THE NINES

written by

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FINAL SCRIPT

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READER NOTE

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

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

It'll make more sense in context. Promise.
unwinds a short length of green string. We’re extremely close, with a shallow, blurry focus. It’s like the first moments after a dream -- just fragments.

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

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

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

FADE OUT.

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

Then a SQUEAK. A SQUEAL as rusty springs engage.

A GARAGE DOOR LIFTS,

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

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

Gary spots what he was looking for.

CUT TO:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXTREMELY CLOSE as the match SCRAPES, erupting in flames.

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

A DIGITAL METER

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

INT. THE PRIUS - DAY

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

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

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

GARY
Hey! Do you sell crack?

The boys look wary.

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

QUICK CUTS:
Money changes hands.
Gary holds a small ziplock bag -- and has no idea what to do with its lumpy beige contents.

CUT TO:

HOLLYWOOD.

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

Gary holds up the little bag.

GARY
Is this crack?

She takes a closer look.

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

CUT TO:

INT. SHITTY MOTEL ROOM - DAY

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

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

CUT TO:

LATER, Octavia is sleeping.
INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

Gary takes a shower with his jeans on.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

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

GARY
Yes, hello. I’m having a medical situation. Yes. Okay. I don’t have a belly button.
(explaining carefully)
I do not have a belly button where I should, on my belly. And I’m concerned, because I don’t know if that’s...

He sits down on the edge of the bed.

GARY (CONT’D)
Can a person live without a belly button? Because if you think about it, you’re born with one. So if you don’t have one, you’re unborn and it’s really hazy whether you’re alive or not. I guess I’m wondering: am I alive?
(a sudden thought)
Or what if I’m God?

A beat.

GARY (CONT’D)
No, no. I’m totally sober.

A beat.

GARY (CONT’D)
No, I don’t think I need an ambulance. I don’t seem to be dying any faster than usual. But I should probably go to the hospital, don’t you think? Yeah, I should.

He hangs up.

CUT TO:
INT. THE PRIUS - DAY

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

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

VERSIONS OF HIMSELF

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

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

UPSIDE-DOWN.

Gary has rolled the car.

The music suddenly STOPS. We hear SIRENS approaching.

CUT TO BLACK.

TITLE OVER:

Part One:

THE PRISONER

FADE IN:

INT. COURTHOUSE PROCESSING AREA - DAY

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

MARGARET

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

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

MARGARET (CONT’D)

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

A beat.

MARGARET (CONT’D)

Please! He was heartbroken, betrayed. You say you understand but you don’t. You can’t. You’re like a big giant Vulcan.
Noticing something to her right...

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

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

GARY

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

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

GARY
Gary.

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

CUT TO:

115 INT. BACK HALLWAY - DAY

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

GARY
Are there reporters out front?

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

GARY
What is?

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

A phone RINGS.

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

PAROLE OFFICER
Answer it.

Gary picks it up.

GARY
Hello? Yes. Yes.

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

GARY (CONT’D)
The weather in Toledo is rainy.

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

PAROLE OFFICER
Use your normal voice.

GARY
(to the phone)
Nine dogs ran through the field.
The koala sits in the tree.

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

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

GARY
What if I’m not here?

Catching the officer’s concerned look...

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

(to the officer)
He can take direction, I promise.

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

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

GARY
I didn’t mean to burn down my house.

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

(moving on)
This flammable house belongs to one of Lola’s other fabulous clients, who is currently shooting a pilot in Toronto.

GARY
Actor?

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

Noticing two crates...

GARY
He has dogs?

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

He lies back on it, feeling it out.

GARY
It’s fine.

MARGARET
Comfortable?

GARY
Sure.

She massages his besocked feet.
MARGARET

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

GARY

I do.

MARGARET

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

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

MARGARET (CONT’D)

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

A long beat.

MARGARET (CONT’D)

That wouldn’t be comfortable for
either of us.

CUT TO:

118 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

MARGARET

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

GARY

I don’t do heroin.

MARGARET

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

GARY

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

Margaret is a little impressed by this show of backbone.
MARGARET
Let me see your phone.

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

GARY
C’mon! All my numbers are in that.

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

She picks up the liquor box, ready to go.

MARGARET (CONT’D)
You have my cell number. You have delivery menus. You’re fine. Right?

GARY
I guess.

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

TIME CUT TO:

119 INT. HOUSE / VARIOUS - DAY

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

He plays a few NOTES on the piano.

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

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

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

120 EXT. BACKYARD - SUMMER NIGHT

Gary swims laps, trying to exhaust himself.

He stands in the shallow end, listening to the quiet.
Wearing a fluffy white robe, he looks through the delivery menus.

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

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

Gary unwraps the Thai food. Makes himself a plate.

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

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

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

He settles on a paperback of Voltaire’s Candide.

He lies back on the couch, reading it.

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

CUT TO:

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

Nearing climax, he looks for something to come on. He can’t find anything.
INT. FOYER - NIGHT

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

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

Gary hears it too.

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

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

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

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

GARY
Is somebody there? Hello?

He CLAPS his hands twice. Listens.

Nothing.

He’s about to venture a step forward when suddenly THE PHONE RINGS.

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

GARY (CONT’D)
Hello?!
(relieved)
Yes. Yes.

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

GARY (CONT’D)
Nine leopards run through the jungle.
(listening)
I bought two cakes at the store.

His identity evidently confirmed, he hangs up. He looks back into the foyer.
GARY (PRE-LAP) (CONT’D)
The house is haunted. There’s a zeitgeist, or something.

127 EXT. UPSTAIRS DECK - DAY

Margaret’s brought coffee and pastries from Susina.

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

GARY
Sure. Maybe.

He’s obviously not convinced.

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

GARY
Really?

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

GARY
Parade? I fucking hate Parade.

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

GARY
Okay.

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

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

GARY
I'm not crazy.

MARGARET
Exactly.  Exactly.

CUT TO:

128  EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

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

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

WOMAN’S VOICE
Sorry!  Really sorry.

