

KNOCK ON THE SKY

by
MICHAEL NEFF

Michael Neff
Writerworkshops@earthlink.net
703-403-4280

INT. HERITAGE MEDIA HQ CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A hand clutches a paper while a finger runs down it with a quick read. We see the owner. He is ANDREW SNOW: slick, suited, early forties, gold earring.

Corporate suits around a long conference table are staring at him. Snow stands and walks solemnly to the head of the table, fixating on one of them, RICHARD GOLDMAN.

SNOW
Goldman, where's Franken?

GOLDMAN
Mr. Franken is ill, in the hospital-

SNOW
Tell me, Goldman, where did you work before you came to Heritage Media?

Goldman squirms.

GOLDMAN
CNN--

SNOW
Ah, Consumer News Network... Well, doggone, I used to work there too, till I got... *right*.

The meeting attendees chuckle with admiration.

SNOW (CONT'D)
I just read your latest hot-sheet talk for our network anchors, Goldman. Among other things, you actually want them to open with a story about...
(reads from the hot-sheet)
Octavia Valentin, a former Romanian freedom fighter who can't afford to cure her brain tumor? Is this a joke?

Snickers are heard. Goldman attempts a nervous smile.

GOLDMAN
Well, it's true, uh, sir, and--

SNOW

It's true? It's mush! You going blue state on me?

Snow begins to move on Goldman as if stalking him.

SNOW (CONT'D)

What the parrot-shitting difference if it's true, Goldman? Lots of things are true. It's true that my pet Rottweiler, Ragnar, puked up his bloody fucking meat last night, but our viewers don't want to know that, do they?

Snow looms closer till he towers above Goldman. He leans back against the table edge, arms folded. Goldman looks faint.

SNOW (CONT'D)

Do you know the purpose of these meetings, Goldman?... No? Well, allow me to perform a bit of alchemy and turn your leaden liberal brain into something far more precious. In this room, everyday, we decide what tens of millions of viewers, nearly half of this voting country, are going to receive as news. Do you have any idea what a supreme responsibility that is?

GOLDMAN

Yes--

SNOW

No... No, I don't think you do. You see, since becoming director of news broadcasting at Heritage Media, I've learned to poll and test.

As Snow speaks, the other executives watch Goldman closely, their faces showing contempt, dislike, and amusement.

SNOW (CONT'D)

I know what our viewers want, and in-between that, I provide them with what they need: the kind of no spin, hard balling, fair and balanced truth necessary to make informed decisions, and not only about their own lives, but about what type of government they want running our fair nation...

Snow turns from Goldman and strolls haughtily back to the head of the table, speech making while in motion.

SNOW (CONT'D)

Therefore, Golden, not only are we at Heritage Media smart businessmen, we provide a public service. We are, in effect, moral innovators...

(turning back to face

Goldman)

Any questions?

A terrified Goldman shakes his head. A satisfied Snow sits down, refocuses on the hot-sheet.

SNOW (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Okay... pretty much same as yesterday. We've got that pedophile Senator Kelly wetting his pants in Florida--

A woman at the meeting, A STRIKING BLOND, interrupts.

BLOND

He's already down eight percent in the Florida opinion polls thanks to us.

She smiles hugely at Snow, but he doesn't look up.

SNOW

Good, corporate will be pleased. The President hates Kelly, and we love our President. And let's see... more restrictions on voters, yes, the deregulation of consumer rights, okay, and wait a second... A black male school teacher named Mathers accused of sexual assault...

(MORE)

SNOW (CONT'D)

no, no, no, that's three minutes of
wasted air time... Shit. Now a bigger
surprise from Mr. Holden. A sun flare?

HOLDEN

Well, sir, uh, it's the biggest ever
and... uh, everyone knows...

Holden glances around the room for support, but finds none.

SNOW

Back to mush, Holden. Science is back
page on Sunday. Our viewers care about
things like viruses and politics, not
acid sun reflux.

Laughter on cue.

HOLDEN

But, uh, Mr. Snow, CNN and BBC carried
a story about the sun thing. We might
look... well, not too good if we--

Snow smiles wolfishly.

SNOW

Very well, Holden. This hot-sheet is
approved, except for school teachers
and Romanian brain tumors!

More laughter.

SNOW (CONT'D)

Meeting adjourned, people.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Snow is followed closely by Holden.

HOLDEN

Uh, uh, Mr. Snow, a minute, please?

Snow turns, his face cold. The man gulps.

SNOW

What do you have for me Holden?

HOLDEN

Yes, sir... Just real, real, quick,
about the, uh, hot-sheet.

SNOW

And?

HOLDEN

The lead story about Senator Kelly
accused of being a pedophile? Word has
it from our affiliate in D.C. that the
pedophile accusation was arranged to
distract from Kelly's new report on
the drug trade which blames Customs
officials appointed by the President
for turning a blind eye to billions in
dangerous narcotics rolling across the
border.

Snow places both hands on Holden's shoulders, staring him
square in the eye.

SNOW

What is the motto of all good newsmen?

Holden whispers as other meeting attendees file past.

HOLDEN

Never let the facts get in the way of
a good story?

SNOW

Exactly. And for all we know, that
liberal, pedophile, America-hating
bastard is guilty of being a
pedophile? Do you know that he isn't?
Why don't we let the public decide?

HOLDEN

Yes, sir.

SNOW

And don't forget, Holden, we're in the
news marketing business, with the
emphasis on business. And, good
business means?... Yes? Yes?

HOLDEN

Good ratings, sir.

SNOW

Right... And no one gives a Klingon circling Uranus about south-of-the-border narcotics. It's stale, dead... And, oh, Holden, if you ever contradict me in a meeting again, I'll have you escorted out by security.

HOLDEN

Yes sir... Uh, Mr. Snow?

SNOW

(exasperated)

What?

HOLDEN

I just want you to know, sir, I marvel that you've been responsible for the most successful info-marketing stories of the past two decades... like satanic ritual child abuse. What a coup that was! Oh, and bird flu!

SNOW

Even if no epidemic, just snap a good name to it and run... Will and vision, Holden.

HOLDEN

Will and vision, sir!

INT. RECEPTION OFFICE AT HERITAGE MEDIA - DAY

A very attractive red-head secretary, GISELLE, types behind her desk. Snow enters. She notices him and crosses her legs, thrusts her chest out, her cleavage conspicuous.

SNOW

Giselle, prepare a termination letter for Robert Franken. I want him officially cut by COB. And have the letter expressed to the hospital.

Giselle speaks with a refined London accent.

GISELLE

Ooooo, cold.

SNOW

Yeah, but I can't let it get around I tolerate managers who hire a-holes like Goldman.

GISELLE

But you're *not* sacking Goldman? I'm shocked.

SNOW

I'll keep him around to make an example. Besides, he's catharsis. After I bash the squirming little *whine-o-crat* I feel good. But I'll say this without hesitation, Giselle, we must reopen the Gulag.

GISELLE

(amused)

Oh, you mean sending your favorite apostates to slave in the mail room as torture prior to termination?

SNOW

Blue state *bullshit*! First, a whine about a woman from Romania with a brain tumor. Can you fucking believe it?... Next up? A black male teacher accused of assault. Irks me into wanting scotch. Who can make time for the *whine*?

GISELLE

I'd say, sir, that the Gulag vacation is in order. Btw, a phone call this morning from a Judge Regina Suarez about that accused black teacher.

SNOW

(wistful)

Regina?... An old flame of mine. Haven't talked to her in years.

GISELLE

And a couple of notables in the mail. A letter from God, and a FEDEX from some Chinese persons.

SNOW
What?... God?

Giselle grins and hands Snow the note. Snow reads it.

CLOSE ON THE LETTER

Andy, hi!

Just FYI. You've been chosen by me to find a new redeemer for the human race. If you fail, a mighty force from the sun will overtake the world and destroy it.

So see you soon! I'll be the one eating apricots.

GOD

Snow reads it out loud.

SNOW (V.O.)
(mocking)
Andy, hi. Just FYI. You've been chosen by me to save the human race. If you fail, a mighty force will overtake the earth and everyone will die. So see you soon. I'll be the one eating apricots.

BACK TO SCENE

Snow snickers, crumples the note and tosses it on the desk.

SNOW
Psycho will have to choke on apricots.
And?

GISELLE
Just this, from China Freedom Watch.

Giselle hands Snow a folder. Inside is a cover letter and a large, black-and-white glossy photograph. THE FACE OF A YOUNG CHINESE WOMAN. She appears defeated and afraid.

BACK TO SCENE

SNOW
Old news... a dissident group trying to get Congress to reopen the book on China's trade status with the U.S.
(MORE)

SNOW (CONT'D)

This woman, Can Chunxia, is their poster child.

GISELLE

What's her story?

SNOW

Labor-camped by the Chinese government for teaching democracy... She even believes America is a democracy.

GISELLE

Oh, my, such a naïve poster child.

Giselle smiles and winks at Snow conspiratorially.

SNOW

But they won't stop pitching us to do a piece on them. Must know we'll be in Beijing next week.

Snow contemptuously tosses the folder back on Tamra's desk.

SNOW (CONT'D)

Circular file.

GISELLE

And about China, your tickets are ready. Mr. Moorcock's office called. You'll land in Beijing Saturday.

SNOW

Good deal... Oh, and send a thanks to Mr. Moorcock along with a present - a model soldier from my gift stock.

Suddenly, the striking blond from the meeting, MURIEL, enters and walks up behind Snow. Giselle glowers at her.

MURIEL

Mr. Snow... Andrew?

SNOW

Ah, Muriel, yes. Thanks for coming. We need to discuss your ideas for extending the Kelly story. Please, in my office.

INT. SNOW'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Huge, plush, high-tech, artsy. Cathedral-like windows open to San Francisco Bay. Rodinesque sculptures of tortured human beings contrast to the sharper image atmosphere.

With pocket remote in hand, Snow causes an array of dead bolts to whisper forth and lock the entrance door. Next, a recessed camera lens above the door spins and focuses.

Muriel, her body illumined by a column of sunlight, leans against Snow's desk and pulls her underwear off from beneath her skirt and opens her legs, staring at Snow seductively.

Snow removes his coat, unsnaps his suspenders, replaces his sunglasses. Muriel pulls him close and scissors him tightly with her long, muscular legs.

SNOW

I hope you don't mind the sunglasses.
My eyes are sensitive.

MURIEL

Unlike your heart, my darling? Oh,
no, of course not.

The two begin to writhe. Snow's pants drop to reveal boxers with little crossed guns on them.

SNOW

And Muriel. Your bad boy fired Franken
today.

Muriel moans with pleasure and digs her claws into his back.

SNOW (CONT'D)

And I fedexed his termination to the
hospital.

Muriel moans longer and louder, bites his ear.

MURIEL

And fire that little prick, Goldman
too. I hate his attitude.

SNOW

All things are possible, my radiant
Nemesis. Will and vision, will and
vision...

INT. KITT PEAK SOLAR OBSERVATORY - DAY

The chief astronomer and assistants walk down a broad, high-ceilinged corridor, their footsteps ECHOING.

FEMALE ASTRONOMER

We're hearing from more observatories,
first Mount Stromlo in Australia, then
Japan. They spotted Heaven's Scythe
less than five minutes ago.

CHIEF ASTRONOMER

(staring ahead)
What in God's name?

MALE ASTRONOMER

They both confirm it's free of the
sun's corona and dissipating rapidly
in normal space.

The chief astronomer stops and faces both astronomers, a dire look on his face.

CHIEF ASTRONOMER

The corona must have regenerated it,
or caused a quantum echo of some kind.
No other explanation is possible.

The other two astronomers nod.

CHIEF ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

I'm certain we can relax now, but I
want to coordinate with as many solar
observatories as possible before going
public. CNN and now Heritage Media
are all over this.

INT. SNOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Snow thrusts. Muriel GROANS. "Stravinsky's Firebird" echoes in the office. Still scissored by an enraptured Muriel, Snow claps in mid-air. A speaker-phone on his desk lights up.

SNOW

Yes?

GISELLE (V.O.)

Your ex-wife.

MURIEL
(whispers)
Loser bitch.

Muriel begins biting and licking Snow's neck.

SNOW
Tell her I'm meeting with a lobbyist.

GISELLE (V.O.)
She wants to know if you received the
flash drive she sent.

SNOW
What?... Flash drive?

GISELLE (V.O.)
Sitting in your in-box.

Snow appears a bit alarmed after he spots a small but thick manila envelope. He taps Muriel on the thigh and she releases her scissor hold.

SNOW
Tell her to hold for a minute.

A flustered Muriel stands and straightens herself. Snow unlocks the door by remote, then just as Muriel begins to head for the exit, she turns and grabs his crotch.

INT. SNOW'S PRIVATE OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Behind his enormous desk, Snow fixates on the sculpture of a Mayan farmer. He holds his index finger in space before him, tracing the edge of its facial profile.

SNOW (O.S.)
Giselle, put her through!

GERRI BLITZER'S voice BLARES from the speaker phone and ECHOES in the vast office.

GERRI (V.O.)
Andy? You there, you crap artist?

INT. GERRI BLITZER'S APARTMENT - DAY

A television SPUTTERS, the air dismal, shadowed, smoky. Gerri appears late thirties, disheveled and bitter.

GERRI

Sorry to interrupt your lobbyist. Did you make a good video of her so you can spank the Snow monkey later?

SNOW (V.O.)

Cameras are only for my protection, and besides, Gerri, masturbation is for liberals, not real men.

GERRI

But you're still spewing enough to keep the government power mafia happy, I see.

SNOW (V.O.)

Gerri, you know the news business. It's all about drama, fear, appeals to the base emotions. People suck it in like addicts. I'm am simply their obedient servant.

Gerri stands and strolls to a window, stares at the Golden Gate Bridge, her face crusty with old tears.

GERRI

You understand evil, Andy?

CUT TO SNOW

Snow holds a hand at arm's length. His index and middle finger appear to stride from left to right above the mountains across the bay.

SNOW (O.S.)

Fairy tale stuff for rabbis, nuns, and school kids, Gerri. I'm beyond good and evil, and I tried to--

BACK TO GERRI

GERRI

Make me into your news whore image?

On the verge of tears, Gerri's attention is distracted by her cat. She picks it up and paces the room as Snow's voice crackles loudly in the air.

SNOW (V.O.)
You sound angry. Off your
antidepressants again?

GERRI
My insurance ran out, Andy, but you
know that.

SNOW (V.O.)
Bottom line Gerri, no one made you
turn whistle-blower. Just cause you
won a Pulitzer that didn't give you
the right to cheap shot Heritage Media
in the New York Times.

Gerri's glances to an old framed photo on her mantle: Gerri
and Snow in hippy college days, smiling and hugging.

GERRI
Doing the right thing gave me the
right, Andy. Exposing phony news
schemes at Heritage was worth it.

BACK TO SNOW

Snow snorts derisively.

GERRI (V.O.)
I made a video for you. Please watch
it.

SNOW
I'm not taking you back, Gerri.

GERRI (V.O.)
Goodbye, asshole!

Gerri rips the phone out, hurls it. She then pauses and
attempts to regain control. The cat meows at her. Gerri
weeps bitterly.

INT. SNOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Snow rips out the flash drive from the envelope. He first rewinds the surveillance video and watches Muriel writhing, then inserts the flash drive in his laptop.

The video player appears. A title fades in.

CLIMBING THE FIRE
By Gerri Blitzer

Below this, the name of the film company.

