group of MOTORCYCLISTS CATCALL her near the projection booth. Katherine flips them off before disappearing into the lady's room.

KATHERINE

Pigs!

INT. BATHROOM - DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

Katherine ambles through the seedy washroom and enters the furthest stall. She closes the door and we track her polka-dotted panties as they drop to the floor.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

From her driver's seat throne, Teresa nervously gazes at the PATRONS around her:

Two LOVERS make-out in a nearby pick-up truck.

Three TEENAGERS drink beers on the jungle gym below the screen.

The motorcyclists light off a set of FIRE CRACKERS in a trash can.

ON SCREEN

The movie's LEADING MAN professes his love for the HEROINE in a scene meant to induce drive-in necking. "*I love you, Angeline.*" But the Alien is nearby; he pops out of a ravine. "Eeeeeek!"

INT. OLDSMOBILE - DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

Teresa LAUGHS at the campy Martian. As she watches the film, her anxiety dwindles a bit. She drops her guard. She takes a deep breath.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Startled, Teresa unlocks the passenger door and Katherine slides back into the car. The two friends sit in silence for a moment.

TERESA

You missed the one dorky guy get killed.

KATHERINE(?)

Is that all?

However, it isn't Katherine's voice Teresa hears. In fact, it isn't even a woman's voice. It's the voice of an ASSAILANT. A hideous, demented man sitting where her friend should be.

ASSAILANT

Hi, Teresa.

Teresa SCREAMS.

The man is dressed in Katherine's clothing and wearing a thick layer of sinister make-up; lipstick painted into a twisted smirk. Teresa presses herself up against the door and flails her legs. It's of little use. The man quickly subdues her. He covers her mouth and thrusts her out of the car.

EXT. DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

Teresa struggles to fight off the assailant but her SCREAMS go unnoticed by an audience enthralled with the film.

TERESA

Help! Somebody please! Help me!

The assailant hauls Teresa through the blacktop like a butcher dragging a hog to slaughter.

The towering black and white horror movie drowns out the horizon behind them. Reflected light from the screen dances across her young body.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Somebody please! Help me! Help!

The assailant and Teresa reach a spray-painted van parked in a shadowy corner of the lot. The assailant pops open the back door and is met by three masked FIGURES waiting inside.

They grab Teresa from him and force her, kicking and SCREAMING, into the vehicle. The door SLAMS and Teresa's muffled screams cease.

The driver starts the engine. Although he doesn't wear a mask, his face is veiled by darkness. We will later meet him in depth but right now we barely catch a glimpse.

His name is SATCHELL WATTS.

NEAR BATHROOMS

A female theater EMPLOYEE (16) sweeps empty soda cups and popcorn bags into a dustpan. The spray-painted van cruises inconspicuously past her in the foreground.

INT. BATHROOM - DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

The employee picks up discarded napkins from the floor and tosses them into a trash bag. The florescent overheads FLICKER. The faucet LEAKS.

After a moment, the employee notices the faint sound of WHEEZING. She stops to listen. She traces the noise to a puddle of urine gathering in the corner of the room.

EMPLOYEE

Hello?

No response. More WHEEZING.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Are you okay, miss? Do you need help?

The employee tiptoes toward the furthest stall and places her hands upon the door latch.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

If this is Sad Girl and Mousey playin' tricks, it isn't funny.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

No response. More faint WHEEZING.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna come in.

One . . . two . . . three . . .

The employee opens the stall.

Katherine's body lays in a mess of blood in the corner. She is barely breathing and half-naked. Her throat has been slashed. Her eyes, deranged with madness.

The employee SCREAMS.

INT. GREEN ROOM - TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

In the drab dressing room of a public access studio, Henry Carnegie -- the cosmologist from the start of the film -- gets his make-up applied for this week's taping of The Stars And You.

We stare at the back of his head as he flips through the newspaper and sips a cocktail. There's something unknowable about the man; unattainable. He's the Wizard of Oz.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

HENRY

Come in.

The PRODUCER enters the dressing room with a telephone.

HENRY (CONT'D)

We ready?

PRODUCER

Hank, there's a phone call for you.

HENRY

I'll call them back.

PRODUCER

I think you're gonna wanna take this.

HENRY

What's it concerning?

PRODUCER

Your daughter.

Henry dismisses the MAKE-UP ARTIST and immediately takes the phone.

HENRY

(into phone)

Henry Carnegie speaking.

Although we can't hear what's being said on the other end of the call, we know the score. We watch Henry through the mirror, stone-faced, as he digests the information he is being told. He's a man used to the staggering indifference of the Universe.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Thank you. I'll come right away.

He hangs up.

PRODUCER  
I'll cancel tonight's show. The network can do a rerun of the Jerry Lewis telethon or something.

Henry takes a moment to compose himself before responding.

HENRY  
No.

PRODUCER  
What do you mean, 'no?' We start taping in two minutes.

Henry stands up from his seat.

HENRY  
I've never missed an episode before and I'm not about to start now. I'll deal with Teresa afterward.

Henry buttons his suit coat, adjusts his hair and exits the dressing room.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

We follow behind Henry as he walks through the darkened soundstage and toward the dated spaceship set. An off-screen CREW MEMBER begins the countdown to taping.

CREW MEMBER (O.S.)  
Alright everyone, lights --

Henry gets into position at his mark. The lights go up.

CREW MEMBER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Camera --

The camera starts rolling.

CREW MEMBER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Five . . . four . . . three . . .

Henry look right at the lens; straight through us.

HENRY  
Hello, I'm Henry Carnegie and this is The Stars And You.  
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

On tonight's show we'll be  
discussing black holes, anti-matter  
and nothingness.

DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. PIER - FISHERMAN'S WHARF - DAY

We follow behind a pair of PINK SNEAKERS as they run down the rickety wooden planks of a misty boardwalk. The owner of the shoes -- a little GIRL -- weaves in and out of the faceless CROWD and toward the cloudy ocean ahead.

She GIGGLES.

Suddenly the crowd disappears and all is SILENT. The camera stops dollying and we watch the little girl as she gets lost in the fog.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - DAY

Gary slowly wakes up from his dream.

Bands of warm sunlight shine through the half-open blinds of his motel room. He is face down and half-naked on the bed. The waitress from the bar SNORES beside him and the TV blasts the morning NEWS.

NEWSANCHOR (O.S.)

Details are still coming in about  
last night --

Gary slinks out of bed and rubs the sleep from his eyes. He looks around his home -- his cell -- and takes it in for a moment. Bad wood panelling from the seventies, a Red Skeleton clown painting and sea-foam green carpeting which hasn't been washed since the Clinton administration.

GARY

Jesus Christ.

ON TV

The NEWSANCHOR speaks over shots of a crime scene. The drive-in. Caution tape and police cars are everywhere.

NEWSANCHOR

Teresa Carnegie, daughter of famed  
cosmologist and television  
personality, Henry Carnegie --

The news transitions into a soundless clip of Henry on The Stars And You.

NEWSANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 -- was kidnapped last night from  
 the Fairmont drive-in off of route  
 eighty-three at North avenue.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary watches the news, intrigued. He turns up the VOLUME.

NEWSANCHOR (V.O.)  
 Along with Teresa, eighteen year  
 old, Katherine Nagel was found  
 brutally assaulted in the drive-  
 in's bathroom. Unfortunately she  
 died en route to an unspecified  
 hospital. Sheriff Brinner had the  
 following to say about the  
 investigation.

ON TV

SHERIFF BRINNER, an overweight, bald, tobacco chewing  
 sonovabitch, stands behind a podium at a press conference.  
 His arrogant sense of entitlement allows him to bask in the  
 morbid attention. He speaks with a rural twang.

SHERIFF BRINNER  
 Listen, if I was the malefactors  
 responsible for this tragedy, I'd  
 be awful scared right now. We at  
 the PD got this sitch on lockdown.

The news transitions segments and the camera cuts to a  
 different ANCHOR.

NEWSANCHOR #2  
 Stay tuned to Action 7 for hour-by-  
 hour updates on the investigation.  
 Coming up after the break is our  
 meteorologist, Jeff Scott, with the  
 weather and a report on what to  
 expect from next week's lunar  
 eclipse.

EXT. KXRT - DAY

Gary's BMW comes to a SCREECHING halt outside the station. He  
 exits the sedan and bee-lines toward the door.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - KXRT - DAY

Gary, Kirby and the KXRT STAFF sit around a long, wooden table in the middle of the establishment. What one would expect to be a heated discussion about the recent event, is a more sullen affair.

KIRBY

Let's go over what we know. The facts.

Gary eagerly fidgets with a paperclip.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

One girl beaten to death. Another girl -- a prominent one -- abducted. Hells Angels taken in for questioning.

The peanut gallery interjects:

EMPLOYEE #1

I heard they found their fingerprints all over the crime scene.

EMPLOYEE #2

I didn't know the Hells Angels still existed.

MARK

Hell yes they do.

HELEN

Mark. Language.

MARK

Sorry.

Gary raises his hand.

KIRBY

Glossup.

GARY

Can I ask a stupid question? Who is this Carnegie guy?

A cacophony of noise responds:

VARIOUS EMPLOYEES

He's the cosmologist. The recluse. He's our Stephen Hawking. More like our Howard Hughes. He's a freak.

Gary WHISTLES. Everyone is silenced. He points at a random EMPLOYEE.

GARY  
You. Fill me in.

EMPLOYEE #3  
Henry does a weekly public access show -- The Stars And You. It's kind of a cult thing. He talks about space and stuff. He's our biggest celebrity.

EMPLOYEE #4  
How don't you know this?

GARY  
Take it easy, darling. I've only been here a month, remember?

KIRBY  
You know who he is, Glossup. You read him in high school, I guarantee it.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. LIBRARY - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY [1989]

Through a large, dated library, we push in on a cardboard cutout of a young Henry Carnegie. The cutout advertises "Henry Carnegie's StarWonder: The Poetry of Space. Available today, wherever cool books are sold."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - KXRT - DAY

Henry's identity instantly registers with Gary.

GARY  
Oh, right. He was like the poor man's Carl Sagan?

KIRBY  
Bingo.

GARY  
And lemme guess. His daughter, Teresa. Only child. Golden girl. Pretty. Promiscuous.

Gary says the last line, half-kidding -- as though describing the profile of every kidnapped teenage girl.

MARK

Exactamundo.

Mark tosses Gary a copy of last year's high school yearbook. He opens it up to a grid TEENAGE FACES. They're all forgettable except one -- Teresa Carnegie. It's an effusive snapshot depicting the transition into womanhood. Her auburn hair glows a glistening orange under the glossy page.

Gary meditates on it for a long moment. Teresa beckons him. She looks just like the photo of the child in Gary's car. The one spinning in a field of flowers.

HELEN

Poor girl's probably dead already.

GARY

The Hells Angels shit-kickers had nothing to do with it. That's a PR stunt by the dumbfuck --

HELEN

Language.

GARY

Sorry Helen -- the *special* police department.

KIRBY

How do you figure?

GARY

Some motorcyclists didn't just roll into town and *happen* to kidnap a famous scientist's daughter. This isn't an episode of Dragnet.

Gary gets up from his seat and paces the room. He's excited. His big city swagger starts to show a bit.

GARY (CONT'D)

When was the last time there was a murder like this? And I don't mean Santo shot Johnny cause he was finger-banging his old lady kinda murder. I mean spooky, sinister shit like this Carnegie thing?

Blank faces stare back at Gary. Finally someone speaks up.

EMPLOYEE #6

This is a safe place, Mr. Glossup.  
Stuff like last night doesn't just  
happen all the time.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - KXRT - DAY

Gary once again sits in his tiny recording booth and speaks into the microphone. The "On-Air" LIGHT blinks red. Kirby and a few other KXRT EMPLOYEES surround Mark in the outer room.

GARY

We here at KXRT are also members of the community and we know how stressful this recent event has been. As a result, we've decided to open the lines. If you'd like to call and send the victim's families your condolences, this is your chance to do so. If you have leads, clues or evidence, we'd like to hear those as well. Really, it's just a forum for thoughtful discussion and uh, community camaraderie. So give us a ring at 630-207-0274. We're here to listen.

Gary sits back and waits for the calls to come through.

SILENCE.

RING. RING.

Mark fields the first call. He sends it through to Gary.

GARY (CONT'D)

Alright, caller number one. Tell us what's on your mind.

CALLER #1 talks to GARY through the intercom.

CALLER #1 (V.O.)

Hi. I'm Gretchen Prager and I'm ninety-three years old. Born and raised here. Lived here my whole life. I tell ya I can't even walk to the grocery store no more. There are thieves and bandits everywhere. The world is goin' to hell in a handbasket. When the Lord comes down again and the messiah --

Gary cuts the call short.

GARY  
Okay, next caller.

Mark sends another one through.

GARY (CONT'D)  
You're on the air.

CALLER #2 wildly pontificates.

CALLER #2 (V.O.)  
I tell ya, I t'ink it wa' proolly da  
Chupacabra who done did it an done  
took dem gurrllz.

GARY  
The Chupacabra? You're talking  
about the, uh, Puerto Rican big  
foot, right?

CALLER #2 (V.O.)  
I seen it wit my own two eyez,  
mistah. It ate my dawg, Ringo.

GARY  
Alright, thank you Mr. Clampett.  
Can we get someone with an IQ, next  
please?

Mark puts another caller through.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Caller number three, let me guess:  
you think it was the Abominable  
Snowman and the Jersey Devil?

At first there's nothing but heavy BREATHING on the call.  
Then, the distant sound of echoing MUSIC. Music from the  
thirties. Just barely. An old dance number for a party of  
ghosts.

The atmosphere in the studio instantly changes. Gravity gets  
heavier.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Hello?

Suddenly, the big band MUSIC begins blasting. It causes the  
sound equipment to FEEDBACK. Gary and Mark remove their  
headphones.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Excuse me caller, you're gonna have  
to turn down that phonograph.

The MUSIC ceases.

CALLER #3 (V.O.)

Hello.

CALLER #3's voice is male, monotone and clear as day. He enunciates his words perfectly although there is a sinister coldness to his cadence. Like the voice of a fallen angel.

GARY

There you are. What do you have to say about the recent events?

CALLER #3

We are the ones responsible.

Gary freezes. So do Kirby and Mark. Something about the caller's voice gives them reason to believe he might be telling the truth.

GARY

And why are we supposed to --

CALLER #3 (V.O.)

Katherine was wearing red polka-dotted underwear. The cotton variety. Also, the girls were sharing a bottle of Seagrams vodka which they purchased a few hours prior at a 7-Eleven convenience store.

Kirby's cell phone rings in the outer room and he picks up. Gary proceeds cautiously.

GARY

Well, sounds spooky. Unfortunately I don't have the police report to corroborate your details.

CALLER #3

Then why don't you say 'hello' to her?

GARY

To who?

CALLER #3

Teresa.

STATIC and SHUFFLING sound over the telephone. Then, SCREAMS. Blood curdling, female SCREAMS.

CALLER #3 (V.O.)  
Say 'hi' Teresa.

TERESA (V.O.)  
Help me! Please! Someone help!

Teresa's voice is far away and dissonant. Like she's screaming through a well. Gary's demeanor changes on the drop of a dime.

GARY  
What is it that you want?

Kirby scribbles something down on a piece of paper. He holds it up to the studio window for Gary to see. "Keep him on the line."

CALLER #3  
The world is going to end. Evidence is abound if you look close enough. A new dawn is upon us. We are merely doing as we're told to please the cosmic monarchs. They are on their --

Gary interrupts the caller. "*Who is this quack?*"

GARY  
I'm sorry, did you just say the world is going to end? Cosmic monarchs?

The caller does not like being interrupted. His voice takes on a heightened sense of authority. Of violence.

