

THE NINES

written by
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FINAL SCRIPT

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READER NOTE

One thing that will be obvious to viewers, but not to readers, is that the nine principal parts in this film are played by only three actors:

- 1) Gary, Gavin, Gabriel
- 2) Sarah, Susan, Sierra
- 3) Margaret, Melissa, Mary

It'll make more sense in context. Promise.

unwinds a short length of green string. We're extremely close, with a shallow, blurry focus. It's like the first moments after a dream -- just fragments.

Scissors cut the string. The man wraps it around his left wrist. A loop. A bracelet.

We see the man's teeth, the edge of his chin as he pulls the knot tight.

His fingers pull against the string. Solid. It won't break easily.

FADE OUT.

There's no music. No sound at all, really, except for some distant birds CHIRPING.

Then a SQUEAK. A SQUEAL as rusty springs engage.

A GARAGE DOOR LIFTS,

revealing GARY BANKS in silhouette. He's 30, effortlessly fit, with movie-star good looks. (Although for now, he's merely a TV star.)

Like most Laurel Canyon garages, this one has never held a car. Instead, it's the resting place for all the detritus of bachelordom: shitty Ikea furniture, a drum set, a styrofoam snowman, and the Harley he always meant to get running.

Gary spots what he was looking for.

CUT TO:

Gary drags a beaten Weber kettle. One of its wheels is broken, SCRAPING against the deck.

WIDER, we see Gary's house has an incredible view of the city. He couldn't fucking care less.

He yanks the circular grill out of the Weber and throws it down the canyon.

He empties a garbage bag into the barbecue: mostly women's clothes, but also some stuffed animals and photos still in their frames. There's too much to fit, so he tries stomping it down with a flip-flopped foot.

He cracks open a container of lighter fluid and begins drenching everything inside. He sprays until the container is WHEEZING air. He shakes it, making sure it's really empty.

Then he cracks open a new container and keeps spraying. And spraying.

We follow the dripping fluid as it runs across a photo of Gary and a BLONDE WOMAN. Her eyes are scratched out, making her unrecognizable.

Under the grill, lighter fluid is dripping in a stream, soaking into the wooden deck.

Finally satisfied, Gary throws the lighter fluid aside. He takes five steps back and pulls a box of matches from his pocket.

103 EXTREMELY CLOSE as the match SCRAPES, erupting in flames. **103**

On Gary's left wrist, we see a green string bracelet.

MUSIC STARTS: a pounding, hypnotic track that will carry us through these MAIN TITLES.

In EPIC SLOW-MOTION, we follow the burning match as it sails through the air, tumbling end-over-end.

Just as it's about to reach its target, we...

CUT TO:

104 A DIGITAL METER **104**

shoots to 100 miles per gallon. It's the display of Gary's Prius. We are...

105 INT. THE PRIUS - DAY **105**

Gary's at the wheel, driving, as he finishes a fifth of bourbon. JUMP CUTS take us out of Hollywood, heading downtown. Our TRAVELLING MUSIC is serving us well.

Gary stops at a light. He looks left and sees himself on the side of a bus. It's an ad for CRIME LAB ("This fall, Mondays are killer.") Gary watches himself drive away.

CUT TO:

106 Further along, Gary spots two THUGGY TEENAGERS sitting on a **106**
low wall. He calls out to them:

GARY
Hey! Do you sell crack?

The boys look wary.

GARY (CONT'D)
It's cool. I'm only a cop on TV.

QUICK CUTS:

Money changes hands.

Gary holds a small ziplock bag -- and has no idea what to do
with its lumpy beige contents.

CUT TO:

107 HOLLYWOOD.

107

Gary pulls up to a curb. He's now on Sunset Blvd. A
matronly black streetwalker (OCTAVIA, 35) approaches the
passenger window.

Gary holds up the little bag.

GARY
Is this crack?

She takes a closer look.

GARY (CONT'D)
Do you know how to do it?

CUT TO:

108 INT. SHITTY MOTEL ROOM - DAY

108

Gary and Octavia jump up and down on the bed, each trying to
bounce higher than the other, LAUGHING all the while.

Gary bounces so high that he THUNKS his head against the
ceiling. He crumples, falling off the bed. But he's still
laughing.

CUT TO:

109 LATER, Octavia is sleeping.

109

110 INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

110

Gary takes a shower with his jeans on.

111 INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

111

Towelings off, Gary looks at his body in the mirror. He notices something odd. He tries to wake Octavia up, but she's down for the count.

Looking around, he finds his cell phone. Dials 911. Pacing, he tries to sober up while it rings. The far side answers.

GARY

Yes, hello. I'm having a medical situation. Yes. Okay. I don't have a belly button.

(explaining carefully)

I do not have a belly button where I should, on my belly. And I'm concerned, because I don't know if that's...

He sits down on the edge of the bed.

GARY (CONT'D)

Can a person live without a belly button? Because if you think about it, you're born with one. So if you don't have one, you're unborn and it's really hazy whether you're alive or not. I guess I'm wondering: am I alive?

(a sudden thought)

Or what if I'm God?

A beat.

GARY (CONT'D)

No, no. I'm totally sober.

A beat.

GARY (CONT'D)

No, I don't think I need an ambulance. I don't seem to be dying any faster than usual. But I should probably go to the hospital, don't you think? Yeah, I should.

He hangs up.

CUT TO:

112 INT. THE PRIUS - DAY **112**

He's driving again, but most of his attention is focused on trying to locate his missing navel.

He looks up in the rear-view mirror, where he sees two

A113 VERSIONS OF HIMSELF **A113**

sitting in the back seat. All three Garys give each other thumbs-up.

Driver-Gary looks out the driver-side window, where he sees shoes and asphalt. Only now do we ROTATE to reveal we're

B113 UPSIDE-DOWN. **B113**

Gary has rolled the car.

The music suddenly STOPS. We hear SIRENS approaching.

CUT TO BLACK.

113 TITLE OVER: **113**

**Part One:
THE PRISONER**

FADE IN:

114 INT. COURTHOUSE PROCESSING AREA - DAY **114**

MARGARET O'REILLY, 34, is speaking to herself.

MARGARET

La la la la la. Like you've never done worse.

From a NEW ANGLE, we see she's using a cell phone earpiece.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Okay, yes. He totalled a car. But it was an environmentally friendly car. Why doesn't that get reported?

A beat.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Please! He was heartbroken, betrayed. You say you understand but you don't. You can't. You're like a big giant Vulcan.

Noticing something to her right...

MARGARET (CONT'D)
He's coming. I'll call you later.

She hangs up, wrapping the earpiece around her phone. We reveal

GARY

being escorted through glass doors by a polo-shirted PAROLE OFFICER. Margaret moves to intercept them, offering a hand.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
Hi. Margaret. I work for Lola.

GARY
Gary.

MARGARET
I know.
(to the Parole Officer)
We need to go out the back.

CUT TO:

115 INT. BACK HALLWAY - DAY

115

Margaret leads the way. She's been here before.

GARY
Are there reporters out front?

MARGARET
A few. Not Hugh Grant level. More like Robert Downey, Jr. when he broke into that family's house and slept in the kid's bed like Goldilocks. "This bed is just right." I handled episodes two through four for Robert. This sort of thing is my specialty.

GARY
What is?

MARGARET
Famous fuck-ups. Don't worry.
Mama's gonna take good care of you.

A phone RINGS.

CUT TO:

116 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

116

A designer kitchen in Hancock Park -- spacious and kosher-ready. The phone on the counter is RINGING.

PAROLE OFFICER

Answer it.

Gary picks it up.

GARY

Hello? Yes. Yes.

He looks to Margaret while the other end of the call talks at length. Then, very deliberately...

GARY (CONT'D)

The weather in Toledo is rainy.

He says this like a sleeper agent repeating his trigger phrase.

PAROLE OFFICER

Use your normal voice.

GARY

(to the phone)

Nine dogs ran through the field.

The koala sits in the tree.

The Parole Officer takes the phone from him, punching in a series of numbers and jotting notes on his work sheet.

MARGARET

It's computer voice recognition.
The system can call you any time
day or night. If you don't answer
within five rings, the police come
and haul your ass off.

GARY

What if I'm not here?

Catching the officer's concerned look...

MARGARET

That's why it's called house
arrest. You stay inside your
house.

(to the officer)

He can take direction, I promise.

CUT TO:

117 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

117

Margaret pulls open curtains, flooding the room with light.
Gary wanders, checking it all out.

MARGARET

Okay, just so it's said, this house
is flammable.

GARY

I didn't mean to burn down my
house.

MARGARET

Yeah, I didn't mean to eat my way
into a ten-year shame spiral, but I
did, and it's healthier to
acknowledge it.

(moving on)

This flammable house belongs to one
of Lola's other fabulous clients,
who is currently shooting a pilot
in Toronto.

GARY

Actor?

MARGARET

Writer. So for the next six weeks,
su casa es su casa. I say, feel
free to wear his clothes. He'll
probably get a sick thrill of out
it. The gays.

Noticing two crates...

GARY

He has dogs?

MARGARET

They're away at summer camp. Now,
try the bed.

He lies back on it, feeling it out.

GARY

It's fine.

MARGARET

Comfortable?

GARY

Sure.

She massages his besocked feet.

MARGARET

Look, Gary, I know this has been crazy and stressful. I want you to feel safe. And comfortable.

GARY

I do.

MARGARET

I'm a fan of yours, you know. Your number-one fan.

Gary looks over his toes at Margaret. From this angle, she looks a bit like Kathy Bates from Misery.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

But if you fuck this up, I will smash your ankles with a sledge hammer.

A long beat.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

That wouldn't be comfortable for either of us.

CUT TO:

118 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

118

Margaret boxes up the alcohol while Gary bounces a lime on the island.

MARGARET

I'll be coming by twice a day to check up on you. I'm the only person who should be coming by. No buddies, no pals, no heroin dealers...

GARY

I don't do heroin.

MARGARET

Yeah, crack is classy. And I'm not buying you porn. There's spray-per-view on cable.

GARY

Good. I really wasn't concerned about my career, my family or my future. I just wanted to jack off.

Margaret is a little impressed by this show of backbone.

MARGARET

Let me see your phone.

He hands over his cell phone. She drops it in the contraband box.

GARY

C'mon! All my numbers are in that.

MARGARET

Dial ten digits at random. Whoever answers will be better than the people on this phone.

She picks up the liquor box, ready to go.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

You have my cell number. You have delivery menus. You're fine. Right?

GARY

I guess.

As she leaves, Margaret notices a long butane lighter by the stove. She adds it to the box, just to be sure.

TIME CUT TO:

119 INT. HOUSE / VARIOUS - DAY

119

Gary paces around his new home, trying to get a feel for it.

He plays a few NOTES on the piano.

He looks up at the painting over the staircase: a cliff near the ocean.

He opens random drawers in a Chinese herb cabinet, wondering if there's anything hidden in one of the 46 slots. There isn't.

He takes a long beat to consider three paintings in the dining room, which show the same thing in three different ways.

120 EXT. BACKYARD - SUMMER NIGHT

120

Gary swims laps, trying to exhaust himself.

He stands in the shallow end, listening to the quiet.

121 INT. KITCHEN - SUMMER NIGHT **121**

Wearing a fluffy white robe, he looks through the delivery menus.

122 INT. FOYER / FRONT DOOR - SUMMER NIGHT **122**

He takes a bag of food from a college-age DELIVERY GUY, who seems to recognize him. Gary pays him, shuts the door.

As he's walking to the kitchen with the food, Gary looks back and sees the Delivery Guy watching him from the front walk. The guy is a little embarrassed, but Gary is pretty used to being stared at.

123 INT. KITCHEN - SUMMER NIGHT **123**

Gary unwraps the Thai food. Makes himself a plate.

He watches CRIME LAB on the plasma screen while eating dinner.

GARY (O.S. TV DIALOGUE)
Once we get these samples back to
the Crime Lab, we'll know who the
real killer is.

