

OCTOBER 3rd

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FADE IN:

EXT. OUTER SPACE

The Milky Way -- the solar system -- the Earth -- Hawaii.

NARRATOR

In the third great age of the universe, in the second galactic eon of the Milky Way, in the Earth year 2013, the 22nd day of September, begins a perfectly normal day. Well, kind of normal.

EXT. HAWAII - MAUNA KEA OBSERVATORIES - SUNSET

SUPER: Mauna Kea Observatories, Hawaii - September 22

PAMELA BERGSEN, 40s, drives fast past a giant radio telescope dish. She stops and rushes out of the Jeep.

INT. RADIO TELESCOPE CONTROL ROOM - EVENING

A GOLDEN RETRIEVER bounds up to Pamela and snaps at a DVD in her hand.

PAMELA

No Kepler! This is not for you.

KYLE, a bright intern, 20s, headphones on, works with technical equipment.

Pamela removes Kyle's headphones and sticks a DVD in his face.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Software, your highness.

Kyle inserts the DVD into the computer.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

We've scheduled this observation for more than a year, so why did I have to miss my dinner to run pick up this software at the last minute?

ROGER WEISENKOPF, 40s, approaches.

ROGER

Because my friend, Professor Nakamura, has found a way to filter out more of the background noise.

The two men adjust the equipment. The phone RINGS.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(to Pamela)

Get that would you?

Pamela checks the caller ID and grabs the phone.

PAMELA

Hi, Sweetie, this is Pam. Let me ask him.

(to Roger)

Dr. Weisenkopf, it's Elita. She wants to know if you'll be home in time to read her a bedtime story.

Roger remains focused on his work.

ROGER

Tell her Daddy loves her but he's really, really busy right now.

PAMELA

Sweetie, I'm afraid your Daddy won't make it on time. But he promised he'll make it up to you by bringing you an expensive present.

Roger shoots her a dirty look.

KYLE

Professor, I'm picking up the signal.

ROGER

Put it on speaker.

Kyle flips a switch and the radio HISSES. A SONIC WAVE pulses on his computer screen.

ROGER (CONT'D)

There it is, that rhythmic hiss from the cosmic background noise. Let's try Professor Nakamura's filter.

Kyle clicks a button on his computer. The hiss disappears, replaced by a STRANGE SET OF TONES. The graph onscreen becomes more rhythmic.

PAMELA

What's that? Galactic phone calls?

KYLE

Maybe we're picking up a signal from here on Earth, some sort of interference.

ROGER

I don't think so.

Roger twiddles knobs. The set of tones remains.

ROGER (CONT'D)

What the--?

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

The software should take care of everything in the original background hiss but somehow this signal is left over.

KYLE

Look. The signal we're hearing is being picked up by the Solaris III satellite. It's pointed away from earth. And here it is again, this time from the Arecibo dish in Puerto Rico. And here it is again from--

ROGER

My God, it's everywhere.

EXT. RADIO TELESCOPE DISH - NIGHT

In the night sky a star blinks. It moves closer revealing that it's a UFO.

INT. SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Two green, big-eyed ALIENS work on exotic equipment.

One of them wears a pair of crystal headphones. He flips a switch and the same STRANGE TONES come out of a speaker.

The aliens speak in their own Alien dialect, subtitled in English.

ALIEN 1

Listen to this.

The two aliens exchange a glance.

ALIEN 1 (CONT'D)

It seems to be a signal embedded in the background hiss.

ALIEN 2

Impossible. It's probably just another one of those stupid radio signals from Earth. Their primitive equipment generates half the radio noise in the galaxy.

Alien One slides over to another equipment.

ALIEN 1

This sounds different. They're not talking about how to lose weight or make a million dollars without lifting a finger.

ALIEN 2

Then it can't be from Earth.

Alien One's whole body turns pink.

ALIEN 2 (CONT'D)
 Sooonz, you're turning pink again.

ALIEN
 I can't help it. Finally something
 exciting happening around here.