CALLER #3  
Listen up, you ignorant mortal. You don't know what you're dealing with. You will burn alive. Do you understand? You will all burn alive. We aren't playing games. We're going to kill again. Not just Teresa, but many more. Their souls will be smoke signals for our coming lords. Teresa will be departing the night of the eclipse.

Silence. Gary is speechless. He has no idea how to respond.

CALLER #3 (CONT'D)  
I'll be seeing you, Mr. Glossup. Goodbye now.

CLICK. The line goes dead.

Gary, Kirby and Mark all stare at one another in terror and excitement. This doesn't exactly happen everyday.

INT. VARIOUS - KXRT - DAY

Following the mysterious phone call, KXRT is teeming with POLICE OFFICERS. The place has been transformed into a make-shift police station.

INT. KIRBY'S OFFICE - KXRT - DAY

Gary excitedly paces back and forth in Kirby's off-white, soulless cell. He pleads with his boss.

KIRBY

Listen, Gary -- even if there was a budget to allow for you to investigate --

GARY

Screw the budget! I'll pay out of my own pocket. Langer, you've got to let me run with this thing.

KIRBY

Why should I risk my --

GARY

It's a story, Kirby. A real story. Life and death consequences. And in case you didn't notice, we're running short on those around here.

KIRBY

I don't think we could get clearance from Phoenix.

GARY

Who are these ass holes in Arizona anyway? Phoenix, Phoenix, Phoenix. Tell 'em I did it without asking you.

KIRBY

"Kirby, ole Kirby boy, I'm just looking for a simple job with simple hours and no stress?" Where's that guy at? He's the one I hired.

GARY

C'mon, Langer. Just let me do one report. Just one. And if you see a spike in numbers -- can you imagine that, what a concept -- we can show it to the faceless puppeteers in Phoenix and get leverage for another. Take it one at a time.

Kirby shakes his head.

KIRBY

You are one royal pain in my ass, Glossup.

GARY

Is that a 'yes?'

KIRBY

Fine.

Gary jumps for joy. He plants a big wet kiss on Kirby's bald cranium

GARY

You're not gonna regret this, old timer. I swear to God.

Gary moves toward the exit.

KIRBY

Glossup.

Gary stops. He turns around.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Just make sure you're doing this for the right reasons. I think you know what I'm talking about.

Gary nods.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - KXRT - NIGHT

Gary pops his head through the door frame and throws a rubber-band ball at the slumbering Mark.

MARK

Woah-pa!

GARY

Funk, you're gonna be my Kato for tonight's operation. Let's hit it.

INT. HALLWAY - KXRT - NIGHT

Gary and Mark march down a cramped corridor of busy bodies and commotion. Mark reads bullet points aloud from a report on Teresa Carnegie.

MARK

Alright, here's some shit I dug up on the Internet. Teresa Carnegie, five foot - six; a buck ten. Redhead. Favorite color: blue. Bank account, four digits. Word on the street is she's pretty loose. Sleeps around. Hence: lots of friends. On StuCo. Head of that club where the honor rollers play with the retarded kids after school. Very sweet. Probably just brownie points for her college app though. I doubt she's genuinely altruistic.

GARY

Anything else?

MARK

Eh, she was in choir. Liked singing. I checked out her MySpace. Lilith Fair, chick rock shit. Pretty good pipes though.

INT. CORRIDOR - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT [SLOW MOTION]

Teresa is wheeled down a long, hospital-like corridor, strapped to a gurney. She SCREAMS at the top of her lungs as a Patsy Cline BALLAD echoes throughout the hallway.

EXT. OUTSIDE EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

Downtown's factory district. Smokestacks and rats. Three chained ROTTWEILER's BARK at their post as Gary's BMW pulls into an alleyway adjacent to a gated warehouse.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Gary turns off his headlights and drives toward an inconspicuous location under an overhang. He kills the engine and turns toward Mark, sitting shotgun.

GARY

Listen, you're on watch tonight.  
Very, very important position.

MARK

The ultimate look out. Fuck yeah.

GARY

I'm gonna break in and see if I  
can't find the girl's car. These  
hodunk cops wouldn't know a clue  
from a box of long johns. If you  
see anything suspicious at all,  
honk, okay? Three times.

MARK

Got it. Morse code.

EXT. OUTSIDE EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary opens his trunk and removes a tan trench coat and an old fedora. He throws them on. He shuffles through a black plastic bag and retrieves a costume police badge. He pins it to his trench coat.

Mark watches from the passenger window.

MARK

Are you kidding me? That's the  
worst Inspector Gadget costume I've  
ever seen, Gary.

GARY

First of all, shut the hell up,  
Mark. Someone's gonna hear you, you  
cock knocker.

Gary SLAMS the trunk.

GARY (CONT'D)

Secondly, you just gotta act the  
part, my man. I've been doing this  
for years. Look like you're  
supposed to be there and you got  
somewhere to go. No one will ask a  
Goddamn question. You'll win plenty  
of awards.

MARK

And when was the last time you won  
an award, Gary?

GARY

Fuck you, funk. Just keep your eyes peeled.

Gary withdraws a pair of wire cutters from his back pocket. He approaches the chain-link fence, cuts a small portion open and slips onto the premises.

EXT. EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

We follow behind Gary as he struts through the lot and toward the main warehouse. Two RENT-A-COPS patrol the area. As Gary predicted, they don't say a word.

INT. WAREHOUSE - EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary breaks into the evidence warehouse with a pair of tweezers and a credit card. He slinks inside and slowly shuts the door behind him.

The place is still. Quiet.

Gary tiptoes through the annals of the giant room. We follow him as he combs the rows of dusty relics until he finds what it is he's looking for. Teresa's Oldsmobile.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Mark air-drums to Black Sabbath's WAR PIGS on the radio. He pays no attention to his assignment.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary hops into Teresa's car and scans the vehicle for any glaring abnormalities. It hasn't changed an iota since we last saw it. Popcorn still litters the ground and two spiked soda pops wait for their owners in the cup holder.

Gary retrieves a flashlight from his coat pocket. He turns it on and shines it beneath the seats. In the cushions. Above the visors. Nothing.

He opens the glovebox. Not much there either. He removes a CD carrier and flips through it. There are no CDs, however there is something of note, a piece of paper hidden in one of the pouches. It says: "Billy Turman -- 630.782.5698." Gary scrutinizes the number closely.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Mark continues to indulge in his rock star fantasy as a shadowy FIGURE slinks into the evidence warehouse.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary steals the piece of paper and puts the CD carrier back in the glovebox.

CLICK. CLACK. CLICK. CLACK.

Gary hears the echoing footsteps of an approaching enemy. He snakes out the Oldsmobile --

INT. EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

-- and hides behind a cluster of nearby MANNEQUINS. He freezes; trying his hardest to blend in with the lifeless dummies.

The footsteps get closer.

CLICK. CLACK. CLICK. CLACK.

Louder.

CLICK. CLACK. CLICK. CLACK.

A shadowy figure lurches toward Gary, stops momentarily, and then continues forward. Gary breathes a sigh of relief.

Once the assailant is a safe distance away -- and his footsteps gone -- Gary tiptoes out from within the dummies. We follow him as he maneuvers through the darkened warehouse.

Then --

BANG!

A bullet whizzes past Gary's ear.

Time freezes. Gary turns.

The shadowy figure stands a hundred feet in the distance. A smoking gun rests between his out-stretched arms.

BANG!

Gary runs. The assailant runs. A foot chase ensues.

CLICK. CLACK. CLICK. CLACK.

Faster. Faster. BANG! BANG!

Gary pivots down an adjacent aisle. He runs toward the opposite end.

The figure appears -- BANG!

Gary drops to the floor, army crawls beneath a shelf and reemerges in a parallel aisle.

He takes off his shoes and socks. He runs barefoot through the echo chamber. He no longer makes a noise. He bests the assailant and finds an exit.

EXT. EVIDENCE IMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary -- still barefoot -- strolls casually through the lot and toward his BMW. He takes off his trench coat, flips it inside out and wears its reversible side instead: black. He throws his hat in a nearby dumpster.

Then -- a pair of HIGH BEAMS shine upon him.

SHERIFF BRINNER (O.S.)  
(through megaphone)  
Glossup, stop right there.

Gary ceases his stride. He turns around to see Sheriff Brinner and his dopey DEPUTY trailing him in their squad car. They exit their vehicle and approach.

SHERIFF BRINNER (CONT'D)  
What are you doin' on police  
property? Isn't it happy hour  
somewhere?

The deputy pats Gary down as the muffled sound of SABBATH echoes in the distance.

GARY  
Easy on Ralph and Larry, Billy Bob.  
Those are for Mrs. Brinner's hands  
only.

SHERIFF BRINNER  
You better tell us why you're here,  
Gary. I'm more than happy to have  
you spend a night in our  
facilities.

GARY

You try a stunt like that and I'll tell the city about how you illiterate inbreds open fire without warning.

DEPUTY

What the hell are you talkin' about?

GARY

Oh, he can talk?

SHERIFF BRINNER

Listen up, Glossup. If I catch you again tryin' to do my job we're gonna have some real problems. Understand?

Sheriff Brinner marches up to Gary and knees him right between the legs. Gary falls to the ground in agony.

SHERIFF BRINNER (CONT'D)

And my wife has been dead six years, so I doubt very much that you've paid her a visit. Unless of course you're even more disturbed than I suspected. Now get the fuck outta here.

Sheriff Brinner and the deputy walk back toward their squad car.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Gary and Mark cruise through the jet black metropolis. Gary drives and Mark -- sitting shotgun -- studies the Billy Turman phone number closely.

GARY

Well there goes my fertility. What little was left of it.

MARK

So sorry, Gary. I got wrapped up in the Geezer's wicked low end.

GARY

Yeah, thanks Funk face.

Mark is hit by a sudden wave of realization.

MARK

Oh, Billy Turman! Dude, shit, I  
knew I knew that name.

GARY

What? What is it?

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

A ROLLER WAITRESS skates past Gary's BMW at a retro drive-in diner. Chubby Checker plays over the INTERCOM as Gary and Mark chow down on patty melts and chocolate malts.

Mark can barely contain himself as he dictates the tall tale of Billy Turman.

MARK

Billy Turman was a high school prodigy. Good lookin' Kennedy mother fucker. Straight As, raked in tons of tail, had a killer Camaro.

The roller waitress stops at Gary's car and inquires about their meal.

ROLLER WAITRESS

How is everything?

GARY

Great. Can I get some more ketchup?

ROLLER WAITRESS

Certainly.

GARY

(to Mark)

Sorry. Continue.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - NIGHT

Mark and Gary walk through never-ending aisles of musty books shelves in the city's forgotten library. Mark continues to spout off the story of Billy Turman.

MARK

Anyway, about six weeks before you arrived, Billy disappeared. He was last seen decorating his house for Halloween, then voom. Vanished without a trace. Right from his own front yard. Kolchak style.

As Gary combs the reference books, he grows more and more intrigued with Mark's anecdote.

GARY

So what happened to him?

MARK

Well, days passed and Billy didn't turn up anywhere. People thought maybe he flew the coop. Maybe he was sick of this town. Too small for the brainiac. Other folks thought he was abducted by aliens. Typical conspiracy theories flyin' every which way.

INT. NEWSPAPER ANNEX - PUBLIC LIBRARY - NIGHT

Gary and Mark skim through overhead scans of various newspaper articles concerning the disappearance of Billy Turman. The machine they use to do this looks like ancient technology by today's standards.

Gary stops on a photo of Billy on the basketball squad. He looks like he just stepped out of an audition to play Jake Ryan in Sixteen Candles.

MARK

Then three days later, people in his neighborhood wake up to a foul stench, man. Like nasty ass smell. They look for the source but don't find anything. Anyway, eventually the police get involved and it turns out -- what everyone assumed was a ghoulish Halloween decoration -- was actually the, uh, hanging body of Billy Turman. The smell? His decomposing body, man.

Gary is knocked out by the tale. It has the air of an old campfire story.

GARY

So he had hung himself outside? Like on a tree? On his property?

MARK

Exactly.

Gary advances the slide to the next article.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER SCAN

Amid lines of fine-print text is a grainy, black and white image of Billy's Turman's body. He is hanging high-above on a tall branch in the front yard of his childhood home. A mob of onlookers and fire fighters look up from the sidewalk.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary studies the photo with a keen eye. Billy's body blends right in with the holiday decorations. It's uncanny. The image evokes spooky snapshots of lynch mobs glimpsed in the pages of history textbooks.

Gary zooms in on a portion of the article which is blackened out. Unreadable.

GARY

What's that about?

INSERT - BLACKENED OUT TEXT

An entire paragraph of the article is covered in a crude black streak.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary copies down the date and author of the story into his notepad.

GARY (CONT'D)

Mark, you got another job. Find me a copy of this article without the shit on it.

Mark whistles the theme to THE TWILIGHT ZONE.

INT. BAR - THRUWAY LANES - NIGHT

Near the bathrooms in the back of the bar, Gary inserts a quarter into the payphone and dials. It rings three times before going to a voicemail box.

HENRY (V.O.)

Hello, you've reached Henry Carnegie. Please leave your name and number after the beep and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Have a nice day.

BEEP.

GARY

Mr. Carnegie, this is Gary Glossup, head of news programming at KXRT.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

I'm calling in regards to your daughter and today's incident on the air. I can be reached at the Comfort Inn by the highway. Room 114. Or if you get this in the next half-hour, I'll be at this number -- an associate of mine's office. And that number is --

Gary searches for the number on the payphone. He finds it.

GARY (CONT'D)

630-408-1184.

AT BAR

Gary nurses a glass of whiskey and scans the newspaper. Stories about Teresa and Katherine are plentiful and scarce with details.

On the nearby TV, a bizarre news story plays to the nearly empty bar.

NEWSANCHOR (V.O.)

Strange happenings to report out of Black River Falls. All one hundred and twenty five residents -- mostly farmers -- have reportedly gone missing. That's right folks -- missing.

ON TV

Images of empty school playgrounds, city streets and churches flash across the screen.

NEWSANCHOR

Is it a prank or something more? Investigators in nearby Owensville aren't quite sure.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary takes the last sip of his drink. He looks at the BARTENDER and asks:

GARY

How does a whole town go missing?

BARTENDER

Beats me.

The bartender serves Gary a new cocktail.

GARY  
Hey chief, I didn't order this.

BARTENDER  
I know.

GARY  
What is it?

BARTENDER  
A vesper. Three parts gin. One part vodka. One-half part Lillet. From the woman in the corner booth, sir.

Gary turns around to see the benefactor of his cocktail: the saddest girl to ever drink a Sex On The Beach. The mystery woman.

Gary pivots back to his drink. He takes a sip.

GARY  
Not bad.

Gary looks down at a hand-written note scribbled on the napkin. It reads: "Sorry about the other night. Join me for a drink. Compliment my eyes and ask about my day. You might get lucky. - Claire."

Gary smirks and exits his seat. We follow him as he walks toward the mystery woman -- or as we'll know her from here on out -- CLAIRE.

GARY (CONT'D)  
I have a few good reasons not to accept this drink, but I got a buzz on and I'm feeling generous. May I take a seat?

Claire motions to the empty seat opposite her.

CLAIRE  
It's a free country.

Gary sits. He undresses Claire with his eyes. She's even more stunning up close than she is from far away.

GARY  
Has anyone ever told you that you have beautiful eyes, miss?

Although Gary's reading from the script, he isn't lying. Claire does indeed have two beautiful pools of emerald eyes. They are piercing and magnetic. She smiles.

CLAIRE

No, never.

Claire LAUGHS. She's a little buzzed herself. Not overboard. Just right.

GARY

I'm Gary Glossup. Nice to meet you.

Gary extends his hand. She shakes it. They haven't said but a few words and already the conversation is loaded with chemistry.

CLAIRE

Claire Phillips.

GARY

So, tell me, how was your day, Claire?

CLAIRE

It was fine.

