

SCRIPT TITLE

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FADE IN:

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Victoria reads e-Book on her laptop as she lays in bed.

ON THE SCREEN

Table of contents of "How To Become and Stay Lucid in your Dreams" is shown. The last chapter is "Parting Comments about Your Journey of a Lifetime".

BACK TO SCENE

VICTORIA
(To self)
We'll see about that.

She starts to read the final chapter on her computer.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Victoria shuts off laptop, sets it on the bedside table next to a notebook labeled "dream journal" and turns off the lamp. Complete darkness.

EXT. DESERT OF PARALLEL WORLD - DAY

An athletic, clean-shaven, thoughtful man, early 40's -- CURALIS HUNTER -- strides alone across a barren, flat, sandy expanse. A canteen hangs from a black leather belt that holds up a pair of loose-fitting canvas shorts. He has a leather backpack strapped over his white sleeveless shirt.

He sips from canteen, peers straight ahead. In the distance, a faint shape breaks the monotony of the desert landscape.

CURALIS
Must be on the right track.

He marches toward the distant shape.

EXT. DESERT OF PARALLEL WORLD - DAY

Curalis, beads of sweat on his forehead and cheeks, approaches the now distinct shape. Ninety-nine thin pillars of wet, now dried sand, each one standing less than two inches from its neighbor, rise up to skyscraper height.

LED signs hang from the pillars, strewn about in random patterns and climb up the walls of the structure: LOVE AND BE PEACEFUL TO ONE ANOTHER, KINDNESS HEALS BETTER THAN ANY MEDICINE, LIVE EACH DAY WITH AN OPEN MIND AND AN HONEST HEART, ALL WE HAVE IS EACH OTHER...

FATHER MALICKY -- mid 60's, bald on top, gray beard, short in physical stature, epic reputation for devout holiness -- smiles broadly as he emerges from the shadows of the church.

FATHER MALICKY

Welcome, welcome, my friend, to the Temple in the Desert. I hope the Holy One has blessed you on your journey to this place.

CURALIS

Thank you, Father. Zoran always blessed me but I do not always realize the nature and purpose of those blessings.

FATHER MALICKY

Indeed, rare is the person who does. Please, come inside. I'll get you water and something to eat.

CURALIS

Bless you, Father.

Malicky leads him toward a fountain that dominates the ground floor of the Temple in the Desert. Rocks of varying earth-tone colors surround the pool that houses the fountain.

Curalis hands his canteen to Malicky. The priest kneels and dips it into the pool. He hands it back to his guest.

FATHER MALICKY

Other than two sturdy feet, what brings you to The Great Desert?

CURALIS

A quest for the truth.

FATHER MALICKY

The truth about what?

Curalis looks surprised and confused by the question. An instant later, the confusion lifts.

CURALIS

That's right, your church prohibits the use of modern communications devices except for emergency use.

FATHER MALICKY

That is correct, my son.

CURALIS

So you have no idea who I am.

FATHER MALICKY

Other than being a child of Zoran,
no, I do not. You must be some type
of celebrity in civilized circles.

Curalis laughs.

CURALIS

Actually many people are convinced
I am the Son of God.

Father Malicky raises an eyebrow.

FATHER MALICKY

You're Curalis Hunter?

CURALIS

I am.

FATHER MALICKY

Interesting. I have spoken with
several visitors and two members of
our church, residents of Zomfehr, a
village about ten standard land
measures from here, about you. Your
long-lost mother claims your birth
was of divine origin because she
became pregnant with you even
though she was a virgin.

Curalis nods as he takes a drink of water.

CURALIS

Nadelle Ophelland is her name. She
claims to have given birth to me in
a cave outside of Yakere. She was
hesitant to come forward with this
information earlier because she was
concerned that I wouldn't be able
to handle all the attention.

FATHER MALICKY

An understandable concern.

CURALIS

But she couldn't keep it a secret
any longer. I need to find out the
truth of my birth.

(MORE)

CURALIS (CONT'D)

If this Nadelle woman is right,
then I am the Son of God.

FATHER MALICKY

And the beginning of a new age will
commence, just as the ancient
prophets proclaimed.

CURALIS

Exactly.

FATHER MALICKY

And not a standard time unit too
soon. People have lost faith in God
or dismissed the idea of something
greater than themselves. For a time
it seemed like every other guest I
had here asked me about the nature
of God or what I thought heaven was
like. Lately it's been 'thanks for
the crackers and cheese, see yah,
Father'.

Curalis smiles as he stares at the flowing fountain.

CURALIS

Speaking of crackers and cheese,
Father...

FATHER MALICKY

Of course. Forgive an old holy man
for rambling on. Let me get you
something from our food storehouse
down in the cellar. Sit tight.

He takes off and opens the backpack. Curalis leaves it on the
stone edging of the pool. He leans over, sees his face
reflected in water. The image of the watery face begins to
fade away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Victoria's eyes pop open. She reaches for the dream journal,
one, sits up in bed and starts to write furiously.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I dreamt about a man named Curalis
Hunter making a trek through a vast
desert.

(MORE)

VICTORIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

His ultimate destination is a village named Yakere, the place of his possibly Immaculate Conception. Although I wasn't in the dream as a participant, I accompanied this Curalis man on his journey. Basically I was an invisible balloon of consciousness floating above and just behind him. Strange but intriguing.

She pauses, frowns and adds more to dream journal.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Too bad the dream ended as I am curious about what happens to Curalis. Oh well, there'll be other dream worlds to explore.

She closes the notebook, throws back covers to begin her day.

EXT. NORTHERN HEIGHTS BIKE TRAIL - DAY

Victoria pedals along paved, wooded trail as she listens to Beck's "Loser" on her iPod.

FROM IPOD

"You get a parking violation and a maggot on your sleeve."

RETURN TO SCENE

Victoria smiles.

VICTORIA

(To self)

I hate when that happens.

She rides on, passes two slow-moving seniors, and turns off the iPod. She takes cellphone out, checks her messages. None.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

Nobody loves me. Fine.

She starts to put phone away when the phone lights up. Victoria answers it as she rides one-handed.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Somebody does love me after all. Randy, what's going on?

RANDY (V.O.)

I was going to ask you that. You're the poor schmuck who's freshly but unfairly unemployed due to a poor decision by Global Links Airlines.

VICTORIA

I'm out on my bicycle at the moment. I'll hit the unemployment office's website after I get back home. If nothing materializes, I'll ride the state's unemployment-benefits gravy train for awhile.

RANDY (V.O.)

Dirty job but you're just the person to do it.

VICTORIA

What about you? Are you still flying all over the planet on your vastly-reduced employee rate?

She slows down at stop sign, sees there's no cross traffic and pedals across the street. She's back on the trail.

RANDY (V.O.)

Of course. I just got back to the office today after spending last week in merry old England.

VICTORIA

Sounds like fun. Other than the normal touristy stuff, how was it?

RANDY (V.O.)

I did a Jack the Ripper walking tour by the author of a book about the sick SOB and I found a fun little pub not far from my hotel. They serve a killer martini. The regulars were a hoot.

VICTORIA

Cool.

RANDY (V.O.)

But the wildest thing was the two people who happened to stay at the same little Slovakian hotel I did.

VICTORIA

Who might that be?

RANDY (V.O.)

A couple of childhood friends of yours, now big wigs at the airlines. And actually one of them is the head of your old department.

VICTORIA

Anthony Hart and Michelle Brown?

RANDY (V.O.)

In the flesh, dear girl. I chatted with them in the little dining room where they serve a continental breakfast English style.

Victoria shakes her head in amazement. She arms sweat off her forehead, leaves her riding no-handed for a few seconds. She quickly returns left hand to the handlebar.

VICTORIA

But they're both married so what are they doing traveling together?

RANDY (V.O.)

They made up this flimsy cover story about researching life in the U.K. so Global Links can improve their international advertising.

VICTORIA

Maybe it's true.

RANDY (V.O.)

They're having an affair and using business as their cover. Not that I'm judging them, mind you.

VICTORIA

Oh no, perish the thought.

RANDY (V.O.)

There was a creepy thing that happened. The police found a body, as in dead body, in a park four blocks from my hotel.

VICTORIA

That is rather morbid. Do the police suspect foul play?

RANDY (V.O.)

The foulest. Poor woman's throat was slashed.

VICTORIA

Oh dear Lord.

She winces, shakes her head and zips around a rotund, gray-haired man (48) on a five-speed bike.

RANDY (V.O.)

That's not all. The body was drained of all the blood. Apparently after slitting her throat, the murderer collected all her blood in some kind of container before leaving the scene.

VICTORIA

Oh my God, that is sick. What is wrong with people? It sounds cult like or a serial killer.

RANDY (V.O.)

Or maybe a serial killer with a vampire fixation. Listen hon, I've got to run. You remember how it is after you're on vacation. It takes two days just to go through all the e- and voice-mails and paperwork that piled up during your much-deserved absence.

VICTORIA

It's tough but I think I can stretch my mind back that far.

RANDY (V.O.)

Bye hon. Let's do lunch soon. Okay gotta go. Bye bye.

Victoria hangs up and pedals on.

INT. THE CAFFEINE CENTER COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Victoria waits in line behind three other customers. Man directly ahead of her has a *PostIt Note* with list of drink orders. Victoria rolls her eyes. She makes call with phone.

VICTORIA

Hi Randy. Hey, I know you're at work so I'll make this quick. Can you pull an employee flying report for the last two years?

(Two beats)

I'm curious to see where Anthony and Michelle have flown to.

(MORE)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

I'm probably delusional but I want to make sure about something.

(Two beats)

Yep, e-mail is great. Thanks Randy.

She waits for the guy with the PostIt to finish his order.

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

Victoria, dressed in black, loose-fitting blouse and knit pants with black pumps, leans forward in her chair positioned in front of the desk of TABITHA (TABBY) SIMON -- 34, quiet enthusiasm, professional demeanor, tanning-booth tan.

TABBY

You've got a degree in accounting, you worked in the fleet-accounting department at Global Links Airlines for the last six and a half years. Is that the direction you want to continue in?

Victoria smiles, shrugs.

VICTORIA

Sure, no, maybe. I have no flipping no clue. What are my options?

TABBY

With a little more schooling, you could become a specialist in accounting. There are schools that have a green accounting degree if you're into saving the planet.

VICTORIA

Saving the planet? I can barely take of myself. Sorry, go on.

TABBY

Another area that's going to be huge over the next decade and beyond is cyber-security. With your analytical skills and a little more schooling...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE - DAY

Victoria stuffs her resume and employment-office paperwork into a folder. She stuffs it all into a briefcase-like shoulder bag. She stands. Tabby and Victoria shake hands.

VICTORIA

Thanks for your help. I've got plenty of jobs to apply for and enough food for thought to start my own all-you-can-eat joint.

TABBY

Good luck. Keep the cyber-security option in mind. I think you'd excel in that area.

VICTORIA

We'll see. Have a great day.

She smiles and leaves the office.

EXT. EMPLOYMENT OFFICE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Victoria climbs into her gray 2002 *Dodge Intrepid*. She extracts laptop from the shoulder bag, turns it on and while it starts up, Victoria starts the car.

As she drives, Victoria gets on Internet and brings up her e-mail. There's a message from Randy with the subject line "Here's the Report You Wanted, Sunshine".

While she leaves parking lot, Victoria retrieves the e-mail.

VICTORIA

(To self)

Here's the report you wanted, honey. Hope it helps you figure out whatever it is you're trying to figure out. Have a great night.

She opens the attachment, signals and turns left onto Smith Avenue. Traffic is light. Victoria squints, tries to make sense of the report.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

Wow, those two have been busy little globe-trotting beavers.

(MORE)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

First they go to San Francisco, New York City and Dallas, then to The Netherlands, Rome, Belize, and back in the U.S. to Washington, D.C. And that was in just four months.

She looks up from the computer. A boy (13) on a skateboard rolls over crosswalk not twenty feet from her front bumper.

Victoria SQUEALS brakes, veers hard right. The Dodge misses the startled boy by less than six inches. The passenger-side wheels roll over the curb, leaves vehicle half on the sidewalk and half on the street.

Victoria, breathing hard, leans over the steering wheel while she waits for her pounding heart to slow down. She closes her eyes, waits for a couple of seconds, and looks in rear-view mirror. The boy glances at her car, then rolls across street over onto sidewalk.

Victoria breathes SIGH OF RELIEF, looks at computer again.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

Where I was in? Oh yeah, Anthony and Michelle were over half the globe in four months. Then they zipped over to Frankfurt, Germany; Brussels, London, Costa Rica, Vancouver and Greenland in a little over three months. Holy shit, no wonder I never saw Anthony at the office. He was never there.

A KNOCK on the driver's side window. Victoria SCREAMS briefly as she turns to see the junior-high boy standing there. She rolls down the window.

JUNIOR HIGH BOY

You all right?

VICTORIA

I'm fine. Are you okay?

JUNIOR HIGH BOY

Just saw my life, short as it is, flash through my mind.

VICTORIA

Sorry about that. Let that be a lesson to you. Never read your e-mail while you're driving.

JUNIOR HIGH BOY
I'm too young to drive.

VICTORIA
Oh, well, you know, keep that in
mind for future reference.

JUNIOR HIGH BOY
Sure.

He waves and skates off. Victoria returns to her computer.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Victoria navigates to Google dot com. In the search field, she types "murders or unsolved missing person cases in San Francisco" and clicks "search".

Victoria scrolls through results until reaching a San Francisco Chronicle headline: "19 Year Old Woman Reported Missing After She Didn't Return to Dorm after Party"

Screen changes back to the report sent by Randy. Anthony and Michelle were in San Francisco from January 21st to January 24th. Screen changes back to Google results.

VICTORIA
(To self)
So she disappeared the day before
Anthony and Michelle flew back to
Minnesota. But that's just one
case, well, two if you include
London.

In the search field, she types "Murders or unsolved murders in New York City" and clicks search.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
(To self)
Good Lord, this is gonna be long.

List appears. Screen switches back to the report. It shows suspects were in New York City from February 20th to February 23rd. Screen returns to Internet. In the "Search within results" field, Victoria types "February 20, February 21, February 22, February 23" and clicks search.

She scrolls through results.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
(To self)
Oh shit, we have another bingo.

New York Times headline: "Homeless Man's Stabbed, Bloodless Body Found in Central Park". Lead paragraph of article: "Nathaniel Joseph Wayne, unemployed for over two decades and living out of a shopping cart and cardboard box, was found by a policeman patrolling Central Park. Wayne was stabbed to death, his throat slashed. Police spokesperson Janet Cochran refused to comment about preliminary indications the body was drained of blood."

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

What in the hell is going on?

BACK TO SCENE

A hand clamps Victoria's left shoulder. She jumps, screams and whirls to find Anthony at the side of her car.

ANTHONY

I'm sorry, Victoria. I didn't mean to startle you but I saw your car sitting at an odd angle. I was worried you'd been in an accident.

VICTORIA

No, nothing like that. Well, it's kind of like that. I was distracted by something on my computer and narrowly avoided hitting a pedestrian back there. Thank God he wasn't hurt. My car ended up like this. I'm fine. It's all good.

Anthony frowns.

ANTHONY

Wow, distracted driving. That doesn't sound like the Victoria I know. It must have been something really important.

VICTORIA

Ah, well, yeah, it was about a job I'd applied for. The woman I interviewed with had a few more questions that she wanted me to answer by e-mail. It was stupid. It could have waited until I got home.

ANTHONY

What's the name of the company?

Victoria waves the question away.

VICTORIA

Oh I'm sure you haven't heard of them. They're a small, new company in the Cities. They're interviewing a lot of people. I probably won't get the job anyway.

ANTHONY

Don't underestimate yourself. You're an intelligent, resourceful, hard-working woman. This company would be lucky to get you.

VICTORIA

My thoughts exactly but with the economy like it is, the pool of candidates is no doubt huge. It's a buyer's market.

ANTHONY

That is true.

VICTORIA

So what are you doing in little ole Northern Heights? I thought you moved to the big city to be closer to work.

ANTHONY

I do live in Minneapolis, actually a wealthy suburb, but I'm back in town to visit Sal and Freddy. You remember them, right? They were a year behind us in school.

VICTORIA

Sure. Sal was a jock but smarter than your average jock and Freddy was the strong, silent, handsomely yummy type.

ANTHONY

Not that I thought much about the last part but yes, those are the guys. We're meeting at the Roadhouse Bar, which is where I'm going. You're welcome to join us.

VICTORIA

Thanks but I've got to get home. I have a bunch of job applications to fill out, perfect my resume, that kind of thing.

Anthony straightens up. He smiles.

ANTHONY

Sure, I understand. But if you change your mind, you know where the Roadhouse is.

VICTORIA

I do.

She glances in the rear-view mirror at Anthony's car, a black *Lexus* with flashers on.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

You don't have your lovely wife Gloria along, huh?

ANTHONY

She didn't want to intrude on the boys'-night-out thing.

VICTORIA

That was big of her.

ANTHONY

Have a safe drive home.

VICTORIA

Thanks. I'll shut my computer off and there'll be no issues. See yah.

ANTHONY

One more thing, Victoria.

He leans over, places both hands on top of the rolled-down window, his face looming over her.

VICTORIA

What's that?

ANTHONY

I'm curious. Why would you want a report of all Global Links employee flying for the last two years?

VICTORIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

ANTHONY

Oh really? That's odd. After seeing Randy Johnson created that report today, I shot him an e-mail asking him why he created that report.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

He replied that you asked him to do it. It's no big deal, it's not like it took him a lot of company time to do it, but you know me. I have this thirst for knowledge of why people do things. And since Mr. Johnson is under the finance umbrella at the airlines, technically it's something I should be concerned about.

VICTORIA

You know me. I'm a curious type too. I just wanted to see if anyone in the company used their flying benefits more than Randy.

ANTHONY

And what did you find out?

VICTORIA

I haven't read the report yet.