(A practiced ear notices a Canadian accent.)

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

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

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

Indeed, she’s holding a putter.

GARY
Not really.

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

GARY
What did you do?
SARAH
I had sex with my husband.

GARY
That’s awful.

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

She points to a small portable baby monitor.

GARY
She’s cute.

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

GARY
She sounds really boring.

SARAH
(whispers)
She is.

A beat. A smile between them.

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

SARAH
I’m Canadian.

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

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

GARY
Very Canadian.

SARAH
Thanks.

Another pregnant pause.
SARAH (CONT’D)
Listen, Jaden goes down again at 2:30. Maybe I could stop by.

GARY
I’m pretty sure I’ll be here.

SARAH
It’s a date.

GARY
Is it?

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

SARAH
Oh. I’m Sarah, by the way.

GARY
Gary.

SARAH
Yeah. I know.

CUT TO:

129 INT. BATHROOM - DAY
Gary brushes his teeth and tongue.

130-131 OMIT

132 INT. KITCHEN - DAY
Gary neatens up, tossing out newspapers and delivery boxes. He plumps pillows.
He looks up at the clock: 2:30.
He sits, trying to read Candide again. He fidgets.
He looks at the clock again: 2:49.

133 EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY
Under the pretense of sweeping up leaves, he peers over the wall, looking directly into Sarah’s kitchen. But there’s no one in there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She stops beside him.

SARAH
The best of all possible worlds.

GARY
(confused)
Okay.

SARAH
(pointing to his book)
Voltaire. Candide.
(off his reaction)
Are you actually reading it?

GARY
I thought I was.

He gets up.

SARAH
Sorry I bailed. Jaden had a fever.
GARY
Ah! How boring of her.

She hands him the wine.

SARAH
Housewarming gift.

GARY
Demon liquor.

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

GARY
So did I.

143-144 OMIT 143-144

145 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

SARAH
Yeah. Fire’s tricky that way.

GARY
How about you? Any history of arson?

SARAH
Strangely enough...

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

SARAH
It wasn’t arson. Probably.

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

SARAH (CONT’D)
Okay. When I was a little girl, our house caught on fire.
GARY
Oh shit.

MUSIC begins, providing backing to her monologue.

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

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

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

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

SARAH (CONT’D)
Is that all there is, is that all there is? If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing.

She leans closer.

SARAH (CONT’D)
Let's break out the booze and have a ball. If that's all there is.

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

SARAH (CONT’D)
Is that all there is, is that all there is? If that's all there is my friends, then let's keep dancing. Let's break out the booze and have a ball, If that's all there is.

CUT TO:
INT. SARAH’S BATHROOM – DAY [MONOLOGUE]

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

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

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Sarah and Gary start to dance.

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

INT. ANTIQUE HARDWARE STORE – DAY

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

TO CAMERA:

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

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Sarah and Gary become more intimately acquainted on the couch. They still haven’t kissed, but hands are running up and down over clothing. Sarah isn’t singing anymore, though her voice continues.
SARAH’S VOICE
Is that all there is, is that all there is?
If that’s all there is my friends, then let’s keep dancing.
Let’s break out the booze and have a ball,
If that’s all there...

Just as they’re about to kiss,

A BABY HOWLS.

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

SARAH
I need to...

GARY
Just...

SARAH

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

SARAH (CONT’D)
Crap!

GARY
Don’t worry about it. Just...

SARAH
I’m going. Bye.

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

CUT TO:

154 INT. KITCHEN – DAY

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

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

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

155 OMIT
INT. OFFICE / GYM - SUMMER NIGHT

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

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

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

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

Look for the Nines.

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

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

SARAH (ON MONITOR)
Goodnight, sweetheart.

GARY
Goodnight.

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

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

VOICE
The cat says meow!
The pig says oink!

Gary smiles to himself.

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

Evidently, Jaden loves the cow.

VOICE (CONT’D)
Nine.
Gary looks back. Did he just hear that?

The phone RINGS.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT [CONTINUOUS]

Gary answers it on the third ring.

GARY

Hello.

It’s the parole system.

GARY (CONT’D)

Yes. Yes. Two trains run through the forest.

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

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

MALE COMPUTER VOICE


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

SOMEONE ELSE.

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

Gary bolts for the door.

Reaching the foyer, Gary steps on a

RAT TRAP,

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

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

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD. – NIGHT

HEADLIGHTS FLARE as cars travel down Miracle Mile, bringing us to a Metro Bus stop -- a semi-enclosed bench with backlit signage.
The far side of the shelter has a one-sheet for Crime Lab. ("This fall, Mondays are murder.") The bench side is a promo poster for a show called Knowing. ("Some fates are chosen for you.")

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

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

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

GARY
Jesus! You scared the shit out of...

She signs "What's wrong?"

GARY (CONT'D)
(confused)
What?

NOELLE
(signed, subtitled)
You're hurt.

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

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

GARY (CONT'D)
I'm fine. I'll be fine.

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

GARY (CONT'D)
Where are your parents?

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

GARY (CONT'D)
Your mom, your dad. Where are they?

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

Again, Gary has no idea what she's saying.
NOELLE (CONT'D)
(signed, subtitled)
You're lost.

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

Noelle glances to her left.

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

GARY (CONT'D)
Shit.

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

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

Putting on his best face for the police...

GARY (CONT'D)
Evening, officers.

CUT TO:

B160 INT./EXT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

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

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

160 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

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

She points to an electronic device by the wall.
MARGARET (CONT’D)
...the cops come, they throw your
ass in jail. If you ever try to
take it off, the cops come and
throw your ass in jail. And if
they ever detect drugs or alcohol
in your system...

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

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

The parole officer smiles.

GARY
Do I still have to answer the
phone?

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

GARY
I don’t need a babysitter.

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

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

MARGARET (CONT’D)
Let’s never hear that again.

CUT TO:

161  EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE – DAY

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

MARGARET
97. 98. 99.