"Silent Films For You"

The film begins, appears like an old silent film: jerky, black-and-white, grainy. Organ music plays. A room devoid of furniture fades in, only one window.

Gerri on the floor in a ragged dress, make-up dark, distraught. Her lips move. A dialog frame appears: "I am forsaken. Who will listen now? Who will care?"

Suddenly, a poof of smoke and a ridiculous, godlike figure stands before Gerri, scraggly beard, long white robe.

GERRI
Who are you?

GOD
I am God.

GERRI
What do you want of me?

GOD
You climbed the fire my daughter. You did the right thing despite the futility and pain.

GERRI
But I burn so terribly!

EXT. GERRI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Gerri washes her face off in the bathroom. Her cat enters and meows. She picks it up and turns to stare out the bathroom window at the Golden Gate in the distance.

GERRI
(wistful, dazed)
I'll make sure you have a home,
Walter.

INT. SNOW'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Back to "Climbing the Fire":

GOD
Thus it must be. And yet, you still
have a debt left to pay.

GERRI
A debt? What can it be? I've lost all
purpose in life. What is left?

Snow chuckles off screen. The Gerri character gets to her feet and backs away from God towards an open window, till finally she stands on the sill, verging on falling.

GOD
Your soul!

GERRI
Fraud! You are no one's God. I owe you
nothing!

GOD
Alright then! The truth at last!

A poof of smoke. The worn-out God vanishes and in his place stands a classic silent film villain, mustache and all. On his chest, a big badge says: "THE ANDREW DEVIL."

GERRI
No! Where is the real Andrew?

ANDREW DEVIL
He will not help you, for he is an
evil jabberwocky bastard and I am here
to claim your soul on his behalf.

GERRI
Then I am undone!

The Devil moves towards her, but Gerri flings herself from the window. Her tiny body in the distance falls to the street.

The Devil faces the camera.

ANDREW DEVIL

Well, she's certainly climbing fire now, by God! Nyah, hah hah!

SNOW (O.S.)

So fucking crazy.

EXT. GOLDENGATE BRIDGE - LATER

Gerri whips her car over to the curb and jumps out. Cars behind her HONK furiously. She clambers up to the side of the bridge and onto a railing.

Gerri leans against a railing and stares down into the Bay. The wind gusts cause her be unsteady. In the background, the cars continue to HONK.

INT. SNOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Snow is up and stretching with a yawn when he hears a spurt of Stravinsky again. He claps.

SNOW

What now, Giselle?

GISELLE (V.O.)

Turn on channel nine. You have to see this!

SNOW

Why in hell should I watch KWIP?

GISELLE (V.O.)

It's Gerri. She's on the bridge. Live!... Live!

Snow quickly grabs a remote. A wall panel revolves and a monitor appears. He flips to channel nine. Gerri's face is there, the image shaky, cars honking in the distance.

Snow's face drops.

EXT. GOLDENGATE BRIDGE - DAY

Gerri's face wobbles in the news shot

NEWS WOMAN (O.S.)
Who are you?

GERRI
(on camera)
I won a Pulitzer. B.L.I.T.Z.E.R.

NEWS WOMAN
Oh, you're the one--

GERRI
(waves at camera)
Yeah, me!... Hey! Andy devil! See
you in H. E. double hockey sticks!

Gerri turns to stare down to the water below.

GERRI (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Walter, what do you think?

She turns back and fishes a cell phone out of her bathrobe.
Her hands are shaking. The wind buffets her. She almost loses
her balance. Her hand grips the railing.

GERRI (CONT'D)
Whoaaa! Not yet!

She punches in a number and holds the cell to her ear.

INT. SNOW'S OFFICE

Snow's cell rings. He listens.

GERRI (V.O.)
Did you watch my film, Satan?

SNOW
(frantic)
Yes... Yes! I get it, okay?

GERRI (V.O.)
Remember when we worked for CNN in
Guatemala?

FLASHBACK TO GUATEMALA: we see a pocked and dirty refrigerator door opened by a dark hand. Inside is Snow's body, in fetal position, his face showing his pain.

EXT. GOLDENGATE BRIDGE

GERRI

And Orico, the Indian woman who told
us how her husband climbed the fire
and died. Remember?

INT. SNOW'S OFFICE

SNOW

Yes, yes, I do! Now--

GERRI (V.O.)

And remember our favorite song by the
Guess Who? "It's too late, she's gone
too far, she's lost the sun, she's
come unnnnnndone."

SNOW

Yes, I--

GERRI

You win, Andy.

Gerri hangs up.

Snow dials her cell number. While it rings, he rummages in his desk drawer. He removes a large pair of binoculars and scampers to a window, focusing on the bridge.

He pans till he sees Gerri, still holding the phone.

SNOW

(to himself)

Don't be a fool. I love you.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

The cameraman leans over to the news woman.

CAMERAMAN

If you can talk her off there in front
of everyone, you'll be a hero. Think
about it.

NEWS WOMAN

(yells to Gerri)

Ms. Blitzer! Ms. Blitzer!

Gerri sits atop the rail. Her cell phone RINGS with a J.P.
Sousa march. She lifts one hand, the wind gusts fiercely. She
tips over backwards with a short shriek.

NEWS WOMAN (CONT'D)

Damn! Damn! Damn!

INT. SNOW'S PRIVATE OFFICE

The tiny image of Gerri is seen through Snow's binoculars,
her long, silent fall, just as in the video.

SNOW

God! Nooooo!

Gerri's body hits the water. A tiny silent splash.

Snow puts down the binoculars, his face in shock. He turns
off the television and slumps down behind his desk, dazed.

He pushes a button on a desk panel and the skylight is masked
by a black shutter, the column of sunlight slowly vanishing.

After a moment, a knock on the door and Giselle enters,
looking concerned. She walks up to Snow.

SNOW (CONT'D)

She reached for the cell phone...

GISELLE

Anything I can do? Mr. Moorcock is on
the way here.

Snow, watched by Giselle, struggles to look stoic.

SNOW (TO HIMSELF)

Gerri... Gerri.

Giselle frowns, then turns and leaves.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO BAY - MINUTES LATER

Police helicopters circle the area. Just above the surface, a dull white image below the waves grows larger, brighter. It surfaces to a face: Gerri's, her eyes closed.

The face smiles and spurts a bit of seawater into the air. Gerri uprights herself in the water. She spots the helicopters in the distance, then turns to see a tiny rocky island filled with BARKING sea lions.

GERRI

Golden lads and lasses, bounce higher!

She backstrokes leisurely towards the sea lions. As she does another helicopter BEATS overhead. A crowd of tourists on a boat motors past and she waves at them. They wave back.

She reaches the little rock island. The sea lions BARK excitedly. One leans forward to kiss her on the cheek. She turns her head to stare over the Bay.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Here is my journey's end and
beginning.

She hears a shout and turns to wave at the tourists on a nearby wharf.

GERRI (CONT'D)

It's okay! I've just been reborn!
Anyone have a few apricots?

INT. SNOW'S PRIVATE OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Andrew Snow gazes over the Bay, still half in shock. He turns and stares at the sculpture of Mayan Indian woman.

With a whoosh of air, his door opens and two men barge in. One is RANDOLPH MOORCOCK, owner of Heritage Media Inc. The other, his assistant, CHAMBERS. Both in their sixties and eerily similar, as if brothers.

SNOW

Mr. Moorcock...

MOORCOCK

Snow, my gentleman, contemplating a new sculpture? Why not chisel out something happy this time?

SNOW

(still dazed)

I haven't... sculpted in years, sir.

MOORCOCK

What's wrong, Snow? You look like a Bond martini, shaken not stirred.

Chambers snickers.

SNOW

It's nothing.

MOORCOCK

Well, I've just come from a teleconference with the Chinese government. Meet me in my office at three p.m. cause we need to plan. You're now the New China project lead.

SNOW

Sir?

MOORCOCK

Hello? China's trade status. It must be kept status quo and you'll head off any human rights mush the donkeys might stir up. We'll be filming in China, Snow, in their factories, showing them rather humane and all that. Understand?

SNOW

(stoic)

Will and vision, sir.

EXT. THE WHARF - DAY

Gerri is helped from the water and onto a dock by a couple of TOURISTS who appear perplexed. Gerri smiles hugely at them.

GERRI

Ahhhh, glorious day... Apricots?

TOURIST
No, and yes, it is.

Gerri looks up at the sky and then back to the tourist.

GERRI
Knock on the sky, and listen.

TOURIST
Uh, sure.

Gerri saunters through a small crowd of curious people and up some wooden steps. At the top of the stairs she turns and addresses them as they gaze up at her:

GERRI
Remember, the obscure you'll see in
time, but the completely obvious takes
much longer!

INT. EXECUTIVE RECEPTION OFFICE - LATER

Giselle stares at a web page on her computer filled with photos of male models in business suits: a site that advertises "HOW TO MEET RICH HUNKS."

Snow suddenly steps from his office and walks up to her.

SNOW
I'm leaving... back in an hour.

GISELLE
Where to?

SNOW
If anyone asks, I'm at lunch.

GISELLE
Off to get Walter?

Snow doesn't reply, only turns and leaves.

EXT. GERRI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Snow's Jaguar sedan pulls up. Snow gets out and goes inside the building, his face solemn.

INT. GERRI'S APARTMENT

The front door swings towards us, Snow walking through. Upon entering, he sees a framed art print on the wall: a copy of a Michelangelo original from the Sistine Chapel.

Snow hears a television. Walter the cat runs up, meows.

SNOW

Walter...

Walter runs off. Snow follows the cat into the living room, only to find Gerri watching TV and popping dried apricots.

GERRI

(happy)

Andy! Just in time to save the world.
And pardon my dried apricots. You
know, I almost choked on one.

Gerri jumps up from the couch and extends her hand to a paralyzed Snow.

GERRI (CONT'D)

You can call me God, if you wish.

Snow remains open-mouthed. Gerri withdraws her hand.

SNOW

You... How?

GERRI

It was easy.

SNOW

It's not... possible.

GERRI

Nothing you see is possible.

SNOW

The fall... and now you think--

GERRI

I think, therefore you are.

Snow breathes rapidly, places hand to his forehead, rubs it.

SNOW
(to himself)
Alright, I know I'm not whacked out,
so I have to transcend the bullshit
here... There must be an explanation.

GERRI
No, not that one. I'll prove it.

Snow points accusingly at Gerri.

SNOW
You! You! You're Gerri's twin I never
knew... Yes, and this is all part of
a Hitchcock-like plan to turn me
mental. Like the old Latin saying,
whom a god wishes to destroy he first
drives mad.

GERRI
You're the New China project lead.

SNOW
Huh?... Giselle? My God. It's a
conspiracy.

Gerri moves closer to Snow to make the point.

GERRI
While Chambers blathered on about
China you wondered how he would look
naked and belly-crawling like a snake.

SNOW
What?

Even closer.

GERRI
After this morning's hot-sheet meeting
you imagined installing electric prods
in Goldman's chair so you could ram
ten thousand volts up his ass.

SNOW
Very... very good guesses--

Gerri moves to within inches of Snow's face.

GERRI

When you were eight you shot a stray tabby cat with your father's rifle and that night you cried yourself to sleep over it. The next day you crossed Rosewood Avenue, entered the woods, and buried the cat in the gully of a creek bed where none of your friends could see you.

Snow looks dumbfounded.

SNOW

No one... could possibly...

As he stares into Gerri's eyes, he finally sees the incredible truth and appears afraid, stumbles backward.

GERRI

Relax! You can worship me later, or whatever floats you, though I'm not the God you think. I'm outside your experience, but still, I am a cosmic maker, beyond flesh and time.

SNOW

Floats you? That's the kind of thing Gerri would say, but you're--

GERRI

I'm speaking with her personality. I need one to interact with the world, one you can relate to.

SNOW

How... am I supposed to relate to an ex-wife possessed by a cosmic God maker being or whatever you are?

GERRI

You'll get used to it. Besides, with Gerri I'm fun now. As a rule, I have zero personality. You would find me extremely boring.

SNOW

Imagine... me, bored by God.

GERRI

I'm not that God. Wait...

Gerri picks up a glass of water from the coffee table and hands it to Snow. She motions to him to try it. He sips.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Mango banana with a stiff shot of St. John's Wort. Your favorite.

SNOW

Wow... this is kinda like an Aladdin genie thing.

INT. MOORCOCK'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

We see the Bay in the distance, Moorcock stands like a statue in the shadows, face inscrutable, gazing ahead.

MOORCOCK

Must be another suicide, Chambers.

CHAMBERS (O.S.)

We could use a few more.

MOORCOCK

Snow looked odd today. I'm concerned. Billions are riding on New China.

CHAMBERS (O.S.)

There is nothing to worry about. He can't breathe unless we give him air.

INT. GERRI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Snow's face is pushed to the ceiling. He gasps for breath.

His entire body is flattened like a big "X" against the ceiling. Gerri stands below him looking up.

GERRI

(calm)

Can't you ever accept a favor or a gift without imagining how you can exploit the giver?

SNOW

I'm sorry, Gerri, uh... Please. I didn't mean the genie thing.

GERRI

No? Soon as I gave you the drink you imagined me with big boobs, wearing a harem outfit.

SNOW

Yes, yes! Okay!

Snow drops from the ceiling onto the couch. Gerri sits him up and pats him. He finds himself facing the television.

GERRI

You need to watch this, Andy. It's the back page science stuff.

SNOW

Huh?... Oh. Sure... sure Ms. cosmic super god being.

ON TELEVISION: a man walks to a podium. He is the chief astronomer from the Kitt Solar Observatory.

CHIEF ASTRONOMER

At two A.M., Pacific Standard Time, the Kitt Observatory witnessed an anomalous surge erupting from the sun's surface, one caused by an unprecedented flux in the sun's magnetic field... By six A.M., PST, the surge, or Heaven's Scythe, as we now call it, had achieved escape velocity from the sun's surface. However, shortly after formation, it began to break up and dissipate.

The cameras flash at a furious pace.

CHIEF ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

Since that time, and much to our surprise, other solar observatories reported seeing and recording Heaven's Scythe even hours after we thought it had ceased to exist. We have no explanation for this now, but we feel certain the phenomenon is no longer a threat. All observatories ceased to measure any hint of it once its trajectory carried it beyond the sun's corona.

The press explodes with questions. More camera flashes. The screen goes blank. Snow turns to Gerri.

SNOW

Heaven's Scythe?... Can I ask a question or two without you slamming me into the ceiling?

GERRI

Yes. And the answer is, yes, the Scythe is my doing, and yes, the world will soon end.

SNOW

Right.

GERRI

Unless you save it.

Snow appears dazed once again. Gerri gently pulls him up to his feet and escorts him towards the door.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Andy, you'll have plenty of chances. Let's talk... Hey, I feel like a yogurt smoothie with apricot sprinkles.

SNOW

(zombie-like)

Sure... smoothie. Let's, uh, get a smoothie.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Gerri straw-sucks her smoothie. Snow is beside her. They sit on a bench facing the Bay. In the distance, a helicopter scans the waters below the bridge.

SNOW

They're still looking for you.

Snow turns to stare at Gerri. He moves to touch her.

GERRI (O.S.)

Yes, I still feel like Gerri...

BACK TO SCENE

SNOW

So... this sun thing. It's gone now--

GERRI

No, it's not. They just can't see it.
No one can but you and me. Put on
your sunglasses and look up.