ANTHONY

I have to be toward or at the top of the list. Of course, most of my traveling is related to business.

VICTORIA

Of course.

ANTHONY

I'd better get going. Don't want to keep the guys waiting.

VICTORIA

Right. Have a great time. Tell them Victoria says hi.

Anthony smiles and walks back toward his Lexus. Victoria expels giant SIGH of relief. She shuts the computer off, starts up the Intrepid, and checks her rearview mirror. Anthony is doing a U-turn.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

How in the hell did he get to his car so fast?

(Two beats)

And the Roadhouse is that away.

She points straight ahead.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Victoria makes phone call as she crawls under the covers.

VICTORIA

Randy, I have one more request.

RANDY (V.O.)

If it involves pulling another report from the system, forget it. The big Kahuna wanted to know why I created that report. If he's looking at stuff that closely, he'll see how many personal e-mails I send on company time. It'll no doubt show up on my next review and I can forget about a raise.

Victoria fires up her computer.

VICTORIA

I'm sorry, Randy. I never dreamt Anthony would be that anal about checking system reports. With all his traveling, I wouldn't think he'd have time.

RANDY (V.O.)

So what's this other favor?

VICTORIA

Find out, in a discreet manner, when his next out-of-town trip is.

RANDY (V.O.)

What am I supposed to do, break into his office at night and check his desk calendar?

Victoria gets on the Internet.

VICTORIA

I hadn't thought of that but now that you mention it --

RANDY (V.O.)

Sorry hon, I'm fresh out of black face paint and all my black clothes are dirty.

VICTORIA

Actually I was thinking a simpler, safer way would be to ask his administrative assistant.

RANDY (V.O.)

Frank?

VICTORIA

Yes, Frank. But make sure he knows how important it is that he not mention it to his boss.

RANDY (V.O.)

Frank's a pretty by-the-book type. Do you solemnly swear to reimburse me should I need to bribe him in order to get the info?

VICTORIA

Depends on how much. Unemployment benefits don't pay that well. What do you have in mind?

RANDY (V.O.)

Maybe take him to dinner at Magglio's and then have a few giant tap beers at the Roadhouse.

Victoria brings up the flying report, switches back to Internet and does search for murders/missing persons in Dallas area for time-frame Anthony and Michelle were there.

VICTORIA

Randy, are you trying to start a thing with Frank? I didn't know your orientation pointed that way.

RANDY (V.O.)

Let's just say I like to keep my options open.

Victoria chuckles, gets serious after seeing search result.

VICTORIA

(More to herself)

That's three for three.

RANDY (V.O.)

What are you talking about?

VICTORIA

Never mind. Listen Randy, I'm serious about Anthony not knowing that you're asking about his travel habits. Make sure Frank knows it.

RANDY (V.O.)

Why are you so interested in their travel habits?

VICTORIA

I think they're up to something, illegal and well, evil. But right now it's just a feeling. I need to see if my instincts are right but I don't want to endanger you.

RANDY (V.O.)

That makes two of us, Sweetie. Don't worry, I'll be subtle with Frank. And then after this, you're on your own with Anthony and Michelle.

VICTORIA

For sure. Thanks, Randy.

RANDY (V.O.)

I'll let you know what I find out.

VICTORIA

Sounds great. Good night.

RANDY (V.O.)

One more thing, hon. Why do you have this thing about Anthony and Michelle being guilty of something?

VICTORIA

The last time I had any significant interaction with those two was at a Halloween party when we were seven. The party host, Tom Stillson, died of a heart attack while telling a kick-ass ghost story.

RANDY (V.O.)

Oh my God, that's awful.

VICTORIA

But he came back to life after his wife Irene gave him CPR. It was an extraordinary thing for a seven-year-old like me to see.

RANDY (V.O.)

I bet it was. But why does that make you suspect Anthony and Michelle are up to something?

VICTORIA

I felt a chill go down my spine
right after Mr. Stillson came back
to life. It was like someone threw
me into a snowbank in the middle of
the winter and I had no clothes on.
Anthony and Michelle felt the same
thing. It was as if something
invisible entered my body or mind,
I don't know, it's hard to explain.

RANDY (V.O.)

That is weird. Gotta go. See yah.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Red-faced, white shirt drenched with sweat, breathing
labored, Curalis brings canteen to his lips, tilts it back.
Nothing there.

He returns canteen to backpack and forges ahead across the
blistering desert.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis is shirtless. He uses sweat-saturated shirt as a
bandana. He staggers under the scorching sun, goes down to
one knee, closes his eyes. He hefts himself back onto his
feet, expels a long breath, and zig zags toward a valley
straight ahead.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis pauses at the precipice of the valley. A large pond
stands in shadows at the bottom of the depression. Two Sand
Scuttlers -- creatures that are part crab, part lobster, with
eyestalks that protrude from the tops of their heads, linger
on the water's edge in front of the pond.

Curalis watches the creatures as he extracts canteen from his
backpack and descends toward the pond. Two strides away from
the left front corner of the pond, one of the Sand Scuttlers
sidles toward him.

CURALIS

Look here, I mean you no harm. I'll
just get some water and leave.

The creature grabs for his right ankle with a clawed pincer.
Curalis dodges pincer. Creature tries again.

Curalis steps away from it, darts over to the pond and scoops canteen into the water. Sand scuttler latches onto his right ankle before Curalis can escape with his water.

Curalis grimaces, shakes his right ankle free from pincer.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

See, got my water. I'll be going now. Bye bye.

He jogs away and starts up the incline on the far side of the pond. The ground under Curalis' feet rises up, then shifts.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

(To self)

What in Zoran's name is going on?

An army of sleeping Sand Scuttlers emerge from their slumber. Curalis scrambles to find ground not occupied by one of the creatures. No luck. He kicks and bats away a hundred pincer grabs but three make it through his defense. Two are latched onto his left calf and another the right thigh.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

That's it, no more mister nice guy.

He rips the eyestalks off the one clamped on his thigh, then tears the arm off from the creature's body. Curalis kills the Scuttler by stomping on its spine.

He uses his right foot to kick the two off his left ankle but loses his balance and falls into midst of the swarming desert crustaceans.

Curalis thrashes about, shrugs and bats away most of them, and struggles to his feet. One Sand Scuttler holds onto his backpack. Another has both pincers dug into his right side inches above the hip. He elbows off the one attached to his side, kicks away the ones that grab for his feet and rushes up hill.

He finds a narrow break in the sea of desert crustaceans and darts through the opening. In his haste to escape, Curalis stumbles and wipes out on his ascent. He jumps and continues sprint up the sandy incline. By the time he climbs out of the valley, Curalis is doused in sweat and out of breath.

The might-be savior glances back, sees the Sand Scuttlers aren't pursuing him, and slows his pace. Curalis, still holding the canteen, uncaps it and takes a long drink.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

(To self)

Ah, that's the ticket.

He takes another drink and reaches around to put the canteen in his backpack. The Sand Scuttler attached to the backpack grabs onto his wrist.

CURALIS (CONT'D)
(To self)

Ouch!

Startled, he grabs creature and FLINGS IT into the air. It sails and disappears into valley.

CURALIS (CONT'D)
(To self)

There, you're back with friends and family now.

He reaches down and rubs his right ankle, which is swollen. He raises up and walks on with a limp.

EXT. DESERT OF PARALLEL WORLD - NIGHT

Curalis limps up a slight incline toward a COLLECTION OF THICK-LIMBED TREES standing atop a hill. He pauses to catch his breath, then wipes away sweat from his forehead.

Victoria's POV (three feet above and three feet behind Curalis): Victoria's dream consciousness flies ahead of her dream host and hovers above the trees. Just past the copse is a sheer cliff with a small LAKE at the bottom.

Victoria's consciousness dives toward the lake. It grows bigger and bigger as her awareness approaches the water's surface. She plunges into the lake without a splash, is below the surface. She sees nothing of interest at the current depth and goes deeper.

Near the lake's bottom, a SCHOOL OF GLOWING ORANGE AND CRIMSON FISH swims past and above a BROKEN TREE LIMB that's partially buried in the lake bottom.

Victoria's awareness zips quickly upward and out of the lake and then up and over the cliff and trees and back behind previous spot behind Curalis.

Curalis reaches the top of the hill and collapses at the base of a turquoise tree. He arms more sweat from his forehead and drains the last water from canteen as eyes the lake below.

He GROANS to his feet, takes a tentative step toward the edge of the drop-off and leans over to gauge the distance (about five hundred yards). Curalis glances at a path that cuts through forested terrain on his left. He looks to the right. There's no gradual drop-off anywhere in that direction.

CURALIS

(To self)

Forget the path. I need water now.

He dives off the cliff.

EXT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR - NIGHT

In the middle of a sprawling, futuristic city, soaring above the tallest skyscrapers and the high-speed mass-transit L-train lines, is the planet's architectural wonder, the Transcendent and Grand Imperial Castle of Grandeur. Carved into and masterfully blended with Mount Imall, it serves as headquarters for all city government agencies, police station, jail, a luxury condo for the city workers working in the agencies, and it houses thirteen museums, seven art galleries, an event center and sports arena.

On the highest floor, a half mile above the next highest level, is the royal quarters of the vampire kings, Domatrian and Krinel.

The sidewalk running in front of the castle's entrance bustles with foot, bicycle and mini-hovercraft traffic. A SEVEN-FOOT TALL CYBORG SECURITY GUARD stands in front of each of the three sets of motion-activated entrances.

INT. SECURITY HUB OF TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR - CONTINUOUS

All four walls of a sprawling, brightly-lit room are covered with screens showing live shots of the castle's interior and exterior. Twenty-five workstations face each of the four walls. A supervisor and section manager oversee the monitor monitoring at each of the four areas.

One of the security specialists sitting at a workstation is KRELL MACE -- 39, alert, squat, developing beer belly, conscientious but bored aura about him -- prepares to leave the office.

His phone RINGS. Call ID: HEVENRAY. Krell frowns irritation. He grabs the phone.

KRELL

Honey, you know I'm not supposed to take personal calls at work. Why didn't --

HEVENRAY (V.O.)
(Interrupting, frantic)
My sister's been arrested for murder. This is insane. She wouldn't hurt anyone. You've got to do something.

KRELL
What, Emelleh's in jail?

HEVENRAY (V.O.)
She sure is. She just called me, said she met a man at the Urban Edge Nightclub last night. This Dormer Allen man was hitting on her but Emelleh said she wasn't that interested in him.

KRELL
She likes to flirt. It gets her a lot of free drinks from males.

HEVENRAY (V.O.)
This time it got her into a shit load of trouble. She told me the guy wanted to take her back to his hotel room, which was in the hotel attached to the bar, but she claims she told him no.

KRELL
Maybe her lips said no but the rest of her body said yes.

HEVENRAY (V.O.)
Don't joke around. This is deadly serious. My only sister might be the next woman executed for a murder she didn't commit.

KRELL
I'm serious too. There is something weird going on behind the scenes. For centuries, over ninety-five percent of people executed for murder are male and then in the last POAT, all of a sudden females all over the city are cold-blooded killers? Honey, I'll see what I can find out, okay?

HEVENRAY (V.O.)
Thank you. I'm going to call my uncle Raytheon.
(MORE)

HEVENRAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

His son is a partner in one of the best law firms in the country.

KRELL

Good idea. I'll call you when I'm done here.

HEVENRAY (V.O.)

Bye Sweetie.

Krell glances at the bank of closed-circuit surveillance camera monitors on the wall. Marshall and his boss, TRINITY DAVIDSON -- 47, male, intense, legendary sexist -- study the monitors. Majority of workstations are filled.

Krell returns focus to computer screen. He touches ICON on bottom of the screen.

COMPUTER SCREEN

PECNET, Public Electronic Computing Network, is now starting. What information and/or images do you wish to find?

BACK TO SCENE

Krell squints at the keyboard, leans forward and enters "Summaries of females charged with murder in city of Grandeur in last POAT."

COMPUTER SCREEN

A long block of text fills up screen. From Krell: "Summarize key points."

Computer system response fills several screens.

BACK TO SCENE

Krell settles in for long night. Krell folds his arms across his chest. He peers at the words on the computer screen.

KRELL

What the hell is really going on?

EXT. NORTHERN HEIGHTS BIKE TRAIL - EARLY EVENING

Victoria pedals along, beads of sweat dotting her T-shirt and face. She breezes past firs and pine trees, then a sweeping, expansive, towering willow tree. On her left is a sparkling lake. The sinking sun throws darts of light across it.

She sees a man a yard off the trail changing the rear tire of his bicycle. It's IVORY BLACKMON -- 27, thick, blonde, unruly hair; sparkling, unreadable blue eyes; emanates youthful but cynical, guarded streams of energy.

Victoria slows down, rolls over toward the handsome stranger. She watches him finish up the job. Sensing her presence, he whirls around, finds her staring at him.

IVORY

Hi there. Ah, um, can I help you?

Victoria shrugs.

VICTORIA

You stole my line. I saw you doing the tire-changing deal, thought I'd stop to see if you needed any help.

IVORY

That was kick-ass nice of you. Most people, probably ninety-nine point something or other, would have completely ignored my situation.

VICTORIA

I have my moments.

He smiles.

IVORY

I don't doubt that.

She points at his rear tire.

VICTORIA

So how is that going?

IVORY

About as well as can be expected. I always carry a spare, pump and a set of wrenches.

VICTORIA

You must have been a Boy Scout.

He LAUGHS, shakes his head.

IVORY

Don't tell that to any of the girls I've dated. Or their fathers.

VICTORIA

Deal. So do you do a lot of biking?

IVORY

Oh yeah. I have a Y membership but I only use it during the winter. And even then I bike outside as much as humanly possible. It's more than just a workout. It's fun to get outside and just see what Mother Nature is up to.

VICTORIA

Yeah, she totally rocks. I have a home gym but it's my last resort. Pedaling outside is much better. You never know exactly what you're going to see or who you might meet.

Ivory finishes changing his tire. He jumps up and sticks his right hand out.

IVORY

I'm Ivory Blackmon. It's so incredibly great to meet you that words fail to capture the true essence of my feelings.

VICTORIA

I'm Victoria Mayfield. If you're like most males, you are full of so much shit that it makes landfills smell like roses. But I'm not going to lump you into that unsavory category. I'm going to just let you be you and I'll be me.

Ivory SMILES BIG.

IVORY

I like the sound of that. That never happens in real life. But I hope like hell you can pull it off.

VICTORIA

Me too. Are you ready to roll?

IVORY

Sure. Should we like roll together?

VICTORIA

Why not?

He looks at her, then gestures with his left hand toward the road ahead.

IVORY

Lead the way, gorgeous.

She does just that. He's right behind her enjoying the view.

INT. O'GRADY'S PUB & INN - NIGHT

The place is dark everything -- wood making up the bar counter and booths, the beer, and dim lighting. The one exception is the atmosphere.

Sound waves from raucous LAUGHTER from dirty jokes bump up against animated verbal jostling over how much blame to place on Obama and the rest of his party for the state of America.

Victoria sits at the bar along with her best friend GAIL BOLT -- 29, married with children but tends to pretend she's not around attractive young men, low-cut white blouse showing her greatest assets (next to her prowess as an architect).

It's half past midnight. Victoria has her computer in front of her while Gail holds a video camera. They're seated on either side of MORRIE DANKERS -- 55, roundish figure, car salesman, heavily wrinkled face, expert bull-shitter but growing tired of the game.

Gail points the video camera at Morrie and Victoria, both of whom wear giddy masks of drunkenness.

VICTORIA

Mr. Dankers, if you could travel back in time and choose your career, what would it be and why?

Morrie peers at his rum and Coke, then at Victoria.

MORRIE

I don't want to be nit picky or anything but that's two questions.

VICTORIA

No, it's one two-part question.

MORRIE

Okay honey, I'll let it slide.

He changes focus from Victoria to Gail and her low-cut shirt.

MORRIE (CONT'D)

You know what, I wanna work wherever your friend is working.

VICTORIA
Come on, I'm serious.

Morrie peers at Gail's inviting cleavage.

MORRIE
So am I, sweetie.

VICTORIA
Listen, I'll just go onto to
someone else if you're going to be
like this.

Morrie grabs her wrist.

MORRIE
I'll be good. Sorry, gorgeous.

VICTORIA
My name is Victoria.

Morrie polishes off drink, waves for another.

MORRIE
Right. I'll be good, Victoria. Now
what was your question again?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. O'GRADY'S PUB & INN - HALF HOUR BEFORE CLOSING TIME

Victoria makes note on computer, Gail records images and sound as Morrie talks about his job as car salesman. He finishes up.

VICTORIA
So you're saying, enjoy the ride,
not just the destination of making
a sale.

Morrie smiles, takes a big drink, SIGHS.

MORRIE
That's a damn good way to put it,
sweet, I mean Victoria.

A strapping Hispanic male (35), ROBERTO REYES, comes up behind Morrie and pats him on the back.

ROBERTO
My friend, what are you doing now,
giving a seminar on how to sell
water to a fish?

MORRIE

Something like that. How's your soccer team doing? Oh hell, that's right, you guys call it football, don't you?

He waves off the distinction.

ROBERTO

Very good. Well, not really in terms of the standings, we're still fifth place out of eight teams, but we're out of last place.

MORRIE

Good for you. Hey, first place is overrated. As long as you're having fun, who gives a shit?

ROBERTO

That's right, my friend. I was going to challenge you to a game of darts but I see you three are in the middle of something here.

VICTORIA

(To Roberto)

That's okay, I've gathered enough info already. Morrie has shared some gems of insight about his working life. I won't detain him any further.

MORRIE

Are you sure, gorgeous, I mean, ah, what's your name again?

VICTORIA

(Laughing)

It starts with a vee, ends in an aay.

MORRIE

Victoria, how could I forget?

Victoria nods at his drink.

VICTORIA

One too many of those would do it.