With a piece of chalk, she draws a line on the concrete. She
looks back to Gary, who’s waiting by the front door.
MARGARET (CONT’D)
Behold! The edge of your world.
In the world.
  (jumps over the line)
Out of the world. In the world.
Out of the world. Look at me, I’m dancin’!

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

162 OMIT

163 EXT. BACK PATIO - NIGHT

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

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

MARGARET
Lies!

GARY
Always. So he says, “Foil or epi?”

MARGARET
Epée.

GARY
I say, I’m about equal in both.

MARGARET
Which is true.

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

MARGARET
You cut his ear off?

GARY
Just a little. But I got the job.

Margaret is confused.
MARGARET
Wait. You were in Pirates of the Caribbean?

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

Margaret laughs so hard she coughs.

CUT TO:

164 INT. UPSTAIRS WALKWAY - NIGHT

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

MARGARET
Goodnight, fuckface.

Gary looks out his door.

GARY
Goodnight, you filthy whore.

Both doors shut.

CUT TO:

165 EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Establishing.

MARGARET (PRE-LAP)
It’s incredible.

166 EXT. BACK PATIO - DAY

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

MARGARET
It’s incredible.

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

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

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

CUT TO:

167 INT. THE CASTLE - DAY

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

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

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

Prelap: A doorbell RINGS.

CUT TO:

168 INT. FOYER - DAY

Gary opens the door to find Sarah.

SARAH
Where’s the warden?

GARY
Groceries.

SARAH
Quite the little missus.

She walks past him, into the house.

169 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

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

GARY
How’s Jaden?

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

There’s an edge to her voice.

GARY
You’ve been watching.
SARAH
Well. I don’t want to meddle in
your affairs.

GARY
My affairs?

SARAH
Everyone needs affection. I get
it.

She’s headed back for the door.

GARY
I don’t. Are you seriously
jealous?

SARAH
The opposite. I just want to
protect her.

GARY
From what?

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

GARY
Yeah.

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

With that, she’s gone.

CUT TO:

170 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

MARGARET
What are “the Nines?”

GARY
What?

He looks over. Margaret holds up the orange sticky note by
the phone.
MARGARET
“Look for the Nines.”

GARY
It’s not mine.

MARGARET
It’s your handwriting.

GARY
I didn’t write it.

MARGARET
Okay.

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

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

GARY
(perplexed)
What?

MARGARET
Nothing.

GARY
Seriously, what?

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

171 EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

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

Margaret answers her RINGING cell phone.

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

He nods. Margaret starts walking back to the house.

MARGARET (CONT’D)
(on phone)
Well, who thought it was a good idea letting Courtney into a pottery shop?
Left alone, Gary rolls the dice idly. He gets a 4 and a 5. Rolls again. 4,5. 3,6. 4,5. 3,6. 3,6. 3,6. 4,5.

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

172  EXT.  FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

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

MARGARET,

who doesn't look pleased.

MARGARET
I know who you are.

SARAH
Really.

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

SARAH
You'll what?

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

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

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

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

MARGARET
Margaret.

SARAH
I like that. "Margaret." Classic.

MARGARET
Why can't you just leave him alone?

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

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

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

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

REVEAL Gary watching through the hole in the door.

A173 INT. FOYER - DAY

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

173 OMIT

174 INT. UPSTAIRS WALKWAY - NIGHT

Margaret leans out her doorway:

MARGARET
Goodnight, ratface.

GARY
Goodnight.

175 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

176 EXT. SIDE PATIO - MORNING

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

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

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

SARAH
Hey neighbor.

GARY
Hi.
SARAH
Sorry for the psychotic episode.  
I’ll blame it on hormones.

GARY
Okay.

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

He almost deflects it, but decides to trust her:

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

SARAH
Probablistically?

GARY
(annoyed)  
You know what I mean.

SARAH
One time out of ten.

GARY
How about every time?

He hands her the paper through the bars.

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

Trying to find an explanation...

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

GARY
There is something wrong with the 
world.

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

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

She steps forward, and motions for him to lean closer to the 
bars.  Brushing off the non-existent eyelash, she WHISPERS:
SARAH (CONT’D)
I can get you out of here. But you have to trust me.

MARGARET [O.S.]
Morning.

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

MARGARET
Everything okay?

GARY
Peachy.

MARGARET
Peachy’s good. I like peaches.

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

MARGARET (CONT’D)
You want coffee?

GARY
Sure.

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

GARY (CONT’D)
What do I do?

SARAH
You have to trust me.

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

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

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

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

Gary tests it again, trying to move his arm slowly enough that the light never engages.
Margaret enters, carrying two mugs. She watches him warily.

    MARGARET
   You okay?

    GARY
   No.

    MARGARET
   Oh.

    GARY
Tell me about the Nines.

    MARGARET
The Nines?

    GARY
The Nines.

    MARGARET
Sort of hard to start there...

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

Trying to formulate the simplest truthful explanation:

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

    GARY
I’m a Nine?

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

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

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

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

Happy?

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

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

GARY
Talking.

MARGARET
On the phone. Usually.

GARY
I never met you before I came here.

MARGARET
You, Gary, never met me. But you’re not always...
(lacking the words)
I can understand why you’re a little confused.

GARY
No. I’m a lot confused.

MARGARET
Theories?

GARY
This is all a dream.

MARGARET
No.

GARY
I’m in a coma.

MARGARET
(amused)
No.

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

MARGARET
Okay, a purgatorium is where Romans vomited. But no. This is as real as anything can be.
GARY
(suspicious)
What does that mean?

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

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

178 NEW ANGLE (TIME JUMP)
Gary gets up, headed for the front door.

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

But he’s already outside.

180 EXT. FRONT WALKWAY - DAY
He’s walking towards the blue chalk perimeter line, headed for Sarah’s house.

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

Margaret calls out from the arched windows.

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

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

GARY
What happens if I cross this line?

The tear in her eye falls.

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

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

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

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

Oh shit.