Snow does so. He sees a streak of Heaven's Scythe a few inches from the sun, then looks down, removing his glasses.

SNOW

So how come only we can see it?

GERRI

No need to cause panic yet. Only you
need to be reminded, at the moment.

SNOW

Strange... so, okay, I save all
humanity. You turn me into Superman
or Green Lantern or--

GERRI

No. No superhero type stuff, much as
that would suit your narcissism.

SNOW

But why now? And *why me*? Why do I need
to save the world? Why not the
President... or Galactus?

GERRI

Whooooo! Oh, Superrrr Snow! Ha!
You're still imagining yourself flying
through space to save the planet!

Gerri raises her hand and sails it through the air.

SNOW

Okay, okay. I wish you would stop
that, please?

GERRI

To answer you, I held off, but things
are worsening every month.

(MORE)

GERRI (CONT'D)

The dark media culture you've birthed
and stoked to a firestorm, together
with the social media of your peers,
has created an unrelenting torment of
hate that assails me like nothing else
ever has. Pure, bitter, flesh-biting
hate...What's not to love?

Gerri nonchalantly sucks up more smoothie. Snow watches,
transfixed.

GERRI (CONT'D)

And I know you don't believe in evil,
but to answer your second question,
you're one of the most evil people on
earth right now, and therefore, if
someone like you can convince another
of your dark club to do good, then
perhaps the human race is worth
saving.

SNOW

Huh? C'mon! I'm one of the most evil
humans on earth?

GERRI

In the top one hundred, sure. And not
just for the corrupt reality you
create, Andy, but for the things you
don't do. Consider how many terrible
wrongs could be undone if you simply
told the truth to millions.

SNOW

But this Scythe thing... if you won't
give me special powers--

GERRI

I have faith in you Andy. Gerri knows
there's a nugget deep in your soul.
You just have to pan the dirty water.

SNOW

Uhhh, yeah, I'll pan, *sure...*

A woozy Snow stares into Gerri's eyes, the deep blue morphing
to a dark, tsunami ocean that forms a demonic angry face.

Snow is afraid. Gerri reaches forward and soothes him with
her hand, calming him.

GERRI

Use your grand powers of persuasion to convince just one human being to do one good thing of their own free will, just one, and their single act redeems the whole human race. The Scythe will fade. It's that simple, and that difficult.

SNOW

(incredulous)

So you want me to play the good guy? Mr. Evil? I mean, you're God, or whatever, and you truly scare the piss out of me, but--

Gerri smiles at Snow, looks him at the city skyline.

A blackened and desolate San Francisco skyline in her eye. Overhead, globes of searing plasma plummet to earth like meteors.

SNOW (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(stunned)

It's horrible, like Judgment Day. How can you be so cool?

GERRI

(matter-of-fact)

It's what I do.

SNOW

Alright, okay, it's my ass too, and I'll be good... good as possible to get the job done.

GERRI

Will you, Andy?

Gerri takes Snow by the arm and guides him forward as they walk, the Golden Gate Bridge in the background.

SNOW

Look, since you're so godlike, you already know what will happen, so--

GERRI

And since I am possessed of free will, I choose not to.

(MORE)

GERRI (CONT'D)

That's how powerful I am...
Regardless, you have only seven days.

SNOW

Seven, sure, that makes a certain kind
of sense... Alright, so I just walk
into a crowd, ask anyone--

GERRI

Not that simple. You'll go psyche
sailing, become a Janus.

SNOW

I'll become a woman?

A flock of seagulls flies overhead. Children play nearby.

GERRI

(amused)

A Janus. A man with two faces.

Gerri stops and faces snow for a moment, lifting her two
hands flat and palm up before her, facing outward. She moves
the left hand directly behind the right.

GERRI (CONT'D)

After your psyche inhabits another
body, you'll dominate it for a short
time. The inner face will be yours,
the outer face, theirs.

Gerri lowers her hands and they continue walking.

SNOW

It's, uh, simple.

GERRI

You will be you and the other at once,
and everyone around you will see you
as the other.

SNOW

And what happens to them?

GERRI

They sleep.

SNOW

(anxious)

So when do I start? I mean, we only have a few days, right?

GERRI

Yes, but I must tell you something.

SNOW

Do I dare ask?

GERRI

You're going to meet others like yourself, narcissist stereotypes you have a kinship with. You'll know them.

SNOW

(sarcastic)

Evil stereotypes, eh? This just gets better and better.

GERRI

But relax, I won't let you go insane. I will protect you, and I love you, because Gerri still loves you.

SNOW

I don't--

GERRI

Know what to say? Of course not. You've been fucking over people for so long it kinda takes you by surprise, huh?... Oh, and don't worry about your Heritage Media job. I'll make sure they won't even know you're gone.

Children run past them. Ships plow the Bay. Gulls CRY.

SNOW

Uh, quick question, before I go psycho. I've always wondered--

GERRI

About the meaning of life?

Before Snow can respond, Gerri reaches up and with two fingers, gently shuts his eyes.

All is darkness, a star of light expands into a swirl of dusky, cloud-pink sky.

GERRI (V.O.)

Life is the west-going dream-storm,
the sigh of the skies, the breath of
the stars with their golden hair
mussed over their eyes...

Her voice fades.

INT. DOCTOR ST. AMANT'S OFFICE - DAY

SUBTITLE: DAY ONE

Snow's eyes open. A yellow sticky note reads "Goodfellow must save Octavia."

Andrew Snow in a white lab coat. His badge reads, "DR. PAUL ST. AMANT." He sits before a cluttered desk. He picks up a patient folder, opens it.

SNOW

(to himself)

Octavia Valentin? What *the fuck*... I
should have guessed.

(looking up at the
ceiling)

Payback, Gerri, yeah... now all tumors
are my specialty, not just the ones on
two legs, right?

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Snow enters clutching a file. OCTAVIA VALENTIN waits. She holds her head and GROANS.

SNOW

Ms. Valentin, uh, what is it?

OCTAVIA

Someone shot a gun in my head.

Octavia is stocky, middle-aged, generally fatigued in appearance. She winces in pain.

SNOW

Yes, and before this is over I might
ask you to shoot me.

Octavia appears alarmed as Snow examines her. His movements
are hurried, as if impatient. Octavia calms herself.

OCTAVIA

It's hard to eat, keep anything down,
and I'm dizzy most of the time. The
medicine you gave me for headaches
doesn't work anymore.

SNOW

I gave you?... Oh, right.

OCTAVIA

Doctor? You talk crazy--

SNOW

You don't understand

Octavia sniffs the air and frowns.

OCTAVIA

Oh, ah, now again. I hate that smell.

SNOW

(impatient)

What? Smell what?

OCTAVIA

I knew it in Romania, in eighty-nine.
It's a smell of shoes, many, many
shoes, from inside Ceausescu's palace.

Snow stops the exam and stares at Octavia, appearing
irritated and impatient.

SNOW

Ceausescu? What the hell... I mean,
what were you doing there?

OCTAVIA

Being angry. What else? I was a
partisan. Ceausescu killed my brother
and Uncle, imprisoned my mother.

SNOW
(awkward)
I'm, uh, sorry.

OCTAVIA
Oh, I had my little revenge, alright.
I helped storm the palace.

SNOW
(bemused)
Really?

FLASHBACK (INT. CEAUSESCU'S PALACE - NIGHT)

A very young and grim Octavia carrying an AK-47 assault rifle steps cat-like down a bullet-holed corridor and cautiously enters a bathroom gleaming with gold fixtures.

OCTAVIA (V.O.)
You would not have believed that
palace, doctor. So much gold, gold in
piles, even golden bathrooms...

Octavia pushes open a door and enters an enormous shoe gallery. Before her on a black pedestal, illumined by a spotlight, diamond-encrusted black high heels.

OCTAVIA (V.O.)
And his wife, Elena, had hundreds of
shoes, kept them in a big room in the
palace. It was there I found her
famous diamond shoes, made in France.
All of Romania knew about them.

BACK TO SCENE.

SNOW
(dismissive)
Well, I understand tough times,
believe me. I was in Guatemala.

Octavia suddenly winces in pain again.

OCTAVIA
The shoes, though, the shoes got my
whole family to America, bought us a
house.

SNOW

(impatient)

Okay, um, Ms. Valentin, we're gonna need a lot more shoes cause I have your MRI results that show a skullbase tumor. It's the size of an egg and pressing against your brain, and it's uh, getting worse, a lot worse.

OCTAVIA

You mean, soon I'll be seeing Elena instead of just smelling her?

SNOW

Funny... Look, the tumor must come out, but the costs... It would take a team of neurosurgeons and plastic surgeons--

OCTAVIA

All the king's men. Like the egg guy, Humpy Dumplin. But I have no health insurance. At least I can pick my own coffin, eh doctor?

SNOW

(emotionless)

Only if smelling Elena is your goal, but there's a doctor here, Goodfellow, and he's familiar with a less invasive approach. I'll speak with him, slap his head if I have to. Just wait for me in the lobby, okay?

OCTAVIA

Thank you, doctor... but tell me if you are in a bad mood, will you? You act different today, like you got an itch up your butt, or something.

SNOW

No butt itch, ma'am. I'm just an asshole in search of a flush, and if the shit doesn't pass, we're all fucked.

Octavia gasps and her eyes pop. She doesn't know whether to laugh or take offense.

INT. GOODFELLOW'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Goodfellow waves Snow in. He is tall, forties, left side of his face slumping as if from Bells Palsy. He wears a silk black shirt and a gold chain around his neck.

In his office stand three life-sized, Hollywood film aliens.

They appear menacing and they stare at Snow. Snow snickers.

Goodfellow is in the process of assembling a fourth alien.

DR. GOODFELLOW

The aliens are for an earth-invasion theme party my veteran's club is having this Saturday. I paid over five thousand for 'em. Authentic props from actual movies.

SNOW

Real cute...I mean, yeah, that's, uh, impressive. Love it.

DR. GOODFELLOW

Iraq War. I served there as an Army surgeon. Anyway, the studio shipped the aliens here by mistake, but I was anxious to set them up. Wild, huh?

Snow smiles, but when Goodfellow looks away, stares at him as if he's a pathetic worm.

SNOW

(impatient)

Yeah, ya gotta love those irrelevant and grotesque nerd aliens. Look, I need to talk about a patient of mine, one Octavia Valentin. She's a candidate for your endoscopy procedure.

DR. GOODFELLOW

Really, then! What's it all about?

Goodfellow picks an alien head out of a box and fits it carefully on a torso as Snow quietly snickers at him.

SNOW

(bored)

Uhhh, posterior neurilemoma in severe later stage. We're thinking ashes in a few weeks... Damn the inconvenience, eh Goodfellow?

DR. GOODFELLOW

I've had seven of those cases in the past three months alone.

SNOW

You are a *genius*, doctor.

The alien head resembles "THE PREDATOR."

DR. GOODFELLOW

No, no, just one of the few surgeons in the U.S. trained in the procedure. Most of our colleagues are still sawing bone and lifting jaws... Have our patient call my office.

SNOW

Doctor, uh, one step off the cliff here. Ms. Valentin is without health insurance, but I'm certain you can, uh, work out payment...a plan.

Goodfellow's demeanor darkens. He pauses.

DR. GOODFELLOW

I'm a neurosurgeon, not a banker, sir.

SNOW

(stone-faced)

She's critical to our existence.

Goodfellow frowns and glances over at another alien head with big rows of saber-like teeth soaked in a yellowish liquid.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER LOBBY - DAY

Octavia, appearing exhausted by her ordeal, sits in the lobby reading a "Town and Country" magazine.

Magazine depicts a lavishly furnished home with a view of snowy mountain. The title reads, "A Senator's Homestead in Vale."

INT. GOODFELLOW'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

DR. GOODFELLOW

Have her try Sinai Medical Center in Phoenix. They take hardship cases.

SNOW

She could die on the way there.

DR. GOODFELLOW

Doctor, I'll be frank with you. The last hardship case fizzled out, stopped paying after less than six months, then threatened to sue for malpractice when I demanded payment.

SNOW

(impatient)

No, look, I get it. There's a lot of goddamn losers out there who--

Goodfellow walks away from Snow, grabs a light jacket laying across a chair.

DR. GOODFELLOW

(anger mounting)

Don't give me an attitude, doctor. It's her responsibility to have health insurance. Patients who work hard to have health insurance deserve priority, you see? Besides, my schedule is full.

Goodfellow places on the jacket as if preparing to leave while Snow looks ready to erupt.

DR. GOODFELLOW (CONT'D)

I know people who work two jobs so they can have health insurance, and there are thousands of new hardship cases every day. Are they all my responsibility? No, they're not...Tell her to go Google.

SNOW
Fuck Google, you better listen!

Goodfellow bolts out of the office, leaving a flustered Snow behind. The aliens stare menacingly at him.

EXT. THE BACK OF THE CLINIC - MINUTES LATER

Snow slams out of the back door looking furious, Octavia in tow. He looks around and spots Goodfellow heading for his BMW. Snow turns to Octavia who appears perplexed.

SNOW
Wait here, Humpty Dumplin, don't move.

Snow bolts after Goodfellow and catches up with him.

SNOW (CONT'D)
(breathing hard)
Doctor!

DR. GOODFELLOW
Are you mad, St. Amant? What's this really all about?

Snow struggles to control his ever mounting frustration and anger, compose himself and lower his voice.

SNOW
If you can understand who she is then you can help me prevent all hell from breaking loose. She's a hero, and--

DR. GOODFELLOW
All hell from breaking loose?

Goodfellow reaches his BMW and stops beside it.

SNOW
She's, uh... she has Romanian mafia friends... No shit. They could kill us both. Just give her a chance, get to know her. She's right over there.

Snow hooks a thumb to indicate a nervous Octavia.

DR. GOODFELLOW
Romanian mafia? You expect me to
believe that transparent lie? You
should work for Heritage Media, St.
Amant.

SNOW
(losing it)
We are literally fucking TOAST if--

Goodfellow slams into his car, starts the engine, and backs
quickly out, almost hitting Snow as he does.

SNOW (CONT'D)
(to himself)
You're gonna listen, motherfucker.

Wasting no time and furious, Snow runs to his car,
frantically motioning Octavia to get in.

EXT. A MAJOR HIGHWAY - LATER

Both cars drive at a reckless pace.

INT. SNOW'S CAR - TRAVELING

Snow is obsessed, Octavia confused.

OCTAVIA
(melancholy)
Doctor, let's... just never mind. This
is crazy head stuff.

Octavia winces in pain again.

SNOW
Neuro boy isn't losing me... So tell
me, Ms. Dumplin, why in goddamn hell
don't you have insurance? The answer
might help save the world, or not...
Shit, I don't know.

Octavia lowers her head and begins to weep.

INT. GOODFELLOW'S CAR - TRAVELING

Dr. Goodfellow punches a few numbers on his car phone. A police operator answers on speakerphone.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Sausalito police department.

DR. GOODFELLOW
Hello, my name is Doctor Goodfellow and I live at 1920 Celestial Drive in Sausalito. I'm just about home and a lunatic is chasing me. Please send an officer to my house, soon as possible.

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)
You say someone is following you?

DR. GOODFELLOW
Yes, yes! A mental case from where I work. Please!

POLICE OPERATOR (V.O.)
We'll have someone there pronto.

