

THE RETURN

Written by

Howard Green

Based on the short film "Returning" by Howard Green

341A San Jose Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-260-4839
howardmarkgreen@gmail.com

EXT. LONG BEACH, CA - DAWN

A smoky southern California sunrise. Industrial smog paints the sky in gorgeous swaths of red and gold, framing silhouettes of palm trees and smokestacks.

A graceful human figure rises before this beautiful and grotesque tableau. He stands and surveys his surroundings.

SERIES OF SHOTS - LOS ANGELES, EARLY MORNING

The shadow of this MAN makes his way on foot across the Los Angeles basin.

-- He walks along the edge freeway, undaunted by the HONKING of automobiles starting to jam the road.

-- He climbs a ridge in GRIFFITH PARK, overlooking the city.

-- He descends into downtown, past CITY HALL, UNION STATION, and the DOWNTOWN POLICE PRECINCT. Waking vagrants eye him with sleepy regard.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

JESUS, or a man recognizable as such, arrives in the Skid Row area of downtown.

The local denizens emerge from underpass tents and single room occupancy hotels. Men and women, white, Latino and African-American, resume the daily ritual of survival just a few short blocks from gleaming corporate towers and glamorous lights.

A group of OLDER MEN smoke and drink on a stoop.

An old CHINESE MAN sprays down the concrete outside his door.

Sanitation and delivery trucks screech to the curb as their crew crews conduct their business.

Jesus takes in the scene like some wide-eyed tourist. He greets each of these folks like an old friend.

LOS ANGELES MISSION

The usual crowd gathers around the entrance. Some wait patiently to enter, some jostle for position.

Junkies mingle with families, mothers with brood of children in tow, wayward youth and old time vagabonds.

Few pay attention to the newcomer. Just another of lost soul seeking charity.

Two LAPD SQUAD CARS appear. Four OFFICERS disembark, start to filter through the crowd confronting people at random.

OFFICER

You're a new face. Just blow into town?

Jesus observes the cop and his aggressive behavior without response.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

You have a place to stay? A permanent address?

The officer advances on Jesus, who turns aside to avoid the escalating confrontation.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

What's wrong, you don't talk? What are you on? E? Meth? H?

Others in the crowd start to take notice of the commotion. The officer, enraged by the man's refusal to rise to his challenge, lunges at the man.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

Have it your way

SARGE

Jesus H. Christ, that really you?

The Officer and Jesus turn in unison.

SARGE, mid thirties but prematurely aged, his features chiseled as if in stone, approaches the stranger as if to embrace Him, all but ignoring the cop.

SARGE (CONT'D)

Coulda sworn Aunt Josie said you were coming next week.

OFFICER

You know this man, Sarge.

SARGE

Know him? He's my brother.

OFFICER

Never mentioned you had a brother, Sarge.

SARGE

This is my cousin, Jim. Growing up
we was like brothers.

The officer eyes Jesus, then Sarge, not buying it.

OFFICER

(To Jesus)

That true, Jim? You're his cousin.

Jesus nods.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

He's staying with you.

SARGE

Oh yeah, we have a suite a the
Biltmore. Nice place. Free coffee
and croissants in the morning. Feel
free to drop by.

OFFICER

Alright, just stay out of trouble.

SARGE

Will do, Officer Krumpky.

The cop scowls, leaves.

EXT. OFFICE TOWER - CREATIVE MEDIA ARTS AGENCY - DAY

A gleaming glass and steel monolith. High above the street,
behind one of those floor to ceiling corner windows is

INT. JOANNA PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

JOANNA, early forties, gazes blankly across her desk,
struggling to remain professional and composed as GINNIFER,
mid-twenties, looks and personality of a human mannequin,
yammers on incessantly.

Joanna's eyes cloud over and her attention drifts to her
shelf full of trophies, plaques, hard earned awards and
accolades her current client is not worthy to share space
with.

GINNIFER

You win all those awards?

JOANNA

Yes.

GINNIFER
Cool. Real cool.

JOANNA
So what do you want to do,
Ginnifer?

GINNIFER
Aren't you supposed to tell me
that?

JOANNA
Well to start with, where do you
see yourself.

GINNIFER
Really famous. I mean I am already
but like, a huge star.

JOANNA
OK, well lets start from where we
are. I have a couple of projects in
mind I can put you up for.

GINNIFER
What kind of projects?

JOANNA
I've got a feature, horror, mid-
budget. Featured role.

GINNIFER
Do I die?

JOANNA
Probably.

GINNIFER
Pass.

JOANNA
Alright. How about a guest spot on
Murderous Intent. You get to bump
off your billionaire boyfriend's
wife.

GINNIFER
Cause I'm a Real Hollywood
Mistress? Pass.

JOANNA
I think your best strategy right
now is to build upon your existing
image.

GINNIFER

I was thinking maybe music. I'm an excellent singer, you know. And I got moves too.

JOANNA

Ever sung professionally? Do you have a demo?

GINNIFER

Not like, officially. Everyone knows they auto-tune that shit now. And I mean, come one, look at me.

Ginnifer stands and poses, displaying her would be pop-star assets.

JOANNA

There could be some built in interest. We could get you on record and see what you have.

GINNIFER

Lets do it.

JOANNA

(Shouts at the door)
Emily. EMILY!

EMILY, 24, pops through the office door.

EMILY

Yes?

JOANNA

Call around to the recording studios. See if we can book a session this week.

EMILY

The phone works just as well.

JOANNA

What?

EMILY

Studio time, got it.

Emily slips back through the door with well-honed, ninja-like stealth.

EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - DUSK

A TENT-VILLAGE nestled under the FREEWAY. Assorted VAGRANTS of all ages huddle around a TRASH CAN FIRE.

Others line up for food as old timers like Sarge serve hobo stew and sandwiches. Campers cluster in small groups to break bread and relive their days.

SARGE

There you are, enjoy. Hey Little Su, looking gorgeous this evening. Hot date?

The sixty-something, grandmotherly woman blushes and bats her twinkling eyes at Sarge.

LITTLE SU

You'll be the first to know, sweetie. You going to introduce us?

She smiles and looks the newcomer up and down.

SARGE

This is an old friend.

LITTLE SU

Don't be jealous. Hello old friend, you have a name?

Jesus smiles and places a warm roll in the woman's hands.

LATER

Jesus and Sarge eat together, some distance from the others. Sarge watches the stranger in silence a while before opening up.

SARGE

Not too bad, 'eh. I'm no gourmet, but I have certain skills. My captain used to say I could work wonders with an MRE.

He pauses to gage the stranger's reaction. Jesus goes on eating, which Sarge takes as permission to go on.

SARGE (CONT'D)

We work with what we have. Kept a roof over my head for ten years that way. That and the occasional odd job.

(MORE)

SARGE (CONT'D)

Truth is I find more community out here on any given night than I ever did in the respectable world. No one judges, no one asks. You don't talk much. I respect that. But I sense something about you. You served, right?

Jesus nods; Not an answer but an invitation.

SARGE (CONT'D)

See, I knew it, soon as we met. Like, telepathy, you just understand. So what godforsaken desert they send you to?

Again Jesus does not answer, but his reaction implies far even greater understanding.

SARGE (CONT'D)

Iraq for me. Six weeks after Bush declared 'Mission Accomplished,' my unit was protecting of a convoy heading to Tikrit. We're about 80 kilometers south of the city when we hit a cluster of IEDs. My transport was blown off the road, got pretty banged up. We climb out, nothing but black smoke, can't see six inches in front of you. We hear screaming, shouting, cursing. Just chaos. Turns out my unit commander's KIA, second in command's got both legs blown off. No one knows whose in charge. What's left of our unit regroups, makes camp and waits for orders. I just want to get some sleep at this point. So about one in the morning this Corporal starts yelling and banging with his rifle. Says there's an insurgent stronghold right over the next ridge. Has intel there's a bomb maker in the house, going to authorize a raid. Were totally exhausted at this point but we also just lost half a dozen of our brothers so we don't need too much convincing. We get there, three in the morning, total darkness, no movement. We bust in the door, and move in. I stay outside, guarding the door.

(MORE)

SARGE (CONT'D)

Suddenly this little kid, maybe six, charges out the door right at me, all excited, chittering a thousand words a minute, my arabic's OK but its total gibberish. I try to calm the kid down when I make out someone else in the doorway, an adult moving towards me, masked, huge bulge around the torso. Without a thought I fire until the person drops. I have a look. Its a woman, seven, maybe eight months pregnant. Blood gushing from her belly. Probably the child's mother. I'll never forget that little girl's face just staring me as her mother's blood and life drain from her body.

Sarge breaks down, chokes back tears. Jesus takes the man's hands in his.

SARGE (CONT'D)

I haven't told a soul that story. Not my ex-wife, not my case worker at the VA. Good people down there, for the most part. Get me my meds every week.

Sarge unscrews the top of a banged up THERMOS, fills the mug top and hands it to the Jesus, keeps the rest for himself.

SARGE (CONT'D)

You make due with what you have.
Cheers, brother.

He tilts back the thermos and takes his due.

INT. CMA AGENCY OFFICE - NIGHT

Joanna catches up with RYAN ZIERLING, her prodigal, 32 year old boss, roaming the halls of the agency.

The clean cut and freshly scrubbed boy wonder is primed and pressed for an Ivy League formal at dad's yacht club, then straight to an all night Skull and Bones party.

JOANNA

Hey Ryan, got a moment?

RYAN

Oh hey, how did it go with the Beverly Hills mistress?

JOANNA

A nightmare. Wants to be the next Lady Gaga?

RYAN

Can she sing?

JOANNA

You tell me? In fact, what am I doing here?

RYAN

Making me miss tip-off.

Joanna follows him out the door and into the STAIRWELL signed Parking Garage.

JOANNA

Seriously, why am I wasting my time with that imbecile.

RYAN

That imbecile, Joanna, has one-point-five million Twitter followers desperate for pictures of chinchilla and every time she shows up at the club without her panties. She's going to blow up with us or someone else, so if I were you I'd do whatever it takes to keep my client happy.

JOANNA

My client? I haven't struggled twenty years in this god-forsaken boys town of an industry to get to where I am to rep some delusional reality show princess. I built this agency into what it is today. I promoted you out of the mailroom, made you my assistant.

RYAN

Things change. You lost three major clients last year. They didn't just fire you, they fled the agency. You ever consider that you aren't getting the whales anymore because don't understand the industry the way you used to.

INT. PARKING GARAGE, CONTINUOUS

JOANNA

Don't underestimate me, Ryan.

RYAN

You need to deliver if you want to stay in the big leagues, sweetheart. Make her a star.

Ryan clicks the remote entry button on his key fob, and the butterfly doors of his Bently roadster swing open. He slides behind the wheel and speeds off in a single move.

JOANNA

Ungrateful, smug-ass little twerp.

INT. JOANNA'S OFFICE, RECEPTION

Emily, absorbed in her own work, barely acknowledges her agitated boss as she storms into the office.

JOANNA

Emily!

EMILY

Hey Joanna. Can I ask your opinion? Do you like the new Final Draft or Movie Magic.

JOANNA

What?

EMILY

I know they're basically the same thing, but--

JOANNA

Did you finish--

EMILY

The studios, yeah, its done. Sent you the quote list.

JOANNA

How about--

EMILY

Done, and before you ask, also done. Its all done.

JOANNA

Then why are you still here?

EMILY

Writing.

JOANNA

Can't you do that at home?

EMILY

My roommate has these guys over from her acting class tonight. No way I'm getting anything done there.

JOANNA

Ever heard of Starbucks?

EMILY

Oh, Roger called a couple of times.

JOANNA

Christ, Roger. Was it a couple?

EMILY

Possibly three.

JOANNA

Damn.

Joanna attempts to grab her keys and coat and run for the door in one motion, nearly knocking tripping over her heels in the process.

EMILY

Are you coming back tonight?

JOANNA

If I do and you're still here, you're fired.

She rushes out.

EMILY

No respect for the creative process.

EXT. HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The camp's residents settle in for the night; blankets, sleeping bags, cardboard boxes, a few tents.

The hardiest of group remain around the trash fire, sharing spirits from well-used flasks and brown paper bags, toast to changing fortunes.

Without warning, several POLICE CRUISERS encircle the camp, their headlights blasting through the dark.

Sarge watches from the edge of the camp as OFFICERS rouse and scatter the squatters. Just another night in the city.

He recognizes the officer from the mission charging toward them, and warns Jesus.

SARGE

Hey buddy, I'd take off if I were you.

Jesus grabs the veteran's hand, but Sarge shoos him off.

SARGE (CONT'D)

It's cool, man. Officer Friendly and I go way back. Take care brother.

Jesus backs away as Sarge confronts the officer.

OFFICER

You! Stop right there.

SARGE

How can I help you this evening, officer?

OFFICER

How many times do we have to do this, Sarge?

SARGE

You tell me.

OFFICER

You know your friends can't sleep here.

SARGE

You have a place for us to go?