MORRIE

The beverage in your tall glass ain't exactly ice-fucking-tea.

VICTORIA

Touche, Mr. Dankers, touche.

ROBERTO

Come on, Morrie. We must get started on the game. It'll be closing time before you know it.

He helps Morrie out of the bar stool. Roberto flashes his best smile at the ladies.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, Victoria, and whoever your lovely friend is.

He peers at Gail. She thrusts her chest out.

GAIL

Gail Bolt. Nice to meet you too. Maybe I'll stop by to watch you play. What night are your games?

ROBERTO

Wednesday nights at the high-school field.

GAIL

Great. I'll make it by one of these next few Wednesday nights.

ROBERTO

That's be great. We can always use another supporter.

He turns back to Morrie. Victoria grabs Gail's arm, tugs her away from Morrie and Roberto.

VICTORIA

You're married with kids, remember?

Victoria reaches for her glass.

GAIL

Yeah well this soccer mom is tired of watching kids soccer. I'm ready to watch real men run around and get sweaty chasing their balls.

Victoria SPITS UP her Guinness. Smiling, she grabs a bunch of napkins and wipes the beer off her shirt.

VICTORIA

I never looked at soccer quite that way before. Maybe I'll join you.

Roberto and Morrie head towards dart board. Gail moves over into Morrie's vacated bar stool.

GAIL

Roberto's a real cutie.

VICTORIA

No doubt. Morrie was a hoot too. I'd buy a new or used car from him. If I could afford it, which right now I definitely can't.

GAIL

So what'd you learn tonight?

VICTORIA

Men are lecherous pigs, especially after they've had a few drinks.

GAIL

OMG, stop the presses. Thank God I showed up here tonight. I never would have known that.

VICTORIA

Fuck you, bitch. I also was reminded what a flirtatious wench you can be.

GAIL

Why thank you, dear girl. I'm sure that was meant as a compliment.

Victoria reaches inside her jeans pocket to answer her phone.

VICTORIA

Randy, to what do I owe the pleasure?

RANDY (V.O.)

Hi hon'. I have something for you.

VICTORIA

The scoop on Anthony's next trip?

RANDY (V.O.)

That's right. Are you ready?

VICTORIA

Fire away, Captain Randy.

RANDY (V.O.)

He's flying to Venice this coming Friday on Global Link flight number one thirteen departing at seven fifteen p.m.

VICTORIA

Flight number one thirteen leaving at seven fifteen p.m. This Friday. Got it. You rock, my friend. Frank must have come through for us.

RANDY (V.O.)

In more ways than one. Hey, I'm on the phone here. Get your tongue out of my ear.

VICTORIA

Oh my, we'd better wrap this up so you can ah, interact with your partner there.

RANDY (V.O.)

Don't rush on his account.

VICTORIA

Thanks, Randy. I owe you big time.

RANDY (V.O.)

The pleasure was mostly mine, actually. Have a super night.

VICTORIA

I will. Bye bye.

She hangs up and repeats the flight details to Gail, who writes them down on a NAPKIN.

GAIL

So what does this all mean?

VICTORIA

It means I'm going to Venice in a couple of days.

GAIL

Ooh, Venice. Can I come along?

VICTORIA

Most assuredly not.

GAIL

Bitch.

VICTORIA

As they say in "The Godfather",
it's just business.

GAIL

What kind of business?

VICTORIA

I will be conducting covert
surveillance on two targets who
shall remain anonymous.

GAIL

Okay, Miss Bond.

Victoria brings her right hand up just under her nose and
grabs an imaginary mustache.

VICTORIA

Actually Mademoiselle, the name is
Poirot, Hercules Poirot.

Gail grabs her Scotch, points it at Victoria.

GAIL

Oh sure, he's that cute little
French guy created by Angela
Lansbury.

Victoria shakes her head at her friend's cluelessness.

VICTORIA

You get an A for effort, D+ for
execution. The detective is Belgian
and is a fictional character
created by Agatha Christie.

Gail shrugs off her wrong answers, downs her Scotch.

GAIL

Whatever.

EXT. MARCO POLO AIRPORT - DAY

Red, white and blue Global Links Airlines plane descends
toward runway. Peering out of the aircraft windows, wearing a
blonde wig, sunglasses and tons of make-up, is Victoria.
Several rows closer to the front of the plane, from a first-
class seat, Anthony glances out the window.

EXT. GRAND CANAL - DAY

A vaporetto (waterbus) stops just past the Pesaro Palace hotel. Anthony and Michelle, and then the disguised Victoria, who barely keeps her balance on six-inch heels, emerge with wheeled luggage and carry-on bags. Victoria pretends to check out the canal as Anthony and Michelle enter the hotel.

The targets disappear inside. Carefully, methodically, the highly-heeled Victoria makes her way into the Pesaro Palace.

MONTAGE

1) Victoria, similar disguise but sans high heels, a couple hundred yard behind suspects as they across the Rialto Bridge

2) Anthony and Michelle tour part of the city in a vaporetto. Victoria, hair combed out and dyed auburn and wearing steel-rim glasses and New York Yankees baseball cap, sits several rows behind them

3) Anthony and Michelle discuss something intently as they sit on metal bench amid hundreds of pigeons in San Marco's Square. Victoria, back to blonde mode with Nikes, short shorts and black sequined top, tries to appear casual as she throws chunks of bread on the ground for the pigeons.

4) Gondola with Anthony and Michelle in it, flows along the Grand Canal. Two soccer fields behind, Victoria follows in her own gondola.

5) Anthony and Michelle's gondola angles toward the edge of the canal. The Pesaro Palace appears to be their destination. Victoria directs her gondolier to do likewise.

BACK TO SCENE

Anthony and Michelle reach land first. They enter the Pesaro Palace. Victoria quickly tips her gondolier and hustles toward the hotel entrance.

INT. PESARO PALACE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Victoria steps into the elegant space just in time to see Anthony and Michelle enter the elevator. She sneers, makes "I'm watching you" gesture just before the suspects turn towards her. Elevator doors close.

INT. PESARO PALACE SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Victoria leaves her room, number two twenty, and quietly pads down the hallway. She stops at number two thirteen. Victoria sticks her ear against the door. Nothing.

VICTORIA
(To Self)
Damn.

She reluctantly returns to her room but leaves door open a crack. She grabs her laptop, powers it on and sets it in her lap. Through the crack, she can see the door to Anthony and Michelle's room. Nothing happens but Victoria stays put. She's got her computer to amuse her until something happens.

INT. PESARO PALACE SECOND FLOOR - VICTORIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Victoria snoozes. Computer is in screen-saver mode. The door to two thirteen opens. She's instantly awake.

Anthony emerges. He wears a black tuxedo, Michelle a purple satin gown and white-pearl necklace. They turn left, walk toward the elevator.

Victoria closes up computer and sets it on floor as she jumps to her feet. She looks at her clothing -- black Nike warm-up pants, black T-shirt declaring her love of Venice with a HEART in place of love, and jogging shoes -- and shakes her head. She won't fit in wherever suspects are going.

The instant they enter elevator, Victoria rushes down the hallway. She checks the door to their room, locked as expected. She jogs to the door leading to the stairwell.

INT. PESARO PALACE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Victoria bursts into lobby just in time to see Anthony and Michelle step outside. Victoria tries to appear casual as she hustles toward the front door. An elderly couple dawdles right in front of the entrance. Victoria zips past them.

VICTORIA
Sorry. Excuse me.

The woman sneers, CLUCKS HER TONGUE as Victoria runs outside.

EXT. RIGHT OUTSIDE PESARO PALACE - CONTINUOUS

Victoria emerges as Anthony and Michelle climb onto an elaborately painted gondola.

The Italian gondolier -- 20's, energetic, muscled, unfailingly cheerful -- rows them down the Grand Canal.

Victoria, hands on hips, deep in thought, watches them grow smaller and smaller with each stroke of the gondolier. She turns and walks slowly back toward the hotel.

Standing two paces to the left of the front doors is a BELLHOP. His name tag says RICARDO. He's mid 20's, dark complexion, works hard when he needs to.

Victoria turns and walks back toward the canal. She snaps her fingers, then strides for the vaporetto station just ahead.

EXT. GRAND CANAL VAPORETTO STOP - NIGHT

Water bus stops to unload passengers. Victoria, dressed in a purple satin gown and white-pearl necklace and hair done up like Michelle's (ponytail), steps onto pier.

She fakes a DRUNKEN LAUGH as she wobbles and sways her way toward the entrance to the Pesaro Palace. Ricardo finishes his cigarette, crushes it under his shoe and kicks it away. He puts on his best welcome to the wonders of Venice smile as the disguised Victoria approaches him.

RICARDO

Good evening, ma'am. How are you?

Victoria stops, makes a show of keeping her balance, and peers at the bellhop.

VICTORIA

(Slurring)

Kind of great and kind of not.

RICARDO

And why is that?

VICTORIA

((Slurring))

Because I had a massive, relationship-changing discussion with my now former lover, Anthony.

RICARDO

Is that right?

VICTORIA

(Slurring)

Damn fucking, excuse my vulgar language.

(MORE)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

I thought we were soulmates. Boy was I incredibly wrong.

RICARDO

I am very sorry to hear that. How can I help you tonight?

VICTORIA

((Slurring))

All I want is to get a good night's sleep. That bastard Anthony has the only key to our room. If you let me in to our room, I will make you the saint of bellhops.

RICARDO

That kind of request is normally handled by the front desk. I'm sure if you ask them, they will be --

VICTORIA

(Interrupting)

I don't want to bother them with this. I'm sure they're busy with other matters.

She grabs Ricardo by the shoulder, slips a large bill into his right hand. Victoria looks around, sees no one watching, and sticks her left hand onto the small of Ricardo's back, then inches it down onto his right ass cheek. Her fingers transition from ass to his scrotum, tickling from the outside.

He swallows hard, tries unsuccessfully to keep his cool.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Let me into my room discretely and there's no telling what rewards you will reap.

RICARDO

Right this way, ma'am.

INT. PESARO PALACE SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Ricardo lets Victoria into room number two thirteen. She smiles seductively.

VICTORIA

What time do you get off?

RICARDO

Depends on how busy it is. Probably
four or five in the morning.

VICTORIA

Maybe we can have breakfast
Otherwise, here's my phone number.

He smiles.

RICARDO

That would be my pleasure, Miss. I
am glad I could help you tonight.

She smiles, slowly closes the door.

INT. PESARO PALACE SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Victoria turns on computer lying on the table next to the
king-sized bed. It needs a password.

VICTORIA

(To self)

Fuck, I have no idea.

She enters her best guess. No good.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

Fine.

She looks around the room, sees a NOTEBOOK on counter
between living room and kitchen. She grabs it.

Victoria opens it to the first page. She reads it. Her eyes
GROW LARGE.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To self)

Oh my fucking God.

She searches for something to write on but stops after she
HEARS ELECTRONIC KEY OPENING THE DOOR. Victoria races into
the bathroom and hides behind the shower curtain.

INT. PESARO PALACE HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anthony and Michelle bring another couple into their room.
The man is ALBERTO CELSI -- 29, smart and attractive, curious
about everything. Woman is CAMILLA LUCIA -- 27, dark, always
upbeat on the outside, has reservations about male's true
essence but doesn't hold it against them.

Anthony gestures for them to sit on the leather couch in the living-room area. They smile while sitting down.

MICHELLE

What can I get you to drink?
Camilla, what about you?

She smiles shyly, considers the question.

CAMILLA

A glass of wine, red if you have
it, please.

MICHELLE

We do. Alberto, what about you?

ALBERTO

Whatever the lady is having.

She nods, heads for kitchen to make their drinks.

ANTHONY

Have you two lived in Venice all
your lives?

ALBERTO

We have. It's a dream come true.
With God's help, we will never
leave the city.

ANTHONY

I don't blame you. Venice is beyond
words. It makes a conventional city
like New York seem dreary and
pedestrian.

CAMILLA

Venice does that to even magical
cities like Rome and Florence.

Michelle returns with two glasses of wine. She sets them in front of their Venetian guests. They smile and nod their thanks.

ALBERTO

You mentioned earlier you are
seeking financing to build a city
like Venice, i.e. Replacing
conventional streets with network
of canals, in the United States.
What kind of promotional avenues
are you pursuing?

ANTHONY

In addition to asking numerous friends and peers in the finance and accounting arenas, I have posted messages on all the major social-media platforms. Michelle and I are *Facebook* and *Twitter* fanatics.

ALBERTO

As am I. It's like good wine, very addicting.

He smiles while grabbing his glass. Camilla does likewise. Anthony and Michelle grasp their wine glasses. Anthony raises his toward the gilded ceiling of their room.

ANTHONY

To the Floating City. May we never lose our fascination with the watery streets of Italy's most beautiful city.

Other three smile and drink up.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

This is our first trip to Venice . I must say, although we've so enjoyed touring other European hot spots like Amsterdam, London and Rome, Venice is hands down the most intriguing, beguiling destination.

CAMILLA

I do love Venice but I must say, London is a close second. My parents and I were there for a week last year. I found the pubs, and the Tube, filled with fascinating and surprisingly insightful people. They weren't shy about professing their love of their country while pointing out the parts that weren't so great, like the queen and government in general.

She grabs her forehead.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

Oh my, I do not feel well at all. I'm going to have to lay --

She passes out. Alberto leans over to check her out.

ALBERTO

My dear, are you all right?

He tries to sit up but can't. Alberto passes out, falls onto the floor next to Camilla.

ANTHONY

Welcome to our world.

INT. PESARO PALACE HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Victoria tiptoes across bathroom floor, sneaks a look at what Anthony and Michelle are doing. Anthony sticks a handkerchief in Camilla's mouth. Michelle does the same with Alberto. Anthony uses *Duck Tape* to bind Camilla's wrists and then ankles. Michelle does the same to Alberto.

They roll the bodies up against each other so they're back to back. Anthony uses Duck Tape to bind the two bodies together, then motions for Michelle to come over to him.

ANTHONY

Help me with the coffee table.

The two of them flip the marble-topped coffee table upside-down and use it to pin victims onto the floor.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

There we go.

Anthony powers up LAPTOP as Michelle opens a SUITCASE and takes out two ELECTRIC KNIVES. She places an empty LEATHER SUITCASE underneath Alberto, then underneath Camilla.

Anthony finishes setting up Web-Cam on computer and sets computer on chair. He hauls chair over and drops it a yard from victims' feet.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

We'll have to move them into the bath tub before we go touring tomorrow. The suitcases will be full of blood by then.

Michelle nods her comprehension. She turns electric knives on and tapes each one around right ankles of Alberto and Camilla.

MICHELLE

How's that?

ANTHONY

Perfect, my dear.

He takes his shirt and pants off.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

It's time to retire. Right after we get up, I'll e-mail the cult members to let them know the Venetian victims are ready for viewing.

MICHELLE

We'll have to move the electric knives too.

Anthony nods.

ANTHONY

Yes, the blades will be down to the bone in two, maybe three hours. I'm thinking the thigh is the best spot to move the electric knives to.

MICHELLE

Sure, there's more fat in that area. It will take longer to the blade to reach the bone.

ANTHONY

Exactly. We won't have to interrupt our tour of the Doges Palace and San Marcos Square to come back here to check on them.

MICHELLE

I'm still concerned about hotel housekeeping coming into the room.

Anthony shakes his head no.

ANTHONY

Not to worry, my dear. Besides using our "do not disturb" sign, I will notify the front desk that we wish complete privacy tomorrow.

MICHELLE

But they will see us leave the hotel to use the vaporetto.

ANTHONY

Yes but I will simply say tomorrow is our anniversary and we'll be out briefly in the morning to do some shopping but shall return to our room to celebrate.

Michelle comes over to Anthony, who grabs her left hand. They walk hand-in-hand into the bedroom just as Anthony starts to gain consciousness and struggle to free himself.

INT. PESARO PALACE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Victoria tiptoes over, sneaks a peek into the bedroom. Anthony and Michelle appear to be asleep. She hustles over and to Camilla and Roberto.

The blades on both Camilla and Roberto have carved away several layers of skin on their ankles. Blood and bits of flesh have accumulated in the empty suitcases under their legs. Both victims are conscious. Camilla is woozy from the loss of blood while Roberto grimaces with revulsion and pain.

Victoria makes eye contact.

VICTORIA

(Whispering)

I'm going to try to move the tape down far enough so the blades will cut through it. That way if Anthony or Michelle is still awake, they'll still hear the sound of the electric knives and won't suspect anything is wrong.

Camilla and Roberto nod vigorously. Victoria starts with Camilla. Victoria yanks hard but Duck Tape doesn't budge. She repeats. No good. Third time's the charm. She rips tape away from shin, nudges it down over the churning blade.

But Victoria cuts her fingers on the blade. She somehow holds her cry of surprised pain inside here as blood spurts out from her middle and ring fingers on her right hand.

Victoria holds her injured fingers over the suitcase underneath Camilla so her blood flows fall into the suitcase. The ELECTRIC KNIFE cuts through the tape on Camilla's ankle. Victoria catches knife by the handle and snatches Duck Tape out of the air. She quickly wraps tape around her cut fingers and then uses electric knife to free both victims.

Victoria glances toward the bedroom, sees both suspects are still asleep and returns focus and energy to moving COFFEE TABLE off Camilla and Roberto.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(Whispering)

Don't move. I'll grab towels from the bathroom. You can use them as tourniquets.

She hustles into bathroom, returns with FOUR WHITE COTTON TOWELS. She gives two to each person. They wrap towels around injured, bleeding ankles. The trio sneak out of the suite, their blood flows barely contained.

INT. PESARO PALACE LOBBY - NIGHT

Victoria, Camille and Roberto emerge from the elevator. Victoria leads them over to the front desk, which is devoid of any staff people. There's a BELL on the counter. Victoria RINGS it.

From the back room emerges BERTUCCIO GARDI -- 27, male, aristocratic, grudgingly helpful.