124 INT. LIBRARY / TV ROOM - NIGHT **124**

Gary scans the shelves, looking for something to read. There are five times more books here than Gary has opened in his lifetime.

He settles on a paperback of Voltaire's Candide.

He lies back on the couch, reading it.

He flips a few pages ahead to see if it gets more interesting. A beat.

CUT TO:

125 GARY JACKING OFF **125**

to soft-core pay-per-view. We're CLOSE ON Gary's straining face, but we can hear the pleased MOANS of the actresses as they go down on each other.

Nearing climax, he looks for something to come on. He can't find anything.

126 INT. FOYER - NIGHT

126

His left hand cupped to hold the semen, he pads barefoot from the TV room to the downstairs bathroom. We hear WATER RUNNING as he washes his hands. Then it shuts off.

We hear a THUNK. Something hard was dropped on the wood floor.

Gary hears it too.

He steps out of the bathroom, looks around. He takes a few silent paces back in our direction, stopping just before he reaches the two-story section of the foyer.

That's when he hears it: CLICK-CLICK-CLICK-CLICK on the wooden floor. A JINGLE of metal.

We follow Gary's eyes up to the second-floor walkway. We can hear the little FOOTSTEPS, toe nails CLICKING. Faint PANTING. But there's no dog.

BACK ON Gary, increasingly unsettled. He's directly below the walkway, and can't see up into it.

GARY

Is somebody there? Hello?

He CLAPS his hands twice. Listens.

Nothing.

He's about to venture a step forward when suddenly

THE PHONE RINGS.

He nearly jumps out of his skin. It RINGS two more times before he ducks into the TV room to answer it.

GARY (CONT'D)

Hello?!

(relieved)

Yes. Yes.

He turns his back to the foyer, listening to the instructions on the phone.

GARY (CONT'D)

Nine leopards run through the jungle.

(listening)

I bought two cakes at the store.

His identity evidently confirmed, he hangs up. He looks back into the foyer.

GARY (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
The house is haunted. There's a
zeitgeist, or something.

127 EXT. UPSTAIRS DECK - DAY

127

Margaret's brought coffee and pastries from Susina.

MARGARET
Poltergeist, and no. Maybe they
were rats. L.A. is teaming with
rats. They live in the palm trees.

GARY
Sure. Maybe.

He's obviously not convinced.

MARGARET
Okay. You know I'm a licensed
psychotherapist.

GARY
Really?

MARGARET
No. I'm a publicist. My job is
what other people think of you, not
what you think of yourself. So
pull your shit together. I am
thisclose to getting Christine
Walsh to do your piece in Parade.

GARY
Parade? I fucking hate Parade.

MARGARET
Everyone hates Parade. But the
people who watch "Crime Lab," they
love their Marilyn Vos Savant.
Give them a woman of indeterminate
age who solves riddles and they are
in hee-haw heaven.

GARY
Okay.

MARGARET
One heartfelt act of contrition and
maybe the showrunner won't kill off
your character between seasons.

He nods. He gets it.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
I swear to God, if you go batshit
on me...

GARY
I'm not crazy.

MARGARET
Exactly. Exactly.

CUT TO:

128 EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

128

Gary is lying in the sun, eyes shut. Suddenly, a golf ball hits him on the head.

He sits up, perplexed. For a long moment, he has no idea where the ball came from, until he hears a voice from beyond the wall that separates the properties.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Sorry! Really sorry.

(A practiced ear notices a Canadian accent.)

WOMAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Over here. To your left.
(correcting)
Right. Sorry. Right.

He follows the voice to a gap in the hedges at the far corner of the yard, finding SARAH GLEASON. Late 30's, fresh-scrubbed and girlish, she looks more fragile than she really is.

SARAH
I'm working on my putting, if you
can believe it.

Indeed, she's holding a putter.

GARY
Not really.

SARAH
Okay. Maybe I was just looking for
a way to meet my infamous neighbor.
You see, I'm under house arrest,
too.

GARY
What did you do?

SARAH
I had sex with my husband.

GARY
That's awful.

SARAH
Nine months later, I had Jaden.
That's her over there.

She points to a small portable baby monitor.

GARY
She's cute.

SARAH
She's sleeping for another...
(checks watch)
...seventeen minutes. She keeps to
a schedule.

GARY
She sounds really boring.

SARAH
(whispers)
She is.

A beat. A smile between them.

GARY
You're rich. Shouldn't you have a
nanny from Ecuador?

SARAH
I'm Canadian.

GARY
(as if that explains it)
Ohhh...

SARAH
I can't work in the U.S. Plus, I
want to maintain this air of moral
superiority by doing everything
myself.

GARY
Very Canadian.

SARAH
Thanks.

Another pregnant pause.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Listen, Jaden goes down again at 2:30. Maybe I could stop by.

GARY

I'm pretty sure I'll be here.

SARAH

It's a date.

GARY

Is it?

She picks up the baby monitor, heading back into her house. Suddenly, she realizes...

SARAH

Oh. I'm Sarah, by the way.

GARY

Gary.

SARAH

Yeah. I know.

CUT TO:

129 INT. BATHROOM - DAY **129**

Gary brushes his teeth and tongue.

130-131 OMIT **130-131**

132 INT. KITCHEN - DAY **132**

Gary neatens up, tossing out newspapers and delivery boxes. He plumps pillows.

He looks up at the clock: 2:30.

He sits, trying to read Candide again. He fidgets.

He looks at the clock again: 2:49.

133 EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY **133**

Under the pretense of sweeping up leaves, he peers over the wall, looking directly into Sarah's kitchen. But there's no one in there.

134 OMIT **134**

135 INT. UPSTAIRS WALKWAY - DAY

135

Gary carefully sets rat traps, staggering them every few feet.

He pokes one with a pencil. The metal arm SNAPS back, breaking the pencil in two.

136 INT. FOYER - DAY

136

Gary notices that the piano has an electronic device attached to it. He turns it on.

He opens the piano bench, finding computer disks. A red disk is labelled "Knowing." He puts it in. Hits play.

The piano begins playing by itself, a sensuous but melancholy CLASSICAL PIECE.

Gary lies on the floor, listening to it. He stares up at the elaborate chandelier.

137-141 OMIT

137-141

142 EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

142

Gary is sitting on a bench by the front walk, trying to read more of his book. He looks over to see Sarah coming up the steps, carrying the baby monitor and a bottle of chardonnay.

She stops beside him.

SARAH

The best of all possible worlds.

GARY

(confused)

Okay.

SARAH

(pointing to his book)

Voltaire. Candide.

(off his reaction)

Are you actually reading it?

GARY

I thought I was.

He gets up.

SARAH

Sorry I bailed. Jaden had a fever.

GARY
Ah! How boring of her.

She hands him the wine.

SARAH
Housewarming gift.

GARY
Demon liquor.

SARAH
The best part is, I can drink it.
I pumped before I came.

GARY
So did I.

143-144 OMIT

143-144

145 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

145

Sarah tops off Gary's wine glass. They're both on the couch.
The baby monitor is sitting on the table behind them.

GARY
... so it's kind of hard to prove
that I only meant to burn my ex-
girlfriend's stuff, and not the
entire house.

SARAH
Yeah. Fire's tricky that way.

GARY
How about you? Any history of
arson?

SARAH
Strangely enough...

GARY
I knew it! I could see that little
spark.

SARAH
It wasn't arson. Probably.

A long beat while she decides whether she wants to tell him
the story.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Okay. When I was a little girl,
our house caught on fire.

GARY

Oh shit.

MUSIC begins, providing backing to her monologue.

SARAH

I'll never forget the look on my father's face as he gathered me up in his arms and raced through the burning building, out onto the pavement.

ON GARY, feeling bad he brought this up, but fascinated at the same time.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I stood there shivering in my pajamas and watched the whole world go up in flames. And when it was all over, I said to myself, "Is that all there is to a fire?" Is that all there is?

As she starts to SING, Gary realizes the story isn't hers at all. It's Peggy Lee's "Is That All There Is."

SARAH (CONT'D)

*Is that all there is, is that all there is?
If that's all there is my friends, then let's
keep dancing.*

She leans closer.

SARAH (CONT'D)

*Let's break out the booze and have a ball.
If that's all there is.*

Standing up, Sarah takes Gary's hands, pulling him off the couch. She leads him to an open area -- more space for dancing.

SARAH (CONT'D)

*Is that all there is, is that all there is?
If that's all there is my friends, then let's
keep dancing.
Let's break out the booze and have a ball,
If that's all there is.*

CUT TO:

150 INT. SARAH'S BATHROOM - DAY [MONOLOGUE] **150**

Sarah leans up to the mirror, trying to get her contacts in. It's not going well. Her eyes are tearing up.

SARAH

Then I fell in love with the most wonderful boy in the world. We would take long walks by the river or just sit for hours gazing into each other's eyes. We were so very much in love. Then one day he went away and I thought I'd die. But I didn't. And when I didn't, I said to myself, "Is that all there is to love?"

151 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY **151**

Sarah and Gary start to dance.

SARAH

*Is that all there is?
Is that all there is?
If that's all there is my friends, then let's
keep...*

152 INT. ANTIQUE HARDWARE STORE - DAY **152**

Deep in the bowels of the store, Sarah is surrounded by vintage lighting fixtures. She's (futilely) trying to match a specific light switch plate.

TO CAMERA:

SARAH

I know what you're thinking. If that's the way she feels about it why doesn't she just end it all? I'm in no hurry for that final disappointment. I know just as well as I'm standing here talking to you, when that final moment comes and I'm breathing my last breath, I'll be saying to myself...

153 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY **153**

Sarah and Gary become more intimately acquainted on the couch. They still haven't kissed, but hands are running up and down over clothing. Sarah isn't singing anymore, though her voice continues.

SARAH'S VOICE

*Is that all there is, is that all there is?
If that's all there is my friends, then let's
keep dancing.
Let's break out the booze and have a ball,
If that's all there...*

Just as they're about to kiss,

A BABY HOWLS.

It's the monitor, HISSING and POPPING as Jaden wakes up from her nap, cranky and hungry. Sarah pushes back. Gary tries to close the gap, but she's already standing up.

SARAH

I need to...

GARY

Just...

SARAH

My shoes. Are here. Okay.

As she reaches for one, she knocks over a wine glass.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Crap!

GARY

Don't worry about it. Just...

SARAH

I'm going. Bye.

Carrying both her shoes, she's across the room and out the front door before he can say anything more.

CUT TO:

154 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

154

Gary washes the wine glasses, being sure to wash off any trace of lipstick. He dries them and puts them back in the cabinet.

Faced with the remainder of the wine, he considers dumping it down the sink. Instead, he chugs it from the bottle.

He wraps the empty bottle in newspaper and tucks it in the recycling.

155 OMIT

155

156 INT. OFFICE / GYM - SUMMER NIGHT **156**

Gary works out hard on the elliptical trainer. He has his iPod cranked with a POUNDING TUNE.

He does abs on a stability ball. He's spent.

157 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT **157**

Gary enters from the driveway door, gulping from a water bottle. He starts to look through the delivery menus when he notices an orange Post-It note by the telephone. It reads:

Look for the Nines.

He picks it up, looks at the back. Nothing. Sticks it back down on the counter.

CUT TO:

158 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT **158**

Gary sits on the couch with his water bottle, listening to the baby monitor: Sarah is singing a LULLABY. He takes off his shoes and socks. When she's finished...

SARAH (ON MONITOR)
Goodnight, sweetheart.

GARY
Goodnight.

For a long beat, it's quiet. Then we hear RUSTLING.

A crib toy plays a short MELODY. Then a slightly-digital voice speaks:

VOICE
The cat says meow!
The pig says oink!

Gary smiles to himself.

VOICE (CONT'D)
The cow says moo!
The cow says moo!
The cow says moo!

Evidently, Jaden loves the cow.

VOICE (CONT'D)
The dog says, nine. Nine. Nine.
Nine.

Gary looks back. Did he just hear that?