GARY

Just fine? What do you do?

CLAIRE

I'm a writer. A journalist.

GARY

From around here?

CLAIRE

No. I'm from Atlanta. I write for the Sentinel. I'm in town covering the, uh, eclipse.

GARY

Oh right, this eclipse I keep hearing so much about. What's the big fuss?

CLAIRE

Well, they tell me this is the best place on the planet to see it. And it's rare.

GARY

How rare?

CLAIRE

Only happens every two-hundred years. Or so I gather. Lots of conspiracy theories though.

(MORE)

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Tin-foil hats and stuff. Ancient Aztecs thought it signified the end of the world.

GARY

Every two-hundred years, huh? What was happening two-hundred years ago?

CLAIRE

James Madison was President. War of 1812. Napoleon. Louisiana became the eighteenth state. Charles Dickens was born. Sacagawea died.

Gary LAUGHS.

GARY

You've done your research.

Claire shrugs.

CLAIRE

I'm a good journalist.

Gary takes a sip from his vesper.

GARY

You know I'm actually a journalist myself. Although not a very good one.

CLAIRE

Oh, I know. I know all about you, Gary Glossup. I read you in college. You were every journalism coed's wet dream.

GARY

So then why'd you ice me the other night?

CLAIRE

Well, I thought that might have been you. But then I asked myself, why on Earth would Gary Glossup be at a bowling alley bar in shit's creek, USA? And why would he be buying *me* a drink?

GARY

Well then obviously you stopped reading me. My last column for The Chronicle was in 2001.

CLAIRE

Which I didn't know. Until today, when I kept hearing all about some mysterious phone call on the radio to a Mr. Gary Glossup. Then my thoughts instantly returned to the tall, handsome stranger in the bowling alley a few nights back.

GARY

You heard about the call, huh?

CLAIRE

Gossip spreads quick among the sci-fi, eclipse crowd.

Gary and Claire both finish their drinks. There's a long moment of silence. A warm, lush Motown SONG is cued on the jukebox and the room is filled with amor.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

If you don't mind me asking, why did you leave San Francisco?

GARY

I decided I didn't like walking up hills anymore.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - NIGHT

Gary unlocks the door to his room and he and Claire stumble into the air-conditioned darkness. They are both hammered and in the midst of a kiss.

Gary flicks on the LIGHTS. His depressing motel room is just as he left it. He throws his belongings onto the floor and they both undresses as quickly as possible.

They proceed to make love.

CUT TO:

BLACK

Nothing. Silence. Darkness. After a long moment, a male VOICE sounds from above. The same voice that called in Gary's radio show.

VOICE (V.O.)

Ok, let's begin.

The lights slowly lift and the room fades from blackness to a dim, warm glow.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT [CONTINUOUS]

Teresa Carnegie sits alone in the center of a grand, old movie house. Red velvet and romance. She is tied to her chair and her mouth is duct taped shut. She is sleeping. Her face, covered in bruises.

VOICE (V.O.)

Teresa. Teresa please wake up.

The voice speaks through the theater's sound system.

VOICE (V.O.)

Be a good girl, Teresa.

Teresa comes to consciousness.

VOICE (V.O.)

That's it. Wake up. Rise and shine.

Teresa slowly reacquaints herself with reality. She SCREAMS. It's of little use.

VOICE (V.O.)

Teresa. Please. Listen.

She thrashes about.

VOICE (V.O.)

Listen carefully. You will behave!

The voice says "behave" like he means it. With force. With conviction. Teresa is instantly silenced.

VOICE (V.O.)

Thank you.

Teresa tries desperately to catch her breath and slow her speeding heart rate.

VOICE (V.O.)

In a moment the lights will dim and you will watch a little movie we've created for you. Tailored in every way to your individual hopes, dreams, fears and desires. Tailored to address your moral and character inadequacies and to seek out places for further improvement.

(MORE)

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 There will be no coming  
 attractions. No Coca-Cola  
 advertisements. Just life.

The lights once again fade to BLACK.

VOICE (V.O.)  
 Sit back, relax and let the  
 experience wash over you. I think  
 you'll find it rather enlightening.

ON SCREEN

The film's countdown leader is projected onto the screen:  
 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . .

Opening Title: "The Association. Member ID: 1452. Name:  
 Teresa Carnegie."

Then --

A bombardment of images hurtle across the screen. Words.  
 Text. People. Places. Cartoons. Home movies. Colors. No stone  
 is left unturned.

The history of the world is juxtaposed with Teresa's own  
 coming of age. Footage of Henry. Footage of Teresa as a  
 little girl. Images from her favorite movies. Life magazine.  
 War. Atomic bombs. The Beatles. Kennedy's assassination.  
 UFOs.

Teresa stares at the screen, stunned. She's horrified but she  
 can't look away. In many ways, the onslaught of images is not  
 so different from the montage we saw at the beginning of the  
 film -- the closing sequence to The Stars And You. Except  
 it's longer and more perverse. An undercurrent of evil and  
 dread runs through it.

And then it's over. Just as suddenly as it began. The lights  
 fade again to BLACK.

VOICE (V.O.)  
 Thank you Teresa. Your movie is  
 complete.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - NIGHT

Darkness.

RING. RING.

Gary is thrust out of sleep. He's disoriented and startled.  
 Sweat covers his forehead.

He rotates the digital clock toward him to see the time -- 4:12 AM. Claire is sound asleep beside him.

He picks up the phone.

GARY

This better be important. Who's dead?

The unwavering voice of Henry Carnegie sounds on the other end.

HENRY (V.O.)

Mr. Glossup. This is Henry Carnegie. I'm returning your call.

Gary lunges out of bed and immediately turns on the light. He paces the room in his boxers.

GARY

Mr. Carnegie, pleasure to make your acquaintance. Kind of an odd hour.

HENRY (V.O.)

As you can probably imagine, I'm very busy.

GARY

Sure, sure. Of course.

HENRY (V.O.)

Why don't you come over and we can talk in person.

GARY

Right now?

Gary shakes his head in disbelief.

HENRY (V.O.)

Yes.

GARY

Where?

HENRY (V.O.)

My home. 585 Kearsage avenue. In the hills.

Gary writes down the address on the inside of his palm.

GARY

I'll see you in a half hour, Henry.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Gary, bed-headed and slightly disheveled, drives up a winding mountain road outside the city. The shimmering lights of downtown burn bright below him. A miniature circuit board of sleeping souls.

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gary's BMW snakes up the long, brick driveway of Carnegie's ultra-modern, minimalist mansion. All symmetry and glass. He parks the car, exits the vehicle and jogs up the front steps.

Gary KNOCKS on the door and Henry answers. The two men shake hands; each measuring the other.

HENRY

Mr. Glossup. Thank you for coming.  
Please, come in.

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry and Gary walk through the sterile, darkened home and toward two chairs sitting near a panoramic view of the city. A cascade of stars shine bright above the metropolis's glow.

Henry pours two glasses of vodka from a decanter on the table between them. His face is obscured in shadow. There's a Colonel Kurtz way about him. He's elusive. Oblique.

He hands Gary a drink.

GARY

Look Henry, I'll just get right to it -- we at KXRT would like to do a piece about Teresa and the incident that happened the other night. We're all very sorry about the situation. We have a huge listenership and we'd like to help.

HENRY

I see.

Henry seems to be marveling at the stars. He pays no attention to what Gary has to say.

GARY

If you don't mind me asking, when was the last time you saw your daughter?

Henry takes a sip from his drink and tries to recall.

HENRY

The night she was taken she came into my study. She never interrupted my work -- at least she hadn't since she was a child -- and I was short with her. I told her I was working. We'd speak in the morning.

GARY

What did she want?

HENRY

I don't know. I was angry. I wasn't listening.

GARY

And then she left for the movies?

HENRY

And then she left for the movies.

Henry fixes Gary with a knowing stare.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I've done my research, Mr. Glossup. I know about you. I know about San Francisco.

Gary doesn't like where the conversation is headed.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I know about what happened to you there.

Gary's face turns stone-cold. *"If this guy wasn't sixty-five years old -- "*

HENRY (CONT'D)

Which is why I returned your phone call in the first place. I have something to ask of you. From one father to another.

Gary eases up.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I know you're not merely writing a puff piece about my daughter. I'm not an imbecile. You wanna break the case. And I can understand that. So do I.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 God knows the police are useless;  
 they certainly won't. It's just  
 that private matters are a bit  
 complicated right now.

Gary doesn't follow.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 I'm getting to be old. I'm sick,  
 Mr. Glossup. And I'm dying.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Through a vast and darkened soundstage, we rapidly push in on Henry as he addresses the camera directly. We've been here before.

HENRY  
 And sorry folks, but the truth is  
 we're all going to die. You, me and  
 everyone that has ever been.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HENRY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gary and Henry resume their conversation.

GARY  
 How much time do you have?

HENRY  
 Six weeks.

GARY  
 Does Teresa know?

HENRY  
 Yes.

GARY  
 When is it being made public?

HENRY  
 It isn't the public's concern and  
 that's exactly what I'm speaking  
 of. I don't want personal matters  
 entering whatever story your  
 writing. I'm a private man.

GARY

Mr. Carnegie, I have no intention of doing anything but catching these yardbirds. You and your family's personal affairs will be handled delicately. I promise.

HENRY

Fine. Thank you.

Gary runs his fingers through his hair.

GARY

So lemme get this straight, you have six weeks and your daughter has -- when's the eclipse?

HENRY

Four days. Yes.

The first light of morning rises at the horizon and imbues the sky with an aching beauty. Both men stare in admiration.

GARY

I'm going to do everything I can to get your daughter back safely, sir.

Henry nods.

HENRY

Do you believe in God, Mr. Glossup?

Gary smiles to himself.

GARY

Do you ask that of everyone who comes over and watches the sunrise?

HENRY

No. You're the first.

GARY

I did once, old timer. I did once.

HENRY

I never did before. Now I'm not so sure. I'm becoming that famous hypocrite archetype. The atheist who -- when forced to stare down death -- suddenly wants to see the light.

Gary finishes his drink.

EXT. HENRY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Henry walks Gary to his BMW. They shake hands and Gary gets into the car. Morning light blankets the horizon and covers the city like a mirage.

GARY

By the way Henry, do you know  
anything about a Mr. Billy Turman?

Henry freezes.

HENRY

Why do you ask?

GARY

It's just a tip we got wind of.

HENRY

I only know what I read in the  
paper. Why do you ask?

Gary starts his car.

GARY

No reason.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - DAY

Gary waltzes into his motel room. To his surprise, Claire is still there. She scurries around the room, tidying up in one of Gary's button-downs.

GARY

You're still here?

CLAIRE

Where'd you go? I was starting to  
think I might have scared you off.

GARY

Long story.

Gary collapses face first onto his bed.

CLAIRE

What are you doing today?

GARY

Work.

CLAIRE

It's a Sunday.

GARY

Not that work. I have to look into a lead on this Carnegie thing.

CLAIRE

Can I come?

GARY

Your funeral.

Gary watches Claire's long, slender legs as she scissors across the room.

GARY (CONT'D)

I don't get it. One day you're puttin' me down as an old has-been, the next day you're cleaning my place and lookin' to tag along on leads. What are you, some kinda starfucker?

CLAIRE

Yeah. Cause you're a *huge* star, Gary.

Gary LAUGHS.

GARY

C'mere.

Claire tiptoes toward him and slowly unbuttons her shirt. Button. By. Button. Gary takes a bite out of her thigh. She SCREAMS as she falls onto the bed.

EXT. TURMAN HOUSE - DAY

Gary's BMW pulls up to a pastel colored home in a gated, prosperous community. Unlike the rest of the houses around it, the Turman residence has been neglected. Dried, dead grass covers the lawn and an old, rusted Camaro sits on concrete blocks in the driveway.

The tree where Billy hung himself is now a mere stub.

Gary and Claire exit Gary's car and make way toward the front door. Gary KNOCKS. MRS. TURMAN (50) answers shortly thereafter. She is a handsome woman. Other than crows feet and the faint smell of nicotine, she has fought the effects of grief well.

GARY

Mrs. Turman, my name is Gary Glossup, I'm from KXRT.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

I'd like to speak to you about your son, Billy. May I come in?

INT. KITCHEN - TURMAN HOUSE - DAY

Gary and Claire walk among the Turman's kitchen, studying the sharp decor with a keen, interested eye. This house -- like something from the pages of Good Housekeeping -- was once full of love.

Mrs. Turman hands Gary and Claire each a can of beer as she concocts a quick spiked-lemonade for herself. This isn't her first of the afternoon.

CLAIRE

Thank you. Can I use the bathroom?

MRS. TURMAN

Upstairs. Second door on the left.

Claire heads for the stairs as Mrs. Turman takes a seat across from Gary at the kitchen table.

MRS. TURMAN (CONT'D)

So, what's this all about?

GARY

Mrs. Turman, I have a feeling your son's death may be related to the disappearance of Teresa Carnegie.

MRS. TURMAN

Why do you say that?

GARY

I found his phone number in Teresa's glovebox.

MRS. TURMAN

Well, that makes sense. Billy and Teresa were going steady.

GARY

They were?

MRS. TURMAN

Something like that. She'd come over here. He'd go over there. They'd drive around. They were young. It was stupid.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - TURMAN HOUSE - DAY

Claire snoops around Billy's bedroom.

From the looks of it, you would think Billy was a thirteen year old boy. Glow in the dark monster models, UFO mobiles and a pictures of Einstein, Rod Serling (and even Henry Carnegie) hang on the walls.

On his desk is a role of newly developed photos. Claire shuffles through them. Most are of Billy and Teresa: happy, young and in love.

She stops on a PHOTO of Henry and Billy together. They look like they're in the midst of a heated debate. She slides it in her back pocket.

INT. KITCHEN - TURMAN HOUSE - DAY

Gary and Mrs. Turman continue their conversation. Mrs. Turman takes a long sip from her drink.

GARY

So I take it they weren't together at the time of Billy's accident?

MRS. TURMAN

No. I didn't really like Teresa anyway. And her father certainly didn't like Billy. It wasn't made in the stars. C'est la vie.

Mrs. Turman drunkenly laughs at her turn at French.

GARY

Mr. Carnegie and Billy didn't get along?

MRS. TURMAN

Henry hated my son. Which is a shame, because Billy idolized the man. A few days before Billy's passing, Henry came over in that big ole, ridiculous Rolls Royce of his and he and Billy got into a screaming match. To this day I don't know what it was about.

Claire sneaks back into the kitchen.

GARY

Did Billy suffer from depression or anxiety? Was he ever suicidal?

Mrs. Turman is clearly affected by these dormant recollections.

MRS. TURMAN

No. Of course not. He had just gotten accepted to Yale and Brown. He had his whole life ahead of him. My son was killed, Mr. Glossup. Everyone knows that.

GARY

By whom?

MRS. TURMAN

Well, that's the mystery.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - CITY CORNER - DAY

Gary leaves a message for Henry in the dingy, cramped confines of the last phone booth left in the city. Claire sits on the hood of the BMW, curbside. She jots down notes in her legal pad.

GARY

(into phone)

Carnegie, it's Glossup. Got something real important to talk to you about. Call me back at KXRT.

Gary hangs up the phone and looks down to the PHOTO Claire boosted from Billy's bedroom. He studies it closely before exiting the phone booth.

EXT. CITY CORNER - DAY

Gary trudges toward Claire and sits beside her on the car. He SIGHS and hangs his head low upon his chest.

GARY

Carnegie's not answering the Goddamn phone.

Claire doesn't pay any attention to what Gary has to say. She's enamoured with her work.

CLAIRE

How does this sound?

Claire reads aloud from her legal pad.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

"Flocks of citizens from all walks of life and every corner of the country are making a pilgrimage to the center of the USA in hopes of catching a glimpse of what is said to be the greatest lunar eclipse in decades."