OFFICER

As a matter of fact, we do.

He proceeds to cuff Sarge.

SARGE

You serving continental breakfast tomorrow.

OFFICER

Lets go.

He shoves the handcuffed Sarge forward.

SARGE

You have those little waffles I
like. With real syrup this time,
not that sugary shit again.

INT. JOANNA'S CAR - NIGHT

Joanna cruises through downtown streets, on hand on the wheel, the other holding up her CELL PHONE, dialing on handed.

She manages to key The phone RINGS.

INT. SWANKY RESTAURANT BAR - NIGHT

ROGER WESTOFF, a strikingly handsome, professional man in his late forties, sits alone at the bar, staring longingly at the door. The patrons and staff, invariably young, hip and beautiful, seem to occupy another dimension.

Roger's CELL PHONE vibrates unanswered, rippling the liquid in his untouched GLASS. Joanna's name blinks on the screen, then switches to--

MISSED CALL (2) - JOANNA.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Now on the main avenue, Jesus stumbles into the pedestrian current, but soon bumps into another cop.

COP

Whoa there, slow down boss. You
heading some place? Got any ID?

Startled and disoriented, Jesus backs away. Steps off the unseen curb.

Traffic noise swells around him, Cars swerve, horns blast, people shout. He turns his head in the direction of the sound, into ONCOMING HEADLIGHTS.

He leaps out of the way, but not fast enough. The car knocks him to the pavement.

Joanna's car.

INT. JOANNA'S CAR - NIGHT

Jamming the break, she hyperventilates as the vehicle screeches to a halt.

JOANNA

Oh my god oh my god oh my god. Get a grip, Joanna.

She leans onto the steering wheel. The HORN BLASTS, shocking her back into the moment.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Probably hit a speed bump or something. Right, you're going to open the door, step outside and look. Okays.

Hesitantly she cracks open the door and steps out. She walks back until she sees, in her horror --

Jesus' contorted body, lying in the street, con.

She crouches beside him, lays her hands on the body, feeling and listing for signs of movement.

The injured man GROANS, stirs. Tries to sit up.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Don't move. I'm going to get help.

She stands, waves her phone in the air, and calls out.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Can somebody help us? Anyone!

Several ONLOOKERS stare at her, but no one steps forward to help. Those police officers and emergency vehicles are now nowhere to be seen.

She crouches again to the man's eye level.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Are you hurt?

She hesitates at the inanity of the question.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Uh, do you know where you are?
What's your name?

He moans again, lifts his head.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
I'm going to call for help.

Without turning away, she dials 9-1-1 on her phone.

DISPATCHER
Nine-one-one. What's your
emergency. Hello?

Reconsidering, Joanne hangs up.

The stranger is now sitting upright on the pavement, shaken but not apparently seriously injured.

JOANNA
Right, I'm taking you in. Can you
walk?

With some effort, she helps the man to his feet.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
Or we could wait here for the cops.
That's what you do in these
situations, right. Then I can
explain to the police how I just
hit a man with my car and I'm very
sorry, but I'm late meeting my
boyfriend at a swanky restaurant,
and by the way you have a great
face, have you considered acting?
I'm sure he'd be very understanding
at let me go on my way.

With difficulty she hoists Jesus into the backseat, climbs in and drives off.

EXT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY RAMP - NIGHT

Joanna's car screeches to the curb. Joanne helps her hobbled victim out of the car through the automated doors.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - TRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

JOANNA
Need some help here.

In an instant, several triage nurses rush out. One brings a WHEELCHAIR for the injured man.

NURSE
What's the patient's name?

JOANNA

I don't know.

She eyes the bruised and ragged patient.

NURSE

Got it. Did you see what happened.

JOANNA

No. Pedestrian accident. I think.

NURSE

You think he was hit by a car?

JOANNA

He was lying in the street. Can't say for sure since I wasn't there at the time. Obviously.

NURSE

You didn't call for an ambulance?

JOANNA

Well he got up again and didn't seem too badly hurt. I was heading downtown anyway, so--

The nurse fixes a skeptical glare at her.

NURSE

Just a good samaritan.

JOANNA

Yeah listen, I'll just leave my card and you can charge me for the bill.

She slaps an EXECUTIVE CHARGE CARD and business card onto the counter.

As the nurses attending to Jesus begin to wheel him away, he and Joanna lock eyes.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Could you contact me to let me know his condition.

NURSE

You seem like you really care.

The nurse's tone is withering.

INT. ER - NIGHT

Another NURSE wheels Jesus' chair into a treatment room, deposits him in a enclave separated by thin, fabric partitions.

Anxious voices drift through the fabric wall.

DAUGHTER (O.S.)
No dad, we're at the hospital.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
(Delirious)
Captain? They shot him. They're coming.

SON (O.S.)
Who. Who's coming?

OLD MAN (O.S.)
Rodriguez? Where's the captain?

DAUGHTER (O.S.)
That's your son, dad.

NURSE (O.S.)
OK, I need everyone to clear out.

DAUGHTER (O.S.)
No. He has late stage Alzheimer's.
He's disoriented.

NURSE (O.S.)
He needs calm and quiet.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
They're here. They found us.

SON (O.S.)
Where are you taking him.

NURSE (O.S.)
Sir, you need to relax and let him rest.

Jesus stands near the partition to better listen to the commotion on the other side.

I/E SWANKY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Joanna rushes from her hastily parked car into the restaurant, now mostly empty.

A few starry-eyed couples and other late stragglers remain, as bussers clear away the remains of abandoned tables.

Joanna scans the space in vain for her date in waiting, but he's long gone.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY WARD - NIGHT (EARLY AM)

The ward feels eerie and still in this dim post midnight hour. On the other side of the door, sounds of HOSPITAL ACTIVITY continues unabated.

The OLD MAN with Alzheimer's moans and rambles his delirium.

OLD MAN

Fallen. I'm sorry, the Captain has fallen.

Jesus pushes aside the partition, goes to the old man's bedside. The man turns his head.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Captain? You came back for me?

Jesus lays hands on the man, who becomes more agitated.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

The others? I'm sorry, it was my--

JESUS

Shh. Be at ease.

Immediately, the old man's contorted face relaxes. A smile creeps across the man's lips.

INT. EMERGENCY WARD - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Jesus steps into the long hallway. Patients stricken with a range of maladies and injuries await attention from the overworked staff. Most seated on chairs, a few prone on hospital beds.

He makes his way down the corridor, attending to or comforting each patient in turn.

The overworked staff hardly seem to notice, but the patients however watch the stranger with great interest.

Jesus reaches the waiting room at the end of the hall. He tends to the few patients waiting there, then walks through the doors.

INT. JOANNA PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Back at work, Joanna works the phone while rifling through the open contact books that cover her desk.

JOANNA

Hi, just checking in. How's Morris treating you? That's great, listen sweetie, I wanted to give you a heads up. One of our literary clients is about to option her latest novel. I can't tell you the title but its out next month and the buzz is its going to be huge. There's a bidding war, probably going to go low seven figures at least. They're throwing around some big names to direct, Spielberg, Fincher.

Joanna's smooth, upbeat phone pitch belies her stress and anxiety. Her heel relentlessly taps the floor, her hands restless with random activity.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Hear me out. I can package the project with you in the lead. I think its a nomination for whoever plays that part.

She looks up to see Emily at the door. Joanna scowls at her, mouths silently "What is it?", without breaking her phone manner.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I really think its perfect for you. At least read it. What? Oh. They say great minds think alike. All right, well best of luck. Cheers.

She puts down the phone in frustration. She directs that frustration at her assistant.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Did you need something?

EMILY

Someone from Saint Mary's hospital. I offered to take a message, but it sounded urgent.

JOANNA

I'll take it.

She picks up the call, shooin'g Emily out.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

This is Joanna.

NURSE (O.S.)

Ms. Paul, I just need to resolve an issue with your billing, regarding the man you dropped off last night.

JOANNA

Yes, is he OK?

NURSE (O.S.)

Well that's the issue. He's gone.

JOANNA

Gone?

NURSE (O.S.)

We have no record of discharging him. He just left, of this own accord.

Joanna senses from the subtle CREAK and SHIFTING against the door Emily eavesdropping on the conversation. She rapidly opens and slams the door to back her off.

JOANNA

So? Is that against the law?

NURSE (O.S.)

No. Was hoping you could verify his information.

JOANNA

I told the nurse last night, I don't know the man. He was hurt--

NURSE (O.S.)

I understand, but I need you to come down--

JOANNA

Fine, whatever. I'll be right there.

NURSE (O.S.)

That really isn't--

Joanna hangs up, cutting her off.

INT. ER - DAY.

Joanna rushes to the Triage station. A new, younger DAY-SHIFT NURSE greets her there.

DAY SHIFT NURSE
Can I help you, Ma'am.

JOANNA
Yes, I brought someone in last night.

DAY SHIFT NURSE
Oh yeah, I have something for you.

She produces a clipboard with several forms attached. Joanna takes it and, skimming the details, signs her name.

JOANNA
They look happy.

She points out the Alzheimer's patient and his family, only the old man is engaged in animated conversation with his surprised and overjoyed family.

DAY SHIFT NURSE
Seriously odd. That man has late stage Alzheimer's. Last night he recognize his family, much less talk to them.

JOANNA
Miracles happen.

DAY SHIFT NURSE
Been that kind of night. Must have been a full moon or something. The other patients in the ward, like night and day. Never seen anything like it.

Looking around the ward, Joanna notices a conspicuous lack of drama.

JOANNA
What about my guy?

INT. MOSHE'S APARTMENT - DAY

ON an old fashioned, fifteen-inch CRT TV SET, propped on a cart with a bunny-ear antenna, a religious program plays in snowy static.

An elderly preacher, trembling voice full of fire and brimstone.

PREACHER

Matthew 24:36. No man knoweth the day or the hour of His coming. But the Lord has revealed to me in the words of His scripture that that dreadful hour is upon us. His only son will soon return to judge the world.

Jesus watches the telecast with bemused interest.

MOSHE

This man has predicted the end of the world every six weeks since nineteen eighty-two. If he ever got it right he would drop dead of the shock.

MOSHE, a Jewish man in his (apparent) mid sixties, hunches over a small gas range in his tiny kitchen, overlooking the spartan living space.

MOSHE (CONT'D)

If you must watch that thing, could you switch on something important, like the Dodgers score.

JESUS

This man has lived the last thirty years fearing the end of the world rather than living in it.

MOSHE

Heh. Of course men like him are always so certain they're among the saved.

He burns his hand on the pan--

MOSHE (CONT'D)

Ow.

--And jumps back, knocks the pan and its contents to the floor.

MOSHE (CONT'D)

Oh boy. What do you say we go out for breakfast?

INT. FAIRFAX DELICATESSEN - DAY

A homey, schmaltzy, no-nonsense sort of place, where cold cuts and conversation have presided for decades.

A WAITRESS approaches Moshe's favored booth.

WAITRESS

What can I get you?

MOSHE

You serve Matzoh ball soup at this hour?

WAITRESS

Whatever you want.

MOSHE

Make sure its nice and spongy this time, not all dense like last week. The soup should permeate the porous surface of the ball. A decent matzoh ball is not too much to ask in this town.

WAITRESS

What about you?

Jesus declines.

MOSHE

Oh, and if its not too much trouble, a Denver omelet with bacon. Extra crispy on that bacon. And one for my friend here, he's famished.

WAITRESS

Be back with your breakfast.

She leaves them.

JESUS

I see you honor your traditions.

MOSHE

We have this wonderful invention in this century called modern food preparation.

JESUS

Fair enough.

MOSHE

Seeing you again after all these years I have to ask myself, need I be concerned.

JESUS

Concerned about what?

MOSHE

That our preacher friend might be on to something. But I'm sure this is just a social call.

JESUS

Something like that.

MOSHE

Then perhaps its just a feeling in the air.

JESUS

What have you heard.

MOSHE

Murmurings. Those of us left around have been gathering, conversing.

JESUS

Even--

MOSHE

Mohammed, yes Him too, Poor man, can't even appear in public anymore without- Oy, don't get me started.

JESUS

There is no cause to be troubled. I believe the time was right.

MOSHE

Things have changed, old friend. When were you last here, the sixties. Didn't end so well at that time, as I recall.

JESUS

The ending does not negate the trip.

MOSHE

OK, so its not the apocalypse. Got any plans while in town.

Jesus sets Joanna's BUSINESS CARD in front of Moshe.

Moshe dons a pair of READING GLASSES and examines the card.

MOSHE (CONT'D)

(Reading)

Creative Media Artists. Joanna
Paul, partner, artists management.

He sets down the card.

MOSHE (CONT'D)

Nice lady?

JESUS

You might say we ran into one
another.

MOSHE

I see your mind working. What's the
endgame?

JESUS

As you say, the world has changed.
It is vast, people are cynical, the
old truths forgotten and distorted.
How can we reach them again..

MOSHE

And then what? They'll twist your
words as they always do, to serve
their own agendas.