EXT. GOODFELLOW'S MANSION IN SAUSALITO - LATER

Goodfellow turns into his drive. His residence is an enormous chateau, lushly landscaped.

Snow, right behind, pulls his car next to the curb and hops out, still in his white medical coat. He walks quickly over the lawn as Goodfellow heads towards his front door.

SNOW
Wait goddammit! Let me have one last say and I'll leave you alone!

DR. GOODFELLOW
Don't bleed on me!

SNOW
Ms. Valentin--

Goodfellow stops and faces Snow.

DR. GOODFELLOW
What the hell is she to us? Huh? And
isn't she a bit old for you?

SNOW
That's low! You mother--

DR. GOODFELLOW
And all this contrived bull about
Romania? Who cares, St. Amant? Stop
pretending you do!

Snow turns around and motions to Octavia still in the car.
Octavia sees him and gets out, looking sheepish.

SNOW
Ms. Valentin, come here!

DR. GOODFELLOW
I won't let you manipulate me, St.
Amant.

Octavia gets closer, waves at Dr. Goodfellow who only looks
disgusted and turns towards his door. Octavia's face falls.

Snow pursues Goodfellow and jumps in front of him.

SNOW
(losing it again)
Okay, fuckwad, it's obvious from
looking at this Rothschild palace of
yours that you're not hurting for
green--

DR. GOODFELLOW
Did you know baseball players make
more money than I do? That's right.
Guys who use wooden sticks to hit
little balls around. They make more
than a man who saves lives every week.

SNOW
You poor, sad little bastard.

DR. GOODFELLOW
What if every doctor in this country
worked for free, St. Amant?

SNOW

(laughing in fury)

You don't give a rat's head in a trap unless insurance keeps you in two million dollar castles. I know your type, Goodfellow. I love you guys. Cruelty equals castles, man!

DR. GOODFELLOW

Admit you're no better than me.

SNOW

Yeah, and maybe that's what I'm beginning to hate most about you.

DR. GOODFELLOW

Take it up with your therapist!

He lurches past Snow and makes for the front door. Two cop cars pull up in the background. Snow grabs Goodfellow by the arm and Goodfellow hurls himself to the ground.

Goodfellow groans as if hurt. Cops rush up and grab Snow.

DR. GOODFELLOW (CONT'D)

You saw it! He assaulted me. He's been stalking me! Arrest him!

Two cops cuff a flabbergasted Snow and escort him to the squad car, push him into the backseat.

INT. POLICE CAR - MINUTES LATER

In the background Goodfellow stands and dusts himself off, one of the cops talking to him. Octavia stands open-mouthed.

Snow watches Goodfellow return to his car and remove a bag of golf clubs.

SNOW (TO HIMSELF)

You fucking phony bastard.

Snow places his head back on the seat and closes his eyes.

INT. GOD'S SPACE - DAY

Snow opens his eyes to discover himself standing on a pencil-thin line of pink-white light. It pierces a black void yawning to either side of him, stretching on to infinity.

GERRI (V.O.)

Do you now have an idea, Andy, of just how much form exists relative to chaos?... Come to me.

INT. A RESTAURANT - DAY

Gerri sits at a small table, sips her coffee. In the coffee a the ghostly image of Snow, walking, teetering, face strained.

Gerri smiles. She speaks into the coffee.

GERRI

Now hold your arms up, push forward.

Snow extends his arms, hands palm up. Gerri looks away to a far wall and sees a crack appear in it, lengthwise from ceiling to floor.

The crack widens to a door and the door opens. From out of the blackness steps Snow.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Over here! Want some coffee?

Snow walks zombie-like over to the table. He is shaking, breathing heavily, sits down.

GERRI (CONT'D)

You failed.

SNOW

(dazed)

So no redeemer...

(recovering)

But Goodfellow... You must have known--

GERRI

Did I say it would be easy?

SNOW

No, but... The Janus thing. It was strange to know what St. Amant knew.

GERRI

No time for med school.

SNOW

But what about Octavia?

GERRI

You care?

SNOW

I'm not sure I do, or St. Amant does. It's all just...

EXT. A RUGGED LANDSCAPE WITH SNOW - DAY

Snow sees a tiny bead of water on Gerri's finger. It solidifies to a bead of ice. Gerri places the finger in her mouth, removes it, smiles at Snow.

Snow recognizes the location.

SNOW

Glacier Bay...

The two of them sit atop a massive wall of ice. The water far below them is dark blue, misty, and littered with giant shards of ice. In the distance, strange ECHOES of snapping ice.

GERRI

The President is your concern next. I've tried to reason with him myself, even sent him a letter, but he won't listen.

SNOW

You sent a letter to--

GERRI

Yes, to the President of the United States. I used someone else's hands. But it wasn't enough... It never is.

In the distance, more ECHOES, great sheets of ice snapping.

Gerri reaches down to pluck a tiny bit of green leaf thrusting from the gravel-dirt atop the ice.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Letters to Earth, I've sent thousands,
to kings, bullies, CEOs, presidents.

SNOW

And they read them?

GERRI

I made sure, yes. But I didn't want
to make them afraid. I learned long
ago that fear was wrong.

SNOW

What? God learned?... You're saying
you're not all knowing?

LOUD SNAPPING of ice from somewhere beyond the fog.

GERRI

I'm saying that even God can be
surprised. If that's what you want to
call me.

SNOW

That... kinda makes you more human.

GERRI

No. It kinda makes you more like God.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Snow and Gerri have returned to the same bench in the park,
as if they never left.

GERRI

Tomorrow and tomorrow comes, Andy, and
human beings make me more than I am.
They make me perfect, little knowing I
can never achieve it. Little knowing
too how hard I try.

Gerri stares for several moments, distant, pensive.

SNOW

So now my job is to prod the President into doing the right thing? The actual fucking President of the U.S.?

GERRI

Yes, but you must do a better job of faking goodness.

SNOW

Well, uh-

GERRI

The President lives an illusion, like most of you, and those who surround him feed it... Did you know that every illusion you lose brings you closer to the real truth?

In the distance, Gerri's tiny body falls towards the water once again. Snow is distracted by it, points, his jaw slack.

SNOW

How do I know I'm not suffering illusion right now?

GERRI

You are, and all you see or seem to be is naught but a dream within a dream.

Snow fades away while Gerri looks on.

GERRI (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Be my living letter to Earth, Andy.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - MORNING

SUBTITLE: DAY TWO

Excited VOICES erupt suddenly, somewhere beyond Snow. He opens his eyes and gasps. He is dressed in a dark blue suit.

He sits in a small room handsomely furnished with oils, crystal, and antiques. In his hands he holds a report. He glances down at it.

REPORT OF THE KELLY COMMISSION ON RUSSIAN NARCOTICS TRAFFIC
IN THE U.S.

SNOW

First Octavia, now this. The karma...

Snow stares blankly at the report for a few moments. He notes that in his other hand is a small slip of white paper.

The note reads "Get the President to act on the Kelly Report."

VOICES are heard nearby again. Snow looks grim, more nervous.

He slips the note into his pocket. A voice calls to him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Get up. The President is waiting.

Snow looks up and sees a young man approaching him, MANLEY THOMPSON, dressed in identical fashion. Manley walks right up to Snow and Snow stands to face him.

SNOW

Oh, Manley, right. Ready as hell.

MANLEY

You look dazed. Got it together?

SNOW

Yeah.

MANLEY

Remember, we'll dispense with the Kelly report first thing so we can move on to the Middle East. Remember what we discussed with Chief of Staff Monson?

SNOW

About?

MANLEY

The Kelly report. What's your problem?

SNOW

Yeah, yeah, Monson told us the report is definitely not something the President gives a flying shit about, and, uh, he hates Kelly's guts, blah blah.

MANLEY

Suffocate the attitude, just a few sentences of summary downplay, got it? The report is a political crap bomb and the only reason we're broaching is because the press has it. Besides, by tomorrow it's yesterday's news, and even stage shows like Heritage Media won't report it.

SNOW

Don't you think I know that?

MANLEY

You sound bitchy, Dreyfuss.

SNOW

I'm just looking for scapegoats.

Manley frowns at the comment, turns on his heels and leaves.

SNOW (TO HIMSELF) (CONT'D)

Shit, shit, shit.

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

THE PRESIDENT sits behind his massive desk. STAFFERS face him, two empty chairs remain. Snow chooses the outermost.

THE PRESIDENT

Now, fellow astronauts, let's begin. You want to trail boss this gathering of tremendous geniuses, Miss Monson?

The President nods to a stylish, professional, 30-something woman with dirty blonde hair, a conspicuously leggy dark skirt, and hawk-like demeanor. MISS MONSON.

MISS MONSON

Yes, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT

Thank you, and let me say before we begin, ladies and gentlemen, that we have a world of problems out there. Remember, we are not part of the problem, we're the solution.

General sounds of agreement from everyone. Snow appears as if trying not to snicker, clears his throat. Miss Monson glares at him. The President glances at Monson's legs.

MISS MONSON

Well, Mr. President, our first order of business is the Kelly report.

THE PRESIDENT

Oh, that double chin loserrrr.

Sounds of amusement from the group. The President beams.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I recognize the fruit cakeness.

MISS MONSON

Yes, sir. Anyway, as you know, the press locked on to it but we expect it all to blow over within days.

THE PRESIDENT

Those media bobble heads just can't remember anything long enough to keep at it. Always something new, except for Moorcock's lynch mob at Heritage. I respect that guy. Huh?

Snow weakly grins as the staff ass-kiss in agreement.

MISS MONSON

Yes, sir. Staffer Robert Dreyfuss will brief you on the report. We'll devote a minute of your attention and move on to your France visit and the Middle East.

THE PRESIDENT

Sounds dory-hunky... Mr. Boofus?

The President grins at Snow. Monson nods. Manley winks.

SNOW

Basically, Mr. President, none of us
like loser druggies...

THE PRESIDENT

Tell me straight, captain.

SNOW

(looking sincere)

Well, sir, the report basically makes
the case for eliminating supply in
order to dry up demand.

THE PRESIDENT

But honey, pedophile Kelly knows, as
well do we all, that without demand
there is no supply, correcto mundo?

SNOW

Yes sir, but... it's a vicious circle.
More supply begets more demand, sir.
The report argues to effectively cut
ninety percent of the supply at the
border to Mexico--

MISS MONSON

But we all know that stopping the drug
trade is impossible. Even previous
administrations knew that.

SNOW

Yeah so that bastard proves otherwise,
unfortunately. We just need will and
vision... sir.

The President laughs derisively. Miss Monson looks stunned.

Manley scowls at Snow. Nervous tittering all around.

SNOW (CONT'D)

It clearly reveals certain U.S.
Customs on the take--

STAFFER

We saw the old movie Traffic, Bob.

The President guffaws, glances once more at Monson's legs.

More snickers, chuckles.

SNOW

If I may be frank, the report proves the cartels are, um, making fools out of us daily, yes, just goddamn corrupting us, breaking us down to... uh, like a toxic acid.

MISS MONSON

(to the President)

Senator Kelly is attempting to embarrass the Presidency with reports of allegedly bad customs officials.

Miss Monson looks over at Snow, her eyes throwing daggers.

THE PRESIDENT

The past is over, the War on Drugs is for losers and pedophiles to dream about.

SNOW

Yes, sir, Mr. President, but given the sheer volume of narcotics rolling over the border in phony tanker trucks on a daily basis, hundreds of millions of dollars worth, and the relative ease it would take to stop them with dogs and weigh scales--

MISS MONSON

Bob, are you working for a pedophile Senator in the Democratic party?

SNOW

(sarcastic)

No, uh, of course, not, I work for God... Just kidding, I, uh, realize it's not a sexy issue--

Miss Monson looks ready to explode.

MISS MONSON

Sexy?... Sexy? I'm offended!

The President rolls his eyes, appears bored. He plucks a few peanuts from a bowl and begins to munch, staring blank-eyed out a window while humming "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

INT. MISS MONSON'S OFFICE - LATER

The Kelly report ricochets and knocks a statue of Lincoln to the floor. Miss Monson faces Snow, furious.

SNOW

Toppling Lincoln statues?

MISS MONSON

You dare! Whose team are you on? I told you specifically before the staff meeting that drugs are a dead issue with the President. It's not part of his platform and not his concern. He will not address the issue because it is no win. Understand? No win!

SNOW

(fumbling, nervous)

Hey, I'm with him. I hate druggies, like I said, but the report does point out we can win it, but that's not my fault... God, I'm fucking stupid.

MISS MONSON

You are! The report is a political football in waiting.

SNOW

I hate to sound blue state, but we don't have to circle the wagons--

MISS MONSON

Where did you suddenly get this incredible nerve from, Dreyfuss? I don't remember you being such an odd-ball. Anyway, I know your father is an important party donor, but you'll only get so far on that. Don't push it and don't push me! Good day!

Snow looks baffled, but walks away. He turns as if to speak, but the furious image of Miss Monson stops him.

MISS MONSON (CONT'D)

And don't forget you are on chopper at six tomorrow morning. You're going with the President to France... And don't make me regret taking you.

Snow salutes with two fingers and leaves, frustrated.

INT. A HALLWAY IN THE WHITE HOUSE - LATER

Snow stops at a window, pulls a pair of sunglasses from his pocket, puts them on and looks up. He sees Heaven's Scythe, small but unmistakable, a small bright comma of light.

SNOW

Shit.

He gawks for a moment, replaces the glasses. He walks down the hall in a daze, passes the open door of Manley's office.

Manley looks up from his desk and sees Snow. He jumps up and lurches into the hallway to grab Snow by the arm.

MANLEY

We gotta talk. You are one ignorant son of a bitch, Dreyfuss.

SNOW

(dazed)

What do you mean?

MANLEY

Power lunch time. C'mon.

EXT. LAFAYETTE PARK ACROSS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE - LATER

The day is sunny. Homeless people wander, protesters sit beside their sidewalk displays of aborted nuke babies, shirtless people throw frisbees, Japanese tourists snap photos.

Snow and Manley stroll in the grass. In the background, rises Rochambeau, the French hero of the American Revolution, pointing his bronze finger.

MANLEY

You trying to commit suicide?

SNOW

(stoic)

I don't follow.

MANLEY

You're like a child, Dreyfuss. There are two realities in life... the apparent one, like today in the staff meeting, and the other, below the surface, the one that drives things. Ever seen the movie, Blue Velvet?

SNOW

(indignant)

Who the fuck are you to tell me?

MANLEY

Your boss, asshole. Now, let me set you right, off the record. NO ONE in Washington really wants the drug trade to end, get it?

SNOW

(sarcastic)

Sure, set me right, Manley boy.

MANLEY

Stop being naive.

FLASHBACK (INT. LOBBYIST OFFICE - DAY)

Manley sits at a conference table with other suits.

MANLEY (V.O.)

Narcotics barons buy influence in Washington, millions of dollars worth, and they do it through intermediaries like everyone else.

One of the suits, all-American in face, slides a check towards another suit who takes it and smiles.

BACK TO SCENE

MANLEY

All those many years ago, if Saddam Hussein had paid the right power brokers in this city he would never have been invaded, but he snubbed the game.

The White House rises in the background. A cop on a horse clops past.

SNOW
(incredulous)
Wait, this is too much. You're saying
the White House is bribed by drug
lords? As a newsman...

MANLEY
As a what?

SNOW
Nothing, nothing.

MANLEY
Fronts for cartels line the pockets of
lobbyists who influence party
politics. Gold makes the rules...
Democrat politicians, Republican,
their staffs, makes zero difference.