Gary considers Claire's opening sentence. He rubs his eyes.

GARY

Good, but -- "flocks of citizens?" And also, didn't you say this eclipse thing was all doom and gloom? End of the world and whatnot?

CLAIRE

Well, I mean that's a component, yeah.

GARY

See, then that's your angle. That's your hook. Start with the fire and brimstone and then work your way to the, uh, scientific facts.

Claire laughs. Gary continues, half kidding.

GARY (CONT'D)

Free piece of advice from a seasoned pro: people want violence, destruction and death. They want sensationalism. They want the unknown.

CLAIRE

Why is that? Why do we all secretly want the end of the world?

Gary thinks for a long moment before responding. He now has to defend his half-hearted convictions.

GARY

People like the concept of a restart button, Claire. They want to be cleansed. They want redemption. We've fucked this place up enough. World 2.0 seems appealing. Doesn't it?

CLAIRE

I guess.

They simultaneously reach for a can of Coke sitting on the hood of the car. Their hands meet for a moment and they look at each other with attraction, lust and vulnerability.

Gary looks to his feet.

GARY  
I'm gonna kill Carnegie.

EXT. SWIMMING PIER - LAKE LOMBARD - DAY

CASS (18) and BRIANNA (17) lay alone on a swimming pier in the middle of a medium-sized, secluded lake. They are enjoying the last few hours of the setting sun. Beads of lake water dry on their skin as they awkwardly touch one another's bare limbs; adolescent electricity coursing through their fingertips.

A small AM RADIO is quietly tuned into a baseball game sitting near the edge of their little island. *"And the pitcher sets. Curveball. Smacked to center field."*

CASS  
We are not naming our kid Adolpho.

BRIANNA  
Yes I am. Adolpho Zerante is a badass name.

CASS  
First of all, if we ever got married -- big if -- you'd take my last name so the kid wouldn't be named Zerante, alright. He'd be Mandarin. It'd be Adolpho Mandarin and that's . . . no. It's too close to Adolph. And it's dumb. He'd be ridiculed. His name is gonna be Joe. Simple. Classy. Cool.

Brianna LAUGHS.

BRIANNA  
Joe Mandarin? Yeah right.

Cass lifts his face from the whitewashed planks and looks around the empty reservoir.

CASS  
Should I go get those beers now?  
Looks like everyone's left for the day.

Cass isn't lying, there's literally not a soul in sight. It's almost too quiet. Brianna slides her sunglasses down and looks for herself.

BRIANNA

Okay, baby.

Cass stands up. He takes off his crucifix necklace and lays it down on the small of Brianna's back. He dives off the pier.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Cass. Wait.

Treading water, the boy turns around.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Gimme a kiss.

Cass swims back toward the pier and the young lovers lock lips.

CASS

I'll be right back.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LAKE LOMBARD - DAY

Cass struts through the forest preserve's deserted parking lot and toward his father's lone station wagon. He pops the trunk and retrieves a hidden six pack from beneath the spare tire.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Startled, Cass turns around toward the voice. A cute, dainty BRUNETTE (25) stands a few feet away. She wears a flowing summer dress and a hippy-dippy flower in her hair. She is barefoot.

CASS

Yeah?

BRUNETTE

My friend was bitten by a snake.  
Can you help?

There's no urgency or panic in the brunette's voice. She seems sedated.

CASS

A snake!?

BRUNETTE

Yeah. A big one. Are you gonna help  
or not?

Cass looks out at the pier and then back at the girl -- he has no choice but to obey his good Christian upbringing. He follows her.

EXT. FOREST - LAKE LOMBARD - DUSK

The sun dips below the horizon as Cass follows the brunette deep into the woods. She runs and Cass struggles to keep up. Eventually they arrive at a small clearing. The brunette stops. There's no one else there.

CASS

Where's your friend?

BRUNETTE

I dunno. She was here a minute ago.  
I swear.

The brunette GIGGLES.

CASS

Is this some sorta joke?

A group of MEN in animal MASKS and white tunics appear a few yards behind the unsuspecting Cass.

BRUNETTE

You're kinda cute.

CASS

Listen, I gotta go.

The men inch closer.

EXT. SWIMMING PIER - LAKE LOMBARD - NIGHT

The sun has set. It is night. Black. A crescent moon above.

Brianna slowly awakes. The RADIO now plays fluctuating tones of static; the baseball game long over. She must have slipped into a nap somehow and now many hours have passed.

BRIANNA

Cass!

No response. Brianna takes off her sunglasses and tries to orient herself as quickly as she can. She stands up and Cass's necklace falls from her back into the inky water.

She tries to retrieve it but she's too late. It sinks.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Shit.

Brianna becomes aware of the temperature. It's freezing. Panic rushes through her veins. She's scared. She's angry. She's alone.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Cass!

SILENCE.

Despite the cold, Brianna dives into the water and swims toward land. Each stroke the possibility of some --

lurking

underwater

threat

-- feels more and more real.

Miraculously, Brianna makes it to shore.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Cass!?

Nothing. Tears start streaming down her cheeks. Goosebumps cover her flesh.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LAKE LOMBARD - NIGHT

Brianna, shivering and soaking wet, checks the station wagon for her boyfriend. He isn't there. The trunk is wide open and the metronome BEEPING of the alert system punctuates the isolation around her.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Panic. Panic. Panic.

An owl CRIES. A twig SNAPS. The wind HOWLS.

Brianna begins walking. Anywhere. Somewhere. Out of the forest. She's careful not to walk too fast though -- or God forbid run -- as to not fully admit to herself that something is wrong. Very wrong.

She begins bawling.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The forest creatures and unseen spirits around Brianna form a wall of NOISE as we follow the girl down the pitch black, rural road.

But then -- headlights. They're over her shoulder, coming her way.

She waves the approaching vehicle down. The DRIVER flashes his brights before coming to a stop beside her. His face is shadowed by the evening, only his shape can be detected.

DRIVER

Is everything okay, sweetheart?

Brianna struggles to keep her composure. She hyperventilates.

BRIANNA

I think my boyfriend is lost. He went to the car but his car was still there and there was no one there but the alarm was on and --

DRIVER

Slow down, slow down, honey. Did he have blonde hair? About five-ten? Good looking?

BRIANNA

Yeah! That's him!

DRIVER

I think I saw him back a few miles.

CLICK.

The driver turns on his car's interior light. Sure enough it's the same man who was in the driver's seat when Teresa was kidnapped. Satchell Watts.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Why don't you get in and we'll see if we can go find him.

INT. PT CRUISER - DAWN

Helen drives her periwinkle Plymouth down a long desert road. A box of donuts sits on a stack of paperwork in her passenger seat. She SINGS along to a classic TRACK from the nineties playing on the radio.

HELEN

*Kiss me down by the broken tree  
house. Swing me, upon its hanging  
tire.*

EXT. KXRT - DAY

Helen's Plymouth is the first car in the KXRT parking lot. Just like every morning. She walks to the entrance and unlocks the front door.

Sitting on the front mat is a stack of mail and a small cardboard BOX with no return address. She picks up the parcels and enters the studio.

INT. VARIOUS - KXRT - DAY

We watch Helen as she goes through the motions of her morning routine. She makes a pot of coffee (the Tuscany roast), lays out the donuts and takes out the trash. All the while she hums the infectious MELODY from the radio.

At last, she tends to the mail.

The envelopes are all filled with bills and promotions, but the box -- that's a different story.

Helen uses her x-acto knife to cut through the electrical tape and open the package. A letter inside rests above a small, bundled handkerchief.

Helen unfolds the letter.

INSERT - LETTER

"We'll be calling today at noon. The Association."

BACK TO SCENE

Thinking nothing of it, Helen puts the note down on the desk and begins to unwrap the handkerchief. Just then, Kirby enters the front door.

KIRBY

Helen, baby! How's my girl?

HENRY

Morning, Kirby!

Kirby heads down the hallway toward his office and Helen resumes unwrapping the handkerchief.

INSERT - HANDKERCHIEF

In Helen's hands is a bloody stew of teeth, hair, cartilage and bone.

BACK TO SCENE

Helen's face turns white and she lets out a guttural WAIL. She faints.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - DAY

RING. RING. RING.

A disorientated Gary reaches for the telephone on his bedside table. His motel room, once a living, breathing hell hole -- now has a tidy feminine touch. He notices this before answering.

GARY

Yeah.

KIRBY (V.O.)

Where the hell are you, Glossup?

GARY

Kirby?

Claire moans at the A.M. racket surrounding her.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - KXRT - DAY

Once again, Gary sits in his tiny recording booth and prepares for The Association's phone call. It is 11:55 AM. Commercial break.

Sheriff Brinner and two POLICE OFFICERS shove a script down Gary's throat.

SHERIFF BRINNER

Okay, no improv, Coltrane. This is the manual. It's got every 'if,' 'and' or 'but' in the book. Should they say this, that or the other thing, you follow these pages accordingly.

Gary scans the document, unimpressed.

GARY

You guys used the wrong 'there' on page one.

Sheriff Brinner pays no attention to Gary's slight. Gary tosses the manuscript indifferently onto the counter.

KIRBY

Glossup, if you go off script the insurance company isn't gonna pay for the repercussions. I'm begging you, don't be a wise guy, okay?

GARY

Jesus Christ, alright already.

Mark hollers from the outer room.

MARK

Okay, we're live in ten!

The cops and Kirby scurry out of the recording booth and Gary prepares to take the call.

MARK (CONT'D)

Five . . . four . . . three . . .  
two . . . one.

Gary leans forward, toward the mic. The "On-Air" light buzzes red.

GARY

Hello folks, Gary Glossup here with the noon-time newscast. We here at KXRT received a very strange package this morning. Our much beloved secretary, Helen Cooper, opened up a piece of mail to find some rather disconcerting contents. Human remains. I won't divulge more than that. Needless to say, we were asked to take a phone call from the perpetrator at noon today. The local law enforcement feels this is the best course of action. However, I ask two things of you: firstly, that you not call -- unless of course you're the sender of the fan mail. Secondly, I can't vouch for what these people are going to say, so if you're with children or are easily offended, I urge you to stop listening now.

SILENCE. The clock strikes noon. Nothing. The second hand advances moment by moment. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock.

RING. RING.

Mark fumbles to answer the phone. He sends the caller through to Gary.

GARY (CONT'D)  
 Alright caller, you're on the air.

At first there is nothing but silence. Then, the subtle sound of someone BREATHING.

CALLER (V.O.)  
 Hello, Mr. Glossup.

The caller speaks in the eerie cadence we have come to expect.

GARY  
 Hello caller, what is your name and how can I help you?

Gary casually flips through the script he was given by the police.

CALLER (V.O.)  
 Our name is not important. I've come to inform you -- and the half-dozen police officers standing in your studio -- that we are responsible for the missing kids at the lake.

GARY  
 Kids from the lake?

Mark shuffles through paperwork on his desk. He holds up a news headline to the studio window for Gary to see. "Two Teenage Runaways Vanish From Lake."

GARY (CONT'D)  
 Who am I speaking to?

CALLER (V.O.)  
 I think you know our name, Gary. The family and I.

GARY  
 Are the kids safe?

CALLER (V.O.)  
 For the moment.

GARY  
 What do you want?

CALLER (V.O.)

The end is nigh and a great change is upon us, Mr. Glossup. More terrestrial flares are needed to light the celestial bon fire. Their dying spirits are an intergalactic lighthouse for our coming gods.

Gary looks down to his manual in frustration. There's no predetermined line of logic to guide him through negotiations with the caller's esoteric ramblings.

He looks up to Sheriff Brinner and Kirby; they are as perplexed as he is. Gary throws the manuscript over his shoulder and gets down to brass tacks with the caller.

GARY

Okay fruitcake, let's cut the shit. What the hell do you actually want? Who are these gods?

CALLER (V.O.)

They are beings from a distant dimension and they are trailing an invisible comet towards Earth. When the impending eclipse occurs and the world is dark they will destroy our diseased planet and spare only the believers. Are you a believer, Mr. Glossup? You were once and perhaps you'd like to be again. Otherwise, why continue to look for answers?

The caller's last few words hit close to home for Gary. He shakes his head in disbelief. "*Who does this guy think he is?*"

GARY

How can we get these kids back safely? Can we start a productive dialogue here? Enough of the Klingon mumbo jumbo.

The caller continues with violent fervor. He does not like Gary's subtle jab.

CALLER (V.O.)

The kids will not be coming back. History will repeat itself, Mr. Glossup. You have failed to read the signs. As a result no one will ever forget the Association.

GARY

What exactly is that supposed to mean?

CALLER

Just wait until you see what we have planned for the eclipse. It's quite something.

CLICK.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - KXRT - DAY

Gary sits at the head of the conference table and is grilled by Sheriff Brinner and his deputy. Mark and Kirby linger at the periphery for moral support.

GARY

They meant 'you' as in 'one.' The police, KXRT, etcetera. Not 'you' as in 'me.' We know their name; they signed it in the letter. How am I the bad guy here? Those wackjobs are offing teenagers for alien sacrifice and you bozos are ball busting me about it?!

SHERIFF BRINNER

Take it easy, tough guy.

GARY

No, I won't take it fuckin' easy. You take it easy.

The deputy interjects with his slow, southern drawl. He checks the facts from the tiny notepad in his beefy right hand.

DEPUTY

Well, Mr. Glossup, they did seem to insinuate that you and they had some sort of prior relation. And I believe the remark about looking for answers and whatnot, was directed solely at you.

Gary looks to Kirby in disbelief. He points at the deputy.

GARY

Who is this guy? Listen ya big goofy ass hole, I've only been here a month, okay. I don't know jack shit --

DEPUTY

Hey, I don't appreciate that kind of --

GARY

And I don't appreciate what you're suggesting about my character you big dumb oakie.

The deputy thrusts Gary up by his lapel and lays him out flat with one hard left-hook.

BOOM!

Gary hits the floor cold. Mark, Kirby and the Sheriff all gather around him. Gary's fingers twitch. His eyelids flutter. He's seeing stars.

DEPUTY

Sorry Sheriff, I couldn't help myself. He was talkin' shit.

#### DREAM SEQUENCE - VARIOUS

The following string of images weave in and out of each other at a steady, fluid pace. They gain more and more manic momentum until they pause completely for the last micro-scene.

I. Once again, we follow behind the child in pink sneakers as she runs down the foggy boardwalk. In the course of a footstep she is replaced by Teresa. She turns to us and lures us to follow her deeper into the mist.

II. The child's body floats face down in a murky blue bay.

III. A nude Teresa, looking like a fifties pin-up, blows a kiss at the camera.

IV. Billy's hanging body sways in the autumn wind. He is smiling. He winks at us.

V. Gary and Claire get married before an audience of faceless ghouls.

VI. The black and white sci-fi movie from the drive-in plays backward in slow motion.

VII. Teresa -- dressed in her Catholic school uniform -- floats down a long, narrow corridor of lockers and STUDENTS. She looks straight through the camera as we dolly back with her.

She is happy; smiling. But something sinister lurks nearby. You can feel the dread; the uncanny details of a nightmare. Things are just a bit off. This isn't quite reality.

Then --

Something enters the periphery of the frame. Just over head. Billy Turman's swaying Keds.

Teresa looks up at them and starts to SCREAM. Her face twists in terror. No sound is emitted from her mouth. In fact there's no sound at all.

Just SILENCE.

INT. FOYER - KXRT - DAY

Gary is thrust out of his nightmare on an old, musty couch in KXRT's lobby. Helen, Kirby and Mark look down at him like angels.

HELEN

This has got to be the strangest day in KXRT history.

Gary GROANS.

GARY

What happened?

MARK

Dude! It was totally radical. You hit the bricks like Frazier in Manila, man. No joke. Bowling pin. Whoo-pa!

KIRBY

That's enough, Mark. Gary, that officer is being written a citation as we speak. They were pressing a little too hard. I should have stepped in earlier.