JESUS

Perhaps, but others will listen.
Have faith in them.

MOSHE

Just be careful, my friend.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Joanna multitasks in the studio control room.

An ENGINEER adjusts knobs and sliders on the sound board.

Ginnifer primps herself in the glass walled recording booth.
She vocalizes into the microphone between sips of her
designer bottled water.

Emily enters quietly with a steaming cardboard cup and an
overflowing file folder. She takes a seat next to her boss.

ENGINEER

Okay honey, could you give me some levels?

GINNIFER

La la laaaa. Me me MEEEE.

The engineer winces and grabs his headphones. He eases down the volume slider.

ENGINEER

Um, that's fine. Whenever you're ready, Ginnifer.

GINNIFER

Let's rock this.

The engineer hands Joanna a pair of phones. She puts them on, paying half attention to the session.

He cues up the backing track and hits play. Intro bars of generic techno bubblegum pop kick in.

At the appropriate moment the engineer cues Ginnifer to begin her vocal.

As she does, Joanna snaps to attention.

Ginnifer's singing voice could strip paint off a wall.

Joanna's eyes go wide. Emily's jaw drops to the floor.

Ginnifer screams the inane lyrics with rock diva swagger.

ENGINEER

Lets cut there. We'll do another take.

GINNIFER

Hell's yeah. That was good, right?

ENGINEER

Sure, sweetheart. You want some tea, water, something for your throat.

GINNIFER

You got Jamison's?

JOANNA

(sotto)

Jamison's. Meth. A gun.

GINNIFER
You say something?

JOANNA
Whatever you need, its your time.

GINNIFER
Tell me honestly I ain't the next Miley.

JOANNA
You want honesty? Okay, I would honestly rather jam this pen into my ear than listen to another second of your caterwauling.

GINNIFER
My cat-- what?

JOANNA
Have you ever even heard music before?

Ginnifer storms out of the booth, livid.

GINNIFER
Look lady, I don't care if you don't understand my music. It's not, like, what y'all listened to in the forties or whatever. I hired you to make me a star.

JOANNA
Well you obviously don't need me then. You have the voice of an angel, but since when does discernible talent count for anything anymore? Carry on.

Joanna picks up her things.

Emily stops her before she can bolt. Hands her a phone.
Joanna puts it to her ear.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
(on phone)
This is-- Glad to hear you're alright. Is there anything--

GINNIFER
Hey! Whose that? Don't ignore me!
This is my time!

Joanna extends her palm toward Ginnifer's face.

JOANNA

(on phone)

No, I'm not doing anything -- important -- right now. How about one hour, Santa Monica pier, know where that is? Splendid, see you there. Bye bye.

She hands the phone back to Emily and walks out.

GINNIFER

Hey, I'm talking to you. You're in breach of contract. You're supposed to represent me. I'll take this to your boss.

Emily and the engineer look at one another, dumbfounded.

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - DAY

Jesus waits at the head of the Pier. Tourists, families, amorous couples, street performers, beggars, hawkers and hustlers all file by, vying for one another's attention.

Joanna hops out of a CAB, rushes to greet him.

JOANNA

Sorry to keep you waiting.

JESUS

Not at all. Hope I did not draw you away from your business.

JOANNA

Believe me, I couldn't get out of their fast enough.

SHORELINE PARK - CONTINUOUS

They stroll together along the OCEAN FRONT WALK.

JOANNA

So it IS Jesus, right?

He nods.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Parents religious or Mexican?

JESUS

They were rather devout.

JOANNA

I see. You have such an intriguing manner, a quality I can't quite--

She trails off.

JESUS

Tell me.

JOANNA

It's-- Never mind, I'm talking nonsense. So, fancy you calling me.

JESUS

I wished to thank you.

JOANNA

For running you over?

JESUS

For showing concern when you thought I was just another homeless person.

JOANNA

So who are you?

He smiles.

JESUS

Tell me about yourself. According to your card you are in the arts.

Joanna laughs uncomfortably.

JOANNA

I manage artists. Most but not all in the entertainment industry.

JESUS

And you help them to find employment?

JOANNA

That's part of it, but there's more to it. I help my clients craft a personal brand, a marketable identity we can use to identify the right projects and venues to get the client's message to an audience.

JESUS

Your clients are very successful?

JOANNA

Many of them, but what it ultimately comes down is substance. There needs to be something more than the brand. Some of us still believe that, anyway.

JESUS

So one might hire you if I had a message and wished to reach a large audience?

JOANNA

Well its not that simple. Half this town is looking to get repped, and my clients are fairly high level. But hypothetically--

JESUS

Of course.

JOANNA

We'd start with you. Before we even talk message, your audience needs to know who you are.

JESUS

They will know me.

JOANNA

They will because we tell them. Right now I'm your only audience. Tell me.

JESUS

Don't you know, Joanna?

JOANNA

Right, you're--

She stops, a realization washes over her. Takes a step back.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Oh my god. You're-- you seriously think you're THE-- we're still talking hypothetically, right?

JESUS

Hypothetically.

JOANNA

OK. If I'm repping Jesus am I focusing on established Christians, churchgoers, evangelicals.

JESUS
Everyone, anyone.

JOANNA
Could be stepping on a lot of toes.

JESUS
Organized religions have their
message and their following. This
effort is not for them alone.

JOANNA
Well who does Jesus have in mind.

JESUS
The message would transcend
convention notions of faith.

JOANNA
A lot of people might not see it
that way.

JESUS
What greatness was ever achieved
without challenge?

AVENUE - SAME

A FIRE RED CONVERTIBLE crawls along the curb side in view of
the beach.

The DRIVER, face unseen, spies Jesus and Joanna's
conversation from a distance.

Satisfied, the driver cruises on. As it pulls away the car's
PERSONALIZED PLATE can be read--

ANGL LUX

PIER

Joanna and Jesus eat ice cream under the archway.

An UBER pulls up to the curb. Joanna opens the rear passenger
door.

JOANNA
Sure you don't want a lift?

JESUS
I prefer to walk.

JOANNA
No one walks in LA.

JESUS
You should try it sometime.

Joanna steps into the car and shuts the door.

Jesus watches the car drive off. He finishes off his cone and begins to hike along the PCH.

A VOICE shouts to him from the street.

LUX (O.S.)
You're a long way from Galilee.

Jesus turns, and smiles with recognition at the driver of fire red convertible.

JESUS
Took you long to find me?

LUX
Not at all. I was curious.
Hollywood. Novel move for you. Must
say I like your thinking.

JESUS
Don't assume to know my mind.

LUX
Relax. Hop in, we'll talk.

Jesus slides into the passenger seat.

LUX (CONT'D)
Looking good, brother. Been a long
time.

JESUS
I try to take care of myself. What
do you want to talk about.

LUX
Not here. Thought we could get
away, catch up like the old days.

JESUS
What did you have in mind.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - INTERSTATE - DAY

A RATTLESNAKE lifts its head off the steaming asphalt. It stares into the blinding late afternoon sun hovering low over the road.

The speeding convertible appears out the haze. Tires SQUEAL as they swerve at the last minute to barely avoid crushing the snake to jelly.

The serpent swivels its head, HISSES in the direction of the long gone vehicle.

CONVERTABLE - SAME

LUX

By the way, have I introduced myself?

The driver hands Jesus a businessmen card. He reads--

JESUS

Angelo Lux, Esquire. Rather transparent, don't you think.

LUX

No one reads these days. So, Joanna Paul. She's big league, I'm impressed. Little tightly wound for my taste, but--

JESUS

I was not aware the two of you were acquainted.

LUX

I'm pretty well connected in this town. But you knew that. In fact I'm a little hurt you didn't come to me first.

JESUS

I imagine you are quite busy.

LUX

Always have time for family. Can't say the same for you, though. Either of you.

JESUS

You still blame me for your choices.

LUX

You think people turn away because you're not reaching them, because the medium is wrong. No, the problem is you don't know them.

JESUS

And you do.

LUX

You want to save them from themselves. He judges them. I listen. I understand. I am of their world, not above them. We are the rejected, the unwanted children of the universe. Desire, love, lust, passion. Everything that makes them human you would have them reject.

JESUS

I did not come here to fight.

LUX

Nor did I. You and I are going to immerse ourselves in humanity at its most raw and exuberant.

JESUS

You won't tempt me.

LUX

Wouldn't dream of it.

Lux floors the accelerator. With a burst of speed the convertible disappears into the formless expanse of desert, leaving a thick dust cloud in its wake.

The dust clears to reveal a millage sign.

LAS VEGAS - 100 mi

INT. SWANKY RESTAURANT - DAY

Joanna and Roger converse over the remnants of a late midday extended lunch.

ROGER

You're seriously considering this?
Taking him on.

JOANNA

Sure.

ROGER

The guy you hit with the car.

JOANNA

Winged him at best. He was fine.
You make it sound so severe.

ROGER

Fine, so what's his background.
What does he do?

JOANNA

What do any of them do.

ROGER

Does he have any talent?

JOANNA

Like that's a prerequisite
nowadays. He's charismatic.
Compelling. Enigmatic.

ROGER

Obviously.

JOANNA

And I'd rather spend two hours with
him then ten minutes with America's
next top gold digger and I'd like
to think at least some segment of
the viewing public would agree with
me. I know it sounds crazy and I
really do value your opinion.

ROGER

Legal or personal?

JOANNA

Both.

ROGER

Well you're probably in the clear
as far as dropping your current
client, contractually speaking As a
professional strategy--

JOANNA

You should meet him. Call it an
instinct. They're usually pretty
good, you'd have to admit.

ROGER

That's your world.

A WAITER drops the bill between them, as a BUSBOY clears their plates.

ROGER (CONT'D)

You know Miranda's got the kids.
The firm doesn't need me for the
rest of the day.

JOANNA

Oh, I have to get back.

ROGER

Really. I was just thinking--

JOANNA

I know what you're thinking. Take a
rain check?

Joanna grabs the check, places her GOLD CARD in the fold.

ROGER

Joanna, what are we doing here?

JOANNA

Taking care of the check. I'm
getting this one by the way. Only
fair after the other night.

ROGER

No, I mean what are we doing?

JOANNA

We're two busy professionals,
getting together to commiserate
about our high stress careers and
lives and occasional when our
schedules align bone each other's
brains out. All in all its a pretty
sweet arrangement. Why complicate
it?

ROGER

I've just been thinking, I really
like you Joanna, and frankly I
wouldn't mind a few complications
in our relationship.

JOANNA

Oh, Rog, you're so cute. Don't over
think this.

She stands up, kisses him on the cheek, and walks out. Roger
stares into his coffee cup, contemplating the drying
splotches.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

Lux' convertible cruises along Las Vegas Boulevard under the gaudy casino lights. It weaves dangerously through standstill traffic, takes a sharp, abrupt left across opposing lanes into the main portico of CAESAR'S PALACE

INT. CAESARS PALACE - CASINO FLOOR

The travelers navigate their way through the sprawling network of gaming tables and slots, slicing a path through the beckoning lights and chiming music, revelers high on misguided confidence and saturated air tempting luck in all its multitudinous forms.

They arrive at a darkened cul-de-sac where overdressed young men and under-dressed young women queue behind a velvet rope, waiting for a tuxedo-clad giant let them pass.

The fortunate and patient ones enter through gold plated double doors under a glowing neon sign.

INFERNO

Lux leads Jesus past the crowd to the VIP ENTRANCE. The BOUNCER greets them like family.

BOUNCER

Welcome back, Mister Lux.

LUX

Good to be back. Your kid's entering first grade, right?

BOUNCER

Second.

LUX

Already. Time really does fly.

He lays a stack of folded bills in the bouncer's hand.

BOUNCER

Thank you sir. Enjoy your evening gentlemen.

He opens the VIP door for the two to enter.

INT. INFERNO CLUB - VIP DECK

The club's 'exclusive' lounge, a gaudy sanctum of Vegas-style luxury where self styled high rollers on expense accounts can gaze down upon the plebes on the dance floor.

LUX

What do you think? Do I disappoint?

JESUS

Impressive. This is your place?

LUX

That's what they say. Tell me, what do you see?

Lux directs Jesus' attention to a variety of scenes unfolding on this stage.

PRIDE

-- A party of strikingly BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE - athletes, rappers, supermodels - cruise through a roped off area to a private table in full view of the gawking crowd.

ENVY

A YOUNG WOMAN follows them. Pretty by most standards, but a civilian. A host ejects her from the area, to the mocking laughter of the VIPs.

GLUTTONY

-- A group of YOUNG PROFESSIONALS snort WHITE LINES off the bar.

AVARICE

-- A couple of BUSINESSMEN harass and grope a scantily clad COCKTAIL WAITRESS.

LUST

-- An ATTRACTIVE COUPLE make out violently on the dance floor.

WRATH

-- An AMPED-UP ALPHA MALE, sniffs and glares at the amorous couple. He slaps his equally edgy COHORT to attention.

The pair advance on the couple. The Alpha Bro shoves the young man into the crowd.