The phone RINGS.

159 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT [CONTINUOUS]

159

Gary answers it on the third ring.

GARY

Hello.

It's the parole system.

GARY (CONT'D)

Yes. Yes. Two trains run through
the forest.

Music STRIKES. We see a sudden change in Gary's expression. He nearly drops the phone.

Forcing himself not to panic, he pushes the button for speakerphone. He wants to make sure he's hearing it right.

MALE COMPUTER VOICE

Nine. Nine. Nine. Nine.

Gary backs away from the phone like it might sprout legs and jump on him. Suddenly, he backs into

SOMEONE ELSE.

He spins around, startled. He only catches a glimpse of THE MAN -- same height, same build, same everything. The Man is gone in half an instant, vanished into thin air.

Gary bolts for the door.

Reaching the foyer, Gary steps on a

RAT TRAP,

which SNAPS down on his toes. He SCREAMS, pulling it off. He looks around to find all eight traps are now on the main floor, rather than the second-floor walkway.

Limping, he hops out the door. We stay behind, looking out through the open door.

A160 EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. - NIGHT

A160

HEADLIGHTS FLARE as cars travel down Miracle Mile, bringing us to a Metro Bus stop -- a semi-enclosed bench with backlit signage.

The far side of the shelter has a one-sheet for Crime Lab. ("This fall, Mondays are murder.") The bench side is a promo poster for a show called Knowing. ("Some fates are chosen for you.")

It's here we find Gary taking a seat, gingerly checking his toes where the rat trap snapped. He's hobbled his way here from the house, which is probably a block away.

There's only a little blood, but his toes really hurt.

Over Gary's shoulder, we see a blonde 8-year old girl (Noelle) watching him with concern. She BANGS on the shelter to get his attention. Gary nearly jumps out of his skin.

GARY

Jesus! You scared the shit out of...

She signs "What's wrong?"

GARY (CONT'D)

(confused)
What?

NOELLE

(signed, subtitled)
You're hurt.

GARY

I don't speak that. Sorry. I don't...

She points to his toes. Getting what she must mean...

GARY (CONT'D)

I'm fine. I'll be fine.

Looking around, he realizes that the little girl is out here by herself.

GARY (CONT'D)

Where are your parents?

She looks at him oddly, not really getting the question.

GARY (CONT'D)

Your mom, your dad. Where are they?

NOELLE

(signed, subtitled)
Mom is at the car. Where you left her.

Again, Gary has no idea what she's saying.

NOELLE (CONT'D)
 (signed, subtitled)
You're lost.

GARY
 Look, you need to go back, okay?
 You shouldn't be out here. It's
 not safe.

Noelle glances to her left.

We hear BWOOP BWOOP as a police cruiser pulls over to the curb.

GARY (CONT'D)
 Shit.

We go to a WIDER ANGLE as TWO OFFICERS get out of the car. Gary looks back.

Noelle is gone, though there's really nowhere she could have disappeared.

Putting on his best face for the police...

GARY (CONT'D)
 Evening, officers.

CUT TO:

B160 INT./EXT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

B160

Handcuffed, Gary is placed in back. He's reserving the right to remain silent.

MARGARET (PRE-LAP)
 Once again, the idea of house
 arrest is you stay inside your
 house.

160 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

160

The same parole officer from earlier attaches a black anklet to Gary's left leg. We see that Gary's left foot also features bandaged toes.

MARGARET
 Think of it like an electronic
 leash. Basically, if you ever go
 more than 100 feet from the base
 station...

She points to an electronic device by the wall.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

...the cops come, they throw your ass in jail. If you ever try to take it off, the cops come and throw your ass in jail. And if they ever detect drugs or alcohol in your system...

GARY

...the cops come and throw my ass in jail.

MARGARET

No. I kick your ass. Then the cops come and throw your ass in jail.

The parole officer smiles.

GARY

Do I still have to answer the phone?

MARGARET

No, I'll be doing that from now on. I'm moving into the guest room.

GARY

I don't need a babysitter.

MARGARET

Despite all evidence to the contrary. Don't worry, I'm a cool roomie. Who do you think taught Affleck how to gamble?

The parole officer hits a test button on the anklet, which lets out a PIERCING ALARM.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Let's never hear that again.

CUT TO:

161 EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

161

Margaret walks heel-to-toe, counting her steps.

MARGARET

97. 98. 99.

With a piece of chalk, she draws a line on the concrete. She looks back to Gary, who's waiting by the front door.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Behold! The edge of your world.
In the world.

(jumps over the line)

Out of the world. In the world.
 Out of the world. Look at me, I'm
 dancin'!

She starts doing the running man over the line. Even Gary's dark mood is broken.

162 OMIT

162

163 EXT. BACK PATIO - NIGHT

163

Margaret and Gary roast marshmallows over the propane grill to make s'mores. They're giggling.

GARY

So the guy was like, "Do you know fencing?" And I say, of course. That's what it says on my headshot.

MARGARET

Lies!

GARY

Always. So he says, "Foil or epi?"

MARGARET

Epée.

GARY

I say, I'm about equal in both.

MARGARET

Which is true.

GARY

So he tosses me this fucking Conan sword and goes after me. I'm just swinging, trying to stay alive. But I end up cutting his ear.

MARGARET

You cut his ear off?

GARY

Just a little. But I got the job.

Margaret is confused.

MARGARET
Wait. You were in Pirates of the
Caribbean?

GARY
Yes. No. Not the movie, the ride.
I was like, "Gar! Keep both hands
inside the boat!"

Margaret laughs so hard she coughs.

CUT TO:

164 INT. UPSTAIRS WALKWAY - NIGHT

164

Ready for bed, Margaret leans out the guest bedroom door.

MARGARET
Goodnight, fuckface.

Gary looks out his door.

GARY
Goodnight, you filthy whore.

Both doors shut.

CUT TO:

165 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

165

Establishing.

MARGARET (PRE-LAP)
It's incredible.

166 EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY

166

Margaret and Gary sip their morning beverages, looking at
something spectacular in the yard.

MARGARET
It's incredible.

GARY
I know. Whenever I see them, and I
always feel like, damn...

MARGARET
...I was born at the wrong time.

GARY
Exactly.

We REVERSE to see the object of their awe: a giant inflatable jump-o-rama in the shape of a castle.

CUT TO:

167 INT. THE CASTLE - DAY

167

VARIOUS SHOTS: Gary and Margaret jump with all their might, bouncing off the walls, SCREAMING all the time.

When both finally collapse, it becomes strangely tranquil. They're safe inside an inflatable paradise.

Gary scoots over beside Margaret. She puts her head on his arms. It's nice.

Prelap: A doorbell RINGS.

CUT TO:

168 INT. FOYER - DAY

168

Gary opens the door to find Sarah.

SARAH
Where's the warden?

GARY
Groceries.

SARAH
Quite the little missus.

She walks past him, into the house.

169 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

169

Sarah crosses to the couch, picking up the baby monitor.

GARY
How's Jaden?

SARAH
Boring. We haven't had nearly the grand old time you two have been having.

There's an edge to her voice.

GARY
You've been watching.

SARAH
Well. I don't want to meddle in
your affairs.

GARY
My affairs?

SARAH
Everyone needs affection. I get
it.

She's headed back for the door.

GARY
I don't. Are you seriously
jealous?

SARAH
The opposite. I just want to
protect her.

GARY
From what?

SARAH
From you. Look at you. You date
models. Actresses. Tennis
players.

GARY
Yeah.

SARAH
On a scale of one to ten, you
belong with the Nines. We both
know you won't settle for less.

With that, she's gone.

CUT TO:

170 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

170

Gary is trying to load dishes into the dishwasher, but has a
hard time getting one bowl to fit.

MARGARET
What are "the Nines?"

GARY
What?

He looks over. Margaret holds up the orange sticky note by
the phone.

MARGARET
 "Look for the Nines."

GARY
 It's not mine.

MARGARET
 It's your handwriting.

GARY
 I didn't write it.

MARGARET
 Okay.

She puts it back down. But she doesn't believe him.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
 All-ee-all-ee-all-come-free.

GARY
 (perplexed)
 What?

MARGARET
 Nothing.

GARY
 Seriously, what?

MARGARET
 Nothing. I thought you
 were...forget it. Done. Sorry.

171 EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

171

At the far edge of the property, Margaret and Gary play backgammon. Their mood is significantly more subdued.

Margaret answers her RINGING cell phone.

MARGARET
 Yhello? Hi. What?!
 (to Gary)
 I have to take this.

He nods. Margaret starts walking back to the house.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Well, who thought it was a good
 idea letting Courtney into a
 pottery shop?

Left alone, Gary rolls the dice idly. He gets a 4 and a 5. Rolls again. 4,5. 3,6. 4,5. 3,6. 3,6. 3,6. 4,5.

He keeps rolling, the wheels in his head starting to turn.

172 EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

172

Sarah is looking in through the living room windows, trying to spot Gary. Giving up, she turns back to the main steps, only to find...

MARGARET,

who doesn't look pleased.

MARGARET
I know who you are.

SARAH
Really.

MARGARET
I know what you are. And if you come near him again...

SARAH
You'll what?

Margaret lets that go unanswered. There's obviously something big we're not privy to.

SARAH (CONT'D)
What are you going to do, M...

She's forgotten Margaret's name -- if she ever knew it.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Sorry, what's he calling you?

MARGARET
Margaret.

SARAH
I like that. "Margaret." Classic.

MARGARET
Why can't you just leave him alone?

SARAH
Alone? He's an actor. If nobody's watching him, he doesn't really exist.

(approaching)
And for the record, I'm not the one deceiving him.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

He's going to figure it out eventually. And when he does, who do you think he's gonna blame?

Sarah lets her warning land, then walks past Margaret, heading back down the stairs.

REVEAL Gary watching through the hole in the door.

A173 INT. FOYER - DAY

A173

Gary heard the whole conversation. Or at least enough of it to be deeply freaked out.

173 OMIT

173

174 INT. UPSTAIRS WALKWAY - NIGHT

174

Margaret leans out her doorway:

MARGARET

Goodnight, ratface.

GARY

Goodnight.

175 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

175

Gary sits in one of the upholstered chairs, staring at his still-made bed. It's impossible to know what he's thinking, but the wheels are turning.

176 EXT. SIDE PATIO - MORNING

176

Gary opens the newspaper to a page at random. He starts circling things with a red Sharpie.

MACRO CLOSE UP. His pen circles the number nine every time it appears.

As he flips the page, he spots Sarah looking in through the rounded trellis, just a few feet away. She's holding her own newspaper, still in the wrapper.

SARAH

Hey neighbor.

GARY

Hi.

SARAH
 Sorry for the psychotic episode.
 I'll blame it on hormones.

GARY
 Okay.

SARAH
 Are you alright? You look a little
 Beautiful Mind-ish.

He almost deflects it, but decides to trust her:

GARY
 How many times should the number
 nine come up? Probablistically?

SARAH
 Probablistically?

GARY
 (annoyed)
 You know what I mean.

SARAH
 One time out of ten.

GARY
 How about every time?

He hands her the paper through the bars.

GARY (CONT'D)
 But they only show up when you look
 for them. Looking for them changes
 things.

Trying to find an explanation...

SARAH
 Some of these are prices. There's
 going to be a lot of nines when...

GARY
 There is something wrong with the
 world.

Sarah looks up slowly. She smiles for an uncomfortably long
 beat. She's stalling, thinking.

SARAH
 You have an eyelash on your...
 here...

She steps forward, and motions for him to lean closer to the
 bars. Brushing off the non-existent eyelash, she WHISPERS:

SARAH (CONT'D)
I can get you out of here. But you
have to trust me.

MARGARET [O.S.]
Morning.

MARGARET

enters, carrying her tea. She sees Gary by himself, leaning
near the bars of the trellis.

MARGARET
Everything okay?

GARY
Peachy.

MARGARET
Peachy's good. I like peaches.

WIDER,

we see that Sarah is flush back against the wall, out of
Margaret's line of sight.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
You want coffee?