Helen places a packet of frozen corn on Gary's black eye.

GARY

(mumbling)  
I gotta go.

MARK

Where you goin', man?

GARY

I gotta pay Carnegie a visit. Mark  
you drive me, I'm worse than drunk.

Gary gets up and stumbles toward the door.

KIRBY

Glossup, you gotta four o'clock  
broadcast!

GARY

Get Toby to do it. I'm taking a  
sick day.

INT. GREEN ROOM - TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Once again, we watch as Henry goes through his pre-taping  
rituals. He reads a newspaper and downs the hatch as the  
makeup artist applies foundation to his wrinkly, old face.

Three PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS construct a lighting rig nearby.

SLAM!

The green room door flies open and Gary barges in; frenetic  
energy bursting at the seams.

GARY

Carnegie, ditch the hangers-on, we  
have to talk.

Henry swivels around in his seat toward Gary. He takes in  
Gary's black eye and disheveled appearance.

HENRY

If everyone could excuse us, I'd  
like a moment alone with Mr.  
Glossup, here.

Everyone but Gary leaves the room. A production assistant  
shuts the door.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Quite the shiner you got there.

GARY

You haven't returned any of my  
calls and you're not tellin' me the  
truth, Carnegie. Now there are two  
more kids shackled up with some yo-  
yos in God knows where.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

I had information about Billy Turman and your daughter days ago which you extinguished. Falsely. So now I'm implicated in this and so are you.

HENRY

What do you know?

GARY

Your daughter was cutting the rug with Turman and you were not happy about it. I have testimonial that you and him exchanged terse words only a few days before his suicide. Why are you lying? Who are you protecting?

Gary decides to play hardball.

GARY (CONT'D)

And what do you think Teresa was trying to tell you that night in your office? Help me, daddy. I'm way too deep in something, daddy. Or that's right, you were too busy with work.

HENRY

You're overstepping your boundaries, Mr. Glossup. Saving my daughter isn't going to bring yours back. I hope you understand that. Your way past your depth here.

GARY

No, Carnegie, you're way past your depth! These people think some Goddamn aliens are coming down with the eclipse. They're gonna destroy Earth and save only the, uh, enlightened. And it's looking more and more like your daughter isn't coming back. Who is The Association? This whole thing is bigger than just Teresa now.

After a long SIGH, Henry decides to come clean. He know Gary can see through the bullshit.

HENRY

They were the subject of my argument with Billy.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

He was a bright, young boy who had gotten wrapped up in something he didn't quite understand. The Association. And he was trying to recruit my daughter.

GARY

Recruit her for what? Who are they?

HENRY

This is going to sound ridiculous. I don't even know where to begin.

GARY

I got all day.

Henry pours two drinks from the nearby liquor cabinet. He hands one to Gary, who reluctantly accepts.

HENRY

I wrote this idiotic book in my thirties -- The Dying Earth. My only piece of published fiction. It's not even in print anymore but it paid for a divorce at the time. I got a huge advance. It was about a guerilla group of scientists who were convinced Earth was on the brink of destruction and were preparing for an alien messiah. In it, they called themselves The Association.

Gary never thought he'd wind up in a web like this after leaving San Francisco.

GARY

And I'm just hearing about this now, because?

HENRY

I don't want to be associated with these people. I've built a legacy for sixty-five years on scientific fact and I'm proud of that legacy. I don't want to see it undercut by fanaticism and madness.

GARY

Even at the cost of your daughter's life?

HENRY

Perhaps. I don't know, Glossup. I never in a million years thought that book would come back to haunt me like it has. I didn't know the repercussions of selling out could be so grave. You must understand.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - KXRT - NIGHT

Gary catapults into his office and drops a bible-sized hardcover edition of The Dying Earth on Mark's desk. Its boldly-illustrated cover recalls Fantastic Planet or old episodes of Lost in Space.

MARK

What's this all about, man?

GARY

Read it. Give me CliffsNotes on every chapter. ASAP.

MARK

Done.

Gary heads toward the door.

MARK (CONT'D)

Oh wait up, man! I found another copy of that article on Turman from the library -- sans the Sharpie of course.

Mark tosses a yellowed newspaper to Gary.

MARK (CONT'D)

Wasn't even interesting. Just some quote from his co-worker.

GARY

Co-worker?

MARK

Yeah. Said he was a good kid. Worked at some gas station truck stop -- Big Al's. So much for bein' an honor student, huh? Loser.

EXT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary's BMW cruises up to Big Al's Gas, Convenience and UFO History Museum.

The establishment is surrounded by desert and outside the city by at least twenty miles. It's the kind of side of the highway, knick-knack shop you see only in the middle of nowhere on long road trips.

In the parking lot, a giant metal alien statue stands next to a small farm of Ostriches and a collection of rare sandstone rocks. On the opposite end sits a TRUCKER CHAPEL -- a small portable trailer church. Jesus on wheels.

INT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary strolls into the shop and looks around him. Potato chips, candy bars, moccasins and road maps. In the corner of the room is an small archway leading to what is billed as "America's Number One Extraterrestrial Museum."

Gary turns toward the CLERK (22).

GARY  
How much for the UFO exhibit?

CLERK  
Five dollars.

Gary forks over a Lincoln and the clerk stamps his hand with a capital "A."

CLERK (CONT'D)  
Help yourself.

GARY  
What's the 'A' stand for?

CLERK  
Al.

INT. UFO MUSEUM - BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary explores the two large rooms which make up the entirety of Big Al's extraterrestrial showcase. It's the poor man's Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

He strolls past a half-dozen poorly made dioramas of alien lore: farmers being beamed up toward a light in the sky; otherworldly civilizations and the supposed corpse of a Martian which crash landed in the fifties.

Needless to say, Gary wants his five dollars back.

INT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary exits the UFO museum and heads straight for the clerk.

GARY

How about this: you answer me some questions and I won't ask for my money back.

Gary advertises his phony police badge.

CLERK

Am I in trouble?

GARY

Not yet. You ever work here with a fella named Billy Turman?

CLERK

Yeah, totally. Until his accident.

GARY

What was he like?

CLERK

Billy was the best. He knew a bunch about space and stuff.

GARY

Did he strike you as the kinda guy to, you know, pull the plug?

The clerk looks around nervously. He whispers.

CLERK

Well, actually this one time when we were closing up he mentioned something about how he might -- you know -- do it, if he were to do it. I never really believed him though. I mean he had no reason to be sad. He was a happy go lucky guy. Very smart and funny.

Gary is visibly disappointed.

GARY

You're sure about that? He told you he was going to kill himself?

CLERK

Well not necessarily, but kinda. Like you know, he thought about it sometimes.

EXT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary emerges from Big Al's. Over his shoulder and beyond the trucker chapel's neon green crucifix is a towering PLANTATION home. It sits high upon a hill overlooking the business below. Its ominous profile lures Gary.

INT. MESSAGE ROOM - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Satchell Watts stands before a pulsating, blinking grid of multicolored LIGHTS. They rapidly shift colors and patterns. He is clouded and obscured by the halation of the light wall's glow. He speaks to it.

SATCHELL

What's that? You're on schedule? We are ready, my lords. We are ready.

Satchell's eyes widen in excitement and rapture. He puts his hands on the lights and they react to his touch like a living organism. A digital plant.

EXT. DRIVE-IN THEATER - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Gary's BMW is parked in the deserted blacktop of the empty drive-in theater. His is the only car in the establishment. The same movie that Teresa and Katherine watched is projected onto the screen.

INT. BMW - DRIVE-IN THEATER - NIGHT

Claire rests her head against Gary's shoulder. She is engaged and interested in the movie; Gary couldn't care less. His mind is elsewhere. He gazes around the parking lot, searching for invisible clues. There are none to be found.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Henry stands before the cameras and under the harsh white lights of his pitch-black set. He stares right into the camera.

HENRY

Before starting tonight's broadcast on this week's eclipse, I'd like to address something very near and dear to me. To The Association: trust me -- I've studied outer space for many years.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

There is no alien life form coming to save your souls. There is no UFO behind the eclipse. I'm getting to be an old man and I would very much like to see my daughter again.

INT. DORMITORY - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Teresa -- wearing nothing but a hospital gown -- sits in an all-white room. Her own private suite. There's a chair, a desk, a bookshelf and a bed. A model of bare austerity.

She stares at the wall, eyes glazed over and empty. Her head is shaved. Not an iota of her prior beauty can be detected.

The door to her room opens and a warm, motherly NURSE enters.

NURSE

Good evening, Teresa.

The nurse hands Teresa a Dixie cup of assorted pills. Teresa takes them back in one quick shot.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Ok, sweetheart -- time for mass.

INT. HALLWAY - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

The nurse and Teresa tiptoe through the hallway. The sound of an ORGAN echoes throughout the corridor.

One-by-one, other CULT MEMBERS join Teresa and the nurse on the way to chapel. The girls wear flowing, summer dresses and the boys wear white tunics.

Teresa inconspicuously removes the pills from under her tongue. She drops them into a nearby trash can.

INT. CHAPEL - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Teresa and the fellow cultists enter the chapel and join thirty OTHERS gathered in the pews. Everyone is in the midst of singing an old Pagan HYMN.

The chapel looks like an elementary school rec room which has been converted into a Stanley Kubrick set; like something people in the fifties thought the future would look like. Multi-colored lights and overly-stylized flourishes of brash design.

At the alter is Satchell Watts -- the leader of The Association and the mysterious driver from the two crime scenes. He sits stoically on a thrown waiting for his people to finish filing in.

Then --

The house lights fade to black and Satchell is illuminated in a spot LIGHT. All goes SILENT.

SATCHELL

Good evening my fellow associates.  
Tonight, I'd like to tell you all a  
story. The story of the Comstock  
pass incident.

The congregation listens to their leader with eager anticipation. He stands from his seat.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Several years ago in Englberg,  
Switzerland, a group of men decided  
to ski some unmapped terrain in the  
Alps. After weeks of preparation  
and training, they notified the  
mountain rangers, kissed their  
loved ones goodbye and started for  
the hills. A few hours after they  
left, it started to snow.  
Conditions got bad quickly. It was  
the most devastating blizzard in  
years. Not only that, but also --  
on that very night -- people all  
around town complained of being  
kept up by what they described as a  
"guttural moan, a prehistoric cry  
from deep within the wilderness."  
Source: unknown.

Satchel prowls the stage. He holds those gathered in complete captivation.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Now, two of the five skiers had  
climbed Everest and all were  
experienced, well-trained  
sportsman. They had weathered much  
worse before. The rangers were  
confident they'd make it through  
the storm. The day after the  
blizzard, the temperature rose  
dramatically. Record highs. All the  
fresh snow melted away in a matter  
of hours.

(MORE)

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Everyone expected the group to return cheerfully down the mountain. But they didn't. They never came back. Search teams were sent but none found a trace of the men.

Satchell tells the story with subtly and finesse. He's an export raconteur.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Seasons passed. Winter gave way to spring and the mountain closed down. On the last day of the year -- at an entirely different resort -- a ski lift operator took his last ride down the mountain. His last shift of the year. And he spotted something funny near the base of the trees. He didn't know what at first but as his carriage got closer, he saw it. Bodies -- five of them. They were buried in the snow. Blood all around. It was the skiers. They were naked and emitting a green glow. One of them had an unknown symbol of some sort etched into his chest and eighty percent of their bones were shattered. Plus, they all had tiny ice-pick wounds through the back of their skulls. Autopsy reports showed they had traces of radioactive residue in their digestive systems. And here's the kicker, they had only been dead six hours prior to being found. Three months after having gone missing.

The congregation OOHs and AHHS.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

No arrests were ever made, no conclusions were ever drawn and they exist as a forgotten footnote in European, winter-sport folklore.

Satchell takes a sip of water from a glass on the stage.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

My point is . . . mysterious things happen all the time. The unknown.

(MORE)

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

You either believe in a government cover-up conspiracy involving a blizzard, a group of skiers and nuclear weapons testing -- or that an entire town has been beamed up into the sky, or that an alien civilization bearing salvation is coming with the eclipse -- or you push it under the rug and go on with your life. You ignore these truths. These signs. And signs are all around. From gorillas in Birmingham to the shadow people of Black River Falls to global warming.

Satchell's sermon takes a vicious, condemning turn.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Humans have ruined the Earth. They have bitten off more than they can chew and they will pay. Humans lust and kill and envy. Humans are vessels of disease and hurt and pain and death. And they choose to reconcile their own pitiful mortality by leading immoral lives where only the pursuit of immediate gratification is of any importance. Right now the mothership is on its way. In two days the eclipse will be upon us. The age of the scorpion. And when that happens we will all be released from these vehicles. Our souls will be taken on board and we will travel through time and space to new heavens.

Satchell pauses for a long -- long -- moment.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

So I guess what you have to ask yourself is, are you believer or are you not?

Those gathered stand from their seat and wave their arms in the air in unison. A few of them faint and start writhing upon the floor. They are definitely believers.

The house lights turn back on and the spot dies.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Now, we must light a new smoke signal for our lords.

Satchell quickly CLAPS twice.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)  
Bring the boy.

Cass, the boy from the lake, is wheeled onto the alter by a fellow ASSOCIATE. He is duct taped to a dolly and wearing nothing but a pair of briefs. His face is bruised and bloody and a piece of his right ear has been cut off.

He tries to SCREAM but it is futile.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)  
Cass, Cass, Cass.

Cass's eyes are wide open in terror. He takes in the sight of the possessed worshipers before him.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)  
Cass, know that what you're about to experience is rare and awesome. On our future planet you will be considered a saint. A martyr. Know this -- you will be . . . forever.

Satchell looks to the music conductor and nods.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)  
Leroy, track four.

The music conductor cues TIME OF THE SEASON by The Zombies over the PA system. The ironic, smooth sixties classic acts as a bizarre counterpoint to the unhinged violence we're about to see.

Satchell walks off stage for a moment and returns carrying a large SCYTHE. He advertises the weapon to his congregation.

Cass violently thrashes about. It's no use; his bindings don't budge an inch.

Satchell relishes in the show; in the attention. He sings a few words to the song.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)  
*What's your name? Who's your daddy?  
Is he rich? Is he rich like me?*

Satchell really takes his time. He dances a tongue in cheek jig toward Cass, encircling him like a demented circus clown.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)  
*Has he taken any time to show, to  
show you what it means to live?*  
(MORE)

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

*Tell it to me slowly, tell you  
what? I really want to know. It's  
the time of the season for loving.*

Finally, Satchell sticks the scythe into Cass's abdomen and pulls up toward his heart.

CLOSE ON - Cass's eyes.

Pain. Agony. Shock.

CLOSE ON - Satchell's eyes.

Excitement. Joy. Empathy.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You're going to die, Cass. Let it  
in. Think of all your life's  
memories. Balloons and baby bonnets  
and first loves. Think of Brianna.  
Think of loose teeth and skinned  
knees and your favorite song. It's  
ok. It's ok. It won't last long.

Cass passes.

Satchell lets go of the scythe. He turns around and those gathered shower him in adoration and love.

BLOOD covers both Satchell and the floor.

The song concludes.

The congregation quakes in MURMURING prayer.

Two ASSOCIATES walk onto the stage with canisters of GASOLINE. They douse Cass's body and LIGHT the smoke signal.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - NIGHT

Gary and Claire sit cross-legged on Gary's bed. They share a bottle of cheap wine.

Gary studies two large, library textbooks. One is about the occult, the other is a scientific study of eclipses. Colorful, mystifying photos and graphs draw Gary from within the pages. Aliens. Christ on a cross. Mystic cave paintings. Satan. The second coming. UFOs.

As a bookmark Gary uses a headshot of Teresa. Just like the first time he saw her, he is hypnotized by her elusive charm.