The world ignites in white-hot atomic flames.

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

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

As the light hits Gary, we...

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

INTERVIEW sequences are done to an off-camera interviewer.

Some scenes are unscripted. The gist of these scenes is summarized in *italics.*
Part Two: REALITY TELEVISION

CUT TO:

ANIMATED TITLES

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

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

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

INT. SUSAN’S OFFICE - DAY

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

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

INT. GAVIN’S OFFICE / GUESTHOUSE - DAY

INTERVIEW.

GAVIN
“Knowing” is a one-hour drama about a woman whose husband disappears. She starts to believe that her daughter is the key to a dark conspiracy.
205 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Gavin pitches his show to the NETWORK BOSSES.

GAVIN
Basically, it’s like “Rosemary’s Toddler.”

206 EXT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Impromptu INTERVIEW. Gavin is beaming.

GAVIN
We sold it in the room.

207 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Gavin leans into the speakerphone.

GAVIN
Just tell me Roger liked the script.

208 INT. SUSAN’S OFFICE - DAY

Susan is on her speakerphone.

SUSAN
You’re shooting a pilot.

209 INT. SUSINA COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Gavin has coffee with actress MELISSA McCARTHY (34), his best friend. He’s pitching her the idea.

GAVIN (V.O.)
Melissa McCarthy is my first and only choice for the lead.

MELISSA
I love it. I’ll do it.

210 EXT. FOREST - DAY

An EPK-style INTERVIEW, on the set of the pilot.

MELISSA
Gavin and I have been friends for forever.
211 EXT. WARNER BROS. LOT - DAY

Melissa hangs out with her “Gilmore Girls” CAST and CREW.

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

212 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

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

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

213 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

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

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

214 EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

Gavin YELLS:

GAVIN
Action!

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

215 OMIT

216 TITLE OVER:

EPISODE 6: POST

CUT TO:

217 INT. LAX / BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY

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

TITLES identify him as:
INT. LAUNDRY ROOM / KITCHEN - DAY

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

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

GAVIN
Puggies!

Gavin’s PUGS pounce all over him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY [MINUTES LATER]

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

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

GAVIN (ON PHONE)
It’s weird being back. It doesn’t feel like my house anymore.

INT. FOYER - DAY

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

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

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

INT. EDITING SUITE - DAY

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

JUMP CUT TO:

Susan flips to her next note. TITLES list her position as:
Susan Howard  
VP, Drama Development

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

ANGLE ON the Editor, bristling a bit.

221 INT. HALLWAY - DAY [LATER]  
Impromptu INTERVIEW.

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

INTERCUT editing suite.

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

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

GAVIN [INTERVIEW]  
More importantly, I trust her as a barometer of Roger’s taste.

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

CUT TO:

222 INT. EDITING SUITE - [LATER THAT] DAY  
The Editor hands Melissa a microphone. TITLES list her simply as:

Melissa McCarthy  
“Mary”

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

The monitor shows a three-second clip. It’s Melissa and an eight year-old actress (“Noelle”) in a car.
Melissa’s character looks alarmed by something the girl has just done or said.

MELISSA
What’s the line?

GAVIN
(quickly)
How could you...

MELISSA
Howkajew?

GAVIN
Yeah.

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

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

MELISSA
They really think people won’t get it?

GAVIN
The dumb people might not.

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

A beat.

JUMP CUT TO:

Melissa holds a microphone.

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

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

Finished, she hands the mic back to Gavin.
MELISSA (CONT’D)

I feel so dirty.

GAVIN

That’s how I like ya.

Melissa giggles.

223-226 OMIT

227 INT. TESTING SERVICE THEATRE – DAY

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

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

228 INT. TESTING SERVICE / FOCUS GROUP ROOM – DAY

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

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

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

GAVIN

That guy’s looking at me.

SUSAN

He can’t see you.

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

The Moderator directs her next question to the Agitated Man.

MODERATOR

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

AGITATED MAN

It’s not real.

MODERATOR

And what do you mean by that?
AGITATED MAN
The show’s not real. Why can’t you see that? Jesus! Are you fucking blind?

(looking at the mirror)
You think you’re above it all, don’t you? You are trapped here with the rest of them, brother.

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

He SHOUTS:

AGITATED MAN (CONT’D)
Get out. Get out! Oblivio accebit!

Gavin backs away from the glass, freaked out.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - [LATER THAT] DAY

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

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

Gavin sounds like he’s trying to convince himself.

PRODUCER’S VOICE (O.C.)
What did he say?

GAVIN

PRODUCER’S VOICE (O.C.)
What do you think it means?

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

(jump cut)
I think that’s what I’m going to do. Forget it.

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

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

CUT TO:

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

Susan pours herself another glass of chardonnay.

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

GAVIN
From the screening?

Melissa reaches in, grabbing the vodka.

MELISSA
Pardon me. Daddy needs his drink.

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

SAM (O.S.)
Woman, where’s my cocktail!

MELISSA
(yelling back)
I’m a-comin!
(to Gavin)
I still love you most.

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

SUSAN
(continuing her thought)
People write stuff on the cards they won’t say in a focus group. They get more specific.

He SHAKES the mixer.

SUSAN (CONT’D)
Roger has this advice I always remember.

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

Gavin pours.

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

GAVIN
The Nines.

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

Melissa YELLS from the living room:

MELISSA
Round two is starting without you!

SUSAN
So you’ll look at the cards?

GAVIN
Absolutely.

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

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

**LOOK FOR THE NINES**

CUT TO:

232 INT. SUSAN’S OFFICE - DAY

INTERVIEW.

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

INSERT: Comment cards.
SUSAN (CONT’D)
Her overall scores were okay. But if you look at the people who scored the show highest, the one consistent dip was Melissa.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT – DAY
Susan and Gavin are having lunch.

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

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

GAVIN
But the network still likes the show?

SUSAN
Of course. Roger is your biggest cheerleader.

GAVIN
How about above Roger?