GARY
Sure.

She turns and heads back into the house. Once she's out of
earshot...

GARY (CONT'D)
What do I do?

SARAH
You have to trust me.

177 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [A FEW MINUTES LATER]

177

CLOSE ON a white plastic device mounted in the corner of the
room, about ten feet up. It might be a smoke detector.

Gary stares up at it, intently. He steps forward.

A little red light flicks on inside the unit. After a few
seconds it turns off. It's some sort of motion detector.

Gary tests it again, trying to move his arm slowly enough
that the light never engages.

Margaret enters, carrying two mugs. She watches him warily.

MARGARET
You okay?

GARY
No.

MARGARET
Oh.

GARY
Tell me about the Nines.

MARGARET
The Nines?

GARY
The Nines.

MARGARET
Sort of hard to start there...

GARY
Try. And don't tell me I'm
imagining it. They're showing up
everywhere, and I want to know why.

Trying to formulate the simplest truthful explanation:

MARGARET
Best guess? They're your
subconscious trying to remind you
who you are.

GARY
I'm a Nine?

MARGARET
Yes. It doesn't make a lot of
sense of out context.
(offering)
Coffee?

He takes the mug, then reconsiders. Maybe it's laced with something.

GARY
Why don't you drink coffee? You're
always drinking tea.

Frustrated, she takes his coffee back and drinks it. She'd really like to drink the whole thing to prove her point, but it's just too hot.

MARGARET

Happy?

She gestures for him to sit down. Reluctantly, he does. She sits across from him.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

You're not going to understand this yet, but we've known each other for like 25 years. One day when I was 12, you called me out of the blue. And we've been talking ever since.

GARY

Talking.

MARGARET

On the phone. Usually.

GARY

I never met you before I came here.

MARGARET

You, Gary, never met me. But you're not always...

(lacking the words)

I can understand why you're a little confused.

GARY

No. I'm a lot confused.

MARGARET

Theories?

GARY

This is all a dream.

MARGARET

No.

GARY

I'm in a coma.

MARGARET

(amused)

No.

GARY

Then I'm dead. This is Hell, or Purgatorium or something.

MARGARET

Okay, a purgatorium is where Romans vomited. But no. This is as real as anything can be.

GARY
 (suspicious)
 What does that mean?

She sits forward in her chair. By instinct, he sits back.

MARGARET
 Everything is what it is. But
 you're not who you think you are.

178 NEW ANGLE (TIME JUMP)

178

Gary gets up, headed for the front door.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
 God, no! Please, Gary, don't.

But he's already outside.

180 EXT. FRONT WALKWAY - DAY

180

He's walking towards the blue chalk perimeter line, headed for Sarah's house.

Leaves fall lazily from the trees, counter-point to the tension.

Margaret calls out from the arched windows.

MARGARET
 You don't know what you're doing.

She's almost at tears. He stops at the edge of the chalk line.

GARY
 What happens if I cross this line?

The tear in her eye falls.

MARGARET
 I don't know. But it's not good.

He very deliberately steps over the line. We hear a thin BEEPING from the house-arrest anklet. He shoots her a look to say, is that all there is?

But the BEEPING grows louder, deeper. It starts to come from all sides, booming, a nuclear-meltdown/self-destruct-sequence-activated DRONE.

Gary suddenly realizes something very, very terrible is about to happen.

GARY

Oh shit.

The world ignites in white-hot atomic flames.

We see the blinding glare erupt behind Margaret, illuminating through her skin, right to the bone.

The same flash catches a leaf in mid-air, sizzling through it like an etched x-ray.

As the light hits Gary, we...

CUT TO BLACK.

READER NOTE: Part 2 is a half-hour episode of a Project Greenlight-style documentary series called "Behind the Screen," which tracks the progress of a one-hour TV drama pilot from conception through delivery. In keeping with the genre, it's very fast and cutty.

INTERVIEW sequences are done to an off-camera interviewer.

Some scenes are unscripted. The gist of these scenes is summarized in *italics*.

200 TITLES OVER:

200

**Part Two:
REALITY TELEVISION**

CUT TO:

201 ANIMATED TITLES

201

We RUSH IN on a television set, which spins around revealing a blinding constellation of pixels.

MELISSA (V.O.)
Previously, on "Behind the Screen."

CUT TO:

202 EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

202

GAVIN TAYLOR (30) walks to a meeting, with his laptop bag over his shoulder. He has a tidy, Banana Republic sensibility and an easy smile that belies his manic schedule.

SUSAN (V.O.)
Gavin Taylor's one of the best TV
writers out there.

203 INT. SUSAN'S OFFICE - DAY

203

Cluttered and corporate, with stacks of scripts and a few touches of arbitrary quirk. SUSAN HOWARD (35) and Gavin kiss hello.

SUSAN (V.O.)
Every network would kill to work
with him.

204 INT. GAVIN'S OFFICE / GUESTHOUSE - DAY

204

INTERVIEW.

GAVIN
"Knowing" is a one-hour drama about a woman whose husband disappears. She starts to believe that her daughter is the key to a dark conspiracy.

- 205** INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY **205**
Gavin pitches his show to the NETWORK BOSSES.
- GAVIN
Basically, it's like "Rosemary's
Toddler."
- 206** EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY **206**
Impromptu INTERVIEW. Gavin is beaming.
- GAVIN
We sold it in the room.
- 207** INT. KITCHEN - DAY **207**
Gavin leans into the speakerphone.
- GAVIN
Just tell me Roger liked the
script.
- 208** INT. SUSAN'S OFFICE - DAY **208**
Susan is on her speakerphone.
- SUSAN
You're shooting a pilot.
- 209** INT. SUSINA COFFEESHOP - DAY **209**
Gavin has coffee with actress MELISSA MCCARTHY (34), his best
friend. He's pitching her the idea.
- GAVIN (V.O.)
Melissa McCarthy is my first and
only choice for the lead.
- MELISSA
I love it. I'll do it.
- 210** EXT. FOREST - DAY **210**
An EPK-style INTERVIEW, on the set of the pilot.
- MELISSA
Gavin and I have been friends for
forever.

211 EXT. WARNER BROS. LOT - DAY **211**

Melissa hangs out with her "Gilmore Girls" CAST and CREW.

MELISSA (V.O.)
It's really hard to leave a show
like "Gilmore Girls," but I really
believe in Gavin.

212 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY **212**

Gavin, Susan and a LINE PRODUCER go over the figures.

GAVIN (V.O.)
The only way we can afford to shoot
the pilot is in Canada.

213 INT. BEDROOM - DAY **213**

Gavin stacks up clothes on his bed, preparing to pack.

GAVIN
It's really hard to think about
leaving for six weeks.

214 EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY **214**

Gavin YELLS:

GAVIN
Action!

A STEADICAM follows Melissa as she gets out the passenger
door of a Toyota Prius, an alarmed look on her face.

215 OMIT **215**

216 TITLE OVER: **216**

EPISODE 6: POST

CUT TO:

217 INT. LAX / BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY **217**

A DRIVER holds up a sign for "TAYLOR." Gavin approaches,
waves to him. He has a laptop bag over his shoulder.

TITLES identify him as:

Gavin Taylor
Creator / Showrunner

218 INT. LAUNDRY ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY **218**

Gavin unlocks the door, entering from the driveway. He's hauling a massive wheeled duffle bag. (Note: This is the same house from Part One.)

We hear the CLATTER of toenails on hardwood floors. Gavin kneels down to greet...

GAVIN

Puggies!

Gavin's PUGS pounce all over him.

219 INT. KITCHEN - DAY [MINUTES LATER] **219**

Gavin is on the cordless phone, talking with a friend as he sorts through massive piles of mail.

On his left wrist, we notice the same green string bracelet Gary wore in Part One.

GAVIN (ON PHONE)

It's weird being back. It doesn't feel like my house anymore.

A220 INT. FOYER - DAY **A220**

Gavin sits at the piano, pecking out a haunting melody he's been fiddling with. He grabs a red diskette and a Sharpie.

GAVIN (V.O.)

At this stage, you have the script you wrote, and the film you shot, but you don't know how it's all going to come together. You just know how you want it to feel.

He writes "Knowing" on the diskette, and pops it into the Disclavier unit.

220 INT. EDITING SUITE - DAY **220**

Susan, Gavin and the EDITOR watch the cut. Susan is taking notes on a legal pad.

JUMP CUT TO:

Susan flips to her next note. TITLES list her position as:

Susan Howard
VP, Drama Development

SUSAN

I just don't know if you need the cold open. People want to get right to the story.

ANGLE ON the Editor, bristling a bit.

221 INT. HALLWAY - DAY [LATER]

221

Impromptu INTERVIEW.

GAVIN

I invited Susan to see a rough cut because I trust her taste.

INTERCUT editing suite.

SUSAN

Could we be more clear why Mary is so freaked out at that moment?

GAVIN

Wow. I thought it was pretty obvious. And dramatic.

GAVIN [INTERVIEW]

More importantly, I trust her as a barometer of Roger's taste.

SUSAN

I know. But that's Roger's big thing this season. Never let the audience be confused.

CUT TO:

222 INT. EDITING SUITE - [LATER THAT] DAY

222

The Editor hands Melissa a microphone. TITLES list her simply as:

Melissa McCarthy
"Mary"

GAVIN

So we're trying to squeeze in a wild line over this shot of Noelle.

The monitor shows a three-second clip. It's Melissa and a eight year-old actress ("Noelle") in a car.

Melissa's character looks alarmed by something the girl has just done or said.

MELISSA
What's the line?

GAVIN
(quickly)
How could you...

MELISSA
Howkajew?

GAVIN
Yeah.

MELISSA
Howkajew. It sounds like kosher
drug paraphernalia. Like, come on
Shmuley! Have a toke on the
Howkajew.

GAVIN
I know. It's just for the test
screening.

MELISSA
They really think people won't get
it?

GAVIN
The dumb people might not.

MELISSA
I didn't think we were making the
show for dumb people.

A beat.

JUMP CUT TO:

Melissa holds a microphone.

As video footage plays back, we hear three evenly-spaced LOOPING BEEPS. Where the fourth one would be, Melissa says the line.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Howkajew...
(again)
How could you...
(again)
How couldjew...

Finished, she hands the mic back to Gavin.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
I feel so dirty.

GAVIN
That's how I like ya.

Melissa giggles.

223-226 OMIT

223-226

227 INT. TESTING SERVICE THEATRE - DAY

227

A MODERATOR explains how it all works to the RECRUITED AUDIENCE.

The test begins.

ANGLE ON a monitor. We see a scene of Melissa (as "Mary") on a forest road.

228 INT. TESTING SERVICE / FOCUS GROUP ROOM - DAY

228

Through a one-way mirror, Gavin and Susan watch as the Moderator asks a group of twelve MALE VIEWERS about the pilot they just watched.

Their comments are mostly positive. Gavin and Susan share relieved looks. She has a notepad, as always.

One AGITATED MAN keeps staring at the mirror, right at Gavin. (We recognize him as the Parole Officer from Part One.)

GAVIN
That guy's looking at me.

SUSAN
He can't see you.

As a test, Gavin waves his arm. The Agitated Man's expression changes slightly, but it's not clear whether it's in reaction or not.

The Moderator directs her next question to the Agitated Man.

MODERATOR
How about you? Did you feel it was...

AGITATED MAN
It's not real.

MODERATOR
And what do you mean by that?

AGITATED MAN

The show's not real. Why can't you see that? Jesus! Are you fucking blind?

(looking at the mirror)

You think you're above it all, don't you? You are trapped here with the rest of them, brother.

He stands up, pushing past the other people to come right up to the one-way glass. He stares directly at Gavin, even though he shouldn't be able to see him.

He SHOUTS:

AGITATED MAN (CONT'D)

Get out. Get out! Oblivio accebit!

Gavin backs away from the glass, freaked out.