CLAIRE

What if I quit my job and you and I  
formed a detective team together?  
Like the boxcar children.

Gary's not so interested. Claire lays her head down beside  
his thigh.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

You okay?

GARY

Uh-huh.

Claire turns to her side and pets Gary's leg.

CLAIRE

What'd you think of the movie?

GARY

It was fine.

CLAIRE

Lemme take your mind off things.

Claire gets up on Gary's lap and straddles him tight. She  
kisses his neck.

GARY

Jesus Christ. Lay off, would you?

Gary shoves her aside and Claire lands on the bed in an  
awkward, rather ungraceful position. Her face turns red in  
embarrassment. She abruptly gets up and begins packing her  
things into her tote bag.

GARY (CONT'D)

Where you going?

CLAIRE

If I wanted to spend time with a  
morose pet rock I would have called  
my ex-husband.

Claire puts on her jacket.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I just don't understand why this is  
all so important to you. I'm  
throwing myself at you and you  
can't stop thinking about her.

Claire indicates the photo of Teresa. Gary snaps out of his  
trance and follows after her.

GARY  
Claire, c'mon.

Claire turns toward Gary and they embrace.

GARY (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. I'm not very good at the  
whole being a boyfriend thing.

They stand still for a moment before walking back to the bed  
and collapsing onto it.

They kiss one another. Tenderly.

CLAIRE  
What happened to you in San  
Francisco, Gary? Why'd you quit  
your column?

Gary debates telling Claire a story he's never repeated to  
anyone. He decides to proceed.

GARY  
I lost my daughter.

Claire is disarmed by Gary's blunt response. She puts her  
hand on his.

CLAIRE  
Was she sick?

GARY  
No. Nothing like that.

CLAIRE  
What happened?

Gary responds matter-of-factly; all emotion excised.

GARY  
We were at Fisherman's Wharf and  
she was standing by the railing  
watching the sea lion's on the  
swimming piers. I told her to stay  
still. I said I would be right  
back, that I had to use the  
washroom and I loved her. Then, I  
went in a bar and I used the john.  
When I came back out, I saw her  
through the window. She was fine.  
She was standing right there. So I  
had a shot. Two seconds.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

I was gone two seconds. When I went outside she wasn't there anymore.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - EXT. PIER - FISHERMAN'S WHARF - DUSK

We've been here before.

We slowly dolly down an empty pier toward a small, pink sneaker. It sits alone, without its mate, at the edge of the plank.

Gulls SQUAWK and the sound of lapping WAVES crash against the boardwalk.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - NIGHT

Claire and Gary both sit in a long, sobering silence.

GARY

They found her body two weeks later in a sewage drain in Sausalito. She was eight years old. If she was still alive she would of been Teresa's age.

CLAIRE

What happened to her mother?

GARY

She left me. She lives in Tuscaloosa with her new husband and their three kids.

Claire is winded by Gary's tragic tale. He looks right into her eyes.

GARY (CONT'D)

That's what happened in San Francisco.

Claire consoles Gary. She kisses his cheek and embraces him.

INT. PT CRUISER - DAWN

Once again, we're with the affable Helen Cooper as she drives to work. The RADIO plays another late-nineties classic and Helen sings along.

HELEN

*'Cause dreams last for so long,  
even after you're gone. And I know,  
you love me and soon you will see,  
you were meant for me. And I was  
meant for you.*

EXT. KXRT - DAWN

Helen parks her PT cruiser in KXRT's parking lot. We follow behind her as she rumbles left and right down the sidewalk and toward the front door.

Suddenly, she stops. Sitting on the front mat -- on top of the mail -- is a familiar looking box. Helen lets out one of her famous ear-splitting SCREAMS.

INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - DAY

RING. RING. RING.

Gary is thrust out of sleep by the sound of his telephone. Claire slumbers beside him, unfazed by the call.

Gary answers.

GARY

Hello.

MARK (V.O.)

Dude, where are you?! KXRT is code red freaky right now. The Carnegie chick is dead. The cult sent her index finger to Helen this morning.

GARY

What?!

MARK (V.O.)

Yeah. She's free worm food, man.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - KXRT - DAY

Kirby reads the Association's blood-spackled letter aloud to two POLICE OFFICERS and the KXRT staff (minus Gary). Before them on the conference table is the open package.

KIRBY

Dear KXRT, we have killed Teresa Carnegie. Don't worry she is in a better place. The eleventh dimension. Her body is at the bottom of the well in Bellevue park. You will find her with half of her skull missing and severely burned. Tomorrow is the eclipse. The day we've all been waiting for. Unfortunately, your history ends tomorrow. Ours is just beginning. Good luck and goodbye.

Everyone sits in silence for a long moment.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Where the hell is Glossup? He's gotta report on this.

INT. BMW - DAY

Gary barrels down the highway, swerving in and out of traffic.

EXT. BELLVUE PARK - DAY

A scene of total pandemonium. ONLOOKERS, POLICE and NEWS REPORTERS scurry about the park as Gary navigates through them -- toward the well.

AT WELL

Gary watches as Teresa's body -- decomposed to the point of being unrecognizable -- is exhumed from the well by a team of POLICE OFFICERS. He is floored. He watches in shock.

Nearby, Henry stands alone. He watches as his only child's charred remains are placed on a stretcher and hauled toward an ambulance.

Henry is numb. Beyond emotion.

He looks to Gary. They have a brief instance of fleeting eye contact before Henry is pulled away for questioning by the POLICE.

INT. SQUAD CAR - DAY

A distraught and inconsolable Henry stares out the window of a speeding police cruiser. He watches life go on despite his loss as he's hurtled through the city.

MONTAGE - SUPER 8MM HOME MOVIES

Memories of Henry and Teresa flash across the screen. Halloween costumes, ballet recitals and games of hide-and-go-seek.

EXT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary's BMW pulls up next to the trucker chapel in the desolate parking lot of Big Al's. The neon green crucifix's reflection flickers across his windshield.

Gary takes a large pull from a bottle of whiskey. He's clearly had a rough afternoon.

INT. TRUCKER CHAPEL - BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary steps into the portable cathedral and closes the screen door behind him.

Five rows of folding chairs are set up before a statue of Christ on the cross. A tiny organ plays a church HYMN by itself in the corner. Only in America.

Gary is the only soul in the darkened establishment. He slowly walks toward the alter, through the musty smell of incense and toward the plaster Christ. He kneels.

Gary prays for the first time in years.

INT. GREEN ROOM - TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

Alone in his dressing room, Henry Carnegie drinks his sorrows away. He looks at himself in the mirror. The lights on the vanity flatten the old man's features and give him an odd, youthful glow.

He looks down at a photo of Teresa -- his daughter; his only child. He puts it in his suit pocket and lazily salutes his reflection.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - NIGHT

We follow behind Henry as he walks through the darkened studio and toward the technicolor spaceship set. Once again, an off-screen CREW MEMBER yells out the countdown.

CREW MEMEBER (O.S.)  
Ok boys, lights --

Henry positions himself at his mark. The LIGHTS go up.

CREW MEMEBER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Camera --

The camera rolls.

CREW MEMEBER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Five . . . four . . . three . . .

We're live.

HENRY  
Hello, I'm Henry Carnegie and this is The Stars And You. Welcome to part two of this week's special eclipse celebration.

Henry pauses and smiles.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
Do we have free will or are we just acting out the pre-determined mathematical aftermath of the big bang? Are we merely a series of ones and zeros -- computations, or do we have souls? Science can't say for certain. For tonight's opening statement, I'd like to take a serious turn.

The SCRIPT SUPERVISOR flips through the teleplay. This is not the monologue planned for tonight's show.

Henry walks latterly off his mark and the camera follows.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
I know it's easy to look into the cosmos sometimes and be frightened by what you see. The sheer vastness of space can be staggering. We scientists are unfortunately known to talk about humanity in terms which reduce it to zilch. Crude aggregations of matter;  
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 knots of subatomic particles  
 blinking rapidly in and out of  
 existence. And that can be scary.  
 It can make one feel alone in this  
 world.

Henry stops. He stands still and he looks right at the lens.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 We go the grocery store. We watch  
 TV. We hurt and heal and cry and  
 laugh. We mourn the loss of loved  
 ones and know the joy of first  
 kisses and great pop songs and  
 poetry. We don't feel like  
 microscopic particles, we don't  
 feel like computations. We feel  
 real. We feel alive.

Henry loses his composure for an instant. This is a man  
 baring his soul; his bone marrow.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 It's hard to diminish our  
 experience of living to that of a  
 mayfly which is born, reproduces  
 and dies in the span of an  
 afternoon. But as far as infinity  
 is concerned, we and the mayfly are  
 but the same thing.

The crew members -- just moments before perplexed -- are now  
 genuinely touched by Henry's monologue.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 So, how can we transcend that? How  
 do we disassociate ourselves from  
 evil? How can we find peace with  
 each other knowing that we're not  
 alone, but together in the  
 boundlessness of our shared human  
 experience? Ladies and gentlemen,  
 this will be my final broadcast. I  
 don't believe that the end of the  
 world is upon us with this coming  
 eclipse. But it is the end of mine.  
 Thank you. Goodnight.

Henry reaches into his suit coat and pulls out a silver  
 REVOLVER. He puts the barrel in his mouth and pulls the  
 trigger. His brains paint the set red.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Gary drives down a coal-black highway. His high beams are the only source of light for miles. A breaking newscast on the RADIO interrupts his thoughts.

RADIO (V.O.)

This just in: Henry Carnegie, famed cosmologist, theorist and TV personality has apparently committed suicide on live television.

Gary cannot believe what he's hearing. The hair on the back of his neck stands up. A lump forms in the back of his throat.

RADIO (V.O.)

The FCC estimates at least 100,000 homes were tuned into the broadcast and witnessed the tragedy. Mr. Carnegie was sixty-five.

Just then the radio cuts to STATIC. Then -- SIRENS.

A police CAR trails close behind Gary's BMW. He pulls over onto the shoulder and the squad car follows after him.

EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER - NIGHT

We follow behind the POLICE OFFICER as he exits his car and ambles toward Gary's.

GARY

Is there a problem officer?

POLICE OFFICER

Do I smell Jim Beam?

GARY

I don't believe so.

Gary looks up at the authority. His face is painted black by the night.

POLICE OFFICER

Well, you were doing ninety in a seventy-five. Where you headed to in such a hurry?

GARY

I didn't know I was going that fast.

POLICE OFFICER  
License and registration.

Gary opens his glovebox and hands the officer his information.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna run these. You sit tight,  
Speed Racer.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

The police officer saunters back to his car and out of view. Gary immediately begins fumbling with the radio dials, desperately trying to find a clear signal. In between the overbearing static, clear glimpses of Henry's final MONOLOGUE are rebroadcasted over the air.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

Startled, Gary once again rolls down his window. The police officer ducks his head to meet Gary eye-to-eye. A shaft of light from the dashboard illuminates the police officer's face. It's the assailant from the drive-in. "*Hello, Teresa.*" This fact is lost on Gary.

POLICE OFFICER  
You're free to go, Mr. Glossup.  
Consider this a warning.

GARY  
Yeah, thanks.

POLICE OFFICER  
Goodnight. Buckle up. Oh and by the way, I'm a fan of the show.

As Gary collects himself, the police officer hurries back to his cruiser, starts the engine and speeds off into the night.

Just then, Gary's radio signal becomes clear once more.

RADIO (V.O.)  
Mr. Carnegie's suicide is particularly tragic in light of his only daughter's recent passing.

Gary starts his BMW and pulls onto the highway. After only a moment of driving, his tires blow out --

POP. POP. POP.

-- and he is forced to take a lonely exit off the freeway.

GARY  
Sonovabitch.

EXT. MAIN STREET - GHOST TOWN - NIGHT

Gary inspects the busted rubber remains of his BMW's back tires. There's no hope in salvaging them. He's stranded.

GARY  
Goddamnit.

Gary gets up from his knees and dusts off his pants. He looks around him and takes in his surroundings for the first time. He is in the middle of an empty main street. A ghost town. Cobwebbed storefronts surround him on either side. Their doors, closed. Their lights, dead.

No life has stirred this street in a long time.

A single street light in the distance shines upon a gently swaying wooden signpost: BLACK RIVER FALLS.

Suddenly everything goes quiet. The wind stops completely. The Black River Falls sign swings to a halt.

Seconds drag like hours. A chill runs down Gary's spine.

Then --

TAP. TAP. TAP.

Gary looks around him.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Hello?

TAP. TAP. TAP.

Gary hopelessly seeks out the source of the noise. Nothing.

MUMBLING.

TAP. TAP. TAP.

Gary is caught off guard; perplexed. He quietly opens his trunk and removes a small .22 caliber PISTOL from within a tool box.

Out of nowhere a LIGHT explodes on in a nearby storefront.

Gary, slowly -- step by step -- approaches it.

TAP. Step. TAP. Step. TAP. Step.

Gary reaches the business and waits for further communication. Nothing. Silence. Wind chimes RATTLE in the distance.

SCREECH -- the sound of NAILS dragging against dirty glass.

Gary looks up to see a MAN staring down at him from the second floor window of the establishment. The man is dressed in a lavish, Gatsby-esque tuxedo and wearing a large RABBIT MASK. It's a far cry from the friendly Easter Bunny we're used to. It looks real; like something out of a nightmare.

Startled, Gary stumbles backward and toward his car. He surveys his surroundings in a fever of panic. His gun is cocked and ready to fire. The LIGHTS in every place of business blink rapidly on and off, blinding Gary.

Then --

Gary sees a another VISITOR. Just one at first. Then a second. Then a third. They all wear tuxedos and various life-like animal masks.

Suddenly, there are a DOZEN of them staring back at Gary. They surround him. They move toward him slowly. Step by step.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Stay away! Stay back!

The visitors don't heed Gary's command. He aims his pistol toward the sky and shoots.

BANG!

The visitors all stop dead in their tracks. They ogle Gary like a pack of vultures circling a dying carcass.

They move toward him once more.

GARY (CONT'D)  
I said stay back!

Closer. Closer. Closer.

Gary lowers the barrel of the gun perpendicular to his body. He shoots one of them.

BANG!

Then another.

BANG!

And another.

BANG!

The visitors don't slow stride. In fact, they don't react at all.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Stop! Stay Away!

The visitors smother Gary and pin him to the ground. They inject his neck with serum from a dirty syringe.

He CRIES OUT in agony.

Gary's vision begins to morph. The rippling effects of the hallucinogenic serum seize him. Suddenly, a blurred vision comes into focus.

It's -- "*could it be?*" -- Claire.

She sits on a nearby curb. An animal mask rests beside her. She looks distraught; at odds with herself. She makes eye contact with Gary.

Everything goes BLACK.

MONTAGE - LUNAR ECLIPSE FESTIVITIES - DAY

It's the day of the eclipse and the main downtown drag is buzzing with PEOPLE and excitement.

I. The high school MARCHING BAND practices a sloppy rendition of their alma mater's fighting SONG.

II. Local restaurant and bar OWNERS erect food stands along the avenue.

III. Scores of UFO NUTS scurry through the town square. They've transformed the city into a makeshift extra-terrestrial convention. Some are in full-blown alien costumes while others look like they just got back from Burning Man.

IV. A traffic jam of out of state licence plates bottle neck at key entryways into town.

EXT. CITY HALL - PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

Sheriff Brinner and his deputy address a mob of PRESS and concerned CITIZENS.

## SHERIFF BRINNER

As far as the day's festivities are concerned, we plan to forge ahead without a hitch. Despite yesterday's tragedy we ain't gonna be dissuaded by delusional psychopaths. This is a safe town.

Everybody CLAPS. Sheriff Brinner smiles for the cameras.

## INT. TRUCKER CHAPEL - BIG AL'S - DAY

Gary wakes up in the cheerless trucker chapel in a fever of cold sweat. He's shaken and disoriented. He rubs the sleep from his eyes and tries to put the pieces back together as quickly as he can. Was it all a bad dream?