BERTUCCIO

How can I help you?

VICTORIA

You must immediately call the police. These two here were kidnapped and tortured by the guests in room two thirteen.

Bertuccio looks skeptical. He casts calculated gaze at Camilla and Alberto.

BERTUCCIO

(To Alberto)

Sir, is this true?

ALBERTO

Yes, most assuredly it is true. Without the intervention of this woman, we would have died!

Bertuccio nods without conviction. He looks to Camilla.

BERTUCCIO

Dear lady, is this true?

CAMILLA

Yes, yes, it sounds crazy but it's the truth. We met Anthony and Michelle at a social function. They seemed bright, articulate and engaging. We accompanied them back to their hotel room thinking we would have pleasant conversation and some wine. But we found ourselves bound, gagged and an electric knife cutting away the skin of our ankles.

The front-desk clerk seems less skeptical.

BERTUCCIO

I see. That would be very unsettling indeed.

He does something on the computer sitting on the counter.

BERTUCCIO (CONT'D)

I have a Anthony Hart and Michelle Brown, both from the United States, in room two thirteen.

VICTORIA

That's right.

BERTUCCIO

So you know the guests in room two thirteen?

VICTORIA

I do. I used to work for the same company they do, Global Link Airlines. Now are you going to call the damn police or not? If Anthony and Michelle wake up and discover their victims aren't there, I'm sure they'll try to escape.

BERTUCCIO

Very good. I shall call the police. Please wait here.

Victoria turns to Camilla and Roberto.

VICTORIA

Don't worry, you will get justice.

MONTAGE - POLICE QUESTIONING AT HOTEL

A) Two uniformed policemen and a plainclothes detective (all male) enter lobby of hotel and approach Victoria, Camille and Alberto

B) Victoria explains what she saw, gestures toward the victims' injuries

C) Camille, then Roberto tell their sides of the story

D) Policemen and detective go to suspects' room, knock on door

E) Police search, examine hotel room as detective questions suspects

F) Detective goes into bathroom, shuts door and makes call on cellphone to his superior

G) Detective gives names of suspects, and shortly thereafter nods his head, hangs up phone

H) Detective joins others in hotel suite, shakes Anthony's hand, waves good-bye and directs policemen to leave the room

END MONTAGE

INT. PESARO PALACE LOBBY - NIGHT

Two policemen (30's) and DETECTIVE MOROSINI GIRARDINO -- 45, angular, anxious eyes, likes closure -- step out of the elevator. The policemen make for front door while the detective approaches Victoria, Alberto and Camilla, who're seated in on a black leather couch with view of Grand Canal.

Victoria sees him coming, hops to her feet with a confused expression on her face.

VICTORIA

Where are Anthony and Michelle?

Girardino shakes his head.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

No official charges are being filed at this time. The suspects claim it was a misunderstanding.

VICTORIA

What?! What do you mean, misunderstanding?

The detective leans over to whisper into her ear.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

(Softly)

It seems the Americans thought the Venetian couple were, ah, to use an outdated term, swingers. The use of Duck Tape and gags was to make them appear vulnerable, and thus more sexually enticing.

Alberto jumps up.

ALBERTO

That is preposterous. Surely you do not believe that nonsense.

VICTORIA

What about taping electric knives to their ankles?

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

Mr. Hart states Camilla asked them to do it. It is apparently part of the sexual foreplay some swingers engage in.

Camilla jumps up and marches over to Girardino.

CAMILLA

That is a lie! I want to talk to your superior immediately.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

It won't do you any good, Signorina. I called Captain Bellini and he's the one who advised me not to pursue the matter anymore. Apparently Bellini knows Mr. Hart and Miss Brown personally. He is convinced of their good character and is sure they would never do anything unlawful or immoral.

VICTORIA

Apparently preferential treatment and corrupt police departments aren't limited to America.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

I do not appreciate that accusation.

VICTORIA

Well then start acting like a real police department and arrest the parties in room two thirteen.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

I am sorry, Miss Mayfield, but the matter is closed.

He turns to Camilla and Alberto.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO (CONT'D)

Do either of you need a ride to a medical facility to treat your injuries?

ALBERTO

Yes.

DETECTIVE GIRARDINO

I will call for an ambulance. Please remain in the lobby. It will be here within the next fifteen minutes. Good day to you all.

The detective makes a call on his cellphone while heading for the front entrance. Victoria, Alberto and Camille glare at the retreating detective.

EXT. ST. MARK'S SQUARE - DAY

Victoria sits on a black wrought-iron bench that faces the Doges Palace. Her computer is on but she ignores it. She sips an Americiano from a metal to-go mug while she tosses snacks to the hordes of pigeons in Venice's best-known landmark.

She makes a call on her phone.

RANDY (V.O.)

Hi hon'. How's Venice treating you?

VICTORIA

Most of Venice is warm, welcoming and wonderful --

RANDY (V.O.)

The three W's, just like the start of a Web address.

VICTORIA

Exactly. But the police here have got me baffled.

RANDY (V.O.)

Uh-oh, what happened? Did you get thrown in the hosgow for busting up a Venetian bar fight?

VICTORIA

Very funny, Randy. No, I rescued two victims who'd been kidnapped by Anthony and Michelle, and reported it to the police here.

(MORE)

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

But a Detective Girardino told me it was a misunderstanding. Claimed Anthony and Michelle thought the Italian couple wanted to engage in group sex and part of the turn-on was tying them up and torturing them.

RANDY (V.O.)

That's crazy! What kind of madness have you stumbled upon over there?

VICTORIA

That's the million-dollar question. It seems the chief of police in Venice is somehow acquainted with Anthony and Michelle. He's convinced our friends would never do anything illegal.

She flings more snacks. An avian free-for-all ensues.

RANDY (V.O.)

Now what?

VICTORIA

I was going to return to the states tomorrow but I've decided to stay a couple more days. I want to really see the city instead of following Anthony and Michelle around.

RANDY (V.O.)

You go, world-traveler girl. Feel free to IM or text me when you find something deliciously intriguing.

VICTORIA

I'll do that. Hey, how are you and Frankie getting along?

RANDY (V.O.)

Frankie? No, he is so a Frank as in let me be Frank about this. Anyway, we're okay. We're taking it slow after that first insane, alcohol-fueled madness. For like a day, I felt bad because I used him to get info for you but I'm over that.

VICTORIA

I see. Hey, I'm almost out of snacks for the mass gathering of pigeons here and I'm afraid they'll turn on me once they realize I'm out of food. So I'm going to make a run for it. We'll talk/text/IM soon, alright?

She gets up, flings the last of her bird food on the ground and leaves the pigeons to fend for themselves.

RANDY (V.O.)

Sounds good, hon. Watch yourself over there. Anthony and Michelle aren't going to be too excited with you for trying to turn them in.

VICTORIA

That's okay. I found out from one of the bellhops, whom I bribed, that they're checking out the day after tomorrow. So I'll only have to really watch my back for a day.

RANDY (V.O.)

Oh great, the evil cult leaders are coming my way. I'll watch my back when I'm not watching Frank's back, if you know what I mean.

VICTORIA

You're funny, Randy. Later.

EXT. SIDE "STREET" OFF GRAND CANAL - DAY

A gondola propelled by GONDOLIER -- 30's, male, wears trademark black pants with white and black-striped shirt and brimmed hat -- flows through narrow canal. Brick and stone home and business facades line both sides of the Byzantine passageway.

Victoria and three other American tourists take in the quiet, ancient beauty and magic of Venice. Victoria's phone RINGS. She grabs it, sees it's Randy.

VICTORIA

You beat me to the punch. I was just --

RANDY (V.O.)

Oh my God, you are so lucky you decided to stay a few more days. Otherwise you'd be dead.

VICTORIA

What are you talking about?

RANDY (V.O.)

There was plane crash, flight number four oh nine going from Venice to the U.S., that left yesterday. Everyone on board is presumed dead. CNN said it appears someone smuggled a bomb on board. The airplane blew up in mid-air and crashed into the ocean.

Victoria tries to take it all in. She shakes her head, looks around her, sees old couple (80's) wave at them from their balcony. She smiles, waves back at them along with the other passengers in the gondola.

VICTORIA

Holy shit, how, and more importantly, who smuggled a bomb on board?

RANDY (V.O.)

Well hon, lately in your travels all roads lead to our friends, Anthony and Michelle. Maybe this one does too.

VICTORIA

Very astute observation, Dr. Watson.

RANDY (V.O.)

But connecting Anthony and Michelle to the plane crash is going to be really difficult.

VICTORIA

Difficult? Try damn near impossible. Off the top of my head, I'd guess they convinced one of their vampire-cult members to smuggle the bomb on board for the good of the group.

RANDY (V.O.)

That'd normally sound insane but given what's happened with you and Anthony and Michelle, it sounds so possible. So what can you do now?

VICTORIA

Watch them long enough to gather evidence that will put them in prison without getting me killed.

RANDY (V.O.)

Good luck with that.

VICTORIA

Thanks.

RANDY

I'll do what I can to help but I'm no Braveheart.

VICTORIA

You've done more than enough already. I'll take it from here.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis drops through the air towards the lake below. He twists his body around so his outstretched hands will be the first thing to hit the water.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A sleeping Victoria thrashes around under the covers.

VICTORIA

There's buried treasure in the lake. Look for the branch sticking out of the lake floor. You can use it as a cane.

He speeds toward the lake, closer and closer until he SPLASHES into it.

EXT. GREAT DESERT LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Curalis drops below the surface of the water. He looks around, sees nothing but water, and goes deeper.

He reaches the bottom of the lake. Curalis swims around, sees nothing at first, then finds a TREE BRANCH sticking out of the lake floor.

Curalis grabs tree branch and heads up towards the surface.

EXT. GREAT DESERT LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Curalis emerges from lake, branch in hand. He breaks free.

CURALIS

Holy Zoran, I found it. Thank you.

He treads water, peers questioningly at the branch.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

For all the good it'll do me.

INT. VICTORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Victoria, still asleep, sits up in bed.

VICTORIA

Use it as a cane, for God's sake!

Her eyes open. She's awake.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Use it as a cane, Einstein.

She shakes her head, sighs and falls back onto the bed.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis cane-walks over flat, windless, blistering stretch of desert. He extracts CANTEEN from BACKPACK, feels how light it is, shrugs and tries to take a drink. Nothing left.

CURALIS

Just as I thought.

He sticks canteen back into backpack. He wipes brow, goes on.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - LATE AFTERNOON

Curalis walks slower now, every step a Herculean effort. Clothes are drenched with sweat. He looks around for shade but there's none. He trudges forward toward Yakere, which seems impossibly distant.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - NIGHT

Curalis strains up a steep hill. He pauses halfway up, rests, goes on. Another break ten meters from the crest of the hill, then he forces himself up to the top.

He collapses into a heap under the moonlit desert. Breathing hard, then slower, and almost back to normal. Eyes close. Curalis is out for the night.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Emerald ball of the Ulangstian sun hangs halfway above the horizon. Curalis, laying on his back, slowly open his eyes. He heaves himself off the desert floor, struggles to his feet. He licks his parched lips.

Curalis bends over and rummages through his backpack. He extracts a BLACK AND GOLD MOBILE DEVICE.

CURALIS

I was hoping not to have to use
modern technology but what the
hell, I've got to find water.

He pushes several buttons in quick succession. A SKY BLUE LASER BEAM shoots up from the mobile device. It forms a HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGE OF ULANGSTIAS. A tiny flashing dot floats inside the holographic sphere.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

I'm there. Now then, give me the
location of the nearest body of
water, no matter how small it is.

Mobile device takes less than two seconds to respond. Another tiny flashing dot appears inside the hologram. It's some ways away from the tiny dot representing Curalis.

ROBOTIC VOICE FROM MOBILE DEVICE

(V.O.)

The nearest known body of water is
a pond approximately five point
three digibotts long by four point
three two digibotts wide by --

CURALIS

(Interrupting)
How far away is it?

ROBOTIC VOICE FROM MOBILE DEVICE
(V.O.)

Three-hundred ninety seven point
three seven standard long land
units, commonly known as SLLU's.

Curalis's jaw drops.

CURALIS

Sweet Zoran, that will take me at
least four or five days to reach.

ROBOTIC VOICE FROM MOBILE DEVICE
(V.O.)

Based on your rate of travel over
the last three days, it will take
you seven point zero three eight
nine --

CURALIS

(Interrupting)

That's enough numbers after the
decimal point. I get it. Never
going to survive long enough to
reach it. Application end.

ROBOTIC VOICE FROM MOBILE DEVICE
(V.O.)

Bye bye.

Hologram disappears. Curalis breathes out major SIGH.

CURALIS

Maybe the satellites missed a pond
that's just over the next rise.

He peers towards the horizon. It's as flat as his forehead.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

Or maybe just sitting out in the
middle of a flat desert expanse.

He takes sweat-soaked shirt off, finds CANTEEN in backpack,
sets it on the ground and kneels beside it. Curalis squeezes
every last drop of perspiration into the canteen. He puts cap
on canteen and sticks it the backpack.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

In case the satellites are right.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - MID-DAY

Curalis weaves like a drunk under the beating rays of the emerald sun. The branch-cane keeps him from collapsing onto the ground as his body would have him do.

He pauses to catch his breath. Curalis goes to wipe perspiration from his brow but finds none. He shakes his head. Not a good sign.

At the outer limits of his sight, straight ahead, he sees MOVEMENT. Two smaller figures trail a taller figure. Curalis does double take, closes his eyes for a beat, then opens them. The figures are still there.

Curalis resumes journey of a lifetime. Now his path is straight and focused. He's after the trio ahead, whoever they may be.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - LATE AFTERNOON

Curalis has halved the distance between the trio of strangers and himself. He's now about a thousand digibotts behind them. He limps along, breathes shallow and fast.

He's close enough to trio to tell that one is an adult female along with a young boy and young girl. The mother is FLOWERSHYA -- 32, big blonde hair tied in a braid, desperate but determined to protect her children and herself from any threat, running from her past. She pauses to give the girl a sip of water from CANTEEN.

Curalis tries to yell at them but his throat's too parched.

The girl is AMMANICE -- 12, innocence shining through blue eyes, can't believe her mother would get them into a situation like this.

Her brother is NURRESIK -- 10, resourceful, intelligent but easily distracted and quick to anger.

Flowershya takes canteen from daughter before she's done, lets Nurresik have a short sip. She takes canteen back. It's secured to her waist by short rope tied around canteen.

The three of them start to move again. So does Curalis but he makes no effort to get their attention. To Curalis' right the terrain falls off into a modest valley. He angles toward the lower ground as he watches mother and two children.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - NIGHT

Flowershya, Ammanice and Nurresik prepare to go to sleep. Curalis watches from a hundred digibotts away, halfway down a sandy incline. The canteen still hangs from Flowershya's right hip. Curalis licks his lips.

He waits.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - NIGHT

Curalis sneaks closer to the sleeping trio. Three digibotts away, he stops, checks each person's face to ensure they're sound asleep.

Nurresik -- check. Ammanice -- check.

Flowershya -- no check. She's full of restless energy, thrashes about like she's having a bad dream. Curalis waits. She calms down after a half minute.

Curalis tip toes over to mother, bends down and lightly takes hold of the strap around the CANTEEN tied to Flowershya's shorts loop. Curalis tries to undo the knot.

He can't get it undone. He mouths a swear word, blows out a deep breath, goes back at it. It comes close. Curalis mouths "yes". He grabs canteen by the neck.

Flowershya's eyes snap open. She SCREAMS. The children wake up as Curalis jumps back, canteen in right hand.

Flowershya sees Curalis's makeshift cane and that he's favoring left leg. Ammanice, then her brother Nurresik jump to their feet right as their mother lashes out and kicks Curalis's injured right ankle.

He SCREAMS in pain as he nearly falls over. He tries to scramble away. Flowershya gets up, runs over and kicks his injured ankle again.

Curalis clenches teeth, stifles potential scream. Children stay in the background.

CURALIS

Don't, ouch, do that again.

FLOWERSHYA

You're trying to steal our water.
You deserve it.

CURALIS

I'm just trying to survive.

FLOWERSHYA

Join the crowd.

As he finishes sentence, Flowershya kicks Curalis's injured ankle. He SCREAMS in pain, collapses to the ground. Curalis tosses canteen out of Flowershya's reach, rises up onto his knees and swings branch-cane wickedly through the air. It connects solidly with target's forehead.

Flowershya is dazed, stays standing. Curalis hits her a second time in the forehead. She drops to the ground in front of Curalis. Ammanice rushes over to her.

AMMANICE

Mother, are you all right?

No answers. She's out cold. Or worse.

Nurresik jumps on top of Curalis, tries to punch him. Curalis grimaces from throbbing ankle, throws Nurresik off him.

CURALIS

Hey, she had it coming. I wasn't trying to hurt her, like she intentionally hurt me. It, ah, happened so fast.

(Turns toward mother and daughter)

How is she?

Ammanice puts her right ear to Flowershya's unmoving chest, then puts index finger underneath her mother's nose. She whips around toward Curalis.

AMMANICE

Dead is how she is, you piece of shit bastard. You killed her!

Nurresik runs over to check out Flowershya. He kneels down and shakes her by the shoulders.

NURRESIK

Come on, Mom, wake up!

He shakes her more violently. Nothing. The boy gently lays mother on the desert floor.

Curalis struggles to his feet.

CURALIS

I am so sorry. I wasn't trying to hurt her, well, I suppose a part of me was but I just wanted her to stop kicking my ankle.

Ammanice begins to sob. Her brother goes to her, puts his arm around her. She continues to cry without restraint. Nurresik tears up, holds emotions mostly inside. He glares at Curalis.

NURRESIK

I wish I was older and stronger so
I could kill you.

CURALIS

I don't blame you.

Curalis remains silent until her sobs subside.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

How did you three end up in the
middle of The Great Desert?