CUT TO:

229 EXT. STREET - [LATER THAT] DAY

229

Impromptu INTERVIEW with Gavin, standing beside his Prius. He's clearly still shaken by the experience.

GAVIN

The guy was crazy. Obviously. The show is kinda twisted, and it just flipped something in him.

Gavin sounds like he's trying to convince himself.

PRODUCER'S VOICE (O.C.)

What did he say?

GAVIN

Oblivio accebit. It's Latin. "Oblivion approaches."

PRODUCER'S VOICE (O.C.)

What do you think it means?

GAVIN

Other than the world is coming to an end? "Oblivio" also means forgetting, forgetfulness.

(jump cut)

I think that's what I'm going to do. Forget it.

CUT TO:

230 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**230**

Gavin hosts a game night: good friends and lots of cocktails. The guests include Melissa and Susan, along with SAM, TOM, BRUCE, DANA, JON, KEVIN, JEFF, DAN, and CARL. (We don't show anyone's names.)

They're playing Celebrity. We go several rounds, keeping the best of what's said.

CUT TO:

231 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**231**

Between rounds of *Celebrity*, party-goers mingle. Gavin is making a new batch of cocktails -- he obviously has a knack for it.

Susan pours herself another glass of chardonnay.

SUSAN

Did you have a chance to look at the cards yet?

GAVIN

From the screening?

Melissa reaches in, grabbing the vodka.

MELISSA

Pardon me. Daddy needs his drink.

She makes a quick Cape Cod. From the other room, Sam YELLS:

SAM (O.S.)

Woman, where's my cocktail!

MELISSA

(yelling back)

I'm a-comin!

(to Gavin)

I still love you most.

She gives him a quick peck, then dashes off with Sam's drink.

SUSAN

(continuing her thought)

People write stuff on the cards they won't say in a focus group. They get more specific.

He SHAKES the mixer.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Roger has this advice I always remember.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)
 Forget about anyone who scores you
 in the Twos and Threes. They'll
 never like your show.

Gavin pours.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
 Instead, look for the Nines.

GAVIN
 The Nines.

SUSAN
 They're the one who think your show
 is almost the best thing they've
 ever seen. They get your vision.
 They just want it to be even
 better.

Melissa YELLS from the living room:

MELISSA
 Round two is starting without you!

SUSAN
 So you'll look at the cards?

GAVIN
 Absolutely.

Making his way back to the living room, he stops by the
 phone. Pulls out an orange Post-It and makes a note.

As he leaves, we go in CLOSE to read it:

LOOK FOR THE NINES

CUT TO:

232 INT. SUSAN'S OFFICE - DAY

232

INTERVIEW.

SUSAN
 Sometimes the numbers point things
 out that you don't want to admit to
 yourself. In this case, Melissa.

INSERT: Comment cards.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Her overall scores were okay. But if you look at the people who scored the show highest, the one consistent dip was Melissa.

CUT TO:

233 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

233

Susan and Gavin are having lunch.

GAVIN

She doesn't have a ton to do in the pilot. There's so much to set up, you don't get a lot of Melissa-time.

SUSAN

True. That's one of the challenges with a premise pilot.

GAVIN

But the network still likes the show?

SUSAN

Of course. Roger is your biggest cheerleader.

GAVIN

How about above Roger?

SUSAN

Roger calls the shots.

GAVIN

After he consults with the Higher Powers.

SUSAN

True.

GAVIN

Do they like the show?

SUSAN

They haven't seen it. They're watching all the pilots on Friday.

A beat.

GAVIN

Why are you focusing on Melissa?

SUSAN
Because she's the biggest concern.

GAVIN
She's also the biggest star in the show.

SUSAN
No, you're the biggest star. Roger made a huge deal with you, and he went along with casting Melissa when that wasn't his instinct.

GAVIN
Well, hooray for Roger. I don't understand what you want me to do.

SUSAN
Meet with someone.

GAVIN
Who?

SUSAN
Dahlia Salem.

Gavin drops his fork so that it will CLATTER on his plate.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
The network has a holding deal with her.

GAVIN
Yes. And you put her in Gavin's pilot.

SUSAN
It's dead. It's dying. But the network loves Dahlia. So if she could jump over to your show...

GAVIN
Replace Melissa and reshoot the pilot.

SUSAN
Roger would pay for it.

Gavin is nauseous. He has to take a drink to be able to speak.

GAVIN
So is this even about Melissa?

SUSAN

It's about getting your show on the air. That's all that matters in the end.

CUT TO:

234 EXT. SUSINA COFFEESHOP - DAY **234**

Establishing.

235 INT. SUSINA COFFEESHOP - DAY **235**

Gavin meets with Dahlia Salem. She's pretty, funny, and very cool.

They talk about the other pilot (Gatin's), the role, and how fucked up it is to be having these double-top-secret conversations. It goes well. They seem to genuinely like each other.

236 INT. SUSINA - DAY [LATER] **236**

Dahlia is gone. INTERVIEW with Gavin.

GAVIN

I see why the network loves her. It's just, I wrote the part for Melissa. She's one of my best friends. And in my head, I only see Melissa for the role.

(jump cut)

Could Dahlia do it? Absolutely. It could work. I just don't know if I want it to work.

237 OMIT **237**

238 INT. PC BANG - NIGHT **238**

A empty storefront in Koreatown, both walls lined with computers for the CUSTOMERS playing high-end videogames. We see Gavin playing.

His INTERVIEW is intercut with his intense focus on the screen as he plays "Bad Day L.A."

GAVIN

When I get stressed out, I play videogames. It's my therapy. I can't have them on my own computer, because then I'd never write. So I come down to Koreatown.

(jump cut)

(MORE)

GAVIN (CONT'D)

Videogames are better than real life. When you get stuck, you can always hit 'reset.' Life needs a reset button.

239 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

239

Gavin's on the phone.

GAVIN

If we're really going to replace Melissa, I want to hear it from Roger.

240 INT. SUSAN'S OFFICE - DAY

240

Susan talks to the speakerphone.

INTERCUT GAVIN

SUSAN

Roger's on a flight to London. But I talked with him before he left. He said yes on Dahlia.

GAVIN

What does that mean?

SUSAN

It means yes.

GAVIN

Yes, replace Melissa?

SUSAN

He wants your show on the air, starring Dahlia. I just got off the phone with her agents. They love it. She loves you.

GAVIN

What about Melissa?

SUSAN

You want me to call her agents?

GAVIN

God no. I'll tell her.

Gavin hangs up. We stay on his side of the conversation.

In the background, we see the door to the driveway swing open by itself.

A beat later, it SLAMS shut.

Gavin is understandably startled.

CUT TO:

241 OMIT **241**

242 INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY **242**

Melissa, wearing a nun's habit, sings "As Long As He Needs Me." A PIANIST is rehearsing with her.

MELISSA

*As long as he needs me, I know where I
must be...*

INTERCUT with on-camera INTERVIEW:

MELISSA (CONT'D)

In-between the pilot and the series, I'm trying to squeeze in a one-woman show.

(edit)

I've always been obsessed with nuns. They're sort of like God's fag-hags.

Melissa spots Gavin entering and sings the rest of the song to him.

CUT TO:

243 EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD BAR - NIGHT **243**

Gavin and Melissa have martinis.

GAVIN

I think my house is haunted.

MELISSA

Your house is really old.

GAVIN

1926. Ever since I got back, I feel like there's someone else there. And then last night, I thought I heard something. A woman singing.

MELISSA

Shit. Like a ghost?

GAVIN
I guess. And then I saw something.
I ran into someone.

MELISSA
The woman?

GAVIN
It was a man. I think it was me.

A beat while Melissa processes.

MELISSA
Your house is haunted by yourself?

GAVIN
Yeah.

MELISSA
Gavin, are you alright?

GAVIN
No. No.

He takes a long beat, psyching himself up. What spills out is heartfelt but clearly rehearsed.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
The network wants to replace you.

MELISSA
Oh my God.

GAVIN
And I'm letting them, because I really want the show on the air. I have all these characters inside my head, and they want to live. I'm the only way they can. This is the only way they can. I have five seasons mapped out, and though it sucks, either you go away, or the show goes. I had to make a decision, and that's the decision I made. I'm sorry.

By the end of it, we can hear the emotion in his voice. Melissa takes a beat to process.

MELISSA
So it's done. Finished. Decided.

GAVIN
Yes.

MELISSA

I understand. It's not your fault. You're morally incapable of doing the right thing.

Gavin doesn't rise to the challenge.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. I think you do feel bad for me. But that's all you feel for me. You still see me as the fat girl you call on Friday night when a date falls through. Let's go to a movie! Let's go to Fubar! And if you meet a hot piece of ass, don't worry about Melissa, you can apologize tomorrow. Or don't! Same difference. It's not like we're actually friends.

GAVIN

I don't want to do this on camera.

MELISSA

No, because you can't control it. Your little puppets are off their strings, running around. Saying things you didn't write. Reality terrifies you.

GAVIN

Reality.

MELISSA

Yes.

GAVIN

The reality is, you would not be here without me. I gave you your first few roles. And your career is a result of that.

With exaggerated relief...

MELISSA

God, thank you. Thank you for finally playing that card. I always knew you were holding onto it, the "I invented Melissa McCarthy card." Congratulations, you win. The game is over.

She gets up to go, then decides she has one more thing to say:

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Don't you ever pity me again.

She leaves him sitting at the table.

CUT TO:

244 **TITLE OVER: UPFRONTS** **244**

CUT TO:

245 INT. NETWORK CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY **245**

New MUSIC for a change of mood: upbeat, excited.

INTERVIEW:

SUSAN
Upfronts is the week each year when
the networks present their fall
schedule to advertisers.

CUT TO:

246 INT. GAVIN'S OFFICE - DAY **246**

INTERVIEW:

GAVIN
Sort of like, "Here's our new shit.
Like it?"
(edit)
Upfronts is a complete oxymoron,
because no one is remotely honest.

INTERCUT SUSAN:

SUSAN
The schedule is a secret until it's
announced, so everything is still
in play.

JUMP CUT:

GAVIN
But hey! At least you're in New
York!

CUT TO:

247 INT. TOWNCAR / NEW YORK / DRIVING - DAY **247**

Gavin watches Manhattan roll by out the windows.

248 EXT. MANHATTAN HOTEL - DAY **248**

Gavin tips the DRIVER and wheels his luggage into a skyscraper hotel.

249 INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY **249**

Gavin opens the door to room 1909.

250 INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL ROOM - DAY **250**

Gavin checks out the view. We go CLOSE ON a card which reads:

*Congrats!
Love Roger, Susan, and everyone at the network*

It came with a fruit tray.

251 INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL ELEVATOR - DAY **251**

Gavin, alone, is headed down to the lobby. Impromptu INTERVIEW continues:

GAVIN

It's surreal being here. None of
this is how I planned it.

The elevator stops at another floor. CAMERA doesn't look as the doors open, but Gavin spots someone he knows.

GAVIN (CONT'D)

Hey you!

WOMAN'S VOICE

God. Hi. Gavin.

TURN to find Dahlia Salem. She's hesitant to get on the elevator.

DAHLIA

You're doing your...show.

She means the camera filming them.

GAVIN

Get on. Come join reality
television.

She steps on. Hits the button for "Lobby."

GAVIN (CONT'D)

When did you get in?

DAHLIA
Just now. This whole last 24 hours
has been surreal.

GAVIN
I just said surreal.

DAHLIA
You're good? I wanted to call you.

GAVIN
Please. Call anytime. I don't
sleep.

DAHLIA
I just felt weird about what
happened.

Not sure he's following...

GAVIN
Did something happen?

CUT TO:

252 EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - DAY

252

Near the hotel, Gavin is on his cell phone.

GAVIN
So I just bumped into Dahlia Salem,
star of my show...

TITLES indicate Gavin's on the phone with his agents.

GAVIN (CONT'D)
... who tells me Gatin's show got
picked up, so no, she won't be in
my show, which makes me wonder,
does my show even exist?