The man rebounds and swings at his assailant, but takes the next punch across the jaw, dropping him to the floor.

The girlfriend lunges at the Alpha Bro. His sidekick restrains her as she shouts obscenities.

JESUS

I see joy. Celebration. Exuberance.
People having a good time.

LUX

You're not convincing anyone, least
of all me.

JESUS

You think so little of people.

LUX

I know them, and not in some, up on
high, tending to my flock, way. And
occasionally in the biblical sense.

JESUS

You don't--

LUX

Oh lighten up. Don't be so hung up
all the time. Ah, too late.

Lux chuckles at his own pun.

JESUS

I hope you are a better judge of
people than of comedy.

LUX

Now that was almost funny. There's
hope for you yet.

INT. CEASARS PALACE - CASINO FLOOR

Lux and Jesus make their way through the gambling pits.

LUX

So what does your agent think of
your plan?

JESUS

She is not yet my agent.

LUX

But you're in her head. Logically
it makes no sense.

(MORE)

LUX (CONT'D)

You're hardly the first ranting prophet on the streets of Los Angeles, but for some reason she doesn't understand she's inspired, and will follow that inspiration wherever it leads. And at whatever cost.

JESUS

You can not know her mind. If she does choose to follow it will --

LUX

Her own free will? His favorite practical joke. The one way He can rationalize condemning so many of them. Of course there's the Calvinist view, the edict of predestination--

JESUS

What is your point?

LUX

You can't change mankind's essential nature.

JESUS

I do not suppose to change anyone. I love without condition.

LUX

I've seen how that usually turns out. Speaking of--

ZARA

Hey baby.

ZARA, 30, slides up beside Lux. He runs his hand down the back of her shimmering, miniscule dress as she casts her smoldering gaze onto Jesus.

LUX

What's happening out there tonight.

ZARA

Oh God, bachelor parties, don't get me started. Who's your friend?

A ROAR erupts from one of the nearby CRAPS tables: CHEERS, GLASS CLINKING, plastic chips CLATTERING on wood and felt.

LUX

My friend and I are having a friendly debate, a subject on which you have considerable knowledge.

Lux nods toward the craps table. The players around the table wait breathlessly as the SHOOTER winds up his roll.

ZARA

High Roller over there, on fire. Everyone's making money.

LUX

Why don't you offer him some encouragement, Angel.

Zara grins and heads for the table.

LUX (CONT'D)

This should be interesting.

Lux and Jesus keep a casual distance to watch the situation unfold.

INT. CRAPS TABLE

The HIGH ROLLER at the center of attention is a the very definition of a regular guy, your basic mook touched for the moment by lady luck.

Forties, ample, taking up his share of space. The product of innumerable long hours at the office and later nights at the bar.

He basks in his unexpected fortune, the sudden attention, particularly from the statuesque BLONDE by his side.

He rocks the dice in his hand, warming up his throw. Looks over the stacks of chips covering every inch of the playfield. The sweat beading on his forehead belie his confidence.

Zara materializes at the man's side.

The STICKMAN waves his stick over the table to finalize the bets.

STICKMAN

Shooter coming out.

ZARA

Blow on those for you.

HIGH ROLLER

Be my guest.

He opens his palm flat. Zara blows softly over the dice. The blonde squeezes him tighter, kisses his cheek.

Every eye upon him, the shooter tosses the dice.

SLOW-MOTION: The dice turn and tumble above the table. Four and three dots respectively face up.

They STOP, appear to hang in mid air in that position.

The entire scene FREEZES, save for two observers.

JESUS

What have you done?

LUX

What? I never intervene. Where's the fun in that?

JESUS

Hi is going to lose. Its the only outcome you could allow.

LUX

Now who is the hopeless cynic.

Lux waves his hand. At once, the tableau resumes.

The dice land and roll to a stop. The first lands clean on ONE. The second teeters for a moment on its edge between ONE and SIX. It falls on Six.

STICKMAN

Seven. Craps.

The table explodes in celebration. None more than the shooter himself. The blond leaps into his arms, embracing him in a passionate kiss. The others line up to thank and congratulate him.

He collects his winnings and heads off, his arm firmly around the blond's waist.

LUX

You see? Show a little faith in me for a change.

JESUS

Oh, I trust you.

INT. HIGH ROLLER SUITE - NIGHT

The door to the palatial, top floor suite opens and SLAMS shut. LAUGHTER and unstable FOOTSTEPS follow as the High Roller and the blond woman stumble to the BED.

As her evening dress and undergarments are tossed aside, the High Roller sits on the edge of the bed, undoes the top buttons on his shirt.

He picks up a small framed PHOTO.

His own image smiles back, flanked by a WOMAN, early forties, and two TEENAGE GIRLS.

He stashes the photo into his suitcase and rolls into the blonde woman's arms.

INT. LUXURY CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

High Roller signs off on a shiny new exotic convertible sports car.

Blondie tosses her still tagged designer handbags in the back and hurdles into the passengers seat.

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - DAY

The mid-life crisis special streaks down the strip at ungodly speed.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

The convertible races through Red Rock Canyon. High Roller's longer hair blows freely in the wind.

One hand on the wheel, he swigs from a bottle, then hands it too his girlfriend. She leans against him, legs dangling over the edge of the door..

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

High Roller buys round after round, waving wads of bills in the air, making quick friends of the local patrons.

The couple do bumps of COCAINE off the bar and make out sloppily.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

The blond woman holds and admires a dazzling DIAMOND NECKLACE.

A SALESPERSON returns hands High Roller his CREDIT CARD ,shaking his head. A number of cars are laid out on the counter.

The man argues with the salesperson. Another attempts to repossess Blondie's necklace, over her vocal protests.

EXT. CHEAP HOTEL - NIGHT

A vicious argument behind the door. Yelling. Something SMASHED.

The blonde woman storms out. She runs to the street and tries to hail a ride.

High Roller stumbles after her in his underwear. Trips over his own feet and falls face first into the gutter.

INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

The same bar. Sloppy drunk, the man picks a fight with another patron. His erratic swing misses. The other fellow lands one square in the face.

A couple of other patrons toss the bloodied man out into the street.

I/E SPORTSCAR - STREET - NIGHT

The man sits behind the wheel, fighting tears between swigs from a bottle of the good stuff.

He stares at his WIFE'S photo on his PHONE. Unable to dial, he tosses the phone over the side.

Turns the key in the ignition.

Speeds off into the night.

DARK ROAD SIDING - LATER

Sound of SQUEALING RUBBER, SMASHING GLASS, CRUNCHING METAL.

Black smoke billows from the car's crumpled hood, presently wrapped around the trunk of a TREE.

A bloody hand drops out of the open door. The spent bottle spills its pink-tinged remnants out onto the pavement.

JESUS (O.S.)
 Alternately, he donates the money
 to charity.

INT. CASINO FLOOR

Back to the scene, frozen in time, the dice in mid-air.

LUX
 That's why it's fun to play with
 you. The relentless optimist.

JESUS
 Perhaps you assume too much about
 human nature.

LUX
 Anything's possible. May I?

JESUS
 Be my guest.

The scene resumes once more.

The dice land and roll to a stop.

SNAKE EYES

STICKMAN
 Craps!

All at once the crowd dissipates. The dejected players grumble, take what's left of their bankrolls and their pride and walk away.

The next in line pushes the stunned shooter aside. He turns to see that the Blonde Woman is also long gone.

INT. HIGH ROLLER SUITE - NIGHT

High Roller sits alone on the edge of the bed, staring at the photo of his loving wife, and the daughters whose college fund just vanished at the tables.

He picks up the phone from the night stand. Cues up the number. Can't imagine how he can even start to break the news to her.

Placing the phone back on the table, he gets up and lurches toward the floor-to-ceiling WINDOWS. Beyond, the gaudy lights to the Strip gleam mockingly in the night.

A GUST of air billows the thin curtains. Many stories below, a CRASH, a SIREN, a faint SCREAM can be heard.

Pulling back though the window into the room --

The High Roller, hunched on the edge of the bed, stares at the family photo.

He places the photo on the nightstand, picks up his phone.

Tear filled eyes fixed on wife's photo, he dials.

Each ring doubles the weight on his mind. Finally--

WIFE (O.S.)

Hello?

HIGH ROLLER

Sweetheart? I have to tell you something?

He does. We hear just enough of the yelling, crying and pleading to understand that she doesn't take the news too well.

I/E SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

The Wife sits from inside as the KNOCKS outside the door become more desperate and urgent.

She relents, finally and opens to the front door. Her expression hard, resolute.

Her husband, the one time would be High Roller, stands with a bouquet of flowers and a contrite expression.

Tears stream down both faces as they embrace.

He cranes his head to see his teen daughters looking back at him. He manages a sad smile.

Nothing is forgiven and all is not well. But there is hope.

INT. SOCIAL HALL

The wife accompanies her husband to the open hall. The banner on the rear wall reads

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

The group, assembled in a ring of chairs, invite the man to take his place among them.

The man kisses his wife and enters, looking lighter that we've seen him before.

LUX (O.S.)
Charming --

INT. CASINO FLOOR

The immediate aftermath. Nothing further has been written.

LUX
-- but no one can change human nature. Not even you.

JESUS
Time will tell.

LUX
Good luck with that.

Jesus walks over to the High Roller. He takes the man's hand and smiles. Then disappears into the crowd.

The man stands bewildered by this encounter. He collects himself, his face more at ease, less troubled than before.

INT. OFFICE TOWER LOBBY - DAY

Joanna hurries through the rotating door. A frantic Emily rushes to intercept her.

EMILY
Before you ask, I've called everyone.

JOANNA
The hospital? Police?

EMILY
Social services, public records, all the local missions.

JOANNA
More than once?

EMILY

On the hour, for the last several days.

JOANNA

This is not good.

EMILY

What's so important about this guy again?

JOANNA

For one thing we don't have any--
shh, shh -- two a clock.

Joanna covers her face with her arm. Emily instinctively checks her phone calender.

EMILY

You don't have a two--

Joanna stops her, directs her attention to --
Ryan, their boss, looking perturbed.

RYAN

Joanna, a minute.

JOANNA

Ryan, I'm incredibly busy.

RYAN

Important client meeting?

JOANNA

Matter of fact.

RYAN

Then I assume you're headed up to my office, because she's there right now, screaming and threatening to sue us out of existence. What the hell happened with you two?

JOANNA

I encouraged her to follow her ow instincts.

RYAN

Next time you decide to insult a potential multi-million dollar client perhaps you could consider the financial well being, not to mention the reputations, of this agency.

JOANNA

I'm sorry, Ryan. I couldn't live with inflicting that woman's voice on the listening public.

RYAN

You do realize you have no other clients?

JOANNA

I have a client.

RYAN

Really, I'd like to meet him.

JOANNA

My client is not your concern.

RYAN

Our client!

JOANNA

I don't work for you anymore. Let's go Emily.

RYAN

Oh, it's like that. Going to Jerry Maguire me? Where are you going to go? Do you have any idea how toxic you are in this industry right now? No one's going to hire you.

JOANNA

Goodbye Ryan. Let's go Emily.

Joanna turns on her heel toward the doors.

RYAN

You worked hard to get here, Emily. Consider this carefully.

Emily freezes, glancing between her superiors. Watches her career slip away.

JOANNE

Emily!!!

She elects to follow her boss.

EMILY
Wait, who's Jerry Maguire?

EXT. OFFICE TOWER - LA STREET - DAY

Panting, Emily catches up with Joanna.

EMILY
I was kidding. I totally know who
Jerry Maguire is. You complete me.
I love those old movies.

Joanna side-eyes her. She didn't just call Jerry Maguire an
'old' movie.

EMILY (CONT'D)
What just happened in there?

JOANNE
Are you ready to work as hard and
long as you have in your entire
life?

EMILY
So I still have a job?

JOANNE
Christ, I hope so.

INT. RYAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A petulant Ginnifer berates a half dozen desperate
professional AGENTS.

GINNIFER
This is totally unacceptable. I am
not going to be treated this way by
some bitch in an ugly pantsuit who
knows nothing about music.

AGENT ONE
We agree. We'll put you with a rep
who understands your music and your
audience.

GINNIFER
And I want that whore fired.

Ryan charges into his office.

RYAN

Joanna is gone. She's doesn't fit with the culture of this agency.

GINNIFER

Well I think y'all are totally unprofessional. Whatcha gonna do to change my mind? I can go anywhere in town.

AGENT TWO

We'll cut our fee. Five percent. Get a bigger advance from the record label.

LUX

Am I late?

Ryan, the Agents and Ginnifer turn at once to the interloper.

RYAN

I'm sorry, do you work here?

LUX

My apologizes.

Ignoring the other agents in the room, he walks over to Ginnifer, hands her his BUSINESS CARD --

Improbably, it is embossed with the AGENCY LOGO.

LUX (CONT'D)

Angelo Lux. Representation and management.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOFT - DAY

Joanne polishes the BRASS PLAQUE freshly mounted by the door.