SUSAN
Roger calls the shots.

GAVIN
After he consults with the Higher Powers.

SUSAN
True.

GAVIN
Do they like the show?

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

A beat.

GAVIN
Why are you focusing on Melissa?
SUSAN
Because she’s the biggest concern.

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

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

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

SUSAN
Meet with someone.

GAVIN
Who?

SUSAN
Dahlia Salem.

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

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

GAVIN
Yes. And you put her in Gatin’s pilot.

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

GAVIN
Replace Melissa and reshoot the pilot.

SUSAN
Roger would pay for it.

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

GAVIN
So is this even about Melissa?
SUSAN
It’s about getting your show on the air. That’s all that matters in the end.

CUT TO:

234 EXT. SUSINA COFFEE SHOP — DAY
Establishing.

235 INT. SUSINA COFFEE SHOP — DAY
Gavin meets with Dahlia Salem. She’s pretty, funny, and very cool.
They talk about the other pilot (Gatin’s), the role, and how fucked up it is to be having these double-top-secret conversations. It goes well. They seem to genuinely like each other.

236 INT. SUSINA — DAY [LATER]
Dahlia is gone. INTERVIEW with Gavin.

GAVIN
I see why the network loves her. It’s just, I wrote the part for Melissa. She’s one of my best friends. And in my head, I only see Melissa for the role.
(jump cut)
Could Dahlia do it? Absolutely. It could work. I just don’t know if I want it to work.

237 OMIT

238 INT. PC BANG — NIGHT
A empty storefront in Koreatown, both walls lined with computers for the CUSTOMERS playing high-end videogames. We see Gavin playing.
His INTERVIEW is intercut with his intense focus on the screen as he plays “Bad Day L.A.”

GAVIN
When I get stressed out, I play videogames. It’s my therapy. I can’t have them on my own computer, because then I’d never write. So I come down to Koreatown.
(jump cut)
(MORE)
Videogames are better than real life. When you get stuck, you can always hit ‘reset.’ Life needs a reset button.

239  INT. KITCHEN – DAY

Gavin’s on the phone.

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

240  INT. SUSAN’S OFFICE – DAY

Susan talks to the speakerphone.

INTERCUT GAVIN

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

GAVIN
What does that mean?

SUSAN
It means yes.

GAVIN
Yes, replace Melissa?

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

GAVIN
What about Melissa?

SUSAN
You want me to call her agents?

GAVIN
God no. I’ll tell her.

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

In the background, we see the door to the driveway swing open by itself.
A beat later, it SLAMS shut.

Gavin is understandably startled.

CUT TO:

241 OMIT

242 INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

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

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

INTERCUT with on-camera INTERVIEW:

MELISSA (CONT’D)
In-between the pilot and the series, I’m trying to squeeze in a one-woman show.

(edit)
I’ve always been obsessed with nuns. They’re sort of like God’s fag-hags.

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

CUT TO:

243 EXT. WEST HOLLYWOOD BAR - NIGHT

Gavin and Melissa have martinis.

GAVIN
I think my house is haunted.

MELISSA
Your house is really old.

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

MELISSA
Shit. Like a ghost?
GAVIN
I guess. And then I saw something.
I ran into someone.

MELISSA
The woman?

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

A beat while Melissa processes.

MELISSA
Your house is haunted by yourself?

GAVIN
Yeah.

MELISSA
Gavin, are you alright?

GAVIN
No. No.

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

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

MELISSA
Oh my God.

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

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

MELISSA
So it’s done. Finished. Decided.

GAVIN
Yes.
MELISSA
I understand. It’s not your fault. You’re morally incapable of doing the right thing.

Gavin doesn’t rise to the challenge.

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

GAVIN
I don’t want to do this on camera.

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

GAVIN
Reality.

MELISSA
Yes.

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

With exaggerated relief...

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

She gets up to go, then decides she has one more thing to say:
MELISSA (CONT’D)

Don’t you ever pity me again.

She leaves him sitting at the table.

CUT TO:

244  TITLE OVER:  UPFRONTS

CUT TO:

245  INT. NETWORK CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

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

INTERVIEW:

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

CUT TO:

246  INT. GAVIN’S OFFICE – DAY

INTERVIEW:

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

INTERCUT SUSAN:

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

JUMP CUT:

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

CUT TO:

247  INT. TOWNCAR / NEW YORK / DRIVING – DAY

Gavin watches Manhattan roll by out the windows.
EXT. MANHATTAN HOTEL - DAY

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

INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Gavin opens the door to room 1909.

INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL ROOM - DAY

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

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

It came with a fruit tray.

INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL ELEVATOR - DAY

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

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

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

Gavin (CONT’D)
Hey you!

WOMAN’S VOICE
God. Hi. Gavin.

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

Dahlia
You’re doing your...show.

She means the camera filming them.

Gavin
Get on. Come join reality television.

She steps on. Hits the button for “Lobby.”

Gavin (CONT’D)
When did you get in?
DAHLIA
Just now. This whole last 24 hours has been surreal.

GAVIN
I just said surreal.

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

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

DAHLIA
I just felt weird about what happened.

Not sure he’s following...

GAVIN
Did something happen?

CUT TO:

252 EXT. MANHATTAN STREET – DAY

Near the hotel, Gavin is on his cell phone.

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

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

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

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

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

Back to the conversation...

GAVIN (CONT’D)
No, I’ve left word with Roger. I’ve left word with Susan. It’s like they’ve dropped off the face of the Earth.
Susan is on her phone. At the same time, she’s plowing through email on her Blackberry.

SUSAN (PRE-LAP)
Right now, the whole schedule’s in flux. You get these missives from Roger and the Higher Powers...

JUMP CUT

INTERVIEW:

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

CUT TO:

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

John Gatins
Creator/Showrunner “Paradise Fields”

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

GAVIN
I heard your show was gone.

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

GAVIN
The network wanted Dahlia.

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

GAVIN
Really.
GATINS
Really. Who’s your exec?