Snow glances to the side and stares at the face of homeless
woman who strongly resembles St. Amant's Octavia.

SNOW
Do I give a shit?... I don't--

MANLEY
My advice is to drop it once and for
all or you'll be out of here
like misfire through a Colt 45.

Snow scowls at Manley, then appears to realize something. He
jumps up and quickly heads off in a direction other than the
White House.

MANLEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Where the heck are you going?

SNOW
(to himself, determined)
Where there's snow, there's fire.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - NEXT DAY

SUBTITLE: DAY THREE

Snow sits alone, his head back on a seat. He appears on edge. He gently slides from his outer suit coat pocket a small bag that contains a white powder.

SNOW
(to himself)
Do I care? No, yes, no... goddammit.

Suddenly, a couple of staffers make their way up the aisle in a hurry. Someone bumps him from behind.

In the distance he sees a small crowd of people gathering in the President's cabin. He gets up to check it out.

Snow and others crowded around a large television monitor in Air Force One. The President sits in his seat watching the monitor fixed in the wall.

Snow appears dumbfounded and terrified. On the monitor, the planet Venus, fiery wisps of gas circling and grasping the planet, glowing patches of fire spotting the surface.

"HUBBLE TELESCOPE IMAGE, 6 P.M. EST"

A news announcer speaks.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And again, here we see the image of Venus as seen through the Hubble Telescope. Astronomers and scientists throughout the world are baffled by this sudden and violent phenomena.

THE PRESIDENT
Verbosity leads to unclear, inarticulate things, Mr. Talking Head. Let's get on with it.

EWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And now we'll take you to a tape of a press conference held earlier by the European Astronomers Association in Madrid, Spain. The man you'll hear speaking is Professor Olivier de Bilde from Belgium.

The monitor cuts to a portly, bearded scientist in a brown suit speaking in Flemish. Another voice translates.

TRANSLATION VOICE (V.O.)

For reasons we do not yet understand the planet Venus has been subjected to... what can only be described as planet melting temperatures. This follows on the heels of an anomaly witnessed recently by solar observatories around the earth... termed Heaven's Scythe by our colleagues in Hawaii.

Snow stares wide-eyed at the monitor. Venus is seen again, spotted with fiery glow.

TRANSLATION VOICE

All the data is not in yet, but right now our search for answers is focused on the sun... and phenomena associated with it.

THE PRESIDENT

(to no one in particular)

Yakety yak krauts. Where's our man on this? Where is what's his name? The White House science advisor. He's got to get over there, to Portugal.

The President uses a remote to turn off the monitor.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Show's over everybody. Don't expect too much so you won't be disappointed. Back to your seats.

Snow is paralyzed, gaping, his upper lip quivering.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - LATER

A nervous, shaking Snow makes his way back toward the President's seat. He sees the President leaning back, eyes closed. The seat beside him is empty.

SNOW

(fiddles with his tie)

Shit, okay, so this didn't work with Goodfellow, but maybe...

Snow fakes confidence, sits down beside the President.

SNOW (CONT'D)
Your life is in danger.

The President opens his eyes and turns to regard Snow.

THE PRESIDENT
What?

SNOW
I work with Interpol. Your life is in danger.

THE PRESIDENT
Are progressives hunting me?

The President turns around in his seat as if searching.

SNOW
As long as you reject the Kelly report, you'll live... A cartel assassin, code name La Dago, is watching you closely. She is here, now, in disguise.

THE PRESIDENT
Those illegals wouldn't dare--

SNOW
You must be seen to reject it. You must tweet your rejection... I just pretended to go along with it, to keep my cover.

THE PRESIDENT
Who is El Baggo?

SNOW
You will know soon, but the Kelly report is bad anyway, so another reason to do what the cartel wants.

THE PRESIDENT
The cartel can suck a gun barrel.

The President reaches beside his chair, withdraws a remote control and switches on his television monitor again, begins to channel surf while Snow looks on in amazement.

THE PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
 (growing angrier)
 Maybe that report is right and we can
 tell El Baggo to stick it. Does the
 Secret Service know?

SNOW
 Interpol didn't trust Secret Service
 not to tip La Dago off.

The President momentarily settles on an MTV image of young
 women playing topless golf in West Palm Beach.

SNOW (CONT'D)
 There is another option. You accept
 the Kelly report and we snag La Dago
 before she can act... Besides, you
 will be seen as a great reformer, like
 Lincoln. You know, you can make the
 world believe what you wish and tell
 the cartel to stick it up their ass
 too.

The channel switches to a line of British regulars fighting
 Sudanese rebels as the President responds.

THE PRESIDENT (O.S.)
 I like those options, Boofus.

The British square fires volley after volley at the Sudanese.

SNOW
 (stumbling)
 As a bonus, it's just, well, uh... the
 right thing. I'm no fucking saint
 myself, but if we willingly allow harm
 to come to others and do nothing
 within our power to stop it, aren't we
 also responsible for that harm?

THE PRESIDENT
 How about a harm and cheese sandwich?

SNOW
 Sir?

THE PRESIDENT
 Who is La Dago? Now!

SNOW

I want to tell you, sir, I do...

The President turns to Snow and glares at him as he leans towards him and lowers his voice.

THE PRESIDENT

I don't give a ghetto's ass about your drug users or that bullshit loser stuff. Didn't I make that clear, Jew boy? I just hate anyone shoving me...Now since you won't tell me who Dago, Baggo is, I'm going to enjoy tremendously kicking your ass.

SNOW

(cold)

Interpol has me under orders. I broke secrecy just by talking, sir.

Snow glimpses Miss Monson staring at him from a few feet away, gasping at him next to the President. But her astonishment is quickly replaced by rage.

MISS MONSON

Mr. President! I'm sorry, I had no idea Dreyfuss was---

Snow stands and faces Miss Monson, raising his finger to point at her, his face flaring to anger.

SNOW

Mr. President, meet LA DAGO!

MISS MONSON

What?... What are you--

SNOW

I was ordered not to blow your cover, La Dago, but the stakes are too high.

THE PRESIDENT

Miss Monson, have you been sent to kill me?

MISS MONSON

No, no... what? This is insane!

SNOW
(coldly)
When you were a congresswoman from New
Jersey, you vowed to clean drugs off
the streets, did you not?

Miss Monson is fighting for control, but still reeling.

SNOW (CONT'D)
Then quite suddenly, your vows were
forgotten and you met with... the
Generalissimo of Devils, as he is
called, undercover in a New York
nightclub called, um, Tony's Backdoor
Lounge, and, uh, and...

MISS MONSON
(screaming for Secret
Service)
Jaaaason! Mark! Jorgeee! GET IN HERE!

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - LATER

Snow sits in his seat, handcuffed, looking dazed.

SNOW
(quietly, to Gerri)
We're almost Heaven's fucking toast.

Manley suddenly appears and leans down from the aisle to
speak to Snow. He looks ready to explode.

MANLEY
You just got me fired too for that
mental stunt. You son of a bitch.

Manley punches Snow in the arm. Snow grunts in pain.

EXT. CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT - DAY

Air Force One lands on the runway.

INT. CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT - LATER

Snow follows the staff, bumping behind into the terminal.

GUNFIRE suddenly erupts. Secret Service men rush to smother the President. An EXPLOSION rocks the airport.

Snow and Manley duck behind a small food stand. Bullets THUD and WHINE. Manley swivels his legs to kick Snow from behind the food stand and into the fire.

Snow takes a few kicks, knocks Manley's legs away and gets to his knees. Manley springs at him to push him.

Snow flattens himself as Manley hurls forward. Manley's momentum carries him over Snow and barely outside the cover of the stand.

A bullet pierces the top of Manley's head. Manley's face death-freezes, face still contorted with anger.

FLASHBACK (PARAMILITARY BASE IN GUATEMALAN JUNGLE - NIGHT)

A large bonfire illumines a bloody, dazed Snow tied to a tree. One of his bedraggled male companions is led before him, arms pinned by two paramilitary thugs.

A third puts a revolver to the man's head and shoots him. Snow cries out in surprise and anguish.

EXT. A FOGGY FIELD - DAY

Snow lies flat on a muddy ground, in a field, chopped and pocked as if from explosions, scores of bodies in all directions. He sits up, dazed.

In the far distance, a city is burning, oil-black smoke hanging like a storm front in an eerie purple sky, flames snapping above the buildings.

A hand reaches out to his shoulder. He gasps, turns to see Gerri staring down, her face sad.

SNOW
Manley's dead...

Snow struggles to recover his wits. He takes a deep breath and stands to face Gerri, looking fearful, but determined.

SNOW (CONT'D)
And I saw Heaven's Scythe... and you
expect me to--

GERRI
Stop it by convincing the likes of the
President and Goodfellow?

SNOW
(exasperated)
It's crazy, I mean...

Snow looks up to see a plasma meteor, a particle of Heaven's
Scythe arcing across the purple sky, leaving a poisonous
yellow trail.

SNOW (CONT'D)
(pointing up)
Is that for my benefit?

GERRI
The days are passing, more quickly
than you realize.

SNOW
What?... Look, the whole human race is
at stake so why not just change us?
Please, just use telepathy or
whatever. You're the super cosmic
woman.

GERRI
I won't force it to make me happy.

SNOW
Well, I'm sorry you're not happy, but
your living Earth letter isn't
working. I have so little time to deal
with your set-up evil damn
stereotypes. It's bam, bam, then I'm
out.

GERRI
But do you believe in evil now, Andy?

Snow hesitates, thinks, realizes the truth.

SNOW
Yes. I could call it something else,
but--

GERRI

And do you have any concept of how much human suffering takes place each second as a result?

SNOW

No. How could I?

GERRI

You must know the absolute sum of suffering for one moment, only one.

Snow stares dumbfounded at Gerri.

SNOW

You jerk me out of my life, set me up to fail on these ridiculously impossible missions to reform the biggest bastards on the planet, saddle me with saving the entire fucking human race from a sun flare, and now you want me to understand suffering?

Gerri tilts her head upward and stares at Snow.

GERRI

It can always be worse... Know what you must. Now.

Snow begins to speak then he screams as if in horrible pain, his eyes rolling white. He collapses to the ground, his head and face in the dirt.

Gerri leans forward to whisper in Snow's ear.

GERRI (CONT'D)

I've listened to that, every second of every hour of every day for thousands of years. Can you run a new story?

Gerri places her hand gently on Snow's forehead and rubs it.

The dim sounds of ROLLING THUNDER are heard.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

SUBTITLE: DAY FOUR

We see a truck in flames, crashed into the side of a building. In the distance, a man wearing sunglasses walks at a rapid pace, accompanied by a Hispanic woman professional.

The man's hair is a light brown with blond streaks clasped in a pony tail, tie loose, jacket swung over his shoulder.

The man stops and holds his head as if in pain. He stumbles over to a nearby bench and sits, lowering his head. The woman, REGINA SUAREZ, joins him.

Regina acts loving, concerned, massaging his head, the other hand on his shoulder.

REGINA

Jonathan?

SNOW

I'm okay... Just dropping in like that. Such a mind fuck.

REGINA

What do you mean, *dropping in*?

SNOW

(recognizing her)

Regina? My God, *it's you*.

REGINA

You should have taken a vacation after putting that murderer Benjamin Fox away. Too many late nights.

Snow looks at her with surprise, almost lovingly.

SNOW

Um, do you recall Andrew Snow?... a man you knew many years ago.

REGINA

Yes, I still know him, he's at Heritage Media. But why do you ask?

SNOW

He, uh, emailed me last week, said he knew you, before he joined the Peace Corps. He just says hi.

Regina looks at him with open-mouth surprise, unsure what to say. Snow stands and examines himself for a moment, then sees a newspaper in Regina's purse and reaches for it.

The Los Angeles Times. He unfolds it to read the headlines: "THE PRESIDENT ESCAPES TERRORIST ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT"

Snow replaces his sunglasses and stares up at Heaven's Scythe, now a horrific red scimitar arcing across the blue sky, long as fifty moons in a row. He appears stunned.

REGINA

Jonathan, what is the matter with you?

SNOW

We need more time... I mean, I need more time, or we're all so dead and buried.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT OF LOS ANGELES - LATER

At the base of a statue, BLIND JUSTICE, a plaque reads: "DONATED TO THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES."

We see Snow facing Regina, statue in the background.

SNOW

(speaking low)

Look, Judge Regina Suarez, I might need a favor. It's about Mathers, the black male school teacher accused of taking advantage.

REGINA

You mean the sexual assaulter?

Snow's cell phone beeps. He removes it from coat pocket.

A text message appears: "YOU WILL KNOW THE RIGHT ONE SOON."

Snow closes the cell phone and pockets it.

REGINA (CONT'D)

Who was that?

Snow clutches Regina by the arm and ushers her behind a wall further down the hallway, out of sight. The two of them kiss passionately. Regina SIGHS. Snow recovers.

SNOW

Judge Leffer is presiding over the Mathers trial--

REGINA

The man's a horrible virus... but whatever you're scheming, you know my boundaries.

They kiss again. Snow pulls back.

SNOW

Leffer's also the D.A.'s golf buddy.

REGINA

Ah, yes, the golf course, where the city viruses form new combinations... But what's Mathers to you?

SNOW

He was nothing to me, until recently. Um, his attorney is a close personal friend, and he strongly believes Mathers is innocent. I don't believe it personally, but--

REGINA

I love your ethics... Look, Jonathan, why not just quit the D.A.'s office rather than end run all the time?

A chorus of sirens ROARS outside the building and fades in the distance. Snow looks more anxious.

SNOW

(sarcastic)

Cause I'm on a mission from God? Or, uh, maybe when guys like Mathers are rushed off to prison cause the D.A. wants a television spot, it makes me... well, it--

REGINA

So what can't I do for you, Batman?

SNOW

I'll investigate Mathers myself, just to make sure, and if I'm right, I'll need an audience with Judge English.

REGINA

Hah! I don't think so.

SNOW

He's a buddy of yours, the head judge of the superior court, and he can force Leffer to recuse himself. It's the only way to get justice for Mathers.

REGINA

My judgeship is important to me Jonathan.

Snow places his hand gently on the side of her face.

SNOW

And what about the corrupt justice system you're always complaining about? Now here's a chance to kill two of the biggest fucking viruses and you're backing off?

A woman's WAIL is heard. Regina and Snow turn to see a small party of people emerging from a courtroom into the hallway.

Two of them are weeping bitterly. Regina turns back to Snow.

REGINA

You're a manipulative bastard. Did you set that scene up?

She hooks her thumb to the weepers.

SNOW

I'm going to see Mathers, now. I'll call you later. I feel... different.

Snow winks at her, turns and walks away.

SNOW (CONT'D)

(quietly to himself)

And now Mathers, just like Octavia.
I'm so fucked.

INT. CITY JAIL - LATER

We seen the face of a young African-American man, his appearance melancholy and desperate. It is MARK MATHERS. He sits across a plexi-glass wall from Snow.

MATHERS

Right from the beginning it was all funny... strange, I mean. Five cops showed up, quiet and mean as snakes...

FLASHBACK (OUTSIDE MATHER'S HOME - DAY)

Alarmed neighbors in bathrobes freeze as they watch the violent scene from across the street.

MATHERS (O.S.)

They dragged me out in cuffs in front of the whole neighborhood while my wife and kids were crying.

BACK TO SCENE.