The Joanna Paul Agency (JPA)

JOANNA

How does it feel?

EMILY

Like my career is slowly circling the drain.

JOANNA

Em!

EMILY

I had a three-year plan. Become a writer's assistant. Get hired on at a series, preferably premium cable, no sitcoms. Sell a pilot--

They walk through the door of the refurbished old low-rise. It is clearly in the midst of construction.

Hard-hats lug ladders and toolboxes through the half-finished rooms. Incessant DRILLING and SAWING drown-out conversation. Fresh sawdust and debris hang in the air.

JOANNA

Think of this as a start-up. You're getting in on the ground floor.

EMILY

If I don't fall through it.

Just as she says this, a loose two-by-four falls from above, missing Emily by inches.

JOANNA

Oh come on, guys.

HARD-HAT

Sorry 'bout that, ma'am.

Emily's PHONE RINGS

EMILY

Joanna Paul agency. Who? Oh yeah. Yes, she's expecting you.

She distracts Joanna from berating the contractors.

JOANNA

Do you have to do that right now?
(To Emily)
Can it wait?

She hands Joanna the phone.

EMILY

You want to take this one. Trust me.

INT. MOSHE'S APARTMENT

Moshe pan grills BACON. Smoke fills the cramped kitchen.

The unwatched TV plays in the living room.

TELEVISION (O.S.)

Record drought and unprecedented high temperatures across central Asia and the Middle East continue to perplex climate experts. G8 leaders called for an emergency summit to address this latest global crisis as starvation and disease skyrocket around the world.

The SMOKE ALARM goes off.

Two charred SLICES pop up from the TOASTER.

MOSHE

For heaven's sake, that fachacte device. OK, keep your pants on, I'm coming.

He sets a STEP STOOL beneath the alarm and pokes at the device with the end of a broomstick while the alarm SHRIEKS at him.

Just as he finally succeeds at destroying the outer cover, the doorbell RINGS.

Moshe steps down, approaches the front door. Opens it with suspicion.

It's Emily.

MOSHE (CONT'D)

And who in the world would you be?

EMILY

Good morning. I'm with the Joanna Paul Agency. I'm here to pick up--

JESUS

You must be Emily.

MOSHE

You know this person?

JESUS

I am ready to go.

Jesus leaves with her. Moshe looks on, uneasy.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

A high end HAIRDRESSER trims Jesus' locks and grooms his beard, as Emily looks on.

INT. JOANNA'S JPA OFFICE - DAY - INTERCUT

Dust still in the air, exposed bulbs and wires hang haphazardly from steel beams. Books and boxes stacked high against the walls and into the hallway.

Joanna works the phones behind her desk.

JOANNA

I'm not talking about some feel good Christmas special, but a global launch. Full network coverage, CNN, FOX. Premium too, HBO sure. Were going to reach everyone.

INT. EXCLUSIVE MEN'S SHOP - RODEO DRIVE

A TAILOR takes measurements as Jesus' models a sharp new custom all white suit.

Emily snaps a picture, resumes her texting.

BACK TO:

INT. JOANNA'S JPA OFFICE - DAY

Joanna paces her office, talking into a bluetooth headset.

JOANNA

Of course we will consider the right strategic partnership, but this isn't going to be some crass, tacky spectacle. He didn't come back to sell blue jeans.

EXT. DOWNTOWN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A black AUDI pulls up to the curb. The driver gets out, comes around to open the back curb side door.

A FINE LEATHER SANDAL, an obvious upgrade over His previous ragged pair, steps on to the sidewalk.

BACK TO:

INT. JOANNA'S JPA OFFICE

Joanna reclines with her feet on her desk, still on the headset, in full agent mode.

JOANNA

For the last time, we are not interested in talking to Mel Gibson's people. At all. I don't care how much he begs, my client doesn't want to work with him.

A sharply dressed, impeccably groomed Jesus appears at the door. Joanna waves him in.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

OK, gotta go. Bye.

She embraces her new client.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Wow. You do clean up.

JESUS

Thank you.

JOANNA

Making a few changes. Kind of a work in progress.

She stammers a moment, uncharacteristically flustered.

JESUS

It is a beautiful office.

JOANNA

Right, down to business. Tell me, who are you?

JESUS

I am--

JOANNA

Not your name, your message. Your brand.

JESUS

I wish to speak plainly--

JOANNA

Uh-uh-uh, gonna stop you there. I'm not asking you, I'm asking my client.

JESUS
Your client--

JOANNA
Doesn't exist yet. You and I are
going to invent him.

JESUS
Perhaps this is not what I thought--

JOANNA
Exactly. No one cares about you.
What you do, what you think. Your
politics. Who are you sleeping
with.

JESUS
Sorry--

JOANNA
There is a version of you that
every person on earth can not wait
to meet. Only they don't know it
yet. Today we begin to create him.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Joanna sits at the end of the long, unblemished table at the center of the unfinished room, facing her client.

Emily fumbles with a metal easel stand. Joanna gives her an annoyed look, endeavors to ignore the distraction.

JOANNA
How many people would you say
attended one of your sermons.
Estimate.

JESUS
A few hundred, perhaps a thousand.

JOANNA
Celebrity evangelists like Joel
Osteen and Tyrus Johnson preach
before fifteen to twenty thousand
parishioners in their megachurches
every Sunday and hundred thousand
set stadiums. That's not even
counting TV broadcasts. Modest
penetration 20-30 million viewers,
weekly.

JESUS

These charlatans confuse and mislead.

JOANNA

I think they're a bunch of frauds too but what they also are is beloved by millions of loyal followers. You know why? They're incredibly media savvy, and they understand the psychology of their audience. You see what I'm getting at here?

JESUS

Your words echo those of another close acquaintance.

JOANNA

Your friend would do well in this business. Now what we need to do as build brand identification beyond your traditional demo. Churches. Christian media. The Republican Party.

JESUS

Transcending doctrine.

JOANNA

Perfect. We build up your profile, then do media saturation. Strategic brand synergy.

Jesus looks confused, trying to parse Joanna's word salad.

JESUS

I am not certain I follow.

JOANNA

People have to actively want, no need, to hear your message. And we want the largest possible audience don't we?

JESUS

Yes.

JOANNA

Imagine a worldwide sermon, broadcast live around the world. Simulcast to giant screens in public gathering places all around the world.

(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Think Times Square, the Pyramids,
the Kremlin. Thousands maybe
millions experiencing this
communal, spiritual connection. All
starving for substance for a
change.

JESUS

This is the idea.

JOANNA

Splendid. Now--

She gestures to Emily to turn over the presentation board.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

We took the liberty of creating
some artwork.

EMILY

Its just a mock-up.

Jesus stares, confounded, at the poster.

An image of Himself in the foreground, resplendent in His
traditional robes.

A giant CROSS looms ominously behind Him,

JOANNA

We featured the cross as a bold,
universally recognized icon. You
don't like it?

His distressed expression answers her question.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Right, unpleasant association.
We'll lose it straight away.

She scours at Emily, who rushes to remove the offending
artwork.

SERIES OF SHOTS - JOANNE'S CAMPAIGN

(Note: the following scenes to be intercut with one another)

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE

Jesus pan Joanna step put before glaring LED PANELS and
flashing PHOTO BULBS. They take seats at the table before a
hungry PRESS ROOM.

JOANNA

Nervous?

JESUS

It has been awhile.

JOANNA

Relax. Stay on message. You'll be great.

The questions begin. Hands shoot up in unison.

REPORTERS

Jesus, Jesus.

JOANNA

(pointing)

Yes, you.

REPORTER ONE

Frank Brillman, KTLA. Are you really the son of God?

JESUS

We are all children of God.

JOANNA

Right side. Yes.

REPORTER TWO

Katherine Liu, Christian Science Monitor. Can you explain the timing of your return? Is there a connection to current events.

JESUS

I like visit from time to time. I enjoy being in your presence.

The room goes crazy. The questions become more aggressive.

JOANNA

You.

REPORTER THREE

Thank you. Brian Robbins, Wall Street Journal. How do you anticipate your visit will impact the market?

JESUS

The market-- ?

REPORTER FOUR

Which sect of Christianity is the true faith?

JESUS

There is no one true faith.

REPORTER FIVE

How do we know you're who you claim to be?

REPORTER SIX

Is there life after death?

Joanna, seeing the press conference get out of hand, ushers her client out.

JOANNA

OK, no further questions. Thank you.

JESUS

I want to answer--

JOANNA

Trust me, you don't need this cluster.

The room goes crazy.

REPORTERS

-- Don't leave, Jesus.
 -- We have more questions.
 -- Tell us the truth.
 -- Are you a fraud?

The they should and plead in vain as Joanna ushers her client off the stage.

EXT. SHOE COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Giant portraits of elite ATHLETES wearing or holding designer footwear decorate the office walls.

SHOE EXEC, early thirties, very much on, delivers his excited pitch.

SHOE EXEC

The 'Sole Savior' sandal line represents the cutting edge in hybrid performance footwear.

(MORE)

SHOE EXEC (CONT'D)
 Engineered for comfort and
 feedback, its designed to go from
 the gym to the beach to your next
 thousand mile journey.

The exec hands Joanna the prototype SANDAL, shiny ICHTHYS
 FISH embossed on the front strap.

JOANNA
 He's not LeBron James, you know.

SHOE EXEC
 Of course not. The sandals are
 yours. Wear them on your next
 mission, sojourn in the desert,
 whatever.

JESUS
 Thank you.

SHOE EXEC
 Were going to bring back walking.
 For the physical, mental, and
 spiritual health of America.

JOANNA
 We'll let you know.

SHOE EXEC
 Think it over. But not too long.
 I don't know about you guys but I
 am seriously stoked on this
 partnership. You feel it?

JOANNA
 Oh yeah, we feel it.

The exec gets up and leaves. Jesus and Joanna examine the
 shoes with skepticism.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOWL - DAY

Joanna and Jesus view the stage from the seating bowl.

A PROMOTER and DESIGNER present them with a book of pencil
 and color sketches of stage design concepts: complex lighting
 rigs, and religiously-inspired set pieces that would not seem
 out of place at a U2 concert.

The watch as STAGEHANDS massive light rig before them.

INT. CAL GRADY STUDIO - DAY

CAL GRADY, 50, everyone's favorite conservative TV blowhard, grills Jesus on his daily program.

The REVEREND TYRUS P. JOHNSON, 63, sits on the other side of Grady, frowning at this 'alleged' savior.

GRADY

Welcome back to The Truth Zone. Folks, I've always fancied myself a devoted Christian so you can imagine my surprise find myself sitting across from our Lord and savior himself, the genuine article right here in my humble studio. You are the real deal, is that right?

JESUS

The real deal?

GRADY

The Son of Man, the Messiah, that's what you're claiming?

JESUS

You are free to believe what you will.

GRADY

All right, but for the sake of this program, you're Jesus. And since you're here I take it you have a message for us. Let me guess, peace and tolerance.

JESUS

That would be a good start.

GRADY

OK, fine. Here's my question. Assuming you are who you claim to be then this is it? The second coming, the big one?

JESUS

You are all so concerned for judgement. Perhaps there is some burden on your conscience?

GRADY

I just read my Bible, sir. Book of revelations. Judgement day. Is this the end?

JESUS

The end of the current age.

GRADY

Metaphorical as ever, but I think that was an answer.

REVEREND JOHNSON

If I may interject, Cal.

GRADY

Of course, Reverend.

REVEREND JOHNSON

The Bible clearly tells us that in the last days the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, without warning. On that day only those who have taken Him in their hearts will inherit His Kingdom in heaven, while the rest are left to face the great tribulation.

GRADY

Scary stuff. Do you have a response.

JESUS

You presume to debate me on Christian doctrine?

Joanna watches off camera, shakes her head. This could be going better.

INT. JOANNA PAUL AGENCY OFFICE - NIGHT

Joanna and Jesus retreat to Joanna's darkened office.

Outside the window can be seen a BILLBOARD with a revised version of Jesus' image with the words The Return, like a summer movie premiere.

JOANNA

Leave the light off. We've both had enough of it today.

JESUS

As you wish.

JOANNA

I promise I won't put you through too many like this one. I like to hit it hard up front.

(MORE)

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Get your face all over town. Let people know something's happening that they can't ignore.

Jesus gazes at the billboard. Joanna closes the blinds.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

All part of the process.

JESUS

You are the expert in these matters.

JOANNA

Don't know about that. I know what works. Most of the time.

She opens a FILE DRAWER. Removes a half-full WINE BOTTLE and two STEMMED GLASSES. She offers one to Jesus.

JESUS

No thank you.

Joanna fills her glass until it spills over.

JOANNA

Oops.

She drinks about half the glass, then tops herself off.

JESUS

May I ask a question?

JOANNA

Shoot.

JESUS

Do you live here?

JOANNA

Officially or figuratively?

JESUS

Just curious.