A statue of Mother Mary looks down on him from above.

## EXT. BIG AL'S - DAY

The white-hot daylight blinds Gary as he walks through the gravel parking lot of Big Al's and toward his BMW. It waits for him in the same spot he left it. Its tires, perfectly intact.

He gets in the car and starts the engine.

## INT. GARY'S ROOM - COMFORT INN - DAY

Gary unlocks his motel room and enters its cool, sterile confines. The sound of the shower resonates from the bathroom.

He throws his wallet and keys onto the nearby dresser and looks at his weary face in the mirror. He sticks out his tongue, rubs his eyes and runs his fingers through his hair.

Then --

Gary notices something on his neck. A tiny wound where the dream-syringe entered his vein. He fingers it, confounded by its presence.

Suddenly, the shower stops running.

Gary spots a torn up newspaper sitting in the nearby garbage can. A bold faced portion of the headline reads "Carnegie." Gary reaches for the pieces and puts them back together in a hurry.

INSERT - HEADLINE

"Carnegie Kills Self On Air."

BACK TO SCENE

Gary is floored. Perhaps it wasn't all a dream. He doesn't have time to react.

CLICK.

The bathroom door unlocks and Gary swipes the newspaper clippings back into the trash.

Claire enters the main room and is relieved to see Gary.

CLAIRE

Thank God. I was worried sick about you.

GARY

Yeah. Sorry.

CLAIRE

Where were you?

GARY

Long story.

CLAIRE

I've heard that before.

Claire kisses Gary's cheek. He scrutinizes her closely. Dubiously.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

This is why people have cell phones.

Claire begins to change into her clothes.

GARY

Where you goin'?

CLAIRE

It's the eclipse, dummy. I have a million things to do. The Sun has deadlines just like KXRT you know?

*"The sun?"*

GARY

I thought you said you worked for the Sentinel?

Claire changes the subject.

CLAIRE

I heard about the girl. Teresa. I'm so sorry Gary. I know that meant a lot to you.

GARY

Yeah.

Claire tiptoes toward Gary and lays her arms lovingly around his neck. She looks deep into his eyes.

CLAIRE

Grab lunch a little later? I'll be downtown all afternoon. Find me and I'll see if I can sneak off for a bit.

GARY

I might take you up on that.

Claire puts on her heels and makes for the front door. She stops before exiting and turns toward Gary once more.

CLAIRE

I have something I want to tell you.

Gary's all ears.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

This last week with you has been really nice. I haven't felt this way in a long time.

Claire nervously gazes at the floor to hide her schoolgirl smirk. Gary plays it cool. He winks.

GARY

Phillips, I'll see you later, kid.

Claire closes the door and Gary springs to action. He dials a number on the nearby telephone.

GARY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Funk. Glossup.

Gary dresses in a flash. He grabs his pistol.

GARY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

I know, Mark, I heard about Carnegie. I have a feeling he would have croaked soon anyway. Listen, you gotta do something for me.

Gary watches Claire through the window as she walks toward her Ford Explorer and puts her belongings in the back seat.

GARY (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Go on the Google and dig up as much as you can on a certain Claire Phillips. She says she works at the Atlanta Sentinel. Or the Sun. I dunno. I think she might be blowin' smoke. Call them both and find out. Yeah right, Lauren Bacall from the bar.

EXT. PARKING LOT - COMFORT INN - DAY

As Claire's Explorer exits the parking lot, Gary emerges from his suite. He notices a group of scruffy STONERS sitting in a nearby Bronco. He approaches them.

GARY

Any of you fine, young fellas wanna take a classic German automobile on a joyride?

Gary dangles his BMW keys like bait.

INT. BRONCO - DAY

Gary, driving the stoners's Bronco, trails Claire's Explorer at a safe but visible distance. We watch as the Explorer speeds past the highway's downtown exit.

EXT. BIG AL'S - DAY

Claire's Explorer pulls up to Big Al's Gas, Convenience and UFO History museum. She speeds through the parking lot and toward the gated driveway leading to the plantation home. A group of ASSOCIATES meet her at the gate and open up.

Parked along the shoulder of the highway, Gary watches Claire from the Bronco. He is devastated. Heartbroken. As soon as she is within the plantation's confines, he speeds off.

## INT. BALLROOM - CULT COMPOUND - DAY

We follow behind Claire as she struts through a grand, old fashioned ballroom deep within the cult's expansive compound. Other ASSOCIATES decorate the dance hall in preparation for tonight's celestial celebrations. Gold balloons, white-clothed dining tables and glowing, warm chandeliers.

The ballroom's entire ceiling is made of glass; a giant skylight. The beautiful weather outside contrasts starkly with the somber mood inside the compound.

The Association's signature soundtrack -- old-timey JAZZ -- reverberates throughout the echo chamber.

## INT. HALLWAY - CULT COMPOUND - DAY

We follow Claire down a long, atonal corridor. Eventually, she reaches a red door at the end of the hallway. She KNOCKS.

An eye looks through the peep hole and the door opens. It's Satchell. He hugs Claire. She kisses him on the cheek.

SATCHELL

Is everything in order?

CLAIRE

Yes.

It's evident in Claire's tone that she has mixed feelings.

## INT. FOYER - KXRT - DAY

Gary busts through KXRT's front door and makes for his office. Like downtown, the KXRT studio is alive with eclipse pandemonium. KXRT STAFFERS prowl the hallways in homemade alien garb. Excitement is in the air.

Helen, face painted completely green, leers up at Gary like a demented leprechaun.

HELEN

Hi-ya, Gary! Merry *moonday*!

GARY

Can it, Helen.

Kirby materializes near the coffee pot.

KIRBY

Look who decided to come to work.

GARY

What'd I miss? Who won the elementary school spelling bee?

KIRBY

Actually wise guy, you missed the autopsy report. The body in the Bellevue well wasn't Carnegie's girl. It was Brianna Zerante -- one half of the couple from Lake Lombard.

Gary is leveled.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Looks like Henry pulled the trigger a little too soon.

INT. CENTRAL WING - KXRT - DAY

Gary and Kirby march down the central hallway and continue their conversation.

KIRBY

Look, you have to be at Pelican Square tonight at seven PM for the live broadcast of this eclipse bullshit.

GARY

What?! No one sent me that memo.

KIRBY

Maybe if you came into work you'd know these things. Did you check your email?

GARY

I have an email?

KIRBY

Jesus Christ.

Gary and Kirby stop mid-stride and address each other face to face.

GARY

Kirb, I can't do it. I'm about to crack the Carnegie case. If she's still alive, there's still hope.

KIRBY

You're doing it or you're fired.  
And if you're fired you're fucked.  
No one's gonna hire you again,  
Gary. Not after two debacles.

A moment of silence.

KIRBY (CONT'D)

Pelican Square. Seven PM.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - KXRT - DAY

Gary waltzes into his office and collapses upon the couch.  
Mark sits at the sound board, reading The Dying Earth. He is  
nearly finished.

GARY

Homeboy.

Mark raises his pointer finger and silences Gary. He finishes  
his page.

MARK

Every chapter is a cliff hanger in  
this tour de force, man.

GARY

Anything of any use?

MARK

No, it's mostly long, drawn-out  
monologues about the nature of life  
and death. A couple good chase  
scenes. One awesome brainwash bit.  
I have a feeling it's gearing up  
for one of those ambiguous,  
frustrating endings though.

GARY

Any updates on the Claire Phillips  
front?

MARK

Oh yeah, she's totally bogus, man.  
Atlanta Sentinel has no record of  
her. Neither does the Sun.

Gary takes a long moment to digest all this information. He  
shakes hie head.

GARY

Fuckin' woman, man. Goddamn.

EXT. PELICAN SQUARE - DAY

Pelican Square is a lush plot of land in the middle of downtown. A water fountain sits at the center and pleasant pathways weave up and down small foothills.

It is ground zero for the eclipse festivities.

We follow behind Gary as he maneuvers through TOURISTS, CITY OFFICIALS and SCI-FI FANATICS, blindly seeking out Claire.

A nearby GARAGE BAND plays a slow, faithful rendition of Skeeter Davis's "THE END OF THE WORLD" to a disinterested crowd of buzzed TOWNSPEOPLE.

Finally Gary spots Claire. She's standing near a gazebo talking to a man dressed as an Alien WIZARD standing on stilts.

CLAIRE  
(to alien man)  
And what do you think the eclipse  
signifies?

Gary interrupts the interview.

GARY  
Cut the shit, Claire. You're comin'  
with me.

Claire can't believe Gary's gall.

CLAIRE  
What are you talking about, Gary?  
I'm in the middle of something.

Gary leers up at the stilted-freak show.

GARY  
How much they payin' ya, guy?

WIZARD  
Excuse me?

CLAIRE  
What on Earth are you talking  
about?

Gary shoves Claire. It isn't a hit by any means but it's enough to stop some nearby PASSERS-BY. Claire is affronted by the attack. She stiffens in shock.

Gary pushes her again.

GARY

You know Goddamn well what I'm talkin' about. I saw you last night. I followed you to that alien freak show gas station. I don't know what exactly, but something is going on up there.

Claire interjects.

CLAIRE

Calm down, Gary. You don't know what you're talking --

Gary shoves Claire again. She stumbles.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

I swear I don't know --

The wizard watches the confrontation, perplexed.

GARY

Oh yeah, you don't? Well the Atlanta Sentinel has no idea who you are. Neither does the Sun. What are you hiding?

Claire is caught. She knows it.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

In a shadowy alleyway between a drug store and a barbershop, Claire tries to reason with a livid Gary.

CLAIRE

Gary, I swear -- I was going to tell you this morning, but I couldn't. They'd kill me.

GARY

Who's they?!

Claire clams up.

CLAIRE

The Association.

GARY

I know their name, sweetie. What do they want? How did they get to you?

CLAIRE

I'm one of them. Or, I was one of them. I made a lot of mistakes when I was younger. I ran with the wrong crowd, Gary. I've been trying to get out for years but they won't let me. They killed Turman for the same reason. This was my shot to be free.

GARY

What are you talking about?

CLAIRE

This was my one job and then I'd be out for good.

GARY

And what job was that, Claire?

CLAIRE

Keeping you in the dark.

GARY

About what?

Claire wipes tears from her eyes and looks at Gary.

CLAIRE

You don't know?

GARY

Know what?

CLAIRE

They're gonna bomb the square. Tonight. During the eclipse. Everyone here is going to die at midnight. They're insane.

Gary is laid out by Claire's confession.

He looks down the alley at the festivities. Hundreds of innocent, unsuspecting TOWNSPEOPLE enjoy their afternoon oblivious to the danger that awaits them.

GARY

Why me?

CLAIRE

You cared more than the police did. They had no chance of finding us.

GARY

I'm going to the authorities.  
You're all going to jail.

CLAIRE

No! I can get you Teresa.

GARY

And what about all the people out there, Claire? Just let them become, uh "smoke signals?"

CLAIRE

No, we'll stop that too. Together. I swear. One step at a time. Give me til ten PM. We'll exchange the girl and then you can go to the cops. I don't want to jeopardize Teresa's life by being hasty.

Gary fights his own instincts. He doesn't know what to do or who to believe.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Tonight. Ten PM. By the gazebo. She'll be in a yellow rain slicker. I promise. I can make that happen.

GARY

Why should I trust you, Claire?

CLAIRE

Because falling for you wasn't a part of the job description. That just happened. That was real.

They kiss a sudden, spontaneous kiss. Bogart and Bergman style.

GARY

After this I don't wanna ever see you again.

CLAIRE

Don't worry. You wont.

INT. CHAPEL - CULT COUMPOUND - NIGHT

Satchell stands at the alter between two robed, masked WOMEN. Before them is a congregation of naked ASSOCIATES. They all kneel in rows of twelve awaiting their master's sermon.

SATCHELL

The evening we've all awaited so patiently is finally upon us. Before tonight's grand finale there are a few last instructions I must divulge. You are all finally ready.

The congregation is elated to hear they have graduated to a new enlightenment.

The robed women walk toward a long, blanketed table at the corner of the alter. The table is covered in rows of plastic pods. Each woman grabs one of the pods and brings it forward to show the audience.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

To meet our Lords you will all be required to showcase an ordained attire specifically chosen by the star people. For the men, item one: grey tuxedo slacks.

The robed women reveal the contents of the pods as Satchell dictates each item aloud.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Item two: black smoking jacket.  
Item three: red New Balance 574s.  
We all might be doing a lot of walking on this journey.

The men in the congregation OOH and AHH at their new wardrobes.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

And for the woman: an ivory, laced evening gown.

The robed women commence handing out the pods to the congregation.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, one size fits all.

Once all the pods are accounted for, Satchell says his final words.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Before we adjourn I'd just like to say it's been an honor and a great pleasure to lead fine sentient beings like yourselves to a new wisdom; a new age. An age where there is no pain.

(MORE)

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

One where we can be loved and free.  
We depart this evening at the  
stroke of midnight. After tonight  
is through, no one will ever forget  
The Association.

EXT. PELICAN SQUARE - NIGHT

The town has been transformed into a crowded mess of people, humidity and anticipation. Glow sticks, lawn chairs, charcoal grills and coolers full of booze litter the normally tranquil square.

The celebration has the air of a Fourth of July fireworks display.

AT KXRT BOOTH

Gary watches the clock tower adjacent to the park strike 9:45 PM. He's on edge and his nerves are fried.

He sits at the mobile KXRT booth in the midst of the celebratory chaos. With him are Mark, Kirby and an interviewee, JEFF SCOTT (57), the meteorologist from Action 7 News.

GARY

(into microphone)

T-minus two hours until the  
eclipse. With us in the mobile KXRT  
unit is Jeff Scott -- eclipse  
expert, Action 7 meteorologist and  
member of the scientific community.  
How are you Mr. Scott?

JEFF

Very good.

GARY

Thank you for accommodating us on  
such short notice. We were planning  
on talking with Henry Carnegie, but  
you may have heard, he blew his  
brains out on live TV.

JEFF

Quite alright.

GARY

Do you buy any of the apocalyptic  
prophesies regarding the eclipse?

JEFF

No, of course not. This is a special event in the history of the cosmos. There's nothing doom and gloom about it.

GARY

Let's hope not.

The clock tower strikes 9:50 PM. Thunder CRACKS in the distance. Gary looks up toward the sky; a lone RAIN DROP falls upon his forehead.

GARY (CONT'D)

We're gonna transition into a commercial break, but we'll be right back with more on this scientific anomaly.

Mark hits a few buttons on the portable sound board and the broadcast cuts to commercials.

More rain begins to fall. SPECTATORS pull out their umbrellas.

Gary stands up and watches the commotion.

GARY (CONT'D)

Kirby, I gotta go.

KIRBY

You can't go, Glossup. We're in the middle of the Goddamn show.

GARY

Then I quit.

KIRBY

What?!

GARY

I got something I need to take care of. If you wanna hire me back on Monday I'd be more than happy to apply for the position. Funk here can write me a recommendation.

MARK

I'd be happy to, Gary.

GARY

If I don't go, I won't be able to live with myself. I hope you can understand that.

Gary takes off toward the gazebo at the opposite end of the park.

MARK

Actually, sorry Kirb, I quit too.

Mark follows after Gary.

THROUGH PARK

We follow behind Gary and Mark as they book it through the THROGS of drunken debauchery and alien propaganda. Lightning and thunder STRIKE. It begins pouring.

GARY

I didn't know it was supposed to rain!

MARK

Yeah man, fifty percent chance. Don't you check your phone?

GARY

I don't have a Goddamn phone.

MARK

I can't believe we just quit, man!

Mark and Gary arrive at the gazebo. The place is teeming with busy BODIES -- many of which are wearing yellow rain coats. Gary panics.