MATHERS (CONT'D)

Wouldn't even let me get my diabetes medication... You ever read Kafka?

SNOW

Yeah, yeah, I get it.

MATHERS

(struggling not to weep)
Do you? Who will believe me? The entire community thinks I'm a pedophile and I'm about to go to prison. That ever happen to you?

SNOW

(sincere)
No, man, of course not. What I meant was, I've seen a lot of innocent people go down... Let's just say the D.A. gets overzealous.

MATHERS

He's the damn criminal. Not me.

SNOW

Your accuser, Marilyn Banner, says you pushed her behind a shelf of books in the school library and groped her, tried to kiss her.

MATHERS

(composing himself)

Pure fantasy... The history class was met in the library. I was looking for a particular book when Marilyn came up to me and said, "Payback time."

FLASHBACK (SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY)

Marilyn mouths the words silently, knocks the books to the floor and staggers off, appearing traumatized before other students and staff in the library.

BACK TO SCENE.

MATHERS

Then she slams a bunch of books off the shelf and runs off like I'd taken a bite out of her.

SNOW

It's a little hard to believe. I have to be frank with you.

MATHERS

Her grade last semester was a C. Her father told me he'd sue me. The guy's a corporate piranha, a real big mouth. And the way his daughter threatens you... They gotta share the same genes, man.

SNOW

What do you mean?

MATHERS

She's smart, never says anything where anyone can hear her. She just leans close, gets real intense, then whispers at you. The old man acts the same way.

FLASHBACK (MARILYN'S FATHER - DAY)

He leans towards us. His expression is fierce, intimidating.
His mouth moves silently, forming the words: "Payback time."

BACK TO SCENE.

SNOW

Why are they so rabid over this?

MATHERS

College. The grade I'm giving Marilyn is pulling down her GPA. Now the prosecution claims I gave her a C cause she wouldn't have sex with me.

SNOW

If they can't control reality, they create a bullshit reality they can control.

MATHERS

You got that straight, man.

SNOW

And her friend, the one who claims she saw you assaulting Marilyn?

MATHERS

(bitter)

Betsy Powers, one of the girls in her infamous princess clique.

SNOW

Alright, look, the only chance we have is to get Leffer to recuse himself from your case...

MATHERS

(becoming emotional)

That... son of a bitch judge won't even allow character witnesses in my defense, and then he ruled all the prior shit with Marilyn's father was irrelevant. It's so damn Kafka.

SNOW

I know, goddammit, I know. I'll be back in touch.

Mathers begins to shed tears.

MATHERS

Sure, I... I've been a good teacher
for fifteen years. Anything you can
do. Thanks.

EXT. COAST PARK HIGH SCHOOL IN OCEANVIEW - LATER

A view of the front of the school

INT. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE - DAY

BETSY POWERS. Her auburn hair in a sixties flip-up do, a lip
ring, tacky sparkle eye shadow. Snow is facing her. He
extends his hand but she stares at it as if poisonous.

BETSY

I already spoke with a detective.

Snow withdraws his hand, walks over to a door and opens it
for Betsy. She exits, appearing suspicious. He follows.

EXT. OCEAN PARK HIGH SCHOOL - MINUTES LATER

Snow and Betsy face each other in a parking lot behind the
school. Betsy looks uncomfortable.

He stares up at Heaven's Scythe. Individual currents in the
Scythe are visible. Betsy frowns, trying to see what Snow is
staring at.

BETSY (O.S.)

You know who my father is?

SNOW (O.S.)

No idea.

BETSY (O.S.)

Chairman of Biggerman Industries...and
he's a bigger man than you.

SNOW

I hear you invented that story about
Mathers cause Marilyn told you to.

BETSY

No, that's not it. I did see him.

SNOW (O.S.)

The police report says you saw Mathers grope Marilyn's breasts then run his hand down to her crotch.

BETSY

Uh, yeah, well, that's what it says, then guess that's it.

SNOW

(stone-faced)

Actually, Betsy, it doesn't say that.

Betsy, surprised, sits up to face Snow.

BETSY

Huh?

SNOW

It says you saw Mark Mathers reach up and squeeze Marilyn's right breast and then stop when he saw you.

BETSY

(indignant)

You lied to me.

SNOW

And you've been lying to me. Do you know you can go to jail for lying in order to put an innocent person in jail? I'm a witness, Betsy.

BETSY

Okay, okay... It's gone far enough.

SNOW

How far is that?

BETSY

She just wanted him in trouble with the school, but Marilyn's dad got all super pissed and had Mathers jailed up...But she doesn't give a flying fuck. Marilyn owns the world.

SNOW

And you?

BETSY

She pushed me into it. She worked on me and some of our other friends...

FLASHBACK (MARILYN - DAY)

BETSY (O.S.)

She said Mathers was picking on her and that payback was at hand.

Marilyn's mouth is seen. It moves silently, forming the words: "Payback time."

BACK TO SCENE.

BETSY (CONT'D)

And if I didn't help her I was just supporting him and wasn't really her friend, and on and on. I had no idea it would go this far... I won't go to jail, will I?

SNOW

No, because you did the right thing. I just wish it hadn't been necessary to scare you into it... Look, you've saved an innocent man, and as you know, prison is a little tough, huh?

BETSY

Yeah, right... I'm sorry.

SNOW

Oh, and, you'll have to make an official statement, Betsy. Someone will contact you soon.

BETSY

Uh, okay.

Snow stands and walks away. Betsy watches him leave. After a few moments, she opens her purse and we see a miniature digital recorder, recording light on. Betsy clicks it off.

EXT. SUPERIOR COURT OF LOS ANGELES - MORNING

SUBTITLE: DAY FIVE

A view of the front of the building.

INT. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDING JUDGE - DAY

JUDGE BRADFORD ENGLISH sits behind a ship-sized desk, American flags to either side. On the wall behind him are a score of awards and plaques.

English is African-American, early fifties. Snow and Regina sit on wooden chairs facing him. He grins hugely at Snow, as if he knows something Snow does not.

ENGLISH

(to Snow)

My back is just a little sore. I got in a few rounds of golf yesterday afternoon with your boss, the D.A.

Snow tries not to act surprised, but glances briefly at Regina who doesn't return the glance.

ENGLISH (CONT'D)

Now, Judge Suarez here tells me you have an extremely urgent matter.

SNOW

I'll admit this is highly unusual, sir, but a grave error is about to be made in the court's criminal division.

ENGLISH

Judge Leffer?

Again, Snow tries not to act surprised.

SNOW

He needs to recuse himself from the Mathers case, and for several reasons--

ENGLISH

I'm well aware of allegations of misconduct in Judge Leffer's courtroom, but it's all hearsay.

(MORE)

ENGLISH (CONT'D)

I'm also aware that the city wants justice in the Mathers case.

SNOW

Justice is exactly the issue here, Judge English.

ENGLISH

But why involve yourself? It's not your case, and certainly not your place.

SNOW

I realize that justice is not possible in the D.A.'s office, especially not with all the publicity surrounding this case. But the superior court is bound by law to pursue justice in a just manner and--

ENGLISH

(indignant)

It's bad enough you have the gall to march in here hurling accusations against Judge Leffer, but now you're accusing the D.A of prosecutorial misconduct?

SNOW

(desperate)

Judge English, please, hear me out. The primary witness against Mathers, Betsy Powers, recanted yesterday--

ENGLISH

Because you threatened her.

This time, Snow can't hide his surprise.

SNOW

What?

ENGLISH

Oh, I know all about it. She filled in her father, Charles Biggerman, and he called the D.A.'s office before COB yesterday. Bottom line, Betsy has recanted her recantation, so Mathers is still going down...

(MORE)

ENGLISH (CONT'D)

and now it appears, so are you, Mr. McBride, for attempting to obstruct justice.

Snow glances over at Regina who looks genuinely shocked.

ENGLISH (CONT'D)

(smug)

I spoke with the D.A. after Judge Suarez set up this appointment for you, and he sent this, along with his condolences.

Judge English reaches over to his phone and punches a few buttons. The answering machine plays.

PHONE RECORD (V.O.)

(Betsy) I won't go to jail, will I?

(Snow) No, you won't. You did the right thing. I just wish it hadn't been necessary to scare you into it.

Judge English shuts it off.

ENGLISH

(nonchalant, to Snow)

Agents from the Justice System Integrity Division want to speak with you and they should be here any minute. As for you, Judge Suarez, I'd like to see you later this afternoon.

REGINA

Yes, uh, of course, Judge English.

ENGLISH

Goodbye for now, Mr. McBride, and good luck. Please linger outside till JSID shows up, okay?... Adios.

Snow appears dazed.

INT. SUPERIOR COURT OF LOS ANGELES - MOMENTS LATER

Regina stomps rapidly down a hallway with Snow right behind.

He calls to her but she doesn't respond.

SNOW

Regina, wait! Don't walk away!

Regina turns a corner, opens a door and runs down concrete exit stairs. As she goes she turns her head for a moment.

REGINA

Stay away from me, Jonathan!

Regina hits the next floor and out the door into a hallway that leads to the first floor lobby. Snow bounds from the door and catches up to Regina, clutching at her arm.

REGINA (CONT'D)

Let go. I have nothing--

SNOW

Regina, honey, please, calm down...

Regina, breathing hard, struggles to regain her composure.

REGINA

English is too powerful, and besides, now he's golfing with the D.A.

SNOW

There's nada he can do to you. Your appointment is secure.

REGINA

The world wants Mathers to be guilty.

Snow reaches down to hold Regina's hands.

SNOW

But you're not a political pawn and you didn't buy your judgeship like so many others. The city likes you. You're the fucking new wave. Hey!

REGINA

But Mathers will be locked up like a dangerous animal. I can't...

SNOW

But you can. Look, the whole system is a virus. You said it yourself. You want change, remember?

REGINA

Yes, I know... It's unfair, yes.

Regina appears to waver.

SNOW

Mathers will blow this thing wide open. And talk about press, you even got profiled in the LA Times last April. You're the redeemer here... Redeem us, Regina. Please! You must.

Snow attempts to place his hands on Regina's face but she knocks them away.

REGINA

That's babble. What do you want?

Snow's face shows resolve.

SNOW

For you to go public with me on the Mathers case.

REGINA

(shocked)

Why don't I just fall on a sword? Hey, news at ten, you can't change the culture around here... Don't you know the old boy network in the superior court would take their revenge and so would the D.A.? These people are insidious.

SNOW

Whistle-blowers are in this year and the LA Times will jump on it. Leffer will have no choice but to recuse himself.

REGINA

Leave me alone!

SNOW

Don't be like me, Regina. You're better than me. You always have been.

REGINA

More crazy talk. Just crazy talk!

In the background, we see two professionally dressed people walk past, stop and stare at Snow and Regina.

SNOW

And that you wanted what was right.

One of the two people calls to Jonathan. She is JANE PHELAN from JSID, her face grave with duty. She walks forward.

JANE PHELAN

Jonathan McBride?

Snow and Regina both turn to face her.

SNOW

Yes, what is it?

JANE PHELAN

I'm Jane Phelan, from JSID. My partner and I want to speak with you.

The blond motions to HER PARTNER. He wears a dark suit, chopped brown hair, square jaw.

Regina backs off from Snow.

REGINA

Goodbye, Jonathan, but I'm sorry... Mathers is guilty and he'll pay for his crimes.

Regina says the last line loud enough to make sure the JSID agents hear her, then she turns and walks away from Snow.

SNOW

(looking crushed)

Regina! No. This isn't you...

Regina ignores Snow. He appears near collapse. The JSID move closer. A shadow falls over Snow and he begins to weep.

INT. GERRI'S SPACE - NIGHT

Snow stands in darkness, still weeping. Insect-like DRONING is heard. A hellish red light plays upon him. He stares fixated, as if suffering severe battle fatigue.

An enormous vision of Heaven's Scythe rises up before him, as if he were floating in space only a short distance away.

Eddies and currents are visible in the hot plasma stream.

Gerri's voice erupts in a booming whisper.

GERRI (V.O.)

Can you wake another who only pretends
to sleep?

Snow looks around, snapping out of his daze to grow frantic.

SNOW

That's enough! Enough!

GERRI (V.O.)

One eventually becomes what one does,
or fails to do.

SNOW

(shouting)

And what have I become?

Snow falls to his knees and begins to weep more bitterly than before as he shudders with anguish,

Gerri walks up beside him. She bends to place her arms around his heaving body.

GERRI

What have *you become*, Andy? But
first, tell me what you were.

SNOW

(gazing up, agitated)

A monster? Is that what you want to
hear? I saw myself in Regina, at that
last moment, throwing others under the
bus for cowardly and selfish
reasons... I couldn't believe it was
her, but I could believe it was me...
But what the hell the difference now?
Octavia, Mathers... The *poor*
bastards. I'm a goddamned useless and
hell bound Ms. Lonelyhearts.

GERRI

I read that book.

Snow breaks down again. Gerri reaches out to hug him while he continues to sob. As she does, the background DRONE stops.

Gerri cradles a sobbing Snow from atop a flat surface of rock, a gaping black wound of canyon below them and a vast panorama of desert night above.

She turns Snow on his back and points up to a band of starry haze. When she speaks, her voice is gentle, melancholy.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Did you know that is the Milky Way?...
And those billions of suns know
nothing of Heaven's Scythe, nor do
they care. They have a thought once
every several centuries, and that is
enough for them.

Gerri strokes Snow's face. With one finger she captures a tear. She places it on her tongue.

SNOW

(exhausted)

Where do you come from?

GERRI

From a darkness into light. I have
always been, as long as I can
remember, but perhaps... I will not
always be.

SNOW

What do you mean?

She hesitates.

GERRI

I've... chosen to end, if Heaven's
Scythe cannot be stopped. I have that
power.

SNOW

(suddenly excited)

What? That's... So, now you're saying
I must save your life too?

GERRI

Not life as you know it.

Snow is terrified. Gerri calms him by massaging the side of his face in a motherly way.

SNOW

Why?

GERRI

Your humanity was the final creation.
All others failed, going back farther
than your imagining... And without
hope, Andy, Time wins at last.

SNOW

But the universe...

Gerri looks up to the sky as she speaks. We see a close-up of the Milky Way and its millions of suns.

GERRI (O.S.)

Wears as it grows... It will continue,
Andy, for ages, and ages more. It
doesn't concern itself with me, or
you.

SNOW

Why can't you just get used to it?
Used to us?

Gerri refocuses on Snow.

GERRI

I considered giving birth to myself
without memory, or pain. I've done it
before, began again in a state of
ignorance of what came before. And
each time I emerged I looked back to
see what I had become.

SNOW

(pleading)

But how can we be so important to you?
If you look, Gerri, God, whatever you
are... up there, at all the stars--

Gerri's face grows intense.

GERRI

You are so important because you are a
part of me. And your part has become
like a dead thing, a source of shame.

SNOW

To hell with us then! We're not worth saving. But you, you need to live, to survive... I love you, Gerri.

GERRI

I know, Andy... You have one final chance. And I love you too.

SNOW

But wait, please. You keep putting me up against the stereotypical narcissist. First a doctor, then a president, a judge, come on! Why not choose someone poor and powerless, like a crossing guard?

Gerri doesn't answer, her face grim.

SNOW (CONT'D)

Alright, then who?

GERRI

(solemn)

Andrew Snow.

Snow appears shocked. Gerri puts a finger to Snow's lips.