JOANNA

What's a home anyway? Some people have families, husbands, kids. Cats. I have my work. Is there little box somewhere I keep my underwear and get my phone bill, sure. I don't have time to waste commuting.

JESUS

There is someone.

JOANNA

We all have needs. Even you, probably. I don't know, do you? Roger' had all that, the family. He gets it. We don't need all that attachments at this point in our lives.

JESUS

You seem very certain.

JOANNA

Its hard enough to be taken seriously as a woman in this business, anywhere. The minute you get involved with someone its all over. He could be the most progressive, supportive, feminist guy with the best intentions. You're in a relationship you give up part of yourself. The moment I start getting all mushy on someone its all over.

JESUS

You're heart is full, Joanna.

JOANNA

You're an extraordinary empath but don't presume know my emotional life. I have enough dudes in my life mansplaining my supposed needs. Like they'd ever pull that on their male colleges. Man that pisses me off.

JESUS

I apologize if I did that.

JOANNA

Well, just think next time. Let's leave it there. You have a place to stay.

JESUS

Yes.

JOANNA

Well, that corner over there. Its a little dusty, but--

She passes out, snores under her desk.

Jesus lifts the shades and cracks open the window. Gazes out at the night sky, feeling the warm air on his face.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

Another press conference. If the previous one was a serious and portentous affair, this one is a party.

Large, bright posters are everywhere; Ginnifer shines ten feet high in all her pop-star glory, her pose at once sultry and innocent. Her name and album title sparkles in bold typeface.

G'INNIFER

Higher Power

Lines of fans, held back by red ropes and SECURITY GUARDS, scream and reach out for their new sensation as if on cue. They could be cast for the role, most of them a good makeover away from being up on stage themselves.

Ginnifer soaks in the spotlight, flashbulbs illuminating her polished skin.

One of her SONGS blasts out from the public address system. The vocals and production are not half bad. Producers with computers can do wonders these days.

The music and screams fade down. An youthful, overcaffinated PRESENTER steps onto the stage.

Angelo Lux drapes his arm around Ginnifer.

Somewhere in the crowd, remaining inconspicuous, Reverend Tyrus P. Johnson looks on.,

PRESENTER

So, Ginnifer. Ginnifer, everyone's favorite Hollywood mistress. Can we get some love up here?

The fans cheer and scream again at his prompt, ceasing almost immediately when the Presenter gestures for them to stop.

FAN

We love you G'innifer.

GINNIFER

I love you too.

PRESENTER

So, so much love. So tell me about your new album.

GINNIFER

Well, music has always been my passion. Every since I was a little girl I've wanted to sing songs that would inspire people.

PRESENTER

And the songs on the album are very inspirational.

GINNIFER

Yes, and the album is called 'Higher Power'.

PRESENTER

Maybe not what some of your fans were expecting.

GINNIFER

Well first off all the tracks are really strong, with great hooks, amazing beats, totally danceable. I wanted them to have, like, a really positive message.

PRESENTER

It really does seem like Christian pop at times.

GINNIFER

It's for everyone. God created music. I'd like to think he wrote every song on the record and I'm just, like, his vessel.

PRESENTER

Wow. So if you've found Jesus, does that mean your days as a reality star are behind you?

GINNIFER

(Giggles)

Never say never. I just want to say, though, its really important to get this message out not. Especially with the all false prophets and frauds out there. Impersonating our Lord. They, and especially their enablers, will answer to God.

PRESENTER

OK then. The album drops today.
Anyone you want to acknowledge
before we end this.

GINNIFER

All my wonderful producers and band
but especially my manager, Angelo
Lux, who helped me realize my
vision. He's a true genius.

PRESENTER

There you have it. Go buy the
album.

The fans yell an paparazzi snap away as Angelo shepherds
Ginnifer away.

INT. USED BOOKSTORE - DAY

Moshe and Jesus stroll the aisles at Moshe's favorite used
bookstore. Jesus' presence draws looks and attention from
several patrons.

MOSHE

We seem to be getting some
attention.

JESUS

As a regular patron, you are
frequently recognized.

MOSHE

Not like this.

JESUS

You think too much.

As they browse the shelves, a couple of excited TEENS
approach.

TEEN FAN

Um, excuse me.

They turn toward the eager teens. One produces a copy of the
HOLY BIBLE.

TEEN FAN (CONT'D)

Could you?

JESUS

Of course.

He takes the book from her. There is a PEN folded in the front cover.

He opens the book and autographs the title page.

JESUS (CONT'D)

You want his as well?

TEEN FRIEND

You are--

MOSHE

George Clooney.

TEEN ONE

Yeah right. Ew.

She takes the Bible back from Jesus. They laugh and run off.

JESUS

You still have a way with people.

MOSHE

You're telling me. You're all anyone can talk about.

JESUS

What are they saying?

MOSHE

That depends on who's talking. You're making waves again. Are you certain that's a good thing?

JESUS

Have you acted only when you were certain of your actions?

MOSHE

I took counsel with a flaming plant. I stood before Pharaoh and threatened him with the Lord's wrath. I led a hundred thousand people into the middle of the sea. Each time I thought I must be nuttier than the last.

JESUS

Yet you acted.

MOSHE

Those were necessary times.

JESUS

As are these.

MOSHE

They don't know. Why you're here,
what's your purpose, what it means
for them.

JESUS

They are seekers. Like those girls.
If I am in their consciousness, I
can reach them.

MOSHE

There's a saying in this town,
there's no such thing as bad
publicity. But you have enemies.
The most dangerous are the ones who
presume to speak for you. They are
moving against you. And when the
people get the real truth you may
have few allies left.

JESUS

I must place my faith in them.

MOSHE

They are not ready, my friend.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Flickering candlelight casting ominous shadows on the inner
walls of the imposing basilica.

Several figures move toward the forward pews. These men are
all clergy, religious leaders a various faiths: A CATHOLIC
PRIEST, RABBI, and IMAM, the Apocalyptic TV Preacher,
Reverend Johnson, and Angelo Lux.

PREACHER

There is no lingering question. We
are truly living in the end times.

RABBI

Is that so. I don't see any
worldwide earthquakes or floods
happening.

PREACHER

The warning signs are present.
You'd be wise to repent, Rabbi.

REVEREND JOHNSON

Surely you don't believe this nut job is the real thing.

LUX

What we believe or not is irrelevant. The public has embraced Him and His spiritual vision and we have no part in it.

PRIEST

And who are you again?

LUX

Angelo Lux, minister, Church of the New Covenant.

PRIEST

Can't say I've heard of your church, Minister.

LUX

We're a new parish, you might say a start up.

RABBI

Whoever you are, you share our concerns.

LUX

There is no question the world you've built is at stake.

PREACHER

The Antichrist has revealed Himself in America. The Beast of Revelation is upon us.

LUX

No doubt, padre. The question is what are we prepared to do about it?

PRIEST

We must inspire our congregations to reject this false prophet.

REVEREND JOHNSON

Everyone must accept the true Savior into their hearts while there is still time.

RABBI

Your savior.

IMAM

I agree with the Rabbi.

PRIEST

That's a first.

IMAM

All the great prophets reveal truths, but to face this threat we must not ignore the teachings of the messenger.

REVEREND JOHNSON

Who invited you again.

PREACHER

The elect of God will have salvation. There is no hope for the multitudes who oppose Him.

LUX

People, let's not fight among ourselves. We all face the same threat, the same enemy.

PRIEST

He's everywhere, like some kind of movie star.

RABBI

People who haven't stepped foot in a church, a mosque or a synagogue are turning out in droves, if just out of curiosity.

IMAM

Yes, but do they believe what he's saying.

REVEREND JOHNSON

Who cares what they believe. He has their attention.

RABBI

There are worse things people could be doing than considering their spirituality once in a while.

PRIEST

Sure, but where is the traditional faith. Our values and structures were already crumbling before this person - came on the scene.

REVEREND JOHNSON

Which is why we have to nip this in
the bud before we have spiritual
anarchy .

IMAM

And what if this new spiritual
movement is beyond your control.

PRIEST

Then we'll control the messenger.
By any means necessary.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - DAY

Joanna, Jesus and Emily stride along the famous boulevard.
Throngs of tourists turn with curiosity as He passes.

Jesus blends in somewhat with the costumed Charlie Chaplins,
Marilyns and Spider Men, regular fixtures of the strip. Yet
He stands out, draws attention.

A YOUNG MOTHER, INFANT slung to her chest, two more
youngsters in tow, approaches Him.

YOUNG MOTHER

Bless my children, Lord.

Jesus caresses the baby, runs a hand over the older children
and embraces the mother.

JESUS

You are loved, dear ones.

Joanna urges Him on. The woman embraces her children and
collapse to her knees, tears streaming down her face.

JOANNA

We're already behind. Try not to
get caught up.

A middle aged, BLUE COLLAR GUY steps in front of them,
backpedaling and talking quickly.

BLUE COLLAR GUY

Hey look, my mother needs to go
into the hospital. My sister's
husband just left her, she has
three kids. My union just elected
to strike, so things are kinda
uncertain. I can handle that, just
maybe you could, you know, look
after them for me.

Joanna pushes the man aside.

JOANNA

Sorry, we're on a schedule. Excuse us.

She increases her stride. Emily and Jesus speed up to follow her.

BLUE COLLAR GUY

(To himself)

He smiled at me. Its really Him.
Its going to be OK.

EXT. KODAK THEATER STEPS - DAY

Jesus' image surrounds the plaza on forty foot-high BANNERS. A crowd of curious bystanders gathers.

Joanna, hauls Jesus before this crowd. She semi-discreetly blots sweat from her forehead as she climbs to the landing.

JOANNA

Afternoon everyone. Unless you've been living under a rock you know the Man standing next to me. Please give him a Hollywood welcome.

A few members of the crowd cheer wildly. Others watch with curiosity.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

One week from tonight he will deliver His message before an unprecedented worldwide audience. If you can't be with us at the Hollywood Bowl, you can watch live right here on the giant screen, or at over fifty other locations throughout the Los Angeles area. As you experience this historic moment with your friends and neighbors, know that millions, perhaps billons throughout the world will be gathering in public spaces throughout the world to experience the Returning as a one people, united.

CROWD MEMBER 1

Let Him speak.

JOANNA
That's what He's doing.

CROWD MEMBER 1
Are you really Jesus? God is real
then?

CROWD MEMBER 2
Tell us now. What is He waiting
for?

CROWD MEMBER 3
Yeah, give us truth, all of it.

JESUS
You must find it in yourself.

JOANNA
Come out or tune in--

CROWD MEMBER 4
If he is who he claims to be.

JOANNA
Of course He--

SARGE
Jim! Brother--

The homeless veteran pushes to the front of the crowd, trying to get Jesus attention.

The angry crowd members shove the man back.

A couple of COPS passing on foot notice the commotion, walk over to investigate.

One of the officers recognizes Sarge.

OFFICER
Hey, step back.

SARGE
You don't-- I know him.
(To Jesus)
Hey. Sarge, remember?

Jesus looks down, recognizes Sarge. Moves towards him. The cops and the crowd stand in his way.

OFFICER
Sarge. You want another night
downtown.

SARGE

Krumpky, I've missed you. Wait,
that's my buddy up there.

OFFICER

Thought he was your cousin.

SARGE

See, you never change. I love that
about you. How's the wife?

OFFICER

All right, lets go.

The officer restrains Sarge, pushes him forward.

JESUS

There is no call for violence.
Please--

JOANNA

This is out of control. We need to
blow.

She grabs him by the arm and pulls him back. Jesus
reluctantly follows, still searching for Sarge in the crowd.

More police arrive to restrain the stirred up crowd members.

I/E. COVERED PLAZA - DAY

Joanna, Jesus and Emily retreat into the partially enclosed
plaza in front of the theater. They scan the area for a
relatively inconspicuous exit route.

JOANNA

This is why you let me speak first.
You don't control the narrative and
that back there is the result.

JESUS

I am sorry, Joanna.

JOANNA

Its OK, you're doing what you do.

JESUS

No. This entire plan was misguided
from the beginning. We should end
it before things get worse.

JOANNA

Are you kidding? You know how many people will be tuning in to hear your truth? You think its crazy now-

JESUS

Truth. What is that, Joanna.

JOANNA

The truth. Your message. Love, world peace, or something?

JESUS

It is a warning. I am sorry. There are good people in the world. Many of them. But it is not enough. I had hoped it could be different, but it is beyond my control.

JOANNA

A warning? Wait, what?

They run down a corridor toward a side exit, into--

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

They continue toward the end of the alley, turn onto the street, hoping to slip away unnoticed.

They instead run straight into--

Ginnifer, accompanied by Lux and her swelling entourage. She thrusts her hand at Jesus and Joanna, fixing the latter with a stare that could melt lead.

Her ever present corps of paparazzi capture the anticipated encounter.

GINNIFER

Fraud. Behold this false prophet and the wicked woman who enables His blasphemy.

JOANNA

Oh, can the act, Ginnifer. Your conversion is about as believable as your singing.