NURRESIK

It's none of your damn business.

Curalis holds up both hands, palms outward.

CURALIS

You're right, it's not. Sorry.

Ammanice rubs tears off her cheeks.

AMMANICE

Mom was in big trouble. As usual.
She owed money for four, maybe five
bottles of street drugs. Lateesh,
her dealer, told Mom he was coming
over to our apartment to get
payment. If she didn't have the
money to pay, he was going to
really hurt her. Beat the sh --
beat her up really bad.

CURALIS

So you guys had to get out of town
in a big hurry, huh?

AMMANICE

Yes. It's not like it was anything
new. We used to live in Xenon City
but we had leave in the middle of
night because Mom was afraid her
boss had figured out she was
stealing money from the till and
he'd tell the policing department.

NURRESIK

She wasn't exactly your model
mother.

CURALIS

I'm sure she did the best she could under the circumstances.

AMMANICE

She stole the money to buy food and clothing for us. And drugs for her.

Curalis nods acknowledgment.

CURALIS

Different people have different, ah, interests. Some people play sports or cards, read, work out, others drink or use drugs.

NURRESIK

She didn't used to be in trouble that often. When dad and her were still together, even though they didn't get along very well, she wasn't using drugs. Well, not as much.

Ammanice stares at their dead mother.

AMMANICE

After Rannen left, she really used drugs. A lot. I think she missed our dad. Plus she was bored.

NURRESIK

Remember the time Mom came to my kicking-ball game at the school field and she was all jazzed up on that drug made her see things?

AMMANICE

She got out of her seat in the stands, ran down next to the field and did this cheer-leading move from when she went to school. I almost ran home from embarrassment.

NURRESIK

Luckily I was concentrating on keeping the other team's shots out of our net so I didn't have time to be embarrassed.

AMMANICE

But then she bought frozen treats for all the players and their parents after you guys won the game. Everyone loved her then.

NURRESIK

But Mom was upset the next morning when the drugs wore off and she realized how much money she spent on those frozen treats.

They're silent for several beats as they rewind the movie of Flowershya's life in their minds.

AMMANICE

What about burying her? We should have some kind of ceremony.

Curalis shakes his head no.

CURALIS

The ceremony is a great idea but the ground is too hard. I mean the top layers are sand, which we can get through with our hands, but once you below a half a digibott, the soil is dense and hard-packed. We'd need shovels or some kind of artificial excavating devices.

AMMANICE

But if we don't bury her, animals will be able to, um, get at her.

CURALIS

I know, honey, but there's nothing we can do. Besides, your mom's soul isn't connected to her body anymore.

AMMANICE

We can't just leave her body here.

CURALIS

Tell you what, as soon as we're within reach of a network connection, I'll use my mobile communicator to call a priest I know. The good Father will send someone out to get the body and give your mother a proper burial.

Ammanice and Nurresik peer at him for three beats.

AMMANICE

I guess we don't have much choice.

NURRESIK

What about water? We're gonna need some real soon.

CURALIS

We'll share mine, your mom's which is now mine which is now ours.

NURRESIK

That's not gonna last long with three people drinking from it.

CURALIS

I know. I will call the police as soon as we're within range of a network. I'll have them come and pick you two up and they can bring me more water so I can keep going.

AMMANICE

Where are you going to?

CURALIS

Yakere. It's where I was born.

NURRESIK

Why don't you fly there like a regular person?

Curalis peers past the corpse of Flowershya and at the two moons of Ulangstias, one orange-red (Colarium), the other crimson and sky blue (Zorarch).

CURALIS

I have to test myself to see if I am up to what I might discover at the end of the journey.

Children exchange a WTF look. Curalis sees their bewildered expressions.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

I know that doesn't make sense to you but it does to me. All right, I say we should all go to sleep. Personally, I'm exhausted.

Nurresik yawns. Ammanice shrugs.

AMMANICE

Why not? There's much else to do
out here anyway.

The three bed down for the night.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE IVORY'S INHERITED MANSION - NIGHT

Victoria, on her bicycle, pulls up in front of the steeply-inclined driveway that leads up to a four-car, double-tiered garage system. She looks over her shoulder, sees no one following her, and quickly turns bike left into the driveway.

She downshifts, grimaces her way up the hill.

The mansion is a three-story masterpiece that blends brick, stone, ivy, glass and slate into a style-defying structure. Ten stone gargoyles of different designs stare down Victoria from their perches at the edge of mansion's forest-green roof.

On her left, the front yard is three-tiered, each level with a bronze fountain spewing out circle of water.

She gets off bike, leans it against the side of the house. Victoria, red-faced and sweating, makes for the front door. She reaches it and is about to ring the doorbell when the towering front oak door swings open.

JACK GREENFIELD -- 28, six foot, broad shoulders, light brown mustache, mesmerizing blue eyes, all smiles and positive energy -- looks at her.

JACK

Hi Victoria, Ivory told me you were coming over tonight. I'm Jack, his domestic-life system manager or life assistant for short. Butler is so Bruce-Wayne-like.

VICTORIA

Hi Jack. It's nice to meet you. I didn't realize Ivory had a but, ah, life assistant. But then again, I don't know very much about him.

He frowns after seeing her red face.

JACK

Are you all right? You seem a bit overheated.

VICTORIA

I rode my bike over here. I normally would drive but there are extenuating circumstances that I'd rather not get into.

JACK

Totally understood. You don't have to explain anything. I just wanted to make sure you were okay. Please, come in.

He steps aside. Standing in the foyer are TWO TOWERING IRISH WOLFHOUNDS. Victoria stops.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's okay, hon'. They're harmless despite their names.

VICTORIA

Which are?

JACK

Seek and Destroy. Seek's on the left, Destroy on the right.

Victoria smiles uneasily. She gingerly approaches giant canine duo. She extends right hand toward Seek, a tower of slate and chocolate brown fur.

VICTORIA

Nice to meet you, Seek.

Seek throws up right paw. They shake. Victoria smiles. She gently pats his giant head.

She turns to Destroy -- black and gray fur, radiant brown eyes -- extends hand. Another egoless, genuine canine greeting. She kisses dog on the snout.

IVORY (O.S.)

I see you've met my best friends.

Victoria looks toward sound of the voice. Ivory smiles from the hallway leading to foyer.

VICTORIA

I have. They seem like perfect, albeit intimidating, companions.

IVORY

You've got them down to a tee.

He takes a drink of Scotch from tumbler in his right hand.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Would you like a drink, my dear?
Name it and we probably have it. If
we don't, Reuben's Spirits and Deli
will deliver it.

VICTORIA

A lite beer of some kind.

IVORY

You sure you don't want something
with a little more get up and go?
Shot of Grey Goose, Patron or Don
Eduardo tequila, or one of Jack's
infamous multi-liquor concoctions?

VICTORIA

No thanks. Lite beer is good.

Ivory shakes his head in feigned dismay, sneaks in another
slurp of his Scotch.

IVORY

Amstel Light okay with you?
Otherwise we've got Heineken Lite,
Samuel Adams Light, Miller --

VICTORIA

(Interrupting)

Amstel Light is great, thanks.

Ivory looks at Jack.

JACK

I'll get right back with our lovely
guest's drink of choice.

IVORY

And can you whip up a plate of
cheese and crackers or chips and
dip, that kind of thing.

JACK

That will be my extreme pleasure.
Give me five minutes and I'll bring
both.

He looks at Victoria.

JACK (CONT'D)

Or if you'd like your beverage
sooner, I can bring the beer and
then the appetizer.

She shakes her head no.

VICTORIA

No, no, I'm not in that much of a hurry for the beer. Take your time.

Jack smiles, nods and hustles past the dogs.

IVORY

(Yelling at Jack)

We'll be in the living room.

He nods to his left.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Let's go get comfortable.

VICTORIA

I'm all for that.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ivory leads Victoria into a cavernous space: black leather sectional couch, glass-topped coffee table with black marble legs, rocker-recliners on either side of couch, sprawling oil painting of George Washington and Union Army crossing the Delaware River.

A fifty-gallon aquarium stands opposite the couch and chairs, takes up residence in center of picture window overlooking the lawn. Standing on each side of the aquarium is a STONE GARGOYLE -- two feet tall, benign, peaceful face, left big tone slanted across big toe on right foot.

VICTORIA

You seem to have a thing for gargoyles.

IVORY

Doesn't everyone?

VICTORIA

No. I mean to me they're like playing in a polo league. The idea is intriguing but I just don't know enough about either one to know if they're as cool as they appear.

Ivory laughs.

IVORY

Even though my neighbors think I have enough time and excess cash to play polo, I don't. So I don't know diddly squat about it. But I can tell you plenty about gargoyles.

He fortifies himself with more Scotch, in fact, drains his glass. He extracts phone from shirt pocket.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Shit, I should have put my request for a refill with your beer order.

He calls Jack.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Come on, pick up the phone.

Jack pushes a small cart into the room. A bottle of Scotch, bucket of ice and bottle of AMSTEL LIGHT and a FROSTED BEER STEIN stand next to a PLATE OF ASSORTED CHEESES, SALAMI AND WHOLE-WHEAT CRACKERS.

Ivory, phone still to his ear, pretends he doesn't see Jack.

IVORY (CONT'D)

(To Victoria)

Can you believe that, the guy calls himself the manager of my domestic systems and he doesn't even answer my phone call.

JACK

Very funny, boss. Here, drink this.

He grabs the beer and glass, walks them over to Victoria. She smiles as she takes them from Jack.

VICTORIA

Thank you. You get my vote as but, er, ah, I mean whatever you call yourself, of the year award.

JACK

Thank you. That's probably the only vote I'll get but that's fine. At least I won't be shut out. And I'd say don't hesitate to call me if you need anything but with Ivory here, that won't be a problem.

He smiles, produces his own SMARTPHONE, holds it up for Ivory to see. Ivory, his glass now full of Scotch, salutes Jack as he leaves the room.

VICTORIA

Tell me more about your gargoyle collection.

IVORY

Besides the ones you saw on top of the roof, there are sixty-six more on the property, fifty-three in the house and thirteen on the grounds. They range from grotesque and horrifying to peaceful and serene.

VICTORIA

Why so many?

Ivory knocks back a quarter of his drink.

IVORY

Because I can? I don't know, some people collect baseball cards or stamps. Me, I'm a gargoyle guy.

Victoria sips her beer.

VICTORIA

What interests you about gargoyles?

IVORY

They're a mixture of two opposites. On the one hand, they're practical because they functioned as waterspouts on churches starting in Medieval times, and on the other hand, they're spiritual bodyguards because they scare away evil spirits from churches.

VICTORIA

That's neat. I see what you mean. You must think you need protection from evil spirits.

IVORY

Yeah, evil spirits and the general evil nature of the outside world.

VICTORIA

What's so evil about the world?

IVORY

No one wants to let you be who you really are. The few people who care enough to get to know you always find things about you they want to change. If you don't conform to their version of you, they suddenly don't want anything to do with you.

He knocks back more Scotch. Seek and Destroy trot into the room. Seek pads over to Victoria, lies chin on left knee, stares her down. She gently massages the space between dog's luminous eyes.

Destroy squeezes massive body underneath coffee table, gets comfortable and regards Ivory, then Victoria with curious eyes. Log-like tail THUMPS BEAT on polished-oak floor.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Unlike these two guys, who accept me, alcoholic warts and all, for who I am. Isn't that right, Big Guy?

He peers at Destroy. Dog's tail thumps a little faster.

VICTORIA

When people don't accept me, I normally presume it's my fault, like I should improve something about myself so they do accept me.

IVORY

Don't worry about that around here. I'll be somewhat presumptuous and speak for all the males, canine and human, under this roof: we all accept you just the way you are. As far as we can tell, you're perfect.

VICTORIA

Thanks but I'm not sure how much of that is Ivory Blackmon talking and how much is the Scotch.

Ivory grabs his cocktail glass, raises it to toast his guest.

IVORY

Don't worry about breaking down the package into separate pieces. Consider Scotch and I a killer-package deal with a teeny-tiny down side and vast up side.

Victoria raises her beer.

VICTORIA

Here's to hoping you're right about that.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ivory and Victoria, drunken smiles plastered on their faces, play a round of mini-golf. A NETWORK OF ASTROTURF FAIRWAYS AND GREENS snake around a POOL TABLE and PING PONG TABLE. One fairway curls around and leads to a green sitting on the floor behind a PUB-LIKE BAR COUNTER.

They're on the ground floor of the mansion. A spiral metal staircase leads down to a pool table on the basement. Another spiral staircase on second floor leads to pool table on the subbasement. Pool tables are staggered so one can look over the railing and see the table on the level directly below the higher one.

Seek shadows Victoria's every move while Destroy hangs back, a GIANT DOGGIE BONE in his mouth. The giant dog's back covers up part of the sixteenth hole's green.

Ivory tries to line up a two-foot putt, leans too far to his right, and topples over. He laughs drunkenly, putter still in left hand. Victoria smiles down at as he rests head on base of the bar.

Seek looks concerned, says nothing.

IVORY

In the immortal words of Uncle Nathan, after he'd consumed nearly a full bottle of silver Patron, without any mix mixed in to dilute the pure nectar of the gods, oopsy.

VICTORIA

Uncle Nathan was apparently a real eloquent son of a bitch.

IVORY

He knew enough words to make himself a rich bastard before he died. He also once said, after he fell down at his niece Ann's college graduation party, that he graduated from the Dean Martin School of Drunken Public Navigation.

VICTORIA

Would you like help getting back on
our feet?

She extends her right hand.

IVORY

Yeah, that'd be great.

She grabs railing of pool table with left hand, bends knees
and grabs Ivory's hand. He pushes, she pulls, Seek watches
intently.

Ivory is on his feet but loses balance, falls into Victoria,
knocks her ass against side of pool table. They stare into
each other's eyes.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Thanks for the helping hand.

VICTORIA

My pleasure. So tell me about the
pool table setup. I've never seen
anything quite like it.

Ivory's hands land on Victoria's hips. Seek, then Destroy,
issue baritone GROWLS. Ivory glances over at the dogs.

IVORY

It's all right, guys. No one's
threatening anyone here. Okay, the
pool table idea was mine, thank you
very little. When I inherited the
place, Uncle Nathan had just the
one on the ground floor.

VICTORIA

Like a normal person does.

IVORY

Right. Well I'm not normal, as
you've already seen.

VICTORIA

But in a good way, more or less.

IVORY

Whatever. Anyway, I thought it'd be
cool to have a tower of connected
pool tables, kind of a three-in-one
deal.

(MORE)

IVORY (CONT'D)

You start on the top table, once you make all your balls, you move down to the second floor and after you make all your balls there, you go down to the bottom table.

VICTORIA

What about the eight ball?

IVORY

You don't shoot the eight ball in until you reach the last table.

VICTORIA

Interesting. So it's like one really long game of eight ball?

IVORY

Yeah.

He returns focus to attractive house guest.

IVORY (CONT'D)

When we get tired of pool, we take the dogs for walks and play with various electronic and gaming gadgets. Oh yeah, occasionally we go stark raving mad and host group meetings in one of the cavernous, well-appointed libraries on the ground floor.

VICTORIA

Like the Ladies Crocheting Club?

IVORY

Ah, not so much. There's a quarterly meeting of the Northern Heights Fantasy Football Geeks Group, the bimonthly meeting of the local gun club and the monthly gathering of the Occult History and Literature Society of the Upper Midwest. Excuse me while I reach for your beer.

He leans over and grabs Victoria's beer from its spot on a coaster atop the pool table covered with protective sheet.

Ivory is back, one hand on Victoria's hip, the other around the beer.

VICTORIA

Sounds heavy on testosterone and aggression. The last one sounds intriguing. Do they let you sit in on the meetings?

Ivory slurps the beer.

IVORY

One time Anthony and Michelle let me stay --

VICTORIA

(Interrupting)

Anthony and Michelle? What are their last names?

IVORY

Ah hell, I'm not sure. But I can tell you they're near the top of the food chain a the airlines.

VICTORIA

Oh my god, that must be Anthony Hart and Michelle Brown. Anthony was my boss at the airlines and we all were childhood friends.

She takes the beer from Ivory, brings it her mouth, and chugs down the rest.

IVORY

Yikes, that a girl. Keep that up and you'll be promoted to the Ivory Blackmon Master Drinking Level. You want me have Jack bring you another one?

Victoria breaks away from Ivory.

VICTORIA

I need to stop drinking completely or turn to the hard stuff.

Ivory finds his drink, sips, and goes around behind the bar. He throws several ice cubes into an empty glass, finds a Patron anejo' bottle and pours three fingers into it.

IVORY

You're already too drunk to drive home anyway. We have five, or is it six, guest rooms to choose from.

VICTORIA

I didn't drive. I biked here.

He frowns at her.

IVORY

What are you, a physical-fitness fanatic?

VICTORIA

Nothing of the sort. I rode my bike because I was afraid if I drove, the people who've been following me would follow me over here.

IVORY

If you have a stalker, call the damn cops.

She laughs, shakes her head.

VICTORIA

No, it's not like that. The people following me are part of Anthony and Michelle's organization.

IVORY

You mean their occult-history meeting group?

She LAUGHS LOUD and LONG.

VICTORIA

Well, I shouldn't laugh. The people who meet here at the occult-history meeting are probably part of the global vampire cult that Anthony and Michelle control.

IVORY

Why are they following you?

VICTORIA

Because I know too much about them. I busted Anthony and Michelle abducting a couple from Venice and trying to use them in a vampire-cult ritual.

IVORY

Then why aren't they in a Venetian jail?

(MORE)

IVORY (CONT'D)

I presume they have jails over there as well as canals and ancient works of art, right?

VICTORIA

They have jails but their police, at least the police commander, is corrupt as hell. He's in bed with the vampire cult leaders.

He holds glass of tequila in front of him.

IVORY

I was going to ask if you were going to drink this but now I want to.

She shakes her head.