GERRI (CONT'D)

Your doppelganger soul. Your double. He's been running things at Heritage while you've been gone, living in your body. I created him, a perfect copy of your psyche I made before you went to work for me.

SNOW

This is insane. You want me to convince myself?

GERRI

Who better?

SNOW

But this other me isn't real.

GERRI

No? Then who fired three employees this past week? He's as ruthless as you ever were.

SNOW

But that Snow is more like Moorcock, a cross between Bill Gates and Genghis Khan. And you know that... You're setting me, us up, for failure again.

GERRI

So you're a different Snow now?

SNOW

I... Yes. I am.

Snow pauses to reflect a moment, holds Gerri's hand.

SNOW (CONT'D)

But what will Snow say when he sees me?

GERRI

He won't. He'll see Dick Goldman.

SNOW

What? No!

GERRI

Would you prefer Muriel's body?

SNOW

No, uh, course not, but... isn't this all some kind of strange death wish?

GERRI (O.S.)

A world must be saved. And so must I.

We see the small, shadowy figure of Snow in the dark starlight of Gerri's eye, running towards us.

EXT. THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA - DAWN

SUBTITLE: DAY SIX

The DOPPELGANGER ANDREW SNOW jogs atop the Great Wall of China. Moorcock jogs in front and Snow is right behind, a few feet to the rear, others behind and in front as escorts.

It is apparent that Snow's Goldman body is a few inches shorter than his real body, the one inhabited by the doppelganger soul.

Snow looks up to see the blade of Heaven's Scythe pushing above the horizon, expanding like a great arm into the sky.

Snow runs a bit faster to get beside doppelganger Snow.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

You ready for our extravaganza tomorrow, Goldman? We'll prove to the world that China is changing, and tens of millions need you to be something other than my whipping boy.

SNOW

Whipped enough, uh, Mr. Snow... by the way, this is off the subject, but I recently heard about your Guatemala days, when you worked as a journalist for CNN. I never knew.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Hah! Guatemala felt like a century.

SNOW

You remember how you were treated?

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Like a dog in need of a bullet.

SNOW

But you were a different man, then.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Huh? What's that to you, Goldman?

SNOW

Nothing, uh, but remember that time...

FLASHBACK (PARAMILITARY BASE IN GUATEMALAN JUNGLE - DAY)

Close-up of the old refrigerator. The door opens again and Snow falls out to the ground, crumpled and looking half dead.

SNOW (O.S.)
Government paramilitary types locked
you in an old refrigerator for two
days and tortured you with lit
cigarettes and razors cause they
thought you were helping rebels--

A paramilitary thug slams Snow flat on his back, sits on his
chest and pushes a lit cigarette close to Snow's eye as if
preparing to blind him.

BACK TO SCENE

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
Who told you about that?

SNOW
My point is, it happened cause you did
the right thing.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
But I'm doing the right thing now.

SNOW
You mean what's right for you.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
And what's wrong with that? Besides,
what's right for me is right for
everyone. I'm a political superman,
Goldman.

The two of them continue to jog, the hilly countryside beyond
the Wall in the background.

SNOW
You defended Mayan Indians in
Guatemala, and you were tortured for
it.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
And all I have are scars.

SNOW
But people here are treated bad enough
to make you gag.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
Propaganda, Goldman.

SNOW

The entire world knows--

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

But we're here to dispel negative notions, remember? We're on a holy mission to defeat the whining have-nots who want to sink China's trade status.

SNOW

For whom are we keeping afloat, sir?

The doppelganger Snow stops jogging and faces Snow who has also stopped. The escorts keep running, following Moorcock.

Doppelganger stares at Snow as if he is impossibly stupid.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

The Chinese government has a thankless job and we've gotta help. I mean, hell, even liberal intellectuals think China's a great place. So one more fucking word of discontent--

SNOW

Only one class benefits in China, like in Orwell's "1984," which you always said was your favorite novel behind "Catcher in The Rye."

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

I never told anyone I liked Salinger. How the hell do you know so much?

SNOW

You can still be the catcher.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

(surprised, angry)

Shut up! I'm not a catcher any more.

Doppelganger Snow turns to jog away, picking up speed as he goes. Snow follows. They both move against the backdrop of Heaven's Scythe, Snow chasing the Doppelganger.

EXT. A TERMINAL AT BEIJING AIRPORT - LATER

Moorcock, Doppelganger, Snow, and others descend a ramp to the ground, all in their jogging outfits and carrying gym bags. Chinese in western business attire await them.

The lead Chinese, MARK ZHAO, smiles and extends his hand to Moorcock. He speaks with an English accent.

MARK ZHAO

Good afternoon, Mr. Moorcock. I trust your Great Wall jog was successful.

MOORCOCK

Yes, Mr. Zhao, it was.

(turns to Doppelganger)

Snow, this is MARK ZHAO. He is our official liaison with the government here in Beijing.

Doppelganger Snow extends his hand and shakes. Zhao is a slight man, effeminate in appearance. Snow notices that he wears a shoulder holster beneath his jacket.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

MARK ZHAO. Any relation?

ZHAO

No, sir.

SNOW

And why the firearm?

ZHAO

For your protection, sir... Your limousine awaits.

Zhao gestures to a black Mercedes limousine a short distance away and smiles, appearing very much the toady.

EXT. A STREET IN BEIJING - DAY

Two limousines inch forward and stall in a sea of Chinese people mobbing a narrow street. A general commotion and atmosphere of fear is prevalent. SHOUTS and CHANTS are heard.

The men exit the limos and stand beside them, appearing confused. One of Zhao's men says something in Chinese.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

(to Zhao)

Why are we stopped?

ZHAO

I don't know... This is unusual

Moorcock's blood pressure is rising.

MOORCOCK

I have to be back at the hotel, ASAP.
So what the hell?

ZHAO

The hotel is very close, sir. We can
walk. I assure you of safety.

MOORCOCK

Let's get going then!

The men reopen the limo doors to grab a few items. Zhao
flips out his cell phone and speaks in Chinese. His aides
appear grave, suspicious of the crowd.

EXT. SAME STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The men make their way down the street, hugging close to one
side, Zhao's aides leading the way, followed by Moorcock,
then Zhao and Snow, Doppelganger Snow behind.

Snow sees the source of the CHANTING: hundreds of young and
elderly Chinese in a small park, many on their knees, wailing
and looking to the sky, hands clasped as if in prayer.

ZHAO

(to Snow)

They are insane. Someone has stirred
them into believing the end of the
world will come soon. Some are
praying.

SNOW

(perplexed)

I thought you didn't allow any
religion here, Zhao.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
Thin ice, Goldman.

ZHAO
Mr. Goldman, I've been to America and
around the world. In every country
there are malcontents who do not obey
the government. You understand these
things.

Suddenly, a rush of people close in on them. They see Snow
and the others and fall to their knees, appealing to them in
Chinese, crying, begging.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
What is it, Mr. Zhao?

ZHAO
They say a fire will fall from the sky
and they want to go to America where
they think they'll be safe...

Snow doesn't know how to approach these begging faces. A
small girl hugs his leg. Snow reaches down to pick up the
child as she is about to be knocked over by someone else.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
(angry)
Shake your adoption before we get to
the hotel, Goldman.

Snow doesn't reply. He carries the girl, her mother right
behind and CRYING OUT in Chinese.

SNOW
(to Zhao)
Which factory will our cameras be
touring tomorrow?

ZHAO
The Golden Burger factory, sir, where
the Golden Burger happy toys are made.
It is a model factory, one that all
Chinese factories want to emulate.

SNOW
And how does Golden Burger compare to
thousands of other sweatshops and
labor camps in this province?

ZHAO

Sir?

SNOW

You know, places where the workers sleep on the floor after a breezy thirteen hour work day seven days a week at an average pay of nine cents per hour?

Zhao laughs nervously and acts befuddled. Everyone dodges more bodies, weaves and pushes ahead. The CHANTING sounds louder then ever, more frantic.

ZHAO

No, no, Mr. Snow. Those reports are just not true. The factory is a mother to the workers.

SNOW

A mother guilty of child abuse?

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Goldman! You're not a catcher, so stop pretending and put her down!

Snow pauses, lowers the girl as Zhao and Doppelganger

Snow push ahead. Snow removes his wallet, gives the mother a few bills. She holds his hand and kisses it over and over.

EXT. THE BEIJING HILTON - LATER

Snow and company approach the hotel on foot, arriving at the front, greeted there by gold-ribboned hotel employees.

A COMMOTION across the street attracts their attention. Zhao's aide says something urgent in Chinese.

They all look to see a naked man atop a catwalk at least three stories high girdling a large billboard with pictures of smiling Chinese workers. He SHOUTS to the sky.

Below him, a crowd has gathered. Several police scale the ladders up to the billboard to bring him down.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

What the hell now?

SNOW
I don't know... wait.

Policemen scramble to the top of the catwalk. The naked man jumps and his body disappears in the crowd below.

ZHAO
A crazy man, no doubt. Most likely an immigrant worker from the country.

Doppelganger Snow looks puzzled. Snow is stone faced.

INT. BEIJING HILTON - LATER

The hotel lobby is opulent, filled with western tourists and western-dressed Chinese businessmen. Moorcock waits for Doppelganger Snow inside.

MOORCOCK
The new China! Look Snow, all around us. This is just the beginning.

Snow clutches at Doppelganger Snow's arm as he faces Moorcock and is prepared to speak. Doppelganger Snow frowns at Snow's hand on his arm.

SNOW
Mr. Snow, just a minute, I have something urgent to tell you. Please?

MOORCOCK
Uh, I'll catch up with you later, Snow. Will and vision.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
Will and vision, sir!

Moorcock and his escorts turn and leave. Doppelganger Snow, angry, seizes Snow by the sleeve and pulls him towards a side door off the lobby.

INT. A MEETING ROOM IN HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Doppelganger Snow pulls Snow inside. He looks around to see no one in the room, then closes the door and faces Snow, his expression dark.

SNOW

We have the opportunity to seize the day here, sir. Think of the publicity.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Huh?

SNOW

If I can prove that people here are being mistreated on a scale not seen since the building of the pyramids--

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

What's your real agenda, Goldman?

SNOW

To reveal the truth.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

I've kept you around, asshole, cause I want my people to clearly see in you the opposite of what they should be. You're useful in that way, and here in China I actually thought you might be of real assistance to the New China program, but I see now that was a horrible mistake.

SNOW

You don't have to kiss Moorcock's ass.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

You're fired, shit brain.

SNOW

You've wrapped your soul around the flag of Moorcock and whatever defies or contradicts it is a source of harm to you, cause it reminds you of your catcher days.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Shut up!

SNOW

We're talking about guilt.

Doppelganger Snow grabs Snow by the collar, temper growing.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
I have nothing to be guilty of!

SNOW
You're lying. You feel guilt and hate
it, then guilt for feeling guilty, and
you hate that even worse!

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
(becoming enraged)
Shut up!

SNOW
You went wrong the first day you opted
for a paycheck at Heritage. You were
always a savvy guy, so it was easy to
trump a few idiots there... then
you're first firing and your prestige
skyrocketed. You felt guilt then, but
you suppressed it. The money poured
in and the view of the Bay was next.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
Enough!

SNOW
What a rise for the tortured boy! What
an honor! Then came Moorcock and you
were surprised at just how
passionately you could kiss ass.

Doppelganger shoves Snow violently.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
You better start kissing mine, now!

SNOW
Then more guilt, more kiss ups and
firings, the guilt meter climbing till
only utter denial was possible...

Doppelganger violently shoves Snow again.

SNOW (CONT'D)
But what's that compared to the
betrayal of your news sources in
Guatemala?

FLASHBACK (PARAMILITARY BASE IN GUATEMALAN JUNGLE - DAY)

The tip of a burning cigarette edges towards Snow's eye.

SNOW (V.O.)
You told the paramilitaries
everything.

Snow begins to frantically babble, as if spilling secrets.

SNOW
And the next day your sources were
pulled from their homes and shot.

We see a man and a woman pulled from a doorway and gunned
down in the street by paramilitary thugs.

BACK TO SCENE

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
(shocked)
How?

SNOW
Then the final and ultimate betrayal,
the sell out of your own wife!

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
(suddenly enraged)
Motherfucker!

Doppelganger Snow, enraged, lunges at Snow and encircles his
throat, slamming him against a wall and continuing to choke.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW (CONT'D)
Who are you to tell me this? To judge
me?... You are dung! Do you hear? A
fucking dung beetle!

Snow chokes and struggles, talks between gasps.

SNOW
You've killed before... When you were
eight you shot a stray tabby with your
father's rifle... and that night you
cried yourself to sleep over it...

The Doppelganger releases Snow's throat and steps away, his
eyes wide and his mouth gobbling soundlessly.

SNOW (CONT'D)

The next day you... crossed Rosewood Avenue, entered the woods, and buried the cat in the gully of a creek bed where no one could see.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

(shocked)

How?... Nobody knows that. It's impossible--

SNOW

And that's why you can't fire me, not till you know the truth.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

The truth?...

SNOW

I know your secrets. I know your guilt caused you to join Heritage in the first place, but I know you can be a catcher again... I was, and I am now, cause I'm trying to catch you.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Huh?

SNOW

Just change the New China program to help the Chinese. You have the power--

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

(dazed)

There needs to be proof... Moorcock... It won't--

SNOW

Then you'll have your proof by tomorrow. I swear it.

Doppelganger Snow stares at Snow, shocked, and then walks quietly from the room, stopping once to stare at Snow again.

Snow is left alone in the shadows.

EXT. THE HOTEL BEIJING - NIGHT - LATER

Much traffic and lights outside the hotel.

INT. SNOW'S HOTEL SUITE

Snow sits on his bed shoveling noodles and watching television. He appears on edge, desperate. On the TV, hundreds of happy workers march to MARTIAL MUSIC.

A uniformed hotel worker, YAO JINGSHENG, emerges from the bathroom and stares at Snow. He is an older man, in his fifties, short of stature, sad, meek.

He approaches Snow slowly, reaching inside his pants pocket to pull forth a small sheet of white paper. He places the paper beside Snow on the bed and turns to go back to work.

Snow stares at him, puzzled, then picks up the paper and reads a note written on it in pencil.

Mr. Goldman,

I am Yao Jingsheng, member of China Freedom Watch. Because you are very important man I come to ask you help us tell the world what happens here. If you do not share this dream, say nothing and I will leave. I only ask you not tell authorities who I am.

Thank You,

Yao

Snow, surprised, looks at Yao.

SNOW
(whispering)
Mr. Jingsheng?

Yao turns and walks over to face Snow.

YAO JINGSHENG
Yes.

SNOW
I do want to talk to you, and don't worry, your secret is safe... How did you get here?

YAO JINGSHENG
Money takes you far in China.

SNOW
I remember, something that came to me
by mail in Frisco...

YAO JINGSHENG
Yes, a letter about Can Chunxia. We
didn't know you would read it.

SNOW
I did. Yes, yes, that's it. Look,
I'm, uh, Richard Goldman.

Snow extends his hand and Yao shakes it. He then remotes the television to increase the volume of the music. The happy workers continue to march. Yao bends close to Snow.

YAO JINGSHENG
Can is near. She suffers reeducation
through labor. You will be very close
to her tomorrow When you tour the
hamburger toy factory arranged for
your New China cameras.

SNOW
She's in the Golden Burger factory?