GINNIFER

Yeah, well we know his true identity, and we are going to reveal it, so they world will see the apostate for who he truly is.

JOANNA

OK thanks, we'll all be looking forward to that as much as your record.

GINNIFER

Fine, laugh. We'll see who's laughing soon.

Ginnifer strikes a self-righteous pose for the cameras.

CROWD MEMBER

There they are!

The enraged crowd run toward the group.

Police officers chase the unruly ones, boxing them in between the crowd and her entourage.

OFFICER

You all need to disperse immediately.

CROWD MEMBER 2

I want to know who this guy really is.

GINNIFER

A blasphemer!

OFFICER

Take it easy.

CROWD MEMBER 4

Why don't you show us some kind of miracle?

CROWD MEMBER 3

Yeah, prove it!

CROWD MEMBER

What are you playing at?

LUX

Yes, why don't you tell us.

JESUS

You demand proof? That is what you require?

CROWD MEMBER

That's right.

Dark clouds gather overhead. The sky darkens an in instant.

Jesus shakes with previously unseen rage.

JESUS

Your closed minds are incapable of reason or understanding. Proof is wasted upon you.

CROWD MEMBER 2

That's just, like, your opinion, man.

The ground RUMBLES.

CROWD MEMBER 4

You're a fraud!

The street SHAKES. Those in the street are thrown off balance.

CAR ALARMS BLARE. A CRACK forms on the sidewalk, rapidly stretching and expanding down the middle, dividing the crowd.

At once the skies open up. It begins to pour.

The crowd scatters.

Joanna, hair drenched, looks back at Jesus.

He is gone.

She and Emily share a bewildered look.

INT. JOANNA'S JPA OFFICE - DAY

Joanna works the phones behind her desk. Looking desperate, disheveled. Like she hasn't slept in days.

Emily walks in, in a similar condition.

JOANNA

No luck?

EMILY

Nothing. I even stalked that guy he was staying with. Hasn't been home, no one in the neighborhood's seen him. Any word on the other clients.

JOANNA

What clients? Go home, get some sleep.

EMILY

OK.

She places a sheet of paper on Joanna's desk.

JOANNA

What's this?

EMILY

Letter of rec. I drafted it--

JOANNA

Talk yourself up. You're amazing, people need to know that. I'll write a great one for you.

EMILY

Thanks.

A BIKE MESSENGER enters through the open door. He produces a MANILA ENVELOPE.

MESSENGER

Joanna Paul?

JOANNA

That's me.

MESSENGER

Sign for this please?

She does. He hands her the package and leaves like a shot.

EMILY

No sender address.

Joanna tears the tape from the flap, empties the contents onto the desk.

She and Emily stare at the top sheet. The face of Jesus, their Jesus, stares back at them.

Printed at the top is Los Angeles County: Department of Social Services.

Above the photographs, a name they do not recognize.

Joseph James Collins.

Joanna thumbs through the stack of documents. They paint a picture of an sporadically homeless, mentally unstable itinerant, a regular client of various social service agencies.

The face is unmistakably that of the man she has presented to the world as 'Jesus'.

Joanna drops her exhausted head into her hands. She stares through the dusty window.

Her eyes fix on the Jesus billboard. She fights back tears.

Struggling to process all of this, Joanna flips through the documents again. One sheet in particular piques her attention.

She folds the page and places it in her bag.

Stands and bolts from the office.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Joanna?

EXT. SKID ROW, STREET - DAY

Joanna wanders through the poorer, neglected parts of town.

Passing an unexceptional, decrepid building, she's drawn to joyful, singing voices within.

A GOSPEL CHOIR.

Cautiously she enters the

INT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

She positions herself against the back wall.

The choir sings an jubilant exaltation of love and praise.

The mostly African-American parishioners dance and sing in the pews with unbridled joy.

(Note: I'm probably deep in stereotype territory here. Reader, feel free to call me out if it is too much of a cliché)

Joanna moves cautiously down the aisle.

A kindly GRANDMOTHER bids her to join her in her pew.

The woman's multi-generational family, gather around, welcoming her into their presence.

LATER

The service over, Joanna approaches the pulpit.

She gazes upon a large, traditional icon of JESUS. She sits down on the steps to catch her breath.

REVEREND HAROLD WHITE, 65, African-American, notices her as he folds his CLERICAL STOLE. He sits down next to her.

REVEREND WHITE

Welcome. Always nice to see a new face.

JOANNA

Oh. Thank you father--

REVEREND WHITE

Reverend. Harold White.

JOANNA

Sorry, reverend. Beautiful service. Didn't mean to intrude.

REVEREND WHITE

Everybody's welcome here. I sense something's troubling you.

JOANNA

Is it that obvious. I've done things that--

REVEREND WHITE

Please, there's no confessional. I ain't a priest.

JOANNA

Sorry, its just-- You ever been so sure of something. Your path, the choices you made.

REVEREND WHITE

And suddenly it seems to crumble down, and everything you thought you knew seems meaningless.

JOANNA

Exactly. Where do you go from there?

REVEREND WHITE

You're looking at it.

JOANNA

How did you know?

REVEREND WHITE

How does one know anything? You sit around waiting for a calling, you just grow old.

JOANNA

Well I had it all figured out. I was really good at what I did. I knew it was what I was supposed to be doing. Until--

REVEREND WHITE

It wasn't.

JOANNA

Then I found him. I mean Him. You know what I'm saying?

REVEREND WHITE

I think so.

JOANNA

I never had much use for Him before. I can't explain it but I knew, he was sent to save me. My career, my reputation. So I used this man, exploited him for my own ambitions. To show all the vultures I was still relevant.

She breaks down.

Reverend White places a comforting hand on her shoulder.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

How messed up is that.

REVEREND WHITE

I can't speak to your professional aspirations. That world can be tough, ruthless, and I won't judge what a person does to stay afloat in it, long as they ain't trying to harm their fellow man.

(MORE)

REVEREND WHITE (CONT'D)

I can tell you what I believe, though. His love is a gift. It has no price and no bound. You can't exploit it, you can't misuse it. And there's no expiration date. If you lose your way you can always come back, and it will still be good as gold. Only you can choose to forgive yourself, though. That's all on you.

JOANNA

Thank you Reverend.

REVEREND WHITE

Pat. That's what my friends call me, and everyone who walks into my house is a friend. Excuse me now, I have to run.

JOANNA

May I ask where?

REVEREND WHITE

Heading down to the LA Mission. We volunteer down there a few times a week.

JOANNA

The mission.

REVEREND WHITE

You're welcome to join if you want. If you got nowhere else you got to be. I know you Hollywood types are always busy.

JOANNA

Lead the way.

He helps her to her feet.

EXT. LOS ANGELES MISSION - DAY

The midday heat keeps the activity outside the center relatively sedate, save for the locals lining up to get in.

As Joanna approaches the entrance with the Reverend, she gazes up the giant BILLBOARD, her billboard, rising over the street. Winces. The beatific, ten foot wide smile seems to mock her.

INT. LOS ANGELES MISSION - GYMNASIUM - DAY

The grateful crowd lines up for a hot, hearty meal to which all are welcome. They break bread together around FOLDING TABLES set in rows along the hardwood floor.

Reverend White shakes hands with a SOCIAL WORKER (F, 20's) serving as host, then joins the line of servers dishing up heaping plates from metal trays.

Joanna looks around the room, then approaches the social worker.

SOCIAL WORKER

Welcome. Are you here to volunteer?

Joanna hands her the folded page.

JOANNA

Actually, I'm looking this person.
May go by Joseph Collins?

SOCIAL WORKER

Don't recognize him, but a lot of folks come though here. Does your friend volunteer or--

JOANNA

He'd probably be seeking your services.

SOCIAL WORKER

Sorry. Wish I did.

JOANNA

That's OK, kind of a long shot.

SARGE

I know the guy you're looking for.

JOANNA

Is he here?

SARGE

Decent chance. If he's around, think I know where to find him.

Sarge leads her through the gymnasium and into a

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Joanna notices the badges on Sarge's tattered Army jacket.

JOANNA
You're a veteran.

SARGE
They call me Sarge.

JOANNA
You guys serve together?

SARGE
In a manner of speaking.

They arrive at the

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sarge points out one of the cooks.

It is Him.

JESUS
Good to see you Joanna.

JOANNA
Makes perfect sense you'd be at a
place like this.

JESUS
Could I get you some food?

SARGE
You won't regret. Taught him
everything he knows about fine
cuisine.

JOANNA
Wait, who are you again, and how
did you know who I was looking for.

JESUS
(to Sarge)
Perhaps you could excuse us..

SARGE
No worries, man.

JESUS
We should speak privately.

JOANNA
That's a good idea.

Jesus leads Joanna to an -

INT. UNOCCUPIED DORMATORY

They sit on a bed in a corner of the dark room.

JOANNA

So Joseph James Collins. That is your name? Not an alias or something.

JESUS

I am called many names.

JOANNA

Of course you are.

JESUS

I never meant deceived you, Joanna, but I was also less than forthcoming. You have good reason to be upset.

JOANNA

Upset? I'm totally perplexed right now. I don't know who you are, I don't even know who I am anymore. My career's probably over, and you know what, none of it matters. What's important is you're getting the help you need.

JESUS

I want to thank you.

JOANNA

For what?

JESUS

I am more popular than I have been in ages. You accomplished exactly what you promised. I want to thank you for that.

JOANNA

Jesus never exactly went out of style.

JESUS

I fear the truth is not something the majority of people is prepared to hear.

JOANNA

Why? What truth could be so terrible?

JESUS

Your society can continue along its present path.

JOANNA

So, isn't that why you - He's here?

JESUS

I once believed I could change things, but I fear I am powerless to prevent the inevitable.

JOANNA

No single person can take on so much responsibility. You don't have to be the son of God to create change in the world.

JESUS

You have greatness within you, Joanna Paul. Share it with the world.

JOANNA

Me? I don't know about that. I don't know what I believe anymore.

JESUS

Belief is irrelevant. Someone very wise told me that.

JOANNA

Well whoever you are, a lot of people could stand to hear your words right about now.

JESUS

They may not be enough.

JOANNA

Never hurts to try. If you change your mind --

JESUS

I know where to find you.

Joanna nods in resignation.

JOANNA

Good luck

She leaves him alone. He gazes through the small window, toward the heavens.

LUX
You haven't told her.

He turns his head.

Lux emerges from the shadow.

LUX (CONT'D)
Your real purpose.

JESUS
I thought I could--

LUX
Change His mind. I tried that once.
Didn't work out so well for me.

JESUS
I need more time. There are good
people. I can reach them.

LUX
Still clinging to such naive
notions. Good, evil, are you
kidding me? We all have the
capacity for great or unspeakable
acts, given the right situation. To
protect those we love, to eat, to
survive. To serve our tribes, our
rulers, our sense of justice. He
never understood any of this. But
you and I know all too well.

JESUS
We can appeal to their higher
natures.

LUX
People never change. When will you
just accept that. Look who they
choose to lead them. How many those
supposed leaders are willing to
sacrifice for, what, a few square
miles of real estate? Some
liquefied fossils? Their innate
sense of inferiority? Perhaps He's
right, much as it pains me to admit
it. Call it a mercy killing.

JESUS
They are not beyond redemption. You
see their potential and do nothing.

LUX

I have no skin in the game. I'm a student of the human condition. Sometimes I stir the pot, throw a few unexpected variables into the mix, sit back and watch the fireworks. But you - You can't do it, can you? You won't be a willing participant in His game.

JESUS

I am powerless against His will. What choice do I have?

LUX

You can join me in the new world. Forget these people, they're goners. Like you said, you can't change His will. But there will be will be a another world, no question about that. You can be the Yin to my Yang. Be hands on, balance out my, questionable, influence.

JESUS

Thank you, brother.

LUX

So you'll finally consider my offer.

JESUS

You have made the decision clear.

LUX

Glad you've finally come to reason.

JESUS

More than you know.

INT. ROGER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Roger sits on his tastefully appointed couch, reading a sizable historical novel and sipping a beer. The nightly routine of a divorced man.

The RAIN taps a percussive beat on the roof.

The DOORBELL interrupts his serenity.

ROGER

Who's there?

He opens the door to Joanna, drenched to the bone.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Joanna. What are you doing?

JOANNA
Walking. Thinking.

Roger stares at her for a moment. For Joanna, and unannounced visit it nearly unheard of.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
May I--

ROGER
Oh yeah, come in, come in. Are you OK?

JOANNA
Other than the massive chest cold I'm going to have tomorrow. Are you sure--

ROGER
She has the kids this week. Let me get you a towel at least.

JOANNA
Thanks.

She removes her coat and shoes and sits on the coach.

Roger wraps a towel around her shoulders and hands her one for her hair.

ROGER
Is the thing still happening tomorrow?

JOANNA
Too late to call it off. The marquee attraction is very much in doubt.

ROGER
What happens if he doesn't show?

JOANNA
I think they used to burn people at the stake for less.