As he listens to the other side, we hear a distant BOOM, and
then a RUSH, like autumn leaves blowing down a street.

Gavin reacts, though none of the PASSERSBY seem to hear it.

Back to the conversation...

GAVIN (CONT'D)
No, I've left word with Roger.
I've left word with Susan. It's
like they've dropped off the face
of the Earth.

253 INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL SUITE - DAY

253

Susan is on her phone. At the same time, she's plowing through email on her Blackberry.

SUSAN (PRE-LAP)

Right now, the whole schedule's in flux. You get these missives from Roger and the Higher Powers...

JUMP CUT

INTERVIEW:

SUSAN (CONT'D)

...but you're not sure what they add up to. Right now, I can't say for certain whether Knowing will end up on the schedule at all.

CUT TO:

254 INT. HOTEL GYM - DAY

254

Gavin talks with JOHN GATINS (34), who's doing abs on an exercise ball.

John Gatins
Creator/Showrunner "Paradise Fields"

GATINS

Look, I'm sorry. But I'm kind of not. I want my show on the air. And I think it was shitty for you to go after Dahlia behind my back.

GAVIN

I heard your show was gone.

GATINS

I "heard" you fired Melissa McCarthy without having a backup. Why would they pick up your show when you don't have a star?

GAVIN

The network wanted Dahlia.

GATINS

Yeah, in my show. We tested right before you. Our numbers were through the roof.

GAVIN

Really.

GATINS
Really. Who's your exec?

GAVIN
Susan Howard.

GATINS
She would know. She was there.
Ask her.

CUT TO:

255 INT. CONFERENCE HALLWAY - DAY

255

Susan is on her cell phone. A cocktail party is in full swing nearby. We can hear the DIN and MUSIC, and see the occasional GUEST looking for the restrooms.

SUSAN
(on phone)
I'm at the UTA party. Yeah. Did you hear about Ricky's assistant? She literally shat herself. No, I saw it.

In the background, we see Gavin approaching. Susan spots him and seizes up a bit. She holds up a one-sec finger to him as she continues her conversation.

GAVIN
I will break your fucking finger.

SUSAN
(to phone)
I'll call you back.

She hangs up. They look each other in the eye, daring each other to go first.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Roger wanted to talk to you personally.

GAVIN
Bullshit.

SUSAN
They're only picking up two dramas.

GAVIN
The rest is, what, reality?

SUSAN
You can go mid-season.

GAVIN
You can go to Hell.

SUSAN
Wow.

She takes a beat, trying to size him up.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
You think I deliberately sabotaged
your show.

GAVIN
Didn't you?

SUSAN
G., I'm on your side. Trust me,
I'm the only one who is trying to
protect you.

<p>GAVIN Protect me from what? You? You are psychotic.</p>	<p>SUSAN There is so much more going on than you...</p>
--	---

GAVIN
All I want to know is why.

SUSAN
You want a motive?

GAVIN
Yes.

SUSAN
This isn't "Crime Lab." No one got
murdered.

GAVIN
My show did. So tell me why.

SUSAN
I had to get you away from her.
She was holding you back.

GAVIN
Melissa.

SUSAN
You had to give her up.
(beat)
C'mon, G. If she really mattered,
you couldn't have betrayed her so
easily.

GAVIN
I didn't.

SUSAN

What, you're the victim? The big Creator can't stand up to one little d-girl? It was your choice. I didn't make you do anything. I mean, do you have any principles? Do you believe in anything but your own ego?

GAVIN

Fuck you.

SUSAN

Your dialogue used to be sharper. Maybe Gatins could do a polish.

He suddenly punches her, one hit to the face. She drops hard.

Gavin takes a step back.

Tasting blood, Susan gets to her knees. A wry smile.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Is that all there is?

In the background, we see partygoers responding to the blow. Susan gets to her feet. She approaches Gavin, hands open. She's not going to hit him.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Do you feel like a man? Because I'll tell you a secret.

She leans in very close to his ear. There's a strange intimacy between them.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

(whisper)

You're not.

She walks away. CLOSE ON Gavin.

256 EXT. MANHATTAN SIDEWALK - DAY

256

We move with Gavin as he walks. He's trying to get away from the camera, but it keeps following him.

He reaches a crosswalk. He has to wait for the light. Finally, he looks INTO CAMERA:

GAVIN

Look, I don't want to do this anymore. My show's not going to happen, so this show is over.

(MORE)

GAVIN (CONT'D)

Done. Gone. I'm not going to be your fucking puppet.

OFF-SCREEN VOICE

Are you alright?

Gavin looks left, where an African-American woman is waiting for the same crosswalk. (We recognize her as Octavia, the streetwalker from Part One.)

GAVIN

I'm fine.

OCTAVIA

Who were you talking to?

Gavin looks back towards camera, a strange expression.

MUCH WIDER

We see Gavin and the woman on the corner. There's no camera Gavin could have been talking to. He's understandably perplexed: Where did the documentary crew go?

Was there ever anyone there?

Our CAMERA style has changed: instead of handheld and jerky, we're smooth and slow.

The MUSIC has completely changed, underscoring a sense of creeping dread.

We HOLD for a long beat. The light changes. Still a little unnerved, Octavia begins to cross the street.

Only then do we notice something unusual floating above her head:

A SPHERE OF BLUE LIGHT.

WIDER, we see that everyone on the street has the same kind of sphere floating a foot above their heads. No one seems to see the lights other than Gavin.

Gavin looks around in uneasy fascination, as if he's just landed on an alien world.

A beat, then he has an unsettling thought.

He slowly looks up. Above his own head, he sees the same sphere of light -- only his is bright white. Pulsing. Blinding.

GAVIN

Oh God.

We PULL BACK, RISING UP to a perspective above and behind Gavin. As we do, the edges of the frame creep in, revealing ICONS and unintelligible STATISTICS, changing moment by moment.

A dialog box appears in the center of the screen, reading...

Exit Now?
Unsaved changes will be lost.

[Cancel] [Exit]

An arrow slides back and forth between to the two options. Finally it lands on 'Exit.'

A CLICK.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

x177 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [PART ONE]

x177

We're continuing an earlier scene from the end of Part One.

MARGARET

I can understand why you're a
little confused.

GARY

No. I'm a lot confused.

MARGARET

Theories?

GARY

This is all a dream.

MARGARET

No.

GARY

I'm in a coma.

MARGARET

(amused)

No.

GARY

Then I'm dead. This is Hell, or
Purgatorium or something.

MARGARET

Okay, a purgatorium is where Romans vomited. But no. This is as real as anything can be.

GARY

(suspicious)

What does that mean?

She sits forward in her chair. By instinct, he sits back.

MARGARET

Everything is what it is. But you're not who you think you are.

GARY

Okay, then. Who am I?

With practiced calm...

MARGARET

You're a multi-dimensional being of vast, almost infinite power. You created this world on a whim, and decided to stick around to see how it turned out. You, this body you're in, is just one of your incarnations. Avatars. Call you what you will.

Not sure he follows...

GARY

Are you saying I'm God?

MARGARET

Technically, no. If God is a ten -- a theoretical ultimate, that-which-no-greater-can-be-imagined -- you're more of a nine.

GARY

So what are you?

MARGARET

Humans are sevens. Monkeys are sixes.

GARY

What are the eights?

MARGARET

Koalas. They're telepathic. Plus, they control the weather.

She didn't mean to get on that tangent...

MARGARET (CONT'D)

What's important is that you,
you're the big cheese. El Supremo.
You could destroy the world with a
single thought.

(suddenly)

Don't, incidentally. Just file
that away. But the truth is, you
hold all the cards: every church,
every candle, every sacrifice --
that's for you. When people pray,
they're not praying because they
want this thing or that thing.
They just don't want to be
forgotten.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

So you understand, I would have
told you earlier, but I didn't...

GARY

Yeah.

MARGARET

Okay.

GARY

I understand. But I don't believe
you.

He gets up to exit. (This is where we jump-cut time earlier.)

FREEZE FRAME.

FADE TO BLACK.

300 TITLE OVER BLACK:

300

**Part Three:
KNOWING**

FADE IN:

301 EXT. MEADOW - DAY

301

In a WIDE SHOT, we see a vast field, bordered by green mountains. Unseen BIRDS call out from the trees, while insects CLICK and WHIRR.

In the distance, we spot swatches of bright colors moving our way. It's a family: father GABRIEL (34), wife MARY (33) and daughter NOELLE (8). They're returning from a short day hike. Mary carries a small videocamera.

Seeing that Noelle is already a ways down the path...

GABRIEL

Noelle! Don't get too far ahead.

Noelle turns around. Instead of speaking, she moves her hands in sign language. (She's mute, not deaf.)

MARY

No. You had ice cream at lunch.

Noelle begs to differ. More signing.

GABRIEL

(to Mary)

Apparently frozen yogurt doesn't count.

MARY

I'll make note.

302 EXT. SMALL GRAVEL ROAD - DAY

302

The family walks up to their car, a blue Toyota Prius. Gabriel sheds his daypack, trying to open the hatchback. It won't lift.

Mary goes to open the passenger door. Locked.

MARY

Did you hit it?

GABRIEL

Shouldn't have to.

He fishes the keys out of his pocket. Presses the remote entry button repeatedly.

Gabriel tries to open the driver's side door. Locked. Even Noelle knows something's wrong.

Gabriel pulls the small mechanical key out of the fob. Unlocks the door and climbs in. Opens the door for Mary and Noelle.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I think we left the overhead light on.

He taps it. Moves the switch.

MARY

Shit.

Noelle signs her made-up representation of "shit."

MARY (CONT'D)

Noelle.

Gabriel slides the key into the slot. Hits "START." Nothing.

GABRIEL

Battery is dead. Least the starter is.

Noelle leans forward, aware that this is something serious.

MARY

How do we...?

GABRIEL

We call the service. That's all we can do.

MARY

It's just the little battery that's dead, right? The big one is probably fine.

GABRIEL

I guess.

MARY

We can't jump it from one battery to the other? Cross-over somehow?

GABRIEL

Who did you marry? MacGyver?

He gets out of the car, retrieving his cell phone. Mary follows him out. Noticing that he's not dialing...

MARY
Are you getting a signal?

GABRIEL
No. Do you?

She checks her phone. A long beat.

MARY
Yes! One bar.

They're both relieved. Finding the AAA card in his wallet, Gabriel takes the phone and dials.

It's at this moment we notice the familiar green string bracelet around Gabriel's wrist.

In the back seat, Noelle KNOCKS on the window. She signs, asking if everything is okay.

MARY (CONT'D)
We're okay. Daddy's calling people to help us.

Gabriel pulls the phone from his ear. Looks at the screen. Hits redial. Fuck.

GABRIEL
The minute you try to place a call, the bar goes away.

MARY
Keep trying.

GABRIEL
Okay, I'll keep trying, Mary. But it will keep happening.

MARY
Well, what do you want to do?

GABRIEL
I don't know.

He tries redial.

MARY
Maybe if you hold it up higher.

Humoring her, he holds it at arm's length. No good.

GABRIEL
The problem is we're boxed in.
It's a canyon.

A beat.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Where we turned off the main road,
it was more open. And higher, too.

MARY
That's at least a mile.

GABRIEL
I can run that.

MARY
So...we stay here?

GABRIEL
You okay with that?

MARY
I don't think we have a choice, so,
yeah. Go.

Half a beat, while each waits for the other to think of a better plan. Neither does.

Gabriel leans down next to Noelle's window.

GABRIEL
Daddy's going to get a truck to
help us out. You take care of your
mom, okay?

Noelle nods.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

Gabriel gives Mary a quick peck and starts running down the road.

We MOVE IN on Noelle, who smiles a little.

CUT TO:

303 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - DAY

303

Gravel CRUNCHES under Gabriel's shoes as he runs. He keeps an easy pace.

In VARIOUS SHOTS, we get a sense of the distance he's travelling. He passes gulches, meadows and boulder fields.

He finally arrives at the junction of the dirt road and a larger...