The clock strikes 10:00 PM. The rain becomes torrential. The bell tower RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

Gary paces around the Gazebo manically. Despite a plethora of rain coats, there is no Teresa anywhere. No Claire either.

MARK (CONT'D)

What are you doing, man?

Gary is hit by the implications of his compromise with Claire. A freight train barrels through his head.

GARY

We're fucked.

More and more RAINCOATS file to and fro, past Gary and Mark. The emblem along their breast pocket reads "Courtesy of Big Al's."

GARY (CONT'D)

Sonovabitch.

Gary spots the clerk from Big Al's handing out dozens of free raincoats at a checkpoint near the borders of the park. He's not the only one, there are several OTHERS throughout the grounds handing out the protective outerwear as well.

MARK

Gary, what's the matter, man?

GARY

They're gonna bomb the park.

Gary leans against a tree for support.

MARK

What on Earth are you talkin' about, dude?

GARY

The Association. They're gonna bomb the park at midnight. They're gonna kill everyone.

MARK

Where'd you hear that?

GARY

Claire. She's one of 'em.

MARK

Lana Turner, from the bar?

GARY

We gotta go to the police, Mark. Shit.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Gary and Mark, both soaking wet, join scores of OTHERS looking for shelter in the confines of the police department. They march toward the front desk and approach the RECEPTIONIST.

GARY

We need to see Brinner, now.

RECEPTIONIST

You're gonna have to wait in line like everyone else.

Gary speaks with the authority of a military commander.

GARY

There's a gang of terrorists who are going to bomb Pelican Square, sweetheart. I need to speak with Brinner. Now.

The receptionist measures the sincerity of Gary's claim. She picks up the telephone and dials.

RECEPTIONIST

(into phone)

Sheriff, there's a man here who says someone's gonna bomb Pelican Square. I think you should see him.

INT. SHERIFF BRINNER'S OFFICE - POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Gary paces before Sheriff Brinner while Mark and the deputy stare each other down behind their respective bulldogs.

SHERIFF BRINNER

So lemme get this straight: a girl you met at a saloon, whom you slept with a few times -- turns out she's a part of this alien cult and she divulged all this to after you caught her and her friends wearin' zoo animal masks. Do I have that right?

GARY

Uh-huh.

Gary is more than aware of how ridiculous this all sounds.

SHERIFF BRINNER

And they meet every night at Big Al's, where I buy my grandchildren lil trinkets when they come to visit?

MARK

Hey man, look he isn't lyin'. I can vouch.

SHERIFF BRINNER

Noted, thank you.

GARY

Blood's on your hands, Brinner. I warned you.

SHERIFF BRINNER

Look Gary, this town don't see much excitement. We count on events like this to put bread on the table for the folks who own downtown storefronts. This and the Memorial Day parade are what keep these places alive. And already we got the rain cuttin' in to profits; I don't think your claim is solid enough to really cancel this here event. If I need a bottle bum, whistle blower on my board of trustees I'll know who to call. I think you're stressed out. I think you're losin' it a bit.

Gary looks at Sheriff Brinner with complete and utter disdain.

SHERIFF BRINNER (CONT'D)

Now relax and go enjoy the eclipse. It only happens every two hundred years.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Gary and Mark exit the police station like two wild cannonballs; feverish energy with no place to go. Mark lights a cigarette and scratches his head as Gary paces the sidewalk.

MARK

Huh, you know Gary, this is all kinda weird, man. Doesn't really add up. I smell fish.

GARY

What do ya mean?

MARK

'Cause I just finished The Dying Earth, dude. And they don't bomb shit. At the end, The Association all off themselves Carnegie style. Like mass suicide Jonestown shit. Drinkin' cyanide punch and stuff.

Gary stops his pacing. He is bulldozed by Mark's revelation. He sprints away from the police station, leaving Mark behind.

MARK (CONT'D)

Gary! Where you goin' man?

INT. BRONCO - NIGHT

Gary hops in the driver's seat and starts the ignition. Mark appears at the passenger window.

MARK

What are you doin', man?

GARY

I gotta take care of this on my own, Mark. I'll see you later tonight, okay? Thruway's -- one AM. They got two stools, twenty-eight brews and an endless string of classic jukebox jams with our names on 'em.

MARK

You're payin'.

GARY

Deal.

Gary takes off.

MARK

Good luck, amigo!

Mark salutes Gary; part of him knows he might not be coming back.

INT. HALLWAY - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

We follow behind Teresa as she struts down one of the cult's labyrinth-like hallways and toward the echo of Bing Crosby's depression-era hit "WRAP YOUR TROUBLES IN DREAMS."

INT. BALLROOM - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Teresa opens the doors into a grand, old ballroom -- filled with warmth and eerie ecstasy. Balloons, confetti and champagne. The hypnotizing allure of a bygone era reflected through a perverted prism.

We watch with her as fellow ASSOCIATES waltz with one another and celebrate their last hour on Earth.

Through the ballroom's massive skylight above, the full MOON and a spackle of shimmering stars can be seen.

INT. BRONCO - NIGHT

Gary hurtles down the darkened highway and toward Big Al's Gas, Convenience and UFO History Museum. The rain has stopped and the air is filled with swampy moisture.

EXT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

The Bronco pulls up to Big Al's. It comes to a screeching halt at the gate leading up to the plantation home. The orange glow of the house's interior radiates out the windows and into the blue night.

Gary looks up at it with wonder and trepidation.

He exits the Bronco, puts the keys on the dash and approaches the large, wrought-iron gate separating Big Al's from the plantation's acreage. He inspects the sturdiness and height of the structure before jumping his first fence in twenty-five years.

EXT. CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary lands on the other side of the fence with admirable finesse. He withdraws his gun and stealthily moves through the ghostly fields, toward the reverberating big band MUSIC coming from within the house.

Gary circles to the rear of the home and toward the french doors leading to an industrial-sized kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary CRACKS open a window pane on the french doors. He reaches inside and unlocks the latch.

He navigates through the ancient stainless steel kitchen. All the appliances look like something out of a fifties Sears catalogue. Mint, carnation and diffused yellow casings.

A "Home Sweet Home" sign hangs above the stove and a nearby clock reads 11:03 PM.

INT. DINING HALL - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary exits the kitchen through the chef doors and enters the dining hall. The remnants of tonight's dinner sit on the various tables waiting to be cleared (though they never will be).

From the looks of it, it was quite a feast.

Gary moves closer and closer toward the music. The still night's humidity trickles down his forehead.

INT. HALLWAY - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary moves like a whisper down the same maze-like hallway we just watched Teresa traverse. The door at the end of the corridor is the source of the commotion; the music.

Gary readies himself for whatever it is he should meet at the other end.

He tiptoes.

Closer.

Closer.

Closer.

WHACK.

An unseen FIGURE smacks Gary over the skull with a fire poker. He hits the floor with a dull THUD.

EXT. PELICAN SQUARE - NIGHT

Thousands of SPECTATORS gathered in Pelican Square count down the seconds to the eclipse. The anticipation is palpable. We watch with Mark as the intruding planet edges into the lunar surface. It's a sight to behold.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary comes to consciousness in a darkened movie theater deep in the cult's massive complex. He is bound and gagged. We've been here before.

He tries halfheartedly to free himself but there is no use. He isn't going anywhere. Satchell's voice sounds over the speaker system.

SATCHELL (V.O.)

Gary Glossup. I have to say, we quite admire your tenacity. Somehow we expected you'd show up. In a moment the lights will dim and you will watch a little movie we've created for you.

(MORE)

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

Tailored in every way to your individual hopes, dreams, fears and desires. Tailored to address your moral and character inadequacies and to seek out places for further improvement. There will be no coming attractions. No Coca-Cola advertisements. Just life.

The lights once again fade to BLACK.

VOICE (V.O.)

Sit back, relax and let the experience wash over you. I think you'll find it rather enlightening.

ON SCREEN

The film's countdown leader is projected onto the screen:  
4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . .

Opening Title: "The Association. Member ID: 1453. Name: Gary Glossup."

Then --

A manic montage of images rush across the screen.

Once again -- just like Teresa's video -- the history of the world is juxtaposed with Gary's own life. Footage of him as a kid. Footage of his daughter. Footage of his ex-wife and her new family. Images from Gary's favorite TV shows. Playboy magazine. Frazier and Ali in Manilla. Elvis on Ed Sullivan. A Budweiser advertisement. Fast cars. Billy Turman. An empty San Franciscan pier.

And then it's over. Just as suddenly as it began. The lights fade again to BLACK. Gary is rendered paralyzed by the experience. His pupils are dilated and his heart beats through his chest.

VOICE (V.O.)

Thank you Gary. Your movie is complete.

INT. BALLROOM - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary is wheeled into the ballroom on a stainless steel operating table. His chauffeur is the assailant from the drive-in (and the faux-police officer from Black River Falls).

Gary is dressed in full alien-approved garb: a tuxedo and New Balances. He's sedated but cognizant -- like a dream where you've fallen and can't muster the strength to get up.

The Associates around him dance the Charleston to another old-timey HIT.

Gary spots Teresa sitting by herself at a nearby table. She is wearing a crooked party hat and staring blankly at him. He reaches out to her, helplessly; his arm barely able to manage the gesture.

The song concludes and silence reigns upon those gathered.

GARY'S POV

Gary watches the eclipse through the skylight as he's wheeled through the festivities.

After a long moment, an object interrupts Gary's field of vision. Satchell Watts's face. He looks down at Gary. He smiles.

SATCHELL

It's nice to finally meet you face-to-face, Gary Glossup. I knew you'd find a way to join us.

BACK TO SCENE.

Gary hawks a loogie in Satchell's eye. Satchell calmly wipes it away.

GARY

I'm not joining you anywhere, ass hole.

SATCHELL

Oh, you certainly are. In fact we're just about to depart. You made perfect time.

Gary is propped upright. Before him stands Claire. She barely looks him in the eyes as she approaches him and takes his face in her hands.

CLAIRE

This is all for the best, Gary. You can join us in heaven. You're daughter is there. Everyone is there.

SATCHELL

This place is diseased and corrupt.  
You know this better than anyone,  
Mr. Glossup. Your soul has been  
compromised.

Gary shakes his head slowly back and forth. He notices Teresa bawling silently to herself underneath a nearby dinner table. Her bare feet are visible below the table cloth. She peeks out at him, reigniting his faltered spirit.

Gary addresses Claire and the Association like a crazed witch about to burn at the stake.

GARY

I like it here, Goddamnit! I don't  
care that it's diseased and corrupt  
and that people die. It isn't  
perfect but it's all we got.

To himself.

GARY (CONT'D)

It's all we got.

There's a brief moment of silence before the Association burst into a fit of LAUGHTER.

SATCHELL

Alright, it is now midnight. The  
age of the scorpion is here at  
last. Everyone prepare for phase  
thirteen. Finalization.

The Association all look up through the skylight as the eclipse reaches its zenith. They stare in silent awe. Everything goes dark.

EXT. PELICAN SQUARE - NIGHT

Like the Association, the thousands of ONLOOKERS in Pelican Square gaze at the eclipse in wonder. They CHEER and HOLLER in excitement. LOVERS kiss. Even Kirby is touched. He and Mark hug.

INT. BALLROOM - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Thick, smoky GREEN GAS infiltrates the ballroom through the various air ducts throughout the hall. A team of ASSOCIATES zip tie all exits shut.

SATCHELL

Don't fret my beloved. It should  
only be moments now. Mere moments,

Those very old and young begin to feel the effects of the  
gas. Bodies slowly start to fall.

THUD.

CRASH.

THUD.

THUD.

CRASH.

Gary watches in hopeless horror. His second wind kicks in;  
his survival instinct. He begins thrashing about on the  
operating table.

More bodies fall. No longer just the young and old but  
everyone. Even Claire. Gary watches with twisted satisfaction  
as his former flame falls to her knees.

CRASH.

Gary's living tomb collapses to its side and he's released  
from his bindings. He rushes toward Teresa and flips over the  
table. He scoops her up into his arms.

She is breathing but barely. He cradles her like a little  
girl -- his own little girl -- and makes for a bay of windows  
leading to the front yard of the plantation.

Satchell moves towards Gary. He grabs a hold of his shoulder  
with a death grip.

SATCHELL (CONT'D)

Come with us, Gary! Come with us!

Gary smashes his right fist against Satchell's cheekbone.  
Satchell is leveled to the floor. He doesn't get up. He  
passes.

INT. HALLWAY - CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary and Teresa run through a kaleidoscopic hallway deep in  
the Association's compound. A dark, dream-like labyrinth of  
colors, lights and sinister images seen through cracks in the  
doors. MC Escher meets Disney's Haunted Mansion.

Shards of broken mirror cover the floor like tile and dozens of scrutinizing EYES follow Gary from holes in the drywall.

Finally, they reach a set of french windows at the end of the hallway. Freedom. Gary grabs a nearby end table and throws it toward the windows. They shatter instantly.

He and Teresa jump through the broken glass and toward their awaiting deliverance.

EXT. CULT COMPOUND - NIGHT

Gary and Teresa run as fast as they can in their compromised state. They follow the winding driveway toward the idling Bronco and Big Al's below.

In addition to the eclipse, the night sky is green and malevolent. Otherworldly. Like if Van Gogh's Starry Night was depicting the end of the world instead of a quaint, country evening.

EXT. BIG AL'S - NIGHT

Gary helps Teresa over the fence and together they make their way toward the Bronco. The keys no longer rest on the dash.

Nearby, the trucker chapel sits with its roof unhinged. The towering Jesus statue judges Gary from within. He looks up toward the heavens for redemption.

EXT. CORN FIELD - NIGHT

The next thing Gary knows, he and Teresa are sprinting through the corn field adjacent to Big Al's.

The crop is knee high and Gary and Teresa struggle to make their way through the thicket.

Gary grows more and more disoriented as Teresa somehow regains her strength. He begins coughing up blood. His vision blurs.

Teresa pulls at his sleeve, urging him forward.

MONTAGE - SUPER 8MM HOME MOVIES

Images from Gary's life -- much like the brainwash video -- flash before his eyes and interrupt the scene.

Footage of Gary as a child at an amusement park. Sitting on Santa's lap. His first kiss. A t-ball game.

Catch with his father. He and his ex-wife driving down a costal highway. Henry speaking to the camera on the set of The Stars And You. "*The unknown. Us humans are obsessed with the unknown.*" A pink shoe floating in the ocean. "When Was The Last Time You Spoke To God"? An embrace with his daughter.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary collapses to his knees. Life can be beautiful sometimes.

TERESA  
C'mon! C'mon!

The eclipse nears its conclusion. Teresa holds Gary close.

TERESA (CONT'D)  
Mister, c'mon!

Gary looks into Teresa's eyes. He holds her face. They share a moment.

GARY  
Go ahead. I'll catch up, sweetie.

Teresa heeds his advice. Gary watches as she disappears into the darkness.

She is safe.

Silence.

Then --

An electrical current seizes the atmosphere. Blue bolts of LIGHTNING spiderweb across the sky. Gary looks toward the plantation home. Dead BODIES rise from the shattered skylight and ascend into the storm clouds.

Gary can't believe his eyes.

The plantation crumbles -- brick by brick. Big Al's too. The adjacent highway implodes like an accordion. Asphalt juts out of the ground like jagged ice.

The wind HOWLS at hurricane speeds.

And then --

An otherworldly NOISE sounds from the sky. The sound of its drone is pervasive and depressed. Like television static or silence heard through a baby monitor. Like a giant, hidden sea mammal sobbing from the bottom of an ink black ocean.

A BEAM of blinding white LIGHT shines upon Gary from the heavens.

God? Celestial lords? The age of the scorpion? Enlightenment.

All the could-ofs and would-ofs and might have beens are past Gary now. He basks in the light's strange, wonderful glow.

He smiles.

FADE TO WHITE.