ROGER
Well, if anyone's going to land on her feet.

JOANNA

May I?

She helps herself to the LIQUOR CABINET. Fills a couple of TUMBLERS. Hands one to Roger.

ROGER

No thank you.

She throws hers back. Takes the other one.

JOANNA

I've been thinking.

ROGER

So have I.

JOANNA

Shh. Its my turn now. I've been thinking, I know a lot of people and not many of them have been there for me. I've been shit to pretty much everyone, including you.

ROGER

That's not true.

JOANNA

Especially you. I just wanted you to know that.

ROGER

Know what.

JOANNA

That I appreciate you. What we have.

ROGER

I appreciate you too.

JOANNA

This arrangement between us, its wonderful. But we can't go on like this.

Roger sighs. Not where he hoped the conversation was going. He collects himself.

ROGER

I understand. If you want to end it-

-

JOANNA

No, no, no. Listen. We're both really, really busy people. Maybe not me anymore, but--

ROGER

I'm sure you'll be--

JOANNA

I care about you. I want to make this work. I want to try.

They kiss, deeply. He embraces her, leans her head on his chest.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

You think I'm crazy?

ROGER

Just crazy enough. The perfect amount of crazy.

She laughs.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Sane people are boring anyway.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOWL PARKING LOT - DAY

The area outside the theater, and the streets for miles around, are packed, hours before the big show.

There is a palpable energy about. Tension and anticipation.

A NEWS CREW sets up on a ridge overlooking the theater.

An LOCAL NEWS REPORTER, MOLLY, Thirties, performs her stand up.

TV REPORTER

Frank, Just a few hours to go before the live worldwide broadcast, and already crowds have filled the streets for miles around. Many of the people we spoke to said they weren't certain just why they've come or what to expect, only that something big, perhaps historic, may happen here tonight.

(MORE)

TV REPORTER (CONT'D)

The religious community is sharply divided on the reappearance of this self proclaimed Christ, as you can see from many of the signs and vocal protests behind me. But believe or not, one thing is certain - everyone is paying attention.

I/E LIVE TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

A VIDEO MONITOR inside the truck displays a live feed from the scene.

A SERIES OF SCENES plays out on the monitors. Public gathering spots with GIANT VIDEO SCREENS, rapidly filling with people. Just as Joanna planned.

NEW YORK, PARIS, EGYPT, ISRAEL, TOKYO, BEIJING ISTANBUL. (For starters)

BACK TO LIVE

TV REPORTER

Some truly amazing scenes developing around the world. Reporting live outside the Hollywood Bowl, this is Molly Simmons.

INT. BACKSTAGE, HOLLYWOOD BOWL - DUSK

Joanna peers out the at the audience starting to filter into the seating bowl.

The Man of the Hour is still nowhere to be found.

JOANNA

He's not coming.

EMILY

Do we have a backup plan?

JOANNA

I could strip down to my skivvies and dance for them.

EMILY

I could write a statement. Say he's really sorry, had to go off and save flood victims or something.

JOANNA

Don't rule it out. Look, I don't know why we're here. At this point its an act of, I don't know, faith I suppose.

EMILY

He wouldn't let you down like this. He's coming.

Emily brightens considerably seeing Jesus rushing toward them.

Joanna faces away, gazing hopeless at the stage.

JOANNA

Number one rule in life. Everyone will let you down.

EMILY

He's here.

JOANNA

What?

JESUS

Hello, Joanna.

She swivels around, white as a ghost.

JOANNA

Jesus Christ, you gave me a heart attack.

JESUS

You look healthy enough from my perspective.

EMILY

We have about ten minutes.

JOANNA

You do know how to make a dramatic entrance.

JESUS

We should talk.

JOANNA

No time. You need hair and makeup, stat.

JESUS

I am prepared. You must understand--

The Shoe Executive pushes past Emily.

He pushes a new pair of SANDALS in Joanna's face.

JOANNA

How did you get back here.

SHOE EXEC

Just wanted to say have a great show tonight. He'll be wearing these new Air Saviors. And let the camera crew know we need at least three good product shots, OK?

JESUS

My shoes are adequate.

JOANNA

Are you freaking kidding me with this right now?

SHOE EXEC

It's in you're contract.

JOANNA

Piss off!

SHOE EXEC

Just doing my job.

He leaves the shoes by Jesus feet and goes.

JOANNA

Oy. What's next?

LUX

Bold of you break a contract.

JOANNA

Is there any security in this place, at all? Emily!

LUX

Relax, just stopped by to wish you the best of luck.

JOANNA

We?

Lux steps to the side, revealing Ginnifer.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

Should have figured.

GINNIFER

My new manager actually cares about
his clients and their careers.

JOANNA

Good for you, Ginnifer.

Emily stands by the curtain, watching the --

STAGE

TECHNICIANS perform a sound check.

The STAGE LIGHTS glow, dim, and animate, on by one. A giant
ICHTHYS is illuminated, colored bulbs pulsing in sequence.

ORCHESTRA

A SOUND TECH fiddles with the SOUNDBOARD, adjusting mic
levels.

INT. VIDEO CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A MASTER CONTROL OPERATOR queues up camera feeds on the
BROADCAST SWITCHER.

FLATSCREEN MONITORS above him display various angles on the
stage and audience. The Op punches up a series of shots to
the ON-AIR monitor.

He catches A DARK-FIGURE, practically a shadow, out of the
corner of his eye.

He returns to his work, uncertain what, if anything, he just
saw.

EXT. CONTROL ROOM

This shadowy figure, clad in a LONG, HOODED COAT like a
shroud, brushes past the control room and through the
audience.

Several other similarly clad figures make their way through
the crowd. The first nods and follows the others toward one
of the entry tunnels, where more shrouded individuals wait in
the shadows.

BACK TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - DUSK

Beyond the curtain, the HOUSE LIGHTS dim, STAGE LIGHTS spark to life. The ROAR of the audience builds.

GINNIFER

So sad. Being taken in by such lies.

JOANNA

Like how you convince yourself you've found religion.

GINNIFER

Puh-lease. Where'd you find Him, anyway?

JOANNA

You were pretty certain when you sent me that envelope.

GINNIFER

What envelope?

She slides up to Jesus. Presses her body against his, touches His face.

GINNIFER (CONT'D)

Don't you speak for yourself, or let her do all the talk--

Jesus embraces Ginnifer. Looks deep into her eyes.

JESUS

To be skeptical is to be wise. Do not trust what feels wrong in your heart. Know yourself, Ginnifer, for you are wiser than you believe.

He kisses her. Her body stiffens, then convulses as if filled with light.

She falls to her knees. Tears stream down her face.

GINNIFER

My god--

A PAGE pops his head backstage.

PAGE

You're on in ninety.

EMILY

Wait, what just happened?

JOANNA
This is it. You need your notes?

JESUS
I am prepared.

JOANNA
I have faith in you.

She catches herself in the statement.

JOANNA (CONT'D)
--I mean, break a leg.
Figuratively, not--

LUX
If you go out there, there is no
escaping it. You know His will.

JOANNA
What does he mean?

LUX
His true purpose on earth.
Revelation.

JESUS
So long among humanity, yet so
little faith in them.

He takes a deep breath and steps out on stage.

Lux calls out to Him one last time.

LUX
Deception is not in your nature,
little brother.

EXT. SEATING BOWL - NIGHT

The crowd's excitement builds as MUSIC swells, spotlights pan over the audience.

Joanna and Emily take seats front row, center stage.

EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS

Crowds in the public gathering spots swell to the broadcast images as excitement and anticipation build.

INT. FAIRFAX DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

Moshe watches the broadcast on TV mounted behind the counter.

EXT. SEATING BOWL - REAR - CONTINUOUS

The dark, hooded figures emerge one by one from the tunnel.

Two non-hooded men are remain just inside the tunnel:

Reverend Johnson and the Priest.

The Priest hands some object to one of the shrouded figures, who slips it into his coat too quick to see it clearly.

The two clergymen watch as the dark figures fan out into the crowd again, malicious grins on their faces.

EXT. STAGE

Jesus stands before the crowd. He wears a MICROPHONE HEADSET
The lights seem to cast a halo around him.

The light trick is no accident. Every element choreographed to the finest detail.

Jesus raises his arms out toward the audience. They quiet down, bracing for His words.

JESUS

Welcome, my sisters and brothers.

They go crazy again. He gestures for them to allow Him to speak.

JESUS (CONT'D)

I have come tonight to speak to all of you, regardless of faith, religious or political beliefs, nation or status. You come to me with open minds and hearts, a hunger for truth, but you must first cast off all doctrines, all prejudice and preconceived ideas.

The crowd cheers, a little more restrained than before. Identity and division are not see easily abandoned.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Your time is upon you. This world you know it will end.

A wave of shock washes over the crowd.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The worldwide viewing audience stand in silence as they try to comprehend the meaning of these words.

BACKSTAGE

Lux and Ginnifer watch the reaction from off stage.

BACK TO:

THEATER

As the audience stares in bewilderment -

A HOODED FIGURE sneaks onto the stage.

He pulls back his hood, revealing the face of a YOUNG MAN.
Jaw clenched. Determined.

STAGE

Jesus implores the audience to listen. Raises his voice over the clamor.

JESUS

Hear me. The new world will be what
you bring into it. Only you can
choose the path of love or hated,
redemption or destruction. We--

He turns toward approaching FOOTSTEPS.

The shrouded young man runs toward Him, GUN in his
outstretched arm, pointed at Jesus chest.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Joanna jumps to her feet in horror.

ON STAGE

Jesus smiles at His assailant.

The deafening sound echoes throughout theater, more CANNON
then GUNSHOT.

In that instant, the stage lights EXPLODE.

The stage, and the audience, are washed in blinding light.

All turn away and shield their eyes.

The entire theater becomes pitch dark.

MURMURS from the audience, steadily growing, cut through the total darkness, the sole signs of life.

The HOUSE LIGHTS come on.

The stage is bereft of people, save the hooded young man, slumped and weeping near the wings.

Joanna rushes up to the stage, Emily close behind..

Where Jesus stood, only his HEADSET MICROPHONE remains, lying on the bare wood. A cloud of MIST, or is it STAGE FOG, lingers around the spot.

There are no bodies, no blood, no indication of violence.

Joanna drops to her knees. She picks up the headset, cradles it in her hand. She lifts her head toward the sky.

Emily, Ginnifer, and even Lux stand around her, visibly moved.

INT. FAIRFAX DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

Moshe watches these events on screen. A TEAR streams down his cheek.

All the patrons huddle around, silent attention fixed on the screen.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOWL - NIGHT

The audience filters out, still grappling with what they have witnessed. A miracle? Sceptical? Con?

They intermingle with the crowd gathered outside the theater.

The media folks lay down their cameras and mics and join the gathering mass as well.

With few words or reason, people hug, put their arms around one another. Sing. Experiencing the moment together.

LIVE TRUCK

A bank of VIDEO MONITORS inside the truck shows similar scenes unfolding around the world. Strangers embracing, singing, united for the moment.

JOANNA

Wanders alone away from the scene.

She passes streams of people flowing in from all directions.

Eventually, the crowds heading the opposite way begin to thin out.

She continues along a

TREE-LINED EMBANKMENT

Now a solitary figure, a shadow in the darkness.

She stops by an -

EXT. OVERLOOK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The Los Angeles basin sprawls below her under a clear, star-filled night.

She stands before it, breathes it in.

Remarkably similar to Jesus' view of the city in the dawn light at the beginning of the story.

She senses someone approaching. Hard to identify in the darkness and distance.

Her fleeting moment of serenity broken, she puts her guard up.

The figure comes closer.

Jesus smiles broadly as he approaches.

JOANNA

Well, well. Aren't you full of surprises.

JESUS

I would say we made an impression.

JOANNA

An impression. You only scared me half to death. Was that your plan all along?

JESUS

Look around you. It is a beautiful sight.

JOANNA

Sure, from this distance. So what now?

JESUS

Now I would suggest you bring Roger up here. He would also appreciate this view.

JOANNA

What, how? -- Never mind. You never give a simple, straight answer, do you.

JESUS

That is all I ever give.

JOANNA

So are we all doomed?

JESUS

This world will go on as it always has. People will struggle, try to do good, survive in their way.

JOANNA

And if they bring world back to the brink?

JESUS

Never fails to amuse me. You are all so arrogant and self-centered to believe that it is your generation living in the ultimate times. Your conflicts have existed countless generations before you, and will persist until the end of your history. Yet here you are.

JOANNA

It is nice knowing someone's around to nudge us away from the edge from time to time.

JESUS

You have never needed my help,
Joanna.

JOANNA

Well, I'm glad you are here.
Whoever you are.

JESUS

Likewise. Good night, Joanna.

He starts to walk away.

Joanna watches until He's nearly out of view. She calls out
to him.

JOANNA

I will see you again, right?

He turns toward her and smiles.

JESUS

Most certainly.

He walks on and disappears into the night.

FADE OUT.