VICTORIA

Go ahead. If I drink too much, I can't remember my dreams.

IVORY

So what? I hardly ever remember mine. The ones I can remember were so nonsensical anyway, like all the acid trips I had in college.

VICTORIA

Mine used to be like that but after I read a book about lucid dreaming, I've gotten damn good at becoming aware in my dreams that I'm dreaming. Buddhist Zen masters, among others, have been doing it for hundreds, no, make that thousands of years.

Ivory, his eyes glazed over with intoxication, strains to get his mind around the concept.

IVORY

Why does it matter if you have a lucid dream tonight? I mean it sounds really cool and exciting and like you know, a great bonus during your non-waking hours, but it's no great loss if you take a night off.

Victoria walks to the bar, plants both hands on the counter.

VICTORIA

This would be hard enough to explain if we were both sober but we're not so I have my doubts you'll understand this.

Her host nods, sneaks in sip from Patron, and gives her his best drunken smile.

IVORY

Okay beautiful, I'm all ears.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis, face covered with sweat, his breathing labored, staggers across endless expanse of sand. He reaches into backpack for canteen, brings it to his lips. It's empty.

He tosses it onto the ground, trudges on. His pace slows.

Curalis zig zags like a drunken man under the relentless sun. He GASPS, his face sunburned, lips parched. He drops to one knee, closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GREAT DESERT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Curalis tip toes over the to mother, bends down and lightly takes hold of the strap around the CANTEEN tied to Flowershya's shorts loop. Curalis starts to undo the knot.

He can't get it undone. He mouths a swear word, blows out a deep breath, goes back at it. It comes close. Curalis mouths "yes". He grabs canteen by the neck.

Flowershya's eyes snap open. She SCREAMS. The children wake up as Curalis jumps back, canteen in right hand.

Flowershya sees Curalis's makeshift cane and that he's favoring left leg. Ammanice, then her brother Nurresek jump to their feet right as their mother lashes and kicks Curalis's injured right ankle.

He SCREAMS in pain as he nearly falls over. He tries to scramble away. Flowershya gets up, runs over and kicks his injured ankle again.

Curalis clenches teeth, stifles potential scream. Children stay in the background.

CURALIS

Don't, ouch, do that again.

FLOWERSHYA

What if I do? You're trying to steal our water.

CURALIS

I'm just doing what I have to do to survive.

FLOWERSHYA

Yeah well so am I.

As he finishes sentence, Flowershya kicks Curalis's injured ankle. He SCREAMS in pain, collapses to the ground. Curalis tosses canteen out of Flowershya's reach and swings branch-cane wickedly through the air. It connects solidly with target's forehead. He hits her again with the cane.

Flowershya drops to the ground beside Curalis. Ammanice rushes over to her.

AMMANICE

Mother, are you all right?

As children run towards their mother, Curalis turns away and SEES IN HIS MIND HIM HITTING FLOWERSHYA IN THE HEAD WITH THE BRANCH OVER AND OVER AND OVER. She dies anew with each blow.

BACK TO SCENE

Curalis stands up, walks five more paces, and collapses in a heap. Barely conscious, he manages one more sentence.

CURALIS

You're a murderer, not a Messiah.

He waits for the desert to end his life.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ivory sips tequila as Victoria explains her dreams. Destroy has joined Seek in shadowing Victoria. Both massive canines lay within inches of their house guest's feet.

IVORY

So what's his deal now, this Curalis guy?

VICTORIA

He's walks across a vast desert toward Yakere, his birthplace.

Ivory sips Patron, sips some more.

IVORY

And you're following along in your dreams, right?

VICTORIA

Yep. I'm not visible in his world but my presence is very real. At least to me it is.

IVORY

But if you miss a night, it's like in the early days of television, before DVR's and VCR's and such. You won't ever see that episode, except in reruns, so you have to fill in the blanks when you see the next episode.

Victoria motions for Ivory to give her the tequila. She takes a sip.

VICTORIA

Oh my, that barely tastes like alcohol. It's almost like having a glass of lemonade.

Ivory smiles slyly.

IVORY

Except if you have a pitcher of this stuff, you'll either see God or the idea of God will seem unnecessary.

She takes another sip.

VICTORIA

Anyway, I could fill in the blanks, as you say, but I feel like I should be there all along the way, I don't know, to lend him moral support or something.

IVORY

I guess even the Son of God can use the encouragement of a lovely young female when he's all alone in the middle of the desert.

She hands Patron back to Ivory. He brings glass to his lips. Destroy hops to his feet, glares at the stairway, and slowly walks toward it. Seek is right behind his brother.

Destroy stops, GROWLS, then issues BARRAGE OF BARKS. This sets off Seek, who does the same.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Hey, hey, hey, no more barking.

Dogs ignore him. Ivory stumbles over, whacks Seek on the ass. Ivory does same to Destroy but has no effect. Ivory hits the dog again.

IVORY (CONT'D)

(Yelling)

Seek, no bark.

Dog turns around, WHINES, stops barking.

VICTORIA

What was that all about?

Ivory grabs dogs by their collars, hauls them back to the bar, tells them to lay down. They do.

IVORY

You remember me saying that the gargoyles keep evil spirits away?

VICTORIA

Sure.

IVORY

Well they do a kick-ass job of keeping external spirits away but there are some spirits that have lived in the mansion before the fleet of gargoyles arrived. They don't seem to ever leave.

VICTORIA

Ghosts of former owners?

Ivory shrugs.

IVORY

Who the hell knows? Maybe, maybe something more primeval. It's impossible to say. The dogs notice them more than Jack or I.

He dumps out ice, pours another glass of Patron.

IVORY (CONT'D)

I was so used to putting ice in from my Scotch and sodas that I automatically did it. But one shouldn't dilute Patron with ice.

VICTORIA

I see. Well I can tell you that if you're letting Anthony and Michelle into your house, your gargoyles are falling down on the job. They're seriously evil spirits dwelling in those two.

IVORY

How do you know that? Oh never mind, you told me about the deal in Venice. They are sick fu -- they're not well. But then again, I'm not either.

VICTORIA

But at least you realize it and you only over use alcohol. They kill people, drain their blood and conduct bizarre rituals.

Ivory drinks from tequila, offers it to Victoria. She shakes her no.

IVORY

Man, they're twisted fucks.

VICTORIA

I presume you know about the Global Links flight that exploded over the Atlantic Ocean last month?

IVORY

Yeah, I read a few articles online about it. Why?

VICTORIA

I was supposed to be on the flight but I decided to stay in Venice a little longer.

IVORY

Holy shit, you lucked out on that one, huh?

VICTORIA

Yeah, I don't know if it was the hand of God or dumb luck but my point is that Anthony and Michelle, being airlines employees, knew I was originally booked on that flight.

Ivory raises a pair of drunken eyebrows.

IVORY

You're saying they planted a bomb on the plane to kill you?

VICTORIA

Damn right they did. I don't have concrete proof but in my heart, I know they were responsible. I'm a threat to them because of what I saw in Venice.

Ivory stands back from the bar, tries to take it all in.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

I don't know exactly how they got so twisted but it's got something to do with Mr. Stillson's near-death-experience on Halloween night when we were seven years old.

IVORY

My mind is already seriously overloaded with information that I'm drunkenly trying to process. So I'm going to trust that you're right about that connection.

VICTORIA

Good. The bottom line is that I feel like I need protection from those two and their vast network of sick vampire worshippers. Since I don't have enough tangible evidence of their crimes, the police won't help me.

IVORY

Hey, I'll do what I can. You can stay here as long as you need to.

She considers this. Victoria smiles at Ivory.

VICTORIA

Bless your reclusive, gargoyle-
loving, drunken but lovable self.

IVORY

My pleasure, sweet thing.

She leans over bar, kisses him. Ivory returns the favor. He grabs her arms, they sidle down to the end of the bar, still kissing. Ivory guides her, with dogs following, over to edge of the pool table.

Ivory grabs her ass. She grabs her top, rips it off and tosses it away. He reaches for her bra. Victoria, breathing hard, closes her eyes. In background, Seek and Destroy BARK DESPERATELY AND LOUDLY. Ivory yells at them, then concentrates on the task at hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Victoria's consciousness flies just above desert floor until it reaches Curalis's unconscious body. He no longer sweats. His face, arms and legs are leathery, filled with cracks and burnt spots from overexposure to the sun.

Victoria's awareness -- a glimmer of sparkling light blue -- hovers above Curalis.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Come on, you can't give up now. The planet needs a leader, someone special to show them that love and kindness really are the answers.

Curalis struggles, slowly opens eyes. He looks around, sees no one. He then sees the sparkling blue oval of light above him. He shakes his head to clear his vision. Light's still there.

He closes his eyes, lays down to die.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

I'm here. That's not a mirage you saw. Hey, I'm talking to you.

He opens eyes, struggles, GROANS into sitting position.

CURALIS

I don't know what, if anything, you are.

(MORE)

CURALIS (CONT'D)

You must be a mirage, which is understandable considering the heat and how long I've been without real food. So I'm going to ignore you and go back to what I was doing.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

You mean dying? You're giving up and letting The Great Desert take your life?

CURALIS

Miss Mirage, if you have a voice as well as an visible manifestation, I cannot understand what you are saying. But it does not matter. It is hopeless. It is time to make the planet a better place.

He collapses onto his back, spreads his arms out so they're perpendicular to his body. He closes his eyes.

The sliver of blue light darts wildly around, traces a frenetic, random pattern of movement over and around Curalis. Blue light lowers down to the ground and moves methodically and systematically. Victoria spells out a message on the desert floor two strides to Curalis' right.

VICTORIA (V.O.)

Open your eyes and smell your divinity.

Curalis' eyes flutter open. He looks to his right, sees what Victoria has written in the sand: HOW YOU FEEL BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU DID TO FLOWERSHYA, AND HOW YOU FEEL NOW, IS EXACTLY WHY YOU CAN'T GIVE UP.

He shakes his head to clear away the hallucination. No good. It's still there.

Curalis forces himself to his feet. He somehow moves ahead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

Victoria wakes up to CACOPHONY OF FRENETIC BARKING, IVORY'S HEAVY BREATHING and JACK'S VOICE.

JACK

What in the world, oh, I'm sorry. I heard the dogs the barking, half of the block probably did, and came down here to see what's happening.

He quickly back out of the room, reaches bottom stair leading up to main level of the mansion.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry to interrupt.

He's gone. Ivory glares at Seek and Destroy.

IVORY

This is payback because I had your balls cut off, isn't it?

Dogs, sprawling red tongues hanging out, cock their considerable heads at him. He turns to Victoria.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Welcome to my world. It's bizarre, off the beaten path, but rarely boring.

She smiles sheepishly.

VICTORIA

I can see that.

IVORY

I'll have the dogs go away, make them sleep in their room, and we can take up where we left off.

VICTORIA

Thanks and don't take this personally but I've had enough excitement for one day.

He peers at her nakedness.

IVORY

You sure about that?

VICTORIA

Yeah. Sorry.

IVORY

Oh fine, have it your way. How about we crash in my bedroom?

VICTORIA

Deal.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - BEDROOM - MORNING

Victoria wakes up, rubs her eyes, sees Ivory's still asleep, and slowly extricates herself from their embrace. She sits on edge of the vast bed, sees Seek and Destroy asleep on floor.

Victoria gets up, throws her clothes on, and tries to sneak past Seek and Destroy. Dogs wake up and follow her as she leaves bedroom.

She walks down long hallway. Gargoyles of various designs from fearsome to mischievous watch her as she and the dogs pass by. They reach the stairs. Victoria grabs the left-hand railing and starts down.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - KITCHEN

Victoria plops down at kitchen table as coffee brews. Seek and Destroy peer at her. Victoria pats each one on top of their giant heads. Dogs smile, wag their log-like tails.

She spots a HANDWRITTEN NOTE kept in place with an EMPTY COCKTAIL GLASS. Victoria grabs note.

NOTE

Don't forget the Occult History people will be here at 7 p.m. (East Library on 2nd floor, libraries on main floor needs cleaning). You don't have to greet or meet with them but I am giving you a heads up in case you play a round of mini-golf tonight. It might be awkward if you showed up in East Library wearing only your boxers carrying a glass of Scotch and a Astroturf golf hole.

BACK TO SCENE

Victoria considers this as coffee grows closer to being done.

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis stumbles through desert. He pulls out mobile communications device, searches for a network connection.

ON SCREEN

No network connections available.

BACK TO SCENE

He stuffs device back into his pocket, leans over, puts hands on knees, and drops down to one knee. The would-be savior closes his eyes.

CURALIS

It's hopeless. I'm never going to make it.

He looks around the desert, does complete three sixty.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

So where are you now, oh great mirage? I cannot hear or see you.

He laughs without humor.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

You weren't real before, were you? It was my mind fooling me into believing you were real.

Curalis collapses onto the ground, his face down. The sun beats down on his bare back, legs and arms.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - KITCHEN

Ivory, blurry-eyed, hair more of a mess than usual, shuffles into the room. Victoria and Jack sit at the kitchen table, Seek lies underneath the table at Victoria's feet, Destroy is nestled against wall behind Jack.

A SHEET OF PAPER WITH DRAWING OF THE EAST LIBRARY lies in front of Victoria.

IVORY

Oh shit, you two are up to something, aren't you?

VICTORIA

I've got a plan to topple the global vampire kingdom. And I need your help.

Ivory points at the coffee maker.

IVORY

I need about ten cups of coffee to feel vaguely human.

JACK

Have a seat, boss. I'll make another pot.

IVORY

You wanna pour me a glass of orange juice and ice water?

JACK

Serious cottonmouth, huh?

Ivory drops onto chair, slides it next to Victoria's.

IVORY

No, smart-ass, I'm in training for the fucking Olympics and I need steady diets of liquids.

VICTORIA

You mean like that steady diet of liquids you had last night?

IVORY

What, you guys planned out a give-Ivory-shit day today?

VICTORIA

Sorry, I couldn't resist. Okay, now here's a drawing Jack made of the East Library...

EXT. GREAT DESERT - DAY

Curalis moans, groans like he's having a bad dream. A hundred yards away, a PTU -- Personal Transport Unit -- approaches.

PTU, piloted by NADELLE OPHELLAND -- late 50's, gaunt face, hint of desperation about her -- stops beside Curalis' unconscious body.

Nadelle hops out, a CANTEEN in her right hand. She kneels down, turns Curalis over onto his back. She tries to shake him awake. He stirs but doesn't wake up.

Nadelle tosses cold water on his face. He opens his eyes.

CURALIS

Who are you, the mirage I may or may not have seen earlier?

NADELLE

I'm no mirage. I'm your mother.

CURALIS

What are you doing out here? And how'd you find me?

She hands the canteen to him. Curalis slams down as much water as he can before he has to come up for air.

NADELLE

When you didn't show up Yakere a couple days ago, I feared something had gone wrong during your journey. I borrowed a friend's vehicle to come find you.

CURALIS

You knew I was coming home?

NADELLE

It was on a PECNET news feed I get. And Curalis, don't hate me but it was all one big lie.

CURALIS

You're not my mother?

NADELLE

Oh I'm our mother all right, but your birth wasn't an Immaculate Conception. You were born as everyone else is, was and will be.

CURALIS

The result of two lovers coming together.

NADELLE

Exactly. Your father is no god. Far from it.

CURALIS

Why'd you start those rumors about me being the Son of God?

NADELLE

Partly because my life was so routine, empty and inconsequential. I was unemployed, poor and the few friends I had didn't consider me to be anything special or memorable.

Curalis takes another swig of water, rolls it around in his mouth, then swallows it.

CURALIS

You mean you had me risk my life crossing the Great Desert because you wanted people to notice you?

NADELLE

That's not the only reason. After reading in the scriptures about a savior coming to the earthly plane to lead the people out of the darkness of their sin, and seeing what a sad state humanity is in, I thought it was time for the, a savior, to appear.

CURALIS

Well I'm no Messiah, that's for damn sure. I killed a mother named Flowershya for her canteen of water.

NADELLE

Oh my, out here in the Great Desert?

He nods his head sadly.

CURALIS

So if I'd made it to Yakere, you would have lied to me, said you were a virgin at the time of my birth?

NADELLE

That was my original plan. I convinced two women, both good friends of mine from childhood, to back up my story.

CURALIS

Everyone makes mistakes. We're all human.

Nadelle nods at the hovercraft.

NADELLE

Hop in. We'll catch up on everything on the way to Yakere.

Curalis nods, pauses he kneels on the ground. He peers up at the moons of Ulangstias, closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GREAT DESERT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Curalis wakes up, sees the message spelled out in the sand by Victoria: HOW YOU FEEL BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU DID TO FLOWERSHYA, AND HOW YOU FEEL NOW, IS EXACTLY WHY YOU CAN'T GIVE UP.

END FLASHBACK

She helps Curalis to his feet.

CURALIS

Mother, I love your idea. No one else on the planet except us two need to know that my birth was normal. Let's keep that strictly between us, all right?

NADELLE

It will be my pleasure, son.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - EAST LIBRARY - NIGHT

Anthony Hart and Michelle Brown stand in front of a square of folding chairs, seven deep by seven wide. A LARGE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION screen is displayed behind them.

ANTHONY

Let's move on to the important stuff. We need volunteers to set up, manage and grow a cult center in Portugal. Spanish-speaking members are preferred but if you are willing and able to learn Spanish, this is a great opportunity for you.

Four people in the audience raise their hands.

INT IVORY'S MANSION - SECRET ROOM JUST OFF EAST LIBRARY - NIGHT

Wedged in-between two books, Ivory holds the video camera steady as he records the Occult History Club's meeting.

IVORY

Now the juicy stuff. Sweet.

VICTORIA

Good deal. All we need is definitive evidence that Anthony and Michelle are behind the cult's formation and expansion. Then we can land their sorry asses in jail.