GAVIN
Susan Howard.

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

CUT TO:

255 INT. CONFERENCE HALLWAY – DAY

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

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

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

GAVIN
I will break your fucking finger.

SUSAN
(to phone)
I’ll call you back.

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

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

GAVIN
Bullshit.

SUSAN
They’re only picking up two dramas.

GAVIN
The rest is, what, reality?

SUSAN
You can go mid-season.
GAVIN
You can go to Hell.

SUSAN
Wow.

She takes a beat, trying to size him up.

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

GAVIN
Didn’t you?

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

GAVIN
Protect me from what? You? You are psychotic.

SUSAN
There is so much more going on than you...

GAVIN
All I want to know is why.

SUSAN
You want a motive?

GAVIN
Yes.

SUSAN
This isn’t “Crime Lab.” No one got murdered.

GAVIN
My show did. So tell me why.

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

GAVIN
Melissa.

SUSAN
You had to give her up.

(beat)
C’mon, G. If she really mattered, you couldn’t have betrayed her so easily.

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

GAVIN
Fuck you.

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

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

Gavin takes a step back.

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

SUSAN (CONT’D)
Is that all there is?

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

SUSAN (CONT’D)
Do you feel like a man? Because I’ll tell you a secret.

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

SUSAN (CONT’D)
(whisper)
You’re not.

She walks away. CLOSE ON Gavin.

256 EXT. MANHATTAN SIDEWALK - DAY

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

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

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

(MORE)
GAVIN (CONT'D)

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

OFF-SCREEN VOICE

Are you alright?

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

GAVIN

I’m fine.

OCTAVIA

Who were you talking to?

Gavin looks back towards camera, a strange expression.

MUCH WIDER

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

Was there ever anyone there?

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

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

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

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

A SPHERE OF BLUE LIGHT.

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

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

A beat, then he has an unsettling thought.

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

GAVIN

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

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

Exit Now?
Unsaved changes will be lost.

[ Cancel ]          [ Exit ]

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

A CLICK.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

x177 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [PART ONE]  x177

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

MARGARET
I can understand why you’re a little confused.

GARY
No. I’m a lot confused.

MARGARET
Theories?

GARY
This is all a dream.

No.

MARGARET

GARY
I’m in a coma.

MARGARET
(amused)
No.

GARY
Then I’m dead. This is Hell, or Purgatorium or something.
MARGARET
Okay, a purgatorium is where Romans vomited. But no. This is as real as anything can be.

GARY
(suspicious)
What does that mean?

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

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

GARY
Okay, then. Who am I?

With practiced calm...

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

Not sure he follows...

GARY
Are you saying I’m God?

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

GARY
So what are you?

MARGARET
Humans are sevens. Monkeys are sixes.

GARY
What are the eights?

MARGARET
Koalas. They’re telepathic. Plus, they control the weather.

She didn’t mean to get on that tangent...
MARGARET (CONT’D)
What’s important is that you,
you’re the big cheese. El Supremo.
You could destroy the world with a
single thought.
(suddenly)
Don’t, incidentally. Just file
that away. But the truth is, you
hold all the cards: every church,
every candle, every sacrifice --
that’s for you. When people pray,
they’re not praying because they
want this thing or that thing.
They just don’t want to be
forgotten.

MARGARET (CONT’D)
So you understand, I would have
told you earlier, but I didn’t...

GARY
Yeah.

MARGARET
Okay.

GARY
I understand. But I don’t believe
you.

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

FREEZE FRAME.

FADE TO BLACK.
Part Three: KNOWING

FADE IN:

301 EXT. MEADOW - DAY

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

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

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

GABRIEL

Noelle! Don’t get too far ahead.

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

MARY

No. You had ice cream at lunch.

Noelle begs to differ. More signing.

GABRIEL

(to Mary)

Apparently frozen yogurt doesn’t count.

MARY

I’ll make note.

302 EXT. SMALL GRAVEL ROAD - DAY

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

Mary goes to open the passenger door. Locked.

MARY

Did you hit it?

GABRIEL

Shouldn’t have to.
He fishes the keys out of his pocket. Presses the remote entry button repeatedly.

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

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

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
I think we left the overhead light on.

He taps it. Moves the switch.

MARY
Shit.

Noelle signs her made-up representation of “shit.”

MARY (CONT’D)
Noelle.

Gabriel slides the key into the slot. Hits “START.” Nothing.

GABRIEL
Battery is dead. Least the starter is.

Noelle leans forward, aware that this is something serious.

MARY
How do we...?

GABRIEL
We call the service. That’s all we can do.

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

GABRIEL
I guess.

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

GABRIEL
Who did you marry? MacGyver?
He gets out of the car, retrieving his cell phone. Mary follows him out. Noticing that he’s not dialing...

MARY
Are you getting a signal?

GABRIEL
No. Do you?

She checks her phone. A long beat.

MARY
Yes! One bar.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARY
Keep trying.

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

MARY
Well, what do you want to do?

GABRIEL
I don’t know.

He tries redial.

MARY
Maybe if you hold it up higher.

Humoring her, he holds it at arm’s length. No good.
GABRIEL
The problem is we’re boxed in.
It’s a canyon.

A beat.

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

MARY
That’s at least a mile.

GABRIEL
I can run that.

MARY
So...we stay here?

GABRIEL
You okay with that?

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

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

Gabriel leans down next to Noelle’s window.

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

Noelle nods.

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
I’ll be right back.

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

We MOVE IN on Noelle, who smiles a little.

CUT TO:

303  EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - DAY

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

In VARIOUS SHOTS, we get a sense of the distance he’s travelling. He passes gulches, meadows and boulder fields.
He finally arrives at the junction of the dirt road and a larger...

304 EXT. PAVED ROAD - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

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

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

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

He decides to head off to the right, downhill.

305 EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD - DAY

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

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

    GABRIEL
    Excuse me! Hi! Hello?

She stops, turns.

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

    GABRIEL (CONT’D)
    Excuse me. Do you have a cell phone?