304 EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY [CONTINUOUS] **304**

Pulling out Mary's cell phone, Gabriel tries to get a signal. By his reaction, it's still iffy.

He dials, but the call drops. Tries again. Just the same.

He looks left. Looks right. Looks back down the dirt road.

He decides to head off to the right, downhill.

305 EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD - DAY **305**

We catch up to Gabriel as he's walking in the middle of the road, still trying unsuccessfully to get a signal.

In the distance, he spots a patch of moving color: a female hiker. A moment's hesitation, then he YELLS out to her:

GABRIEL

Excuse me! Hi! Hello?

She stops, turns.

Gabriel jogs to close the distance. As we approach, we reveal SIERRA, 38. In the past 10 years, she's "made a fresh start" 12 times. In this incarnation, she's a wilderness-loving, Bush-hating, wildly-overeducated clerk at Trader Joe's in Venice.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Do you have a cell phone?

SIERRA

No, I don't. There's no service up here.

GABRIEL

(re: his phone)

Yeah, I'm finding that out.

SIERRA

You can usually get a signal up at the ranger station.

GABRIEL

Okay...

She points in the opposite direction -- back the way he came.

SIERRA

You follow the road. It's probably... I don't know. You have a car?

GABRIEL

It's dead. That's why I need...

SIERRA

Oh...

She pulls a stray hair back from her mouth. Notices him noticing her.

GABRIEL

Yeah.

A beat. She takes a subtle step closer to the center of the road.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Are you headed back to your car now? If you could give me a ride to a gas station, wherever...

She doesn't leap to extend an invitation. It takes a beat for Gabriel to figure out why.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Oh. Hey. Look, I'm not some crazy Ted Bundy guy. I'm not going to rape you or kill you or anything.

She doesn't seem reassured.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Of course, that's what Ted Bundy would say. Look, I'm a videogame designer.

(fishing through wallet)

My wife is an editor. My daughter is four.

He offers her a family photo. She looks at it, but doesn't take it.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

They're waiting back at the car, and I want to get some help before it gets dark.

SIERRA

I can call somebody when I get to town.

Trying to temper his frustration...

GABRIEL

I believe you. I do. But you don't know where the car is. And the guy might not come. We can't be up here all night.

Sierra backs away.

SIERRA

I'm sorry.

GABRIEL

Don't be sorry. Just help me out here.

SIERRA

No. I can't. I'm sorry.

Once she feels she's reached a good distance, she turns and keeps walking.

GABRIEL

Why won't you trust me?

She doesn't turn back, heading down the road.

TRANSITION TO:

306 EXT. ROAD / INT. PRIUS - DAY

306

Mary is sitting in the back seat of the Prius with Noelle, who's getting tired of her coloring book.

Noelle signs something to Mary, who considers the request.

MARY

Okay, but you have to be careful, understand? You have to use Big Girl hands.

Noelle nods. Mary hands her the small video camera. Noelle has some trouble folding out the little screen, but eventually gets it open without any help from her mom.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you want to see where we were today?

Noelle nods.

Mary takes the camera back for a second, flipping it to playback mode and rewinding. The blocky video footage zips past.

MARY (CONT'D)
Okay, now hit play. This button.

Noelle does. On the tiny screen, we see Noelle and her father eating lunch by a waterfall. (Mary is filming.)

MARY (CONT'D)
There's you. And there's Daddy.
You're a little movie star, huh?

Noelle smiles. Signs something.

MARY (CONT'D)
He'll be back soon. Don't you worry.

CUT TO:

307 EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY

307

Gabriel continues walking, headed back in the direction he came. From behind him...

SIERRA (O.S.)
Hey!

He turns, finding her a ways back. She approaches.

GABRIEL
Were you following me?

SIERRA
Once I was sure you weren't following me. I'm sorry, it's just...

GABRIEL
You thought I was Ted Bundy.

SIERRA
Kinda.

GABRIEL
My name's Gabriel. Bundy.

She smiles.

SIERRA
Sierra.

They shake.

SIERRA (CONT'D)
Weird that there's no cars. At all.

GABRIEL

Yeah.

SIERRA

So, listen. I'm parked that way.

She points off the road, through the forest.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

It's not that far. If you want,
I'll give you a ride to town.

GABRIEL

Really?

SIERRA

Yeah. Make up some karma.

GABRIEL

Lead the way.

She does. They cross off the pavement, descending into a dark forest.

TRANSITION TO:

308 EXT. FOREST - DAY

308

Gabriel walks with Sierra. The trees here are taller, creating a cathedral-like ceiling above them.

SIERRA

Okay, confession. I kind of
recognized you.

GABRIEL

Really?

SIERRA

I wasn't sure, but I think I saw a
picture of you in some videogame
magazine my boyfriend had. You're,
like, the shit.

GABRIEL

No.

SIERRA

You're like the Quentin Tarantino
of that world. A videogame God.

GABRIEL

Not really.

SIERRA

Fine.

GABRIEL

You seriously recognized me off of one photo?

SIERRA

I thought you were kinda hot. Considering.

GABRIEL

Considering..?

SIERRA

Within the subset of videogame people.

GABRIEL

Okay.

SIERRA

I wasn't masturbating to your picture or anything.

GABRIEL

Well, I guess I'm flattered.

SIERRA

You should be. I'm stingy with compliments.

GABRIEL

So your boyfriend plays videogames?

SIERRA

Ex-boyfriend. And yes. Way too many. He used to play Evercrack back in the day, but yours, well, that was like...what's worse than crack?

GABRIEL

Super-crack?

SIERRA

Sure. He was this orc witch doctor guy.

GABRIEL

Shaman?

SIERRA

Yeah. At one point he was spending like, 40 hours a week gathering "thunderleaf" or whatever.

(MORE)

SIERRA (CONT'D)

Then I was his mule, hauling it around because he ran out of space.

GABRIEL

You had an account?

SIERRA

I was part of your world, and you didn't even know it.

GABRIEL

Sorry.

SIERRA

You can make it up to me.

309 EXT. ROAD NEAR PRIUS - DAY

309

Mary is pacing -- but trying not to look like she's pacing. She holds the other cell phone (Gabriel's), which she turns on and off, hoping that somehow she'll get a signal.

Each time she turns it on, we hear the CHIMES.

IN THE PRIUS

Noelle is still playing with the video camera, watching footage of the hike. She decides to wind back further.

CLOSE ON the blocky pixels rushing past.

Noelle hits "play." For now, we just hear the audio.

MAN'S VOICE

...I have five seasons mapped out, and though it sucks, either you go away, or the show goes. I had to make a decision, and that's the decision I made. I'm sorry.

We reveal the screen. We're watching the argument between Gavin and Melissa from Part 2.

MELISSA (ON TAPE)

So it's done. Finished. Decided.

GAVIN (ON TAPE)

Yeah.

Confused, Noelle looks out at her mother, Mary, who is still pacing with the cell phone.

MELISSA (ON TAPE)

I understand.

GAVIN (ON TAPE)

You do?

MELISSA (ON TAPE)

I understand. It's not your fault.
You're morally incapable of doing
the right thing.

Noelle REWINDS further. Blocky pixels RUSH PAST as we...

CUT TO:

310 EXT. FOREST - DAY

310

Sierra continues to lead the way. She seems confident where she's headed, even though there's no real path.

During the conversation, we notice a small tattoo on her right shoulder blade: IX.

SIERRA

So you play a lot of characters at once?

GABRIEL

A couple. Most people do.

SIERRA

You're not most people. You created the world. You know all the secret codes.

GABRIEL

What, like 'God mode'?

SIERRA

That's what you call it?

GABRIEL

That's when you have all the powers, and you can't be killed. It's fine when you're designing, but it's really boring to play. A game isn't fun unless there are rules.

SIERRA

And you make the rules.

GABRIEL

Yes I do. I mean, you want to give everyone freedom, but they can't handle it. Half your players are teenage boys, and it's like they're programmed to be destructive.

(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
They deliberately crash the world servers. They'd ruin everything just to prove they could.

A311 INT. FOREST VALE - DAY

A311

Sarah offers Gary her water bottle, which he gladly takes.

Out of nowhere...

SIERRA
Do you think I'm pretty?

She stops, turning to face him.

GABRIEL
What?

SIERRA
Do you think I'm hot? On a purely physical level.

GABRIEL
Sure.

He drinks.

SIERRA
That's a rave.

GABRIEL
Well, I don't know why you're asking.

SIERRA
My ex-boyfriend, the orc, he says, "What I like about you is that you're not so hot that I'm afraid of losing you."

GABRIEL
So where's the orc now?

SIERRA
He's dead. I spiked his water bottle with a massive quantity of GHB. He hallucinated, went into convulsions and died.

He screws the cap back on the water bottle and hands it back.

GABRIEL
Remind me not to piss you off, Sarah.

SIERRA

Sierra.

He's surprised. He could have sworn her name was Sarah.

GABRIEL

Sorry.

SIERRA

And what makes you think you haven't pissed me off already?

She smiles, keeps walking.

311 EXT. ROAD / INT. PRIUS - DAY**311**

Mary sits down in the front passenger seat of the car. Noelle is still in back, watching footage on the video camera.

MARY

How are you doing, kiddo?

Noelle doesn't look up.

MARY (CONT'D)

I was thinking we could all go to El Cholo for dinner. How would you feel about some blue corn enchiladas? Should we ask Daddy when he gets back?

Without looking up...

NOELLE

He's not coming back.

Mary is stunned. For her part, Noelle seems to have no idea she just spoke her first words.

We hear three evenly-spaced BEEPS. After the third one, Mary says:

MARY

How could you...

Mary flinches. It's like someone walked over her grave.

Noelle hands her the camera. The footage is cued to earlier in Part 2, where Gavin is having Melissa loop in a wild line:

MELISSA (ON TAPE)

Howkajew. How could you. How could you.

(MORE)

MELISSA (ON TAPE) (CONT'D)

(beat)

I feel so dirty.

GAVIN (ON TAPE)

That's how I like ya.

Mary backs out of the car, as if trying to get away from the video camera. But she's still holding it.

She hits STOP. Tries to collect herself.

Noelle gets out of the car, but doesn't approach. She signs, "Mommy?"

Mary backs away.

CUT TO:

312 EXT. FOREST VALE - DAY

312

Gabriel and Sierra stop for a moment, so he can pull off his outer shirt. For the first time, we see that Gabriel has a large tattoo on his back which looks like this:

I X

He's sweating a lot.

GABRIEL

Am I crazy, or is it getting hotter?

SIERRA

Oh, you're crazy.

She hands him back the water bottle. He gladly drinks.

When she takes the bottle back, she steps forward. The motion leaves them face-to-face. She pauses for a moment, just long enough for him to turn away.

He doesn't.

She kisses him. He doesn't really kiss back -- but he doesn't fight it, either.

She puts a hand on his thigh, sliding up the inside. Only when she reaches his crotch does he pull back.

GABRIEL

I have a wife. And a daughter. They're waiting for me.

SIERRA

Where are they?

GABRIEL
Back at the car.

SIERRA
I mean, which direction?

GABRIEL
They're back...

Gabriel turns, trying to get his bearing. The trees BLUR.
He nearly falls over.

He manages to steady himself.

SIERRA
Face it, G.: You don't know where
they are. You don't know where you
are. We've been walking in circles
for an hour.

GABRIEL
Where's your car?

SIERRA
There is no car. That was all a...
(what's the word)
"pretense," I guess. An excuse to
get you alone.

Wobbling, Gabriel sits down on a stump. Sierra kneels down
in front of him.

SIERRA (CONT'D)
Dizzy, huh? It's probably just the
GHB. In the water.

She holds up the water bottle.

FLASH TO:

QUICK FLASHBACKS FROM PARTS ONE AND TWO

313 EXT. FOREST - DAY

313

Gabriel experienced the flashbacks. He felt time move.

GABRIEL
What's happening?

SIERRA
I'm sorry it had to come this, G.
But it'll all be over soon.