YAO JINGSHENG
No, the Eisey Toons factory.

SNOW
Eisey Toons?

YAO JINGSHENG
Yes, more toys. This is toy land.
The government said if she believes in
Eisey Toon democracy she will work for
Eisey Toons.

Snow now appears hopeful, energetic. He removes his wallet, takes out a wad of bills and hands them to Yao.

SNOW
Will these buy Can's freedom tomorrow?

YAO JINGSHENG

Yes, but she is too important to miss for long... and one hundred dollars, that is all. Any more and suspicious.

Yao hands the rest of the money back to Snow.

SNOW

If I get her on camera tomorrow, in front of the world, then the government won't dare touch her.

YAO JINGSHENG

They hate it when people know things.

SNOW

Listen, I'll break off early from the Golden Burger tour and pick you up at the Eisey Toons factory. Can you meet me outside at nine AM with Can?

YAO JINGSHENG

Yes, I think so. But I will meet you in the alley behind the factory. It is called the Street of Heroes.

Yao extends his own hand, his face stoic. Snow grasps it and holds it. Yao turns and leaves.

The marching tune BLARES loud in the background.

INT. SNOW'S SUITE - NIGHT - LATER

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE

Red lightning flashes. Distant thunder and the sound of rain.

Snow opens his eyes. He jumps up from bed and goes to the window. He sees red-glowing clouds floating ominously.

Snow turns just as a red lightning flash illumines the dark room and he sees Gerri's face in profile, only her face, floating rapidly across the room in a spooky way.

SNOW

Gerri, darling?

Snow gets no answer. He enters the bathroom, hits the light and looks into the bathroom mirror, but when he looks he sees only one half of his face.

Snow panics, sits down on the edge of the tub, breathing hard. Outside, the thunder ROLLS.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

EXT. THE GOLDEN BURGER FACTORY - MORNING OF NEXT DAY

SUBTITLE: DAY SEVEN

A large, warehouse-like building, no windows, but several glass doors in the front. On the glass are cartoon posters of happy workers and one of GOLDIE, the Golden Burger clown.

The light outside is grayish red. A light rain falls.

INT. GOLDEN BURGER FACTORY - DAY

Snow stands in a small lobby-like room. He wears a business suit. Muriel is nearby, talking to Heritage Media tech people with video-cams. General commotion apparent.

Snow walks up behind Muriel.

SNOW
Muriel, excuse me.

Muriel refuses to turn around. Snow taps her shoulder.

Muriel turns to look at him, annoyed.

MURIEL
What is it, Goldman?

SNOW
Muriel, I need to see the layout of the Tiananmen Square set-up.

MURIEL
Look, Dick, just go on the Golden Burger tour as arranged and stay out of my business.

SNOW

What is your problem?

MURIEL

The problem is, you're a loser.

Before Snow can reply, MARK ZHAO appears from a door and speaks to everyone in the room. He motions them forward.

ZHAO

We are ready now, everyone please
follow for the Golden Burger tour.

Muriel turns quickly and walks towards Zhao. Snow, angry and suspicious, follows.

INT. MAIN ASSEMBLY AREA - DAY

We see two lines of assembly stations on either side of an aisle. Factory workers, at least two hundred of them, are dressed in bright yellow shirts with red string ties.

Floating above them, suspended from the ceiling, is an enormous banner featuring a colossal Goldie surrounded by Chinese Golden Burger workers who stare at him lovingly.

The Heritage Media crew walks down the aisle, Muriel and Zhao in the lead, cameramen following up, Snow behind, frowning at all of it. Zhao turns to Muriel.

ZHAO

Please feel free to ask any one of
them about their life here.

MURIEL

Why, thank you, Mr. Zhao.

Muriel halts the crew before one smiling YOUNG WOMAN. She motions to a cameraman and he positions himself. Just as Muriel prepares to address the young woman, Zhao steps up beside her, accompanied by MR. WU, a clone of Zhao.

ZHAO

My associate, Mr. Wu, will translate
for you and conduct the tour from here
on.

MURIEL

Thank you, Mr. Zhao.

(to the worker)

Hello, we are here from America to learn more about your country. Tell us, what is it like to work here at the Golden Burger factory?

Mr. Wu translates and the young woman responds enthusiastically in Chinese.

MR. WU (O.S.)

She says, the factory is like her mother. She is very happy here and pleased that her work makes other people happy in America. Her wage is good, and she is fed well every day.

As the questioning continues, Snow looks on for a moment with contempt, then slowly backs off, detaches himself and exits the scene. He appears on edge.

EXT. THE GOLDEN BURGER FACTORY - DAY

Snow exits into the rain. He wears a black raincoat. He stops and looks around, spots a limousine.

As it approaches, a chauffeur rolls down his window and beckons Snow to get in. Snow enters and immediately comes face to face with Zhao who smiles at him.

ZHAO

Mr. Goldman! Leaving so early?

SNOW

Mark, uh, hi. Look, I need to go to the Eisey Toons factory. I'd like to check it out, add it to the program.

ZHAO

The Eisey Toons facility is not part of our agreement with Heritage Media, and therefore--

Snow lashes out at Zhao with a right cross to the face.

Zhao falls sideways. Snow quickly relieves Zhao of his firearm, pushes it to his face, flicks off the safety.

Zhao appears confused, terrified.

EXT. THE STREET OF HEROES - LATER

The limo approaches from down a narrow, rain soaked street.

Yao Jingsheng stands next to a small figure, CAN CHUNXIA, who wears a grey raincoat with a hood.

The limousine pulls up and the two of them get in and the limo drives away.

INT. LIMOUSINE - TRAVELING

Yao and Can slide next to Snow. Zhao appears anxious.

Can's hood comes off.

Her head is shaven, her face thin, pale, fatigued. She looks up at Snow with pitiful yet hopeful eyes.

SNOW

(to Yao)

Tell Can, we'll place her on camera--

YAO JINGSHENG

I told her already. She is willing and ready for whatever comes. She believes anything, even death preferable to the toy factory.

SNOW

It's that bad?

YAO JINGSHENG

The overseers beat her, and the others if they do not meet quota, and she works a hundred hours each week without pay. The others get paid but they are always cheated or fined by the overseers.

SNOW

A big contrast to the happy workers I just saw at Golden Burger.

YAO JINGSHENG
Actors. The real workers are kept
locked and watched in back rooms.

Zhao erupts.

ZHAO
(to Yao)
Lies! You want our government to fail
so you tell the westerners lies... You
will be jailed for this.

Snow looks ready to hit Zhao again, but Yao stops him.

YAO JINGSHENG
No. You are the lie. You and all
your kind, fleas on the skin of the
Chinese people. See Can Chunxia here.
The truth in her face shows the lie in
your mouth.

Zhao looks at Can and appears unable to respond. Can glances
at Yao and says something in Chinese. Yao responds to her in
Chinese

SNOW
What is it?

YAO JINGSHENG
She wants to know what is being said.
I told her. She also wishes she could
speak English.

Zhao explodes in near hysteria.

ZHAO
She worked with foreign hostile forces
to subvert the government of China!

Can appears afraid.

YAO JINGSHENG
She is a writer, and she told the
truth about the people of China.

Snow puts the gun in Zhao's face.

SNOW
Out! Now!

Zhao scrambles to exit the limousine, helped into the street by Snow's foot. Zhao plops into a puddle.

In the front of the limo, the scared chauffeur exits with hands over his head. Snow gets out, quickly enters the driver side and slams the door.

EXT. TIANANMEN SQUARE - LATER

The rain has slowed to a fine mist. A general state of preparation for the New China ceremony is underway. Much color and motion.

Long snakes of colorful paper dragon parade into the Square, led by supervisors. Various groups of brilliantly costumed people mill about or stand at attention facing their team.

The Heritage Media crews are there, cameras in place.

Suddenly, band MUSIC erupts with a martial tune (the same heard on television in Snow's room).

EXT. A CAMERA PLATFORM OVERLOOKING THE SQUARE

Moorcock and Doppelganger Snow stand side by side on a makeshift platform erected for a camera crew, gazing out over the Square. Doppelganger Snow appears on edge.

MOORCOCK

By the way, Snow, who is announcing this for us?

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

Melinda Krenwinkle, I believe.

MOORCOCK

(beaming)

Ah, yes, that stunning new blond we hired last month... Senator Van Fleet wants her phone number.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

I take it he'll be watching.

MOORCOCK

Oh, most assuredly, my friend, along
with all the other committee chairs,
not to mention the White House.

Doppelganger Snow attempts to smile.

EXT. THE LIMOUSINE - TRAVELING

It crawls down a street, slowed down by several long paper
dragons, the makeshift camera platform visible in the
background. Snow gets out and opens the passenger door.

SNOW

(to Yao and Can)

I'm going up to see Andrew Snow. You
wait here and I'll be right back.

Yao nods. Can appears concerned.

INT. POLICE CAR - TRAVELING

MARK ZHAO and several police in pursuit of Snow. Zhao
jabbers frantically on his cell phone. Following the police,
a jeep filled with Chinese soldiers.

EXT. CAMERA PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Snow bounds up the steps to the camera platform, walks up
behind Moorcock and Doppelganger Snow. Off to side, two
Chinese security guards look grim. Snow places a hand on
Doppelganger Snow's shoulder.

SNOW

Mr. Snow, sir--

Moorcock nods to Doppelganger Snow. And as if at a
prearranged signal, Doppelganger Snow whips around and
violently backhands Snow. He drops as if shot.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW

(calm, to Snow)

Mr. Moorcock wants me to tell you that
the freedom of the Chinese people is
assured, as soon as you are fired.

Snow's face flares in anger. He gets to his feet and the two Chinese security men move forward and restrain him as he struggles to get at Doppelganger Snow.

DOPPELGANGER SNOW (CONT'D)
Your ticket is booked on a plane
leaving Beijing airport at noon. Now,
I don't know how in hell you knew what
you knew, Goldman. There must be a
such thing as telepathy, and if so,
you are too dangerous to have around.

SNOW
Toady bastard! You'll catch nothing!

DOPPELGANGER SNOW
American business puts its trust in
China. Moron!

The security guards escort Snow to the platform steps.

Doppelganger Snow stares at Snow, appearing almost remorseful, but Snow glares, his anger and hatred obvious.

Snow shakes off the guards and walks stiffly down the steps, heading back towards the limousine, breathing heavily, his motions robotic.

He looks up to the boiling red clouds and back down.

SNOW
(to Gerri, furious)
You set me up again... Alright. Hell
with it!

Snow picks up speed, his walk more purposeful. He arrives at the limousine, opens the door and looks inside.

SNOW (CONT'D)
No one up there wants to help us,
but...
(Snow pulls out the
pistol)
we're going up there anyway and I'm
going to put Can on live. We've come
too far to stop now. We got to set
things right.

Yao and Can look fearful, but resigned. Yao speaks gently to Can in Chinese. Can looks at Snow and nods in agreement.

INT. POLICE CAR - TRAVELING

The car approaches the edge of Tiananmen Square. In the distance, Zhao spies Snow, Yao, and Can walking away from the limo. Zhao shouts at the driver and points, urging him to greater effort.

EXT. CAMERA PLATFORM

One guard nudges the other. They both stare at the sight of Snow defiantly leading Yao and Can towards the platform.

They can't be more than 20 or so yards away.

Beyond them, the police car and jeep full of soldiers scoot past the parked limousine and barrel headlong towards Snow and company.

One of the guards YELLS and this attracts the Doppelganger Snow and Moorcock who both turn to view the scene.

EXT. GROUND NEAR THE PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Snow turns to see the police and soldiers bearing down. He yells to Yao and Can behind him.

SNOW

Run!

They all scamper towards the steps of the platform. Snow whips out the pistol.

EXT. CAMERA PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

One of the security guards draws his firearm and points it at Snow. Doppelganger Snow knocks his hand down to protect Snow, causing a round to be fired into the platform.

Moorcock observes this.

MOORCOCK

What has got into you? That man
Goldman is dangerous!

Snow has reached the steps and points his pistol at the surprised security guards who back away. Doppelganger Snow watches, a mixed look of fear and concern on his face.

EXT. GROUND NEAR THE PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Yao runs behind Can. Two of the soldiers in the jeep open fire in the background. Yao takes a bullet in the back, the exit wound exploding from his chest. He falls dead.

Can screams something in Chinese at Snow who has already turned at the sound of the SHOTS, a horrified expression on his face. Can continues to run, tears streaming.

EXT. CAMERA PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

No shot is fired, but Snow swoons and collapses unconscious, gun knocked from his hand.

MOORCOCK

Thank, God!

Doppelganger Snow shouts, as if in pain, his face shocked. He glances down to see the face and body of Goldman (appearing for the first time like the real Richard Goldman).

Snow's psyche has returned to his own body.

SNOW

I am...

Snow retrieves the pistol and points it in Moorcock's face.

SNOW (CONT'D)

Will and vision, Randolph!

The security guards are stunned and immobile. Moorcock collapses to his knees in a fit of fright.

MOORCOCK

Don't kill me, please! I beg you!

Another rifle SHOT is heard. Snow turns.

SNOW

Can!

He lunges to shield Can who has climbed onto the platform.

Another SHOT. Snow winces. He is hit.

MOORCOCK

What in hell?

Snow shudders in pain, but holds up. He is frantic to get things in place for Can.

SNOW

Hell is where we're going, sir!... Get that goddamn camera over here.

Another SHOT. Can screams. Snow falls forward, having taken another bullet, but still shielding Can, pulling her down with him. He falls atop her and stays there to shield her.

SNOW (CONT'D)

(to Can)

Be still... hold on.

Can weeps bitterly beneath Snow. The soldiers run up to the platform, Zhao right behind and screeching at the army officer, apparently displeased by the inconvenient shooting.

The band PLAYS the same martial tune in the background.

Can gently eases Snow onto his back. She holds him and continues to weep, helpless to act. Snow's face is dazed, eyes fogging. His lids close to darkness.

EXT. A DREAMLIKE SPACE ATOP THE CAMERA PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

In the background, human figures silently cavort and jostle in slow-motion.

Snow's eyes open again to see Gerri in Can's place. She smiles in a loving way at Andrew Snow, one hand reaching out to touch his cheek.

GERRI

Feel better?

SNOW

I feel... nothing.

GERRI
A symptom of climbing the fire?

SNOW
What?

GERRI
I now pronounce denouement. News at ten.

SNOW
What? You set me up?

GERRI
I didn't know what would happen, but I hoped for the best.

SNOW
But Octavia, Mathers, the others--

GERRI
Octavia will live. Mathers will be exonerated. The President will be defeated.

SNOW
And Can...

GERRI
In America by tomorrow.

SNOW
But the world...

GERRI
Safe. And no one to blame but you, Mr. Catcher, my letter to Earth... Would you like an apricot?

SNOW
Gerri... I love you.

GERRI
I know.

Gerri gasps. Her face abruptly transforms to one of concern.

SNOW
Gerri?

GERRI
It's me, Andy. The real me.

SNOW
Forgive me, please.

Gerri's eyes begin to tear. She smiles through the tears.

GERRI
Nothing to forgive. You climbed the
fire, my love... I knew you could. I
told her. She listened.

He reaches up to clasp her face. She bends forward and they
kiss.

EXT. CAMERA PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Snow lies still, without life, Can Chunxia weeping atop his
body. Other figures mill about in silence. Golden sunlight
pours through from above as the WIND is heard.

FADE TO BLACK.