The meeting continues. Ivory records it all.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - EAST LIBRARY - NIGHT

Michelle makes a note on her laptop. Anthony says something to her, she nods yes. He returns attention to the group.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - SECRET ROOM JUST OFF EAST LIBRARY-NIGHT

IVORY

Sweet. I got it all. That should be all the police need, right?

He stops recording, turns to Victoria, and accidentally hits switch on the back of book shelf. The book shelf starts to swing around. Ivory presses the button one, twice, five more times.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - EAST LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Ivory and Victoria swing into full view as the secret room becomes seriously not secret. Cult members and the two cult leaders, stare at them.

Ivory smiles, waves weakly.

IVORY

Hi everyone. Hope you're all having a good time here.

Anthony sees the video recorder Ivory holds.

ANTHONY

I'm glad you came clean. We all appreciate that.

He strides toward Ivory. Ivory takes hard left and runs towards the rear entrance. Victoria is right behind him.

Three cultists cut them off. Ivory flips video recorder to Victoria.

IVORY

Good luck.

She takes video recorder, evades four cultists, but is trapped in front of the fireplace by Anthony and Michelle. Michelle sticks her right hand out, takes a step toward Victoria.

MICHELLE

Give me the video cam and we'll forget any of this ever happened.

VICTORIA

I'm not that stupid. If I give you this, we lose all our leverage. Nice try, though.

Michelle gestures towards the forty-nine cult members, many of whom have left their seats, and smiles.

MICHELLE

Actually you don't have a choice. You can give it to me voluntarily or I can take it from you. Either way, we win.

Victoria holds the video cam in front of her.

VICTORIA

Come and get it, bitch.

Michelle GROWLS, a feral, primitive aura comes over her.

MICHELLE

If you insist.

She comes toward Victoria with a primal death look in her eyes. Michelle reaches for the video camera. Victoria throws a right that connects with Michelle's jaw. It knocks the cult leader back. Michelle throws right, Victoria ducks, connects with another right. Michelle staggers backward.

Anthony storms into the picture.

ANTHONY

Impressive display but you've had your two minutes of fame. Sorry it was thirteen minutes short of the norm. Now you're free to die.

He sticks his right hand out.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

We're through fucking around. Give me the device.

VICTORIA

I might as well. We're way outnumbered and there's no way to escape so what the hell, why not?

She tosses video cam straight up in the air. Anthony waits for it to come down. As it comes back down toward earth, Victoria circles around Anthony. As he catches it, she shoves him towards the fireplace.

Anthony tries to save himself from the fire. Victoria shoves him a second time. He stumbles into the flames. Victoria rushes over, snatches video cam as Anthony falls onto his back. A SCREAM OF ANGUISH follows. The fire burns away the human shell covering Anthony.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Burn, baby, burn.

Most of the cult members gather around the fireplace, confused about what to do and mesmerized by the spectacle of flame. Victoria turns and runs towards doors. She's cut off by five cult members. Ivory yells at them from behind.

IVORY

Hey loser boys, back here.

They turn around. Ivory grabs his T-shirt.

IVORY (CONT'D)

You want a piece of me?

Cultists rush towards him. Victoria bolts towards exit. Ivory ducks, dukes, evades the cult members as best as he can while Victoria heads for the door.

Victoria takes opportunity to reach entrance leading out of the room. She looks back. Anthony's human shell is completely gone. His VAMPIRIC ESSENCE emerges from the fireplace.

A seven-foot tall figure, mouth with shark-like predator teeth, writhing dark energy, pure hatred, unparalleled hunger and a face only Satan could love, rushes after Victoria and Ivory.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Come on, I know where we can go.

Victoria runs up to him.

VICTORIA

Good cause I don't. Lead the way.

Ivory grabs a folding chair from the rear of the room and zips through doorway. Victoria's right behind him.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - CORRIDOR OUTSIDE LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Ivory quickly wedges folded-up chair against doorknob. He motions for Victoria to follow him as he exits stage left down the hallway.

Jack and the dogs approach the library coming from opposite direction, They stop cold when they see Ivory and Victoria running toward them. Ivory points over Jack's shoulder.

IVORY

(Breathless)

Come on, we're going to the pool room. You take Seek, I've got Destroy.

JACK

What the hell's going on?

IVORY

(Breathless)

I'll explain later. And call 911. Tell the police they need to come here immediately.

JACK

Why?

IVORY

There's two vampires and part of a vampire cult that's killing people all over the planet. And they're in our house.

SOUND OF SHATTERING WOOD, then CLAW breaks through the library door. Claw gropes around for folding chair.

JACK

Okay, I'm calling 911.

Victoria grabs the growling Seek's collar.

VICTORIA

Do it on the fly. We haven't got much time.

Jack lets go of Seek's collar, reaches in pocket for phone. The human trio and two dogs (against their wills) run down the corridor.

Vampire inside Anthony finds folding chair, tosses it aside and throws door open.

INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO POOL ROOM - NIGHT

Vampire parasite formerly inside Anthony (Vampire Spawn) and Michelle lead group of cultists toward the recreation room. The vampire spawn reaches open door, ducks down and stomps inside.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - RECREATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vampire spawn sees pool table, Ping Pong table, and bar area. It strides farther into the room. Jack emerges from the right-front corner of the room, sneaks across, shuts and quickly locks the door. The cultists try doorknob, BANG on the door, but to no avail.

Vampire spawn whirls around, glares at Jack.

JACK

Sorry, but your friends aren't
welcome in here. You're not either
but we're kind of stuck with you.

Vampire spawn SNARLS, comes to kill Jack. The monstrosity is six away, closing fast. A pool ball BONKS the vampire spawn in the back of the head. It turns around.

Ivory stands by the pool table, a huge smile on his face.

IVORY

Come and get me, Loser Boy.

He hurls the seven-ball at the vampire spawn. It reaches up, catches the ball, squeezes and the seven-ball turns into powder. Ivory swallows hard, hurls the ten-ball. Same thing.

While vampire is distracted, Jack circles around pool table. Vampire spawn comes toward Ivory. He feints as if to his right, then darts back to his left.

Ivory circles around pool table toward the front of the room. Vampire spawn tries to catch up with him but can't do it. Jack reaches circular staircase, pauses. Ivory sees him.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Get your ass down those stairs!

Vampire spawn turns, sees Jack at the edge of the stairs, makes a move toward him. Ivory fires the three-ball off the thing's brawny back. It turns toward Ivory. Jack uses distraction to take stairs down to the lower level.

Vampire spawn ROARS ITS FRUSTRATION, rushes toward pool table, leaps clean over table. Ivory ducks just in time. Vampire CRASHES ONTO FLOOR. Ivory circles around table, vampire circles around, trying to catch up with him.

Ivory moves away from the pool table, glances in back of him - - it's only three feet from the railing overlooking basement and subbasement. He takes the pool ball in his right hand -- the ONE BALL -- and throws it over his head. It clears the railing and drops toward out of sight.

IVORY (CONT'D)

Heads up down below!

IVORY (CONT'D)

(To vampire spawn)

Come on, shit for brains and a Hitler heart, come and get me!

Creature leaps clean over pool table, flies toward the owner of the mansion. Ivory falls to the floor just before the monster lands on him. Ivory brings feet up just in time. As vampire lands on the bottom of his feet, Ivory rolls toward the railing. He uses both legs to launch the giant, loveless parasite into the air. It flies over the railing and towards the subbasement two stories below.

CUT TO:

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - SUBBASEMENT

Victoria, flanked by Seek on her left and Destroy on her right, peers at the falling vampire. As creature drops closer, she's almost transfixed by the thing's sheer hunger for blood and propensity to take human lives. Vampire reaches out with ape-length, fibrous arms. It smiles hideously, opens jaws and looks forward to killing Victoria.

With her killer twenty feet away, Victoria takes the SHARPENED POOL CUE in her right hand, which is more like a WOODEN STAKE, and thrusts in front of her face. She falls onto her back, holds makeshift STAKE IN FRONT OF HER CHEST.

Vampire's soulless, red eyes are filled with terror. But it's too late to save itself. Creature is IMPALED on the stake. It SCREAMS IN UNEARTHLY AGONY.

Victoria is face to face with vampire, the monster's descent towards her stopped three inches short. She peers at the now dead face. The body TURNS INTO WHITE POWDER, falls on top of her face in Cocaine-like shower.

Dogs HOWL and BARK like mad. Seek rushes up to Victoria, sniffs, then licks her face.

VICTORIA

I love you too, honey.

Destroy trots up, stands on hind legs while it peers with head slightly cocked at her.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

I'm okay, killer. Just a little overcome by everything.

She pets Destroy on his sprawling head. Ivory hangs over the railing above them.

IVORY

I can't believe we fucking pulled this off. And I doubted your plan.

VICTORIA

Oh ye of little faith.

IVORY

Hey, I'm a cynical, reclusive drunk, okay?

VICTORIA

There's hope for you yet.

IVORY

We'll see about that.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ivory, glass of Scotch in one hand, pool cue in other, is on the top-level pool table. Jack, fiddling with cellphone, sits at the bar. Victoria is already on the lowest one. Seek and Destroy lay underneath the pool table.

Victoria looks up toward Ivory and Jack.

VICTORIA

(Yelling)

Hey, how about we stop for the night and resume where we are at a later date?

Ivory leans over the railing, peers drunkenly down.

IVORY

Oh come on, it's early yet.

VICTORIA

Early in the wee hours of the morning. I'm tired plus there's someone special I need to talk to in my dream world.

IVORY

You mean that Curalis dude?

VICTORIA

No, someone from my childhood who died a long time ago, who I saw almost die. I'm hoping he has an answer for me.

IVORY

Okie-dokie my dear. I'll twist Jack's arm, make him play miniature golf with me. I'll be to bed in, well, awhile.

VICTORIA

Sounds good. Don't hit your balls anymore than you have to in order to reach the hole.

IVORY

That's the whole fucking idea, sunshine.

Victoria waves, heads for bed. Dogs follow close behind.

INT. IVORY'S MANSION - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Victoria climbs into bed, makes sure dream journal is on the bedside table, tells Seek and Destroy good night, and turns off lamp.

EXT. VICTORIA'S DREAM WORLD - NIGHT

Victoria stands on rainbow-colored mountain that rises above Earth's atmosphere. She peers precariously over mountain's edge. Below and beyond Earth's orbit, hundreds of thousands of round portals to different worlds, dimensions and time periods of the first two, hover in space.

She shakes her head, confused.

VICTORIA

Which one is the right one?

Seek appears at her side, nudges up against her right leg. His small cat-sized pink tongues hangs out of his mouth.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Got any ideas?

Canine peers into space, eyes scanning the panorama of portals. Seek suddenly leaps over the edge, gets sucked into a tractor beam of blueish energy leading to one of the countless portals.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Okay, you better be right.

She leaps off edge but another tractor beam draws her toward different portal.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(Yelling)

Seek, where are you?

Barrage of baritone BARKS echo in the coldness of space. Sounds transform into TRAIL OF PURPLE LIGHT. Victoria guides her falling body toward the purple stream of light.

She reaches the purple light, is sucked into it, and speeds toward portal below.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF PORTAL - CONTINUOUS

Victoria lands next to her canine friend. For an instant, it's just the two of them, then a second later, an arena full of screaming, dancing, rock 'n roll fans springs up around them.

Victoria and Seek are in the front row. Five feet away, on a raised stage, a Serena Williams-like woman plays guitar, sings rousing rock anthem that has her fans whipped into clapping, hip-shaking frenzy. A drummer, two bass guitarists and keyboard player play in perfect synch behind her.

The band's name, DEMON DESTROYER, is spelled out in neon lights behind the band. The leader singer, known as THE ONE, seems to stare directly at Victoria. Victoria points at her.

VICTORIA

(Yelling)

You're the one, aren't you? I mean you were Mr. Stillson in another life, right?

Singer steps back as if hit by a giant, invisible hammer. She momentarily stops singing, misses notes on guitar. Band mates glance at her. The One recovers quickly, is back singing and playing guitar.

Song ends. Stage goes dark. Fans clamor for another.

Spotlights comes on, shows The One.

THE ONE

I'm sorry, my darlings, but as you can hear, I'm losin' my voice. I love you all. Our next show is two nights from now at the Blue Star Center in Astral City. Party on, everyone.

Spotlight goes out. The One, surrounded by security, leads her band down aisle on left edge of the arena.

VICTORIA

(To Seek)

Come on, I've got to talk to her.

She and the dog, along with crowd of adoring nearby fans, follow after Slither.

INT. ARENA - HALLWAY OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TWO NFL-LINEMAN-SIZED SECURITY GUARDS glare at mob of screaming fans. Victoria, hand on Seek's collar, pushes her way through to front of crowd. She angles toward guard on her left.

VICTORIA

I need to speak with The One.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Everyone here wants to speak and shake hands and hug The One. But she's tired and just wants to relax after a long, hard night.

He hands her a BUSINESS CARD.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (CONT'D)

Here, go to that website. You can download a free song, send The One an e-mail. Have a nice evening.

VICTORIA

You don't understand, I'm a close, personal friend. You just tell The One that Victoria Mayfield from a previous life needs to speak with her.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Forget it. It ain't --

He sees Seek staring at him, luminous golden eyes peering into his soul.

SECURITY GUARD #1 (CONT'D)

Hey, that's a handsome dog you got there. How in the hell you got it into the show, I don't know.

An adoring male fan (20) elbows Victoria aside,

ADORING MALE FAN

Hey big guy, I just like thirty seconds with The --

Security guard plants giant right hand on man's chest, shoves him back into people behind him.

SECURITY GUARD #1

(To Victoria)

What'd you say your name is?

VICTORIA

Victoria Mayfield.

SECURITY GUARD #1

Hang tight. I'll see what my boss says.

With other security guard watching his back, Security Guards #1 opens door, disappears into dressing room. Fans go even crazier. Seek GROWLS after one fan tries to move into Victoria's spot. Fan moves away slowly.

Dressing room door opens, guard motions for Victoria and Seek to follow him inside the dressing room. They do.

INT. DRESSING ROOM OF THE ONE - CONTINUOUS

The One, wearing only a bikini bottom, sits in a Jacuzzi, a cocktail and bottle of pills within reach.

THE ONE

Oh my goodness, how in the hell did you find me, girl?

VICTORIA

Is that really you, Mr. Stillson?

THE ONE

In the flesh, such that it is.

She nods toward her body.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

So how did you find me?

VICTORIA

I'd had this amazing string of dreams of a parallel world with a possibly Messianic figure...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM OF THE ONE - NIGHT

The one shakes her head in amazement.

THE ONE

That is quite a journey. But I believe you. Lucid, imaginative dreaming sounds remarkably close to what happens after you die. Once your spirit separates from the body, everything changes so radically.

VICTORIA

And what exactly did happen when you died and then was brought back to life by your lovely wife Irene?

THE ONE

Instead of seeing one light like you hear about, after I died, I saw two lights. One was white, the other a lavender. I went toward the latter one.

She takes a sip from drink, swallows two black pills, chases it with cocktail.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

When I reached the lavender light,
I found my spirit in a church. Two
vampires and one male were kneeling
at an altar.

VICTORIA

Must have been Domatrian, Krinel
and Curalis, kings of Ulangstias.

THE ONE

Probably. All three of them somehow
sensed my presence. Curalis
mentioned something about this
one's vibrational frequency is
different than people from our
world. The vampires agreed.

VICTORIA

And then what happened?

Seek, who'd been snoozing, wakes up and gets up onto all
fours.

THE ONE

Each one of them, one at a time,
used a small knife to slice off a
tiny chunk of flesh from their
index finger. The vampires didn't
bleed but Curalis bled a little.
Then they tossed the bits of flesh
in my direction.

VICTORIA

That's, ah, interesting. I have no
damn idea what it means, but it's
interesting.

THE ONE

Then right before my consciousness
returned to my body, I heard
Curalis say 'I hope this spell
works. I'm really curious about
other worlds, especially the Earth
one'.

Victoria nods weakly. She tries to make sense of the rock
star's comments.

VICTORIA

Then your spirit returned to your body, right?

THE ONE

It sure did, Darling.

VICTORIA

Did anything strange happen when your spirit re-entered your body?

THE ONE

Just before I realized I was alive again, I felt three invisible presences jump ship, so to speak.

VICTORIA

And those presences must have leapt onto the nearest living beings, which were myself, Anthony and Michelle.

THE ONE

So I that, my precious darling, explains your dreams and why the Anthony and Michelle, such lovely people when they were children, turned into bloodthirsty bitches after they grew up. You wanna a drink or pills or something?

Victoria laughs.

VICTORIA

No thank you, The One, you've done more than enough for me. Thank you so much. Seek and I should be getting back home.

Black rock star nods, swallows two more pills, polishes off drink. She pats ledge of Jacuzzi.

THE ONE

Come on over, big doggy.

Seek looks up at Victoria, who nods emphatically towards The One. Dog plods over, lays snout down on edge of hot tub. Rock star strokes top of dog's head.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Oh my god, you are too cute for words. I bet you make a killer watch dog.

She rubs top of Seek's nose. Dog closes his eyes, loves it.

VICTORIA

I am curious. What does Irene think of all this? Or haven't you two gotten together since your deaths?

THE ONE

Oh yes, we had a big-ass talk right after she died. We both agreed we should try out different things, you know, take on new roles, have some fun and excitement, and then get back together afterwards. Hey beautiful, eternal life means there's no end to the shit you can try out in the afterlife.

VICTORIA

That's good to know. What's Irene doing now?

THE ONE

She's a professional football player, a defensive end, I believe, and doing quite well, on and off the field. She gets to shower with a bunch of big, well-built men so that's gotta be fun, right?

VICTORIA

Yeah, I can't argue with that.

She hits Seek on his ass. Dog whirls toward her.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

You ready to go back?

Seek goes to her, sits, stares up at her.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(To The One)

Thanks again.

THE ONE

My pleasure. Maybe we can get together again sometime.