GABRIEL
You're trying to kill me.

SIERRA
No! No. This isn't a murder.
It's an intervention.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.

Images to accompany previous dialogue...

SUSAN
I had to get you away from her. She
was holding you back. You had to
give her up.

GAVIN
Melissa?

SARAH
I can you out of here. But you
have to trust me.

SUSAN
Do you feel like a man? You're
not.

315 EXT. FOREST - DAY

315

Gabriel dry-heaves. Sierra rubs his shoulders.

SIERRA
That's right. Just let it go. Let
it go.

She's genuinely empathetic -- she doesn't enjoy his
suffering.

GABRIEL
Why are you doing this?

SIERRA
You did it to yourself. Admitting
that is the first step.

She comes around to face him. And now we see they're not
alone. Two other familiar faces approach:

THE PAROLE OFFICER/AGITATED MAN, and

OCTAVIA.

They're Nines as well.

SIERRA (CONT'D)

You're a crack-head, G. The thing is, this planet, these people, they're your drug of choice.

CUT TO:

99 INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

99

[The next sequence bridges multiple earlier scenes from Parts One and Two. Gary/Gavin/Gabriel has one conversation with Sarah/Susan/Sierra, but it's broken up among previous scenes and locations, sometimes for just a line.]

S.

It's not that hard to make a universe. At first, you just checked in every once in a while. See how the Neanderthals were doing. Move some continents around. But then you got more into it. Starting playing a couple of characters of your own. Kings. Slaves. Messiahs. Pretty soon, you were playing 24/7.

G.

How long have I..?

S.

You've been gone for four thousand years. Not that time means the same for us, but...

G.

You came looking for me.

S.

That's what a girl does.

G.

Why now?

x107 EXT. STREET - DAY [PART ONE]

x107

Streetwalker Octavia leans in Gary's car window.

OCTAVIA

Because you forgot who you were.

x228 INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY [PART TWO]

x228

The Agitated Man leans up to the one-way glass.

AGITATED MAN
You forgot this wasn't real.

99 INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

99

S.
We couldn't just storm in on a
fiery chariot. It's your universe.
We had to play by your rules. We
had to make you see how limited and
corrupt your little world was.
Don't get me wrong, this world is
nice. It's cozy. But do you
remember where you came from?

A few beats while it comes back to him. Tears start to build
in his eyes. What he's picturing is unspeakably beautiful.

G.
It was warm. And white. Like...

x160 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [PART ONE]

x160

The Agitated Man/Parole Officer attaches Gary's anklet.

AGITATED MAN
You can't describe it with human
words.

x108 INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY [PART ONE]

x108

Octavia leans over Gary, who has fallen off the bed.

OCTAVIA
You can't think it with human
thoughts.

99 INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

99

S.
That's why you have to come back.
Come back with us. With me.

x256 OMIT

x256

316 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD / NEAR THE PRIUS - DAY

316

Mary is sitting on the road. Noelle has her chin on her mother's shoulder, watching the videotape with her.

ON SCREEN, with tinny audio: (from scene 177)

MARGARET

You could destroy the world with a single thought.

(suddenly)

Don't, incidentally. Just file that away. But the truth is, you hold all the cards: every church, every candle, every sacrifice -- that's for you. When people pray, they're not praying because they want this thing or that thing. They just don't want to be forgotten.

BACK TO:

A317 EXT. ROAD / PRIUS - DAY

A317

Mary is still watching the tape. She realizes Noelle isn't watching over her shoulder anymore.

Mary looks around. Her daughter is nowhere to be seen.

MARY

Noelle? Noelle!

CUT TO:

317 EXT. FOREST CROSSROADS - DAY

317

Gabriel and Sierra are back at the junction where the paved road meets the gravel road.

GABRIEL

Maybe if I just cut back, didn't get so involved...

SIERRA

We both know that'll never work. Next week, you'll be back here redesigning the pinecones. You have to quit cold-turkey.

GABRIEL

I can't.

SIERRA
 You can. But I can't force you to
 leave. You have to want it.

She takes his hand, running a finger through the green string bracelet around his wrist.

She kisses him. And then she's gone.

Gabriel stands there for a long beat, considering his decision.

x103 OMIT

x103

318 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD / NEAR THE PRIUS - DAY

318

Panicking, Mary calls out for --

MARY
 Noelle! Noelle!

She's nowhere to be found. Then, from behind her...

GABRIEL
 She's here.

Gabriel is walking up the gravel road, with Noelle holding his hand.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
 I didn't forget you guys.

Mary regards him as a familiar stranger, a beloved imposter.

MARY
 Everything okay?

GABRIEL
 Absolutely. Let's go home.

MUSIC BEGINS, a song that will carry us through the next sequence.

319 INT. PRIUS - DAY

319

Gabriel climbs into the driver's seat. Both Mary and Noelle watch with interest as he pushes the "START" button. The car BEEPS and engages without any problem.

Everyone fastens their seatbelts.

- 320** EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY **320**
The Prius drives down the gravel road. Mary tries to keep her eyes on the scenery, but they keep drifting over to Gabriel, trying to read what he's thinking.
- 321** EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY **321**
The Prius turns on to the paved road. Headlights switch on.
- 322** OMIT **322**
- 323** OMIT **323**
- 324** OMIT **324**
- 325** EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT **325**
The metal gate at the top of the driveway swings open, SQUEALING on its rusty hinges.
- 326** EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT **326**
Gabriel lifts the sleeping Noelle out of the car. Carries her into the house. Mary shuts the door behind them.
- 327** INT. NOELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT **327**
Taking off her shoes, Gabriel tucks Noelle into bed. Turns on a nightlight for her.
- 328** INT. MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT **328**
Gabriel brushes his teeth with an electric toothbrush while Mary reads a magazine on the toilet.
- 329** INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT **329**
Gabriel switches off the light. He spoons Mary, who kisses his hand. On both Mary and Gabriel's faces, we see anxiety. Things left unsaid.
- 330** INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT [LATER] **330**
Gabriel lies awake, staring at the ceiling.

331 INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT **331**

Gabriel's bare feet walk down the carpeted stairs.

332 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT **332**

Gabriel stares at the three paintings on the wall.

333 INT. KITCHEN / EXT. BACK YARD - DAWN **333**

Gabriel stands in the doorway, looking out at the inky-blue sky. His eyes are red, tired. He hasn't slept at all.

It's very quiet, except for the occasional precocious BIRD CALL.

Mary enters from the living room, still in her pajamas. He knows she's there. Neither wants to speak.

MARY

You need to go, don't you?

GABRIEL

No. I can stay.

MARY

How long? Forever? Every day, you'd know what you were missing.

He smiles, a little.

MARY (CONT'D)

What happens? If you go.

GABRIEL

Worst-case scenario? Spontaneous disintegration into a fiery void. Oblivio accedit. The end of everything.

MARY

That's all?

Both smile.

GABRIEL

That probably wouldn't happen. The basic structure of the universe should hold. I guess I'm just worried about the human factor. You guys kill each other a lot.

MARY

In fairness, that's usually in your name. Plus we've gotten much more efficient at it.

A beat.

GABRIEL

I like this world. I like my life, here, with you and Noelle...

MARY

But it's not real. I'm not really your wife, you're not really my husband. On some level, it's all pretend.

GABRIEL

It's not pretend. There's a reason you were there, in every version. You were my sister, my wife, my best friend...

MARY

That's a little creepy.

GABRIEL

I wanted you close. In one version, I even told you. I warned you that some day they might come for me, and...

MARY

...You'd have to leave. How many versions were there?

GABRIEL

Ninety. This is the last one.

MARY

Wow.

GABRIEL

I've destroyed billions of people with a thought. Obliterated them. And you'd like to think it's painless...

MARY

Stop. You don't have to explain, or apologize. Everything that is, is because of you. If that's all, that's enough.

With that, there's really nothing more to say.

MARY (CONT'D)

So.

GABRIEL

So.

MARY

Guess you don't really need to pack anything.

GABRIEL

I'm good.

MARY

You're great. It's been a pleasure.

GABRIEL

Likewise. I love you.

MARY

Love you, too. Ya big lug.

He kisses her. It's not a big, passionate, movie-ending kiss, but rather a fond kiss farewell. At the end of it, he WHISPERS into her ear:

GABRIEL

You're my favorite.

She smiles.

With two fingers, Gabriel BREAKS the green string bracelet around his left wrist.

And in that moment, a film passes over him, like the boundary between water and air.

He's stepped out of this dimension.

Mary is frozen with the same smile on her face, but we notice that she and the kitchen around her have flattened out to two-dimensional images.

She and everything around her has become like wallpaper, slowly curling away, revealing emptiness beneath.

Gabriel collapses into a single, spiky sphere of light.

The light moves through the kitchen, creating waves that ripple through the tissue-thin walls.

Picking up speed, the sphere rushes through the window, heading west.

334 EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

334

As the light flies out over Hancock Park, the mansions and skyscrapers seem unreal, like models.

Reaching Santa Monica, we pass over the ferris wheel at the end of the pier.

We dive into the blue ocean beneath us, which becomes only a swirling gray fog with a viscous thickness.

We see three lights in the distance. We join them, moving with them.

Further ahead, more lights, circling. It's a loose spiral made of stars, resembling nothing so much as the number 9.

As we get closer and closer, we...

MATCH CUT TO:

A PALE EYE,

opening. We are...

335 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

335

Hands reach up, expecting to find glasses, but there are none.

As we PULL OUT, we reveal it's not Mary, Melissa or Margaret, but a fourth person -- just slightly different from any of them. We'll call her M.

She looks first to the spot where Gabriel was standing.

Empty.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Honey, do we have nutmeg?

M looks over at husband Ben, who is busy making pancakes, reading from a recipe.

M

We should.

Coming around from behind Ben, Noelle checks through the spice drawer. M watches her with cautious fascination.

BEN

Cinnamon, too.

M catches her reflection in the toaster. Notices she looks different than she expected.

NOELLE
(to Ben)
If I had a horse...

Noelle turns back with the spices, handing them to Ben one at a time.

NOELLE (CONT'D)
I would name her Cinnamon.

BEN
Really.

NOELLE
And if I had another horse...

BEN
Nutmeg?

NOELLE
No, Flash.

M
Sweetie?

She beckons Noelle over. Tucks back the little girl's hair. Keeping her voice low enough so Ben can't hear:

M (CONT'D)
This is going to sound really
strange, but...what's my name?

Noelle only gives her a half-crazy look.

NOELLE
Mmmmmmmmmmm-Mommy.

Noelle smiles. M smiles too, a little embarrassed.

M
Right. Exactly.

Noelle looks her right in the eye.

NOELLE
He's not coming back. But it's
gonna be okay. He put the pieces
together, it's like...

M
The best of all possible worlds.

Noelle taps her nose.

BEN

Honey? Is it supposed to stick
like this?

Sharing a look...

M

We should help him.

Noelle agrees. They head over to assist.

We MOVE ACROSS the family as they work on the pancakes,
Noelle directing how big the ears on hers should be.

We leave them in the middle of a messy kitchen, gooey
pancakes, and a good life.

FADE OUT.

THE END

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

The following scene (Scene 99) is the conversation between S and G that plays near the end of Part Three. The plan is to shoot this scene in almost every setup of the film that involves both characters -- be it in Part One, Two or Three.

So we'll be shooting this scene a lot. We'll then be intercutting the best of all these moments to create one sequence.

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S.

That's what a girl does.

G.

Why now?

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We couldn't just storm in on a fiery chariot. It's your universe. We had to play by your rules. We had to make you see how limited and corrupt your little world was. Don't get me wrong, this world is nice. It's cozy. But do you remember where you came from?

A few beats while it comes back to him. Tears start to build in his eyes. What he's picturing is unspeakably beautiful.

G.

It was warm. And white. Like...

S.

You can't describe it with human words. You can't think it with human thoughts.

(beat)

That's why you have to come back.
Come back with us. With me.