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

    GABRIEL
    (re: his phone)
    Yeah, I’m finding that out.

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

    GABRIEL
    Okay...

She points in the opposite direction -- back the way he came.
SIERRA
You follow the road. It’s probably... I don’t know. You have a car?

GABRIEL
It’s dead. That’s why I need...

SIERRA
Oh...

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

GABRIEL
Yeah.

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

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
Are you headed back to your car now? If you could give me a ride to a gas station, wherever...

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

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
Oh. Hey. Look, I’m not some crazy Ted Bundy guy. I’m not going to rape you or kill you or anything.

She doesn’t seem reassured.

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
Of course, that’s what Ted Bundy would say. Look, I’m a videogame designer.  
(fishing through wallet)  
My wife is an editor. My daughter is four.

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

GABRIEL (CONT’D)
They’re waiting back at the car, and I want to get some help before it gets dark.

SIERRA
I can call somebody when I get to town.

Trying to temper his frustration...
GABRIEL
I believe you. I do. But you
don’t know where the car is. And
the guy might not come. We can’t
be up here all night.

Sierra backs away.

SIERRA
I’m sorry.

GABRIEL
Don’t be sorry. Just help me out
here.

SIERRA
No. I can’t. I’m sorry.

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

GABRIEL
Why won’t you trust me?

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

TRANSITION TO:

306  EXT. ROAD / INT. PRIUS - DAY

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

Noelle signs something to Mary, who considers the request.

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

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

MARY (CONT’D)
Do you want to see where we were
today?

Noelle nods.

Mary takes the camera back for a second, flipping it to
playback mode and rewinding. The blocky video footage zips
past.
MARY (CONT’D)
Okay, now hit play. This button.

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

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

Noelle smiles. Signs something.

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

CUT TO:

307 EXT. PAVED ROAD – DAY

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

SIERRA (O.S.)
Hey!

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

GABRIEL
Were you following me?

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

GABRIEL
You thought I was Ted Bundy.

SIERRA
Kinda.

GABRIEL
My name’s Gabriel. Bundy.

She smiles.

SIERRA
Sierra.

They shake.

SIERRA (CONT’D)
Weird that there’s no cars. At all.
GABRIEL
Yeah.

SIERRA
So, listen. I’m parked that way.

She points off the road, through the forest.

SIERRA (CONT’D)
It’s not that far. If you want, I’ll give you a ride to town.

GABRIEL
Really?

SIERRA
Yeah. Make up some karma.

GABRIEL
Lead the way.

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

TRANSITION TO:

308  EXT. FOREST – DAY

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

SIERRA
Okay, confession. I kind of recognized you.

GABRIEL
Really?

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

GABRIEL
No.

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

GABRIEL
Not really.
SIERRA
Fine.

GABRIEL
You seriously recognized me off of one photo?

SIERRA
I thought you were kinda hot. Considering.

GABRIEL
Considering..?

SIERRA
Within the subset of videogame people.

GABRIEL
Okay.

SIERRA
I wasn’t masturbating to your picture or anything.

GABRIEL
Well, I guess I’m flattered.

SIERRA
You should be. I’m stingy with compliments.

GABRIEL
So your boyfriend plays videogames?

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

GABRIEL
Super-crack?

SIERRA
Sure. He was this orc witch doctor guy.

GABRIEL
Shaman?

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

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

GABRIEL
You had an account?

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

GABRIEL
Sorry.

SIERRA
You can make it up to me.

EXT. ROAD NEAR PRIUS - DAY

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

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

IN THE PRIUS

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

CLOSE ON the blocky pixels rushing past.

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

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

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

MELISSA (ON TAPE)
So it’s done. Finished. Decided.

GAVIN (ON TAPE)
Yeah.

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

MELISSA (ON TAPE)
I understand.
GAVIN (ON TAPE)
You do?

MELISSA (ON TAPE)
I understand. It’s not your fault. You’re morally incapable of doing the right thing.

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

CUT TO:

310 EXT.  FOREST - DAY

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

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

SIERRA
So you play a lot of characters at once?

GABRIEL
A couple. Most people do.

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

GABRIEL
What, like ‘God mode’?

SIERRA
That’s what you call it?

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

SIERRA
And you make the rules.

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

(MORE)
They deliberately crash the world servers. They’d ruin everything just to prove they could.

A311 INT. FOREST VALE - DAY

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

Out of nowhere...

SIERRA
Do you think I’m pretty?

She stops, turning to face him.

GABRIEL
What?

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

GABRIEL
Sure.

He drinks.

SIERRA
That’s a rave.

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

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

GABRIEL
So where’s the orc now?

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

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

GABRIEL
Remind me not to piss you off, Sarah.
Sierra.

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

Gabriel

Sorry.

Sierra

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

She smiles, keeps walking.

311 EXT. ROAD / INT. PRIUS - DAY

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

Mary

How are you doing, kiddo?

Noelle doesn’t look up.

Mary (cont’d)

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

Without looking up...

Noelle

He’s not coming back.

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

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

Mary

How could you...

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

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

Melissa (on tape)


(MORE)
I feel so dirty.

GAVIN (ON TAPE)
That’s how I like ya.

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

She hits STOP. Tries to collect herself.

Noelle gets out of the car, but doesn’t approach. She signs, “Mommy?”

Mary backs away.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST VALE - DAY

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

I X

He’s sweating a lot.

GABRIEL
Am I crazy, or is it getting hotter?

SIERRA
Oh, you’re crazy.

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

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

He doesn’t.

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

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

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

SIERRA
Where are they?
Gabriel turns, trying to get his bearing. The trees BLUR. He nearly falls over.

He manages to steady himself.

Sierra kneels down in front of him.

Sierra (Cont’d)
Dizzy, huh? It’s probably just the GHB. In the water.

She holds up the water bottle.

Flash to:

Quick flashbacks from parts one and two

Gabriel experienced the flashbacks. He felt time move.