VICTORIA

I sure hope so.

Dream world begins to fade, then goes to black.

EXT. GRANDEUR MASS TRANSIT STATION - NIGHT

Curalis emerges from high-speed passenger train. A crowd of fifty people, many holding signs -- "Curalis, I love you! I know you're the One"; "Welcome home, Son of God"; "I want to believe. Can you help me?"; "The world's going to hell What are you going to do about it?"; and one has only a question mark on the sign -- cheer and wave excitedly. Curalis smiles and waves back.

The man holding the sign with only a question mark on it, ZACHERIUS LEYLAND -- 45, drunken smile, can barely stand, lost expression -- walks unsteadily toward Curalis. He bumps into several people.

ZACHERIUS

Sorry, I'm a little tipsy. Give the drunk plenty of room.

He staggers over to Curalis.

CURALIS

Hi. Thanks for the welcome home.

ZACHERIUS

So if you're really this hot-shot, Messiah dude, then do something mystical and miraculous.

He takes out FLASK, drinks from it.

CURALIS

What'd you have in mind?

Zacherius BURPS, then HICCUPS. SNICKERS and TENSE LAUGHTER from the crowd.

ZACHERIUS

Surprise us.

Curalis considers the situation, peers into the man's eyes.

CURALIS

Why do you believe you need what's in the flask?

ZACHERIUS

I don't need it. Drinking's just a hobby for me. Some folks sew, others are into playing sports. I drink, like my dear, sweet wife Ashley, Zoran rest her soul.

CURALIS

How did your wife die?

Zacherius holds up the flask, grimaces at the sky.

ZACHERIUS

She passed away just over a POAT ago. Complications due to alcohol abuse.

CURALIS

And you probably feel partly responsible for her death because your drinking gave her an excuse to keep on drinking too much even though the doctors told her alcohol was killing her.

Zacherius fights back tears.

ZACHERIUS

Yeah, maybe a little. Hell, I feel a lot responsible. I feel like shit and it gets worse everyday.

Curalis looks at him.

CURALIS

Every person is responsible for their own actions and their attitude. You can't help a person, no matter how much you love them, if that person doesn't want to change.

ZACHERIUS

God help me, I loved her.

CURALIS

Your sweet Ashley was probably just confused about who she really was, as are a lot of people.

ZACHERIUS

What are you talking about?

Curalis nods at the flask.

CURALIS

She thought she was a hopeless drunk, that life was so bad and pointless that she needed to keep drinking because that's what she'd been doing. Your wife mistook her behaviors for her identity.

ZACHERIUS

Kind of what I've been doing.

Curalis puts on a hand on Zacherius' shoulder.

CURALIS

You're more than a drunk, my friend. You're infinitely more than what's in the bottle. Other people can help you but if you're stuck in the past, you'll never outgrow the need to drink.

Zacherius begins to cry. He hands the flask to Curalis.

ZACHERIUS

Please, take that. Don't let me have it.

The two men hug.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE IN CROWD

I'll take the flask.

Several people LAUGH.

CURALIS

Nice try. I'm keeping this for medicinal purposes.

Men continue embrace, then Zacherius steps back.

ZACHERIUS

I want to quit drinking but I can't do it on my own.

CURALIS

I can get you to the right person at Social Services. She will find an inpatient rehab program that's right for you.

Zacherius nods yes.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

All right, come with me. We'll go to the Social Services Department inside the castle.

EXT. GRANDEUR CITY PARK - DAY

Curalis, under watchful eyes of five City Policing Officers, leads a group of about thirty as they construct a multi-media Postcard to Zoran.

Curalis watches MARTHA SKYLANDER -- 27, pigtails, focused -- put finishing touches on a METAL FRAME that's fifty yards long by twenty-five yards high. Metal frames inside the larger one break it into nine areas. Nine people (various ages) paint pictures, create sculptures and write poetry or prayers as friends and family look on.

Krell Mace approaches the group. He stands and checks out the scene. Curalis notices him.

CURALIS

Good day, sir. How are you doing?

KRELL

Very good. Your art project looks rather interesting.

CURALIS

The artists are really putting their heart and soul into it. I'm hoping the city will allow us to display here or maybe even in the Modern Art Museum.

KRELL

Sure, I don't see why not. Say, I hate to take you away from this but I have some important, secret information about Domatrian and Krinel I need to share with you.

Curalis is instantly interested.

CURALIS

How did you obtain the information?

KRELL

Let me introduce myself. I'm Krell Mace, a Security Specialist at the Grand and Imperial City Center.

He thrusts right hand out. They shake hands.

CURALIS

Glad to meet you, Krell.

He glances at the artists. Most of them are at least halfway done with their artwork. Curalis spots a wooden table sitting in the shadow of black-barked ebonacious tree next to a fountain. They're a football field away.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

Let's discuss this over there.

Krell and Curalis walk quickly over to the table. As they sit down, Krell takes out MOBILE DEVICE. He presses a button. Device expands into FULL-SIZE LAPTOP COMPUTER. Curalis points to the BUILT-IN COMPUTER embedded in the table.

KRELL

I don't trust the public computers. You never know how closely the government monitors your activity. Besides, I've got all my research saved on this one.

CURALIS

So what can you tell me about the vampire kings that I don't already know?

Krell opens up a file on his computer. It's a diagram of the execution area on the ground floor of the Grand and Imperial City Center. Curalis glances around. The five police officers, which are cyborgs with cadaver's flesh stretched over a titanium skeleton, are busy watching the artists work on the postcard to Zoran.

KRELL

Alright, I was baffled by the spike in murders by women. So I did some unofficial digging...

MONTAGE OF KRELL'S INVESTIGATION AND THEORY

- 1) Krell examines public-records web site on his work computer.
- 2) Krell uses work device to open locked office door and with overhead lights off, he uses flashlight to read documents in a file folder.
- 3) Newspaper headline from twenty-five years ago: CITY LEADERS ANNOUNCE CONSTRUCTION OF SUBTERRANEAN SHELTER FOR USE IN CASE OF NUCLEAR ATTACK.

4) Diagram on Krell's computer shows the execution chamber is right above the subterranean shelter.

5) Krell in a sprawling graveyard in middle of the night. He's at grave of execution victim Emelleh Ecoff Smythson, frowns after he scans the corpse's teeth. His dental-records identifier device shows the name of the deceased is Franklin H. Luck.

6) Females supposedly executed in gas chamber are locked in cells in subterranean chamber. Heavily drugged, they languish in the twilight. Door opens. Domatrian or Krinel stride in, disrobe, take woman's clothes off and begin to have sex.

7) Same females now pregnant, stomachs protruding with child.

END MONTAGE

Curalis sits next Krell, stares at computer as he processes it all.

CURALIS

So you believe Domatrian and Krinel have built a small city populated with mostly vampire-human hybrids?

KRELL

Yes, and based on the spike in AirTransport One expenses, I'm guessing they're flying in kidnap victims from around the country, probably from all over the planet.

CURALIS

Why haven't you gone to the Grandeur Police with this?

KRELL

I think Domatrian and Krinel have paid off, or maybe threatened, our local law-enforcement officials to keep them quiet.

CURALIS

That would be a real problem.

KRELL

I think the reason the underground city has been built here is to build up an army to protect the Mother of all vampires.

CURALIS

Why do you think that?

KRELL

In the cleansing of 2998, the government agencies task force bragged they exterminated ninety-nine percent of the vampires. Everyone was so happy that humans regained control of the cities. But they never found the Queen of the Night.

CURALIS

That's true. She, it, has to live somewhere but why underneath Grandeur?

KRELL

Our fair city, as beautiful, mystical and cosmopolitan as it is, is also the most populous city on the planet.

CURALIS

That is certainly true.

KRELL

As well-intentioned as the government and law-enforcement personnel are, it's impossible to keep track of every citizen living in the city. I think the Mother vampire takes advantage of this by claiming victims from the slum areas of the city.

CURALIS

When I was in power, I proposed a government study to get a better handle on the homeless and unidentified segment of the city's population. But Domatrian and Krinel thought it wasn't worth the city's time and money.

KRELL

They were afraid of what the task force would discover.

CURALIS

I can see that now. All right, we cannot go to the city policing force for help but I am good friends with Hedrick Stoneman, the head of the federal security agency. I'll get him to send a team of agents to help us out.

KRELL

Help us do what, exactly?

CURALIS

Kill the head and the body will follow.

KRELL

You mean take out the Mother Vampire?

Curalis nods yes. He points at the group of artists working on the multimedia post card.

CURALIS

With Hedrick's and their help, and mirrors, we can do this.

Krell looks to Curalis for an explanation.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

Here's what I mean...

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR - DAY

Group of artists carry completed post card to Zoran down the middle of the street. Hanging from the borders of the post card are the instruments used to create it: paintbrushes, hammers, musical instruments, a welding torch.

PTU's adjust height to avoid hitting them. Two policing agents, towering cyborgs with cadaver's skin, step in front of artists. Martha Skylander motions for others to halt.

MARTHA

What's the problem, officer?

CYBORG OFFICER #1

You are disrupting hovercraft traffic. Get off the street immediately.

MARTHA

There's no room on the sidewalk
plus hovercrafts can just hover a
little bit higher than normal.

Cyborg officer #2 shakes its head, shoots out titanium hand and latches onto her wrist. Martha grimaces in pain, tries to pull her hand away but can't.

CYBORG OFFICER #2

You are in violation of city
ordinance number --

Another artist, RANDY WAITE -- 28, hawk-like nose, shaved head, not in mood to be bullied -- uses a WELDING TORCH to throw white-hot flame across cyborg #2's face.

Cyborg #1 knocks welding torch out of Randy's hand. Cyborg #2, its optical sensors burnt by the welding torch, gropes blindly around. Martha and Randy back away from flailing hand.

Cyborg officer #1 speaks into shoulder mic.

CYBORG OFFICER #1

Need additional policing agents in
front of Grand and Imperial City
Center. Officer attacked and
injured.

Three Grandeur City Policing Department hovercrafts swoop in. Four security specialists from the City Center rush out from the main entrance.

HEDRICK STONEMAN -- 48, slender, fit, intense eyes -- Curalis Hunter AND Krell lead a team of federal security agency undercover agents, each wearing black backpack, through the front entrance of the sprawling castle.

INT. SECURITY HUB OF TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CITY
CENTER - DAY

Supervisor Marshall Hill stands in front of wall of closed-circuit video feeds. Cortland, Landu and Russell are three of the ten security specialists monitoring the forty-nine different monitors.

Hill points to monitor that shows Curalis and company as they stride through the lobby.

ON MONITOR

One male agent stops just inside the front, looks outside, squints into bright sun, stares at RECTANGLE OF SUNLIGHT shining through front door and nods.

A hundred yards away, kitty-corner from agent by front entrance, a female agent stops, shrugs off backpack, and takes out a LARGE OVAL MIRROR. She carefully positions the mirror on the floor at the beginning of the corridor.

Male agent motions for her to move the mirror a little to her right. She moves it. Agent motions to move back to her left. She does. He motions a little more. She moves it accordingly.

He gestures for her to adjust the angle of the mirror, which she does. He smiles, makes OKAY gesture with thumb and index finger.

BACK TO SCENE

Hill stands behind Cortland.

MARSHALL

What in the hell are they doing?

CORTLAND

Beyond setting mirrors on the floor of the planet's largest and best-known building, I have no idea.

Marshall points to a monitor right underneath first one.

MARSHALL

Bring up the video feed on your system.

Cortland hits a key, two icons. Marshall and her peer at her computer.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

A female agent stops halfway down corridor, waits for person walking behind her to pass by, and then takes a standing mirror out of the backpack. She carefully positions the mirror on the left edge of the corridor. Agent looks up at the GLASS CEILING, back to mirror, nods approval.

A man passing by looks questioningly at the mirror. Agent makes explanation but it's not audible on the video monitor.

BACK TO SCENE

Marshall FROWN SERIOUS CONFUSION.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

That is so bizarre. It's almost like they're doing a physics experiment for school or something.

CORTLAND

Or maybe they're scientists doing a real-life experiment.

MARSHALL

But they should have notified us in advance. There's something fishy going on --

RUSSELL

(Interrupting)

Sir, you should see this.

Marshall grudgingly leaves Cortland, rushes over to Russell.

ON MONITOR

Mass confusion and chaos. One of the artists drops a smoke bomb that blinds the policing officers. As they try to see, the group of artists set one side of the giant post card on street, get behind it and then push the giant rectangle of stone and metal onto the police.

BACK TO SCENE

MARSHALL

Russell, instant message the nearest policing units to get their asses over to help them.

RUSSELL

Yes sir.

INT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR - DAY

Curalis leads the way, Hedrick, Krell and five federal agents follow close behind, down corridor. Curalis stops at a locked door on the left. He enters a pass code on an electronic access device mounted into the door.

A CLICK, Curalis breathes SIGH of relief, opens door. Everyone but one male agent file into the execution chamber. Agent takes off backpack, extracts standing mirror and sets it on the floor.

INT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR -
CONTINUOUS

Curalis runs past chair in gas chamber to rear wall. Krell and Hedrick pull up behind him.

CURALIS

Where is the secret access panel?

Krell squints, scans the wall, kneels down and feels around just above the base of the wall.

KRELL

According the unofficial work order I found, it should be less than a standard short unit to the right of center and three point five standard ultra short units above the floor.

He feels around some more, then an audible CLICK.

CURALIS

Right about there.

A secret door opens up. Hedrick takes mirror out of his backpack, sets it on the floor just to the right of the secret door. Curalis rushes past Krell and through secret door.

CURALIS (CONT'D)

Come on, we don't have much time.

INT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR -
CONTINUOUS

Curalis emerges from secret passage into a dimly lit subterranean tunnel. Hedrick, Krell and three out of four remaining federal agents follow right behind. The other agent sets mirror on the floor of the tunnel.

Curalis sees a dim light at the far end of the tunnel on his left. He goes toward it, others follow.

At the end of the tunnel, Curalis stops.

INT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR -
CONTINUOUS

Curalis looks at a curious scene. A THREE-STORY HIGH VAMPIRE MONSTROSITY, mostly fangs, predatory wanting and hunger, sits in a daze with a MOAT surrounding it.

Ten vampire-human hybrids, all holding young babies, approach the Mother Vampire, bow heads in prayer, and proceed to slash their throats.

They hold babies over the moat. Blood from the babies falls into moat. Mother Vampire bends over, licks up the fresh blood.

Curalis turns to Hedrick.

CURALIS

All right, let's do it.

Hedrick speaks into personal communications device.

HEDRICK

It's a go.

INT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR

- DAY

Agent by the front entrance nods, takes mirror out of his backpack and sets in so the beam of sunlight shining through the front entrance hits it just so.

Sunlight bounces off first mirror and hits second mirror, deflects off mirror, hits glass ceiling, goes to third mirror, which deflects it up to glass ceiling and onto next mirror...

INT. TRANSCENDENT AND GRAND IMPERIAL CASTLE OF GRANDEUR - CONTINUOUS

Beam of reflected sunlight makes it down to first mirror in the subterranean tunnel, then onto next one and the next one and then onto one standing by Curalis, which is pointed downwards toward the Mother of all vampires.

The BEAM OF LIGHT hits the monster in its heart. The freak of nature ROARS, SCREAMS IN PAIN. It gropes in the darkness with impossibly long and powerful arms, trying to throttle the source of the searing pain. The light of day reduces the Vampire Spawn to a pile of white dust.

The human-vampire hybrids around the destroyed Queen suddenly look around as if waking from a long, really convincing dream.

Hedrick turns around and looks at the three agents who just filed in behind him.

HEDRICK

Have your weapons and crucifixes ready. Let's see what kind of evidence we can find linking the vampire kings to this underground city.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF CLOSED DOWN BROTHEL - DAY

Curalis and several others (mixed ages) work to convert brothel into combination orphanage and shelter for the homeless. Curalis scrapes old lime green paint off wall facing the street.

Hedrick pulls up in hovercraft, parks vehicle, gets out. Curalis waves with right hand, keeps scraping with left one.

HEDRICK

My friend, Domatrian and Krinel have escaped. After they learned what happened to the Queen of Darkness, they got the hell of town as fast as possible.

CURALIS

Any idea where they fled to?

HEDRICK

We have a few ideas but nothing concrete to say which one, if any, of them are right. I've got a team of people working on it.

CURALIS

The main thing is the wrongly convicted women are free and the city is free from the vampires' rule.

Hedrick grimaces as he looks up at row of windows on the second story.

HEDRICK

Sweet Zoran, I remember being up in that room with a really enthusiastic, much older woman. That was many, many POATS ago, just after I graduated from college,

CURALIS

I have nothing against brothels in general but this one was shut down by the vice squad last lunar cycle.

(MORE)

CURALIS (CONT'D)

They had too many under-age clients and at least three of the women had untreated venereal disease.

HEDRICK

Yeah, they had no choice.

A young man (22) emerges from the building carrying an ancient, rusty bed frame. A woman (29) follows right behind lugging three outdated computers and a dying houseplant.

HEDRICK (CONT'D)

Are you going return to the throne like ninety-five percent of the country wants you to?

CURALIS

No, I have a lot I can accomplish but not if I'm caught up in government red tape.

He continues to peel off more ugly green paint.

HEDRICK

Besides creating more housing for the homeless and orphans, what else do you hope to get done?

CURALIS

Zero percent crime rate in Grandeur, then expand that to the territory, country and eventually the entire planet.

Hedrick breaks out laughing, shakes his head with cynical amusement.

HEDRICK

Nothing like thinking big, I guess.

CURALIS

We're all spiritually connected, one body. A lot of folks have forgotten that. I'm going to remind of them of their true nature, that we're all on the same miraculous, complex, vast, diverse team.

HEDRICK

Sounds good in theory. If you can pull it off, you are truly a miracle worker.

FADE TO BLACK

(CONT'D)

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