Gabriel
What’s happening?

Sierra
I’m sorry it had to come this, G. But it’ll all be over soon.
GABRIEL
You’re trying to kill me.

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

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE.
Images to accompany previous dialogue...

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

GAVIN
Melissa?

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

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

315 EXT. FOREST - DAY
Gabriel dry-heaves. Sierra rubs his shoulders.

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

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

GABRIEL
Why are you doing this?

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

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

THE PAROLE OFFICER/AGITATED MAN, and

OCTAVIA.
They're Nines as well.

SIERRA (CONT’D)
You’re a crack-head, G. The thing is, this planet, these people, they’re your drug of choice.

CUT TO:

99 INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS – DAY

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

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

G.
How long have I..?

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

G.
You came looking for me.

S.
That’s what a girl does.

G.
Why now?

x107 EXT. STREET – DAY [PART ONE]

Streetwalker Octavia leans in Gary’s car window.

OCTAVIA
Because you forgot who you were.
INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY [PART TWO]

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

AGITATED MAN
You forgot this wasn’t real.

INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

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

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

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY [PART ONE]

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

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

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY [PART ONE]

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

OCTAVIA
You can’t think it with human thoughts.

INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

S.
That’s why you have to come back. Come back with us. With me.
Mary is sitting on the road. Noelle has her chin on her mother’s shoulder, watching the videotape with her.

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

MARGARET
You could destroy the world with a single thought.
(suddenly)
Don’t, incidentally. Just file that away. But the truth is, you hold all the cards: every church, every candle, every sacrifice — that’s for you. When people pray, they’re not praying because they want this thing or that thing. They just don’t want to be forgotten.

BACK TO:

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

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

MARY
Noelle? Noelle!

CUT TO:

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

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

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

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

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

She kisses him. And then she’s gone.

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

\[ x103 \] OMIT

\[ 318 \] EXT. GRAVEL ROAD / NEAR THE PRIUS - DAY

Panicking, Mary calls out for --

MARY
Noelle! Noelle!

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

GABRIEL
She’s here.

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

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

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

MARY
Everything okay?

GABRIEL
Absolutely. Let’s go home.

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

\[ 319 \] INT. PRIUS - DAY

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

Everyone fastens their seatbelts.
320 EXT. FOREST ROAD - DAY

The Prius drives down the gravel road. Mary tries to keep her eyes on the scenery, but they keep drifting over to Gabriel, trying to read what he’s thinking.

321 EXT. CROSSROADS - DAY

The Prius turns on to the paved road. Headlights switch on.

322 OMIT

323 OMIT

324 OMIT

325 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The metal gate at the top of the driveway swings open, SQUEALING on its rusty hinges.

326 EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Gabriel lifts the sleeping Noelle out of the car. Carries her into the house. Mary shuts the door behind them.

327 INT. NOELLE’S ROOM - NIGHT

Taking off her shoes, Gabriel tucks Noelle into bed. Turns on a nightlight for her.

328 INT. MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel brushes his teeth with an electric toothbrush while Mary reads a magazine on the toilet.

329 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel switches off the light. He spoons Mary, who kisses his hand. On both Mary and Gabriel’s faces, we see anxiety. Things left unsaid.

330 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT [LATER]

Gabriel lies awake, staring at the ceiling.
INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Gabriel’s bare feet walk down the carpeted stairs.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel stares at the three paintings on the wall.

INT. KITCHEN / EXT. BACK YARD - DAWN

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

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

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

MARY
You need to go, don’t you?

GABRIEL
No. I can stay.

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

He smiles, a little.

MARY (CONT’D)
What happens? If you go.

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

MARY
That’s all?

Both smile.

GABRIEL
That probably wouldn’t happen. The basic structure of the universe should hold. I guess I’m just worried about the human factor. You guys kill each other a lot.
MARY
In fairness, that’s usually in your name. Plus we’ve gotten much more efficient at it.

A beat.

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

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

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

MARY
That’s a little creepy.

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

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

GABRIEL
Ninety. This is the last one.

MARY
Wow.

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

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

With that, there’s really nothing more to say.
MARY (CONT'D)

So.

GABRIEL

So.

MARY
Guess you don't really need to pack anything.

GABRIEL
I'm good.

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

GABRIEL
Likewise. I love you.

MARY
Love you, too. Ya big lug.

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

GABRIEL
You're my favorite.

She smiles.

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

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

He's stepped out of this dimension.

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

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

Gabriel collapses into a single, spiky sphere of light.

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

Picking up speed, the sphere rushes through the window, heading west.
As the light flies out over Hancock Park, the mansions and skyscrapers seem unreal, like models.

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

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

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

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

As we get closer and closer, we...

MATCH CUT TO:

A PALE EYE,

opening. We are...

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

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

She looks first to the spot where Gabriel was standing.

Empty.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Honey, do we have nutmeg?

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

M
We should.

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

BEN
Cinnamon, too.
M catches her reflection in the toaster. Notices she looks different than she expected.

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

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

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

BEN
Really.

NOELLE
And if I had another horse...

BEN
Nutmeg?

NOELLE
No, Flash.

M
Sweetie?

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

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

Noelle only gives her a half-crazy look.

NOELLE
Mmmmmmmmmmm—Mommy.

Noelle smiles. M smiles too, a little embarrassed.

M
Right. Exactly.

Noelle looks her right in the eye.

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

M
The best of all possible worlds.

Noelle taps her nose.
BEN
Honey? Is it supposed to stick like this?

Sharing a look...

M
We should help him.

Noelle agrees. They head over to assist.

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

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

Fade out.

The End
ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

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

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

99 INT./EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS

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S.
That’s what a girl does.

G.
Why now?

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

A few beats while it comes back to him. Tears start to build in his eyes. What he’s picturing is unspeakably beautiful.
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It was warm. And white. Like...

S.
You can’t describe it with human words. You can’t think it with human thoughts.
(beat)
That’s why you have to come back. Come back with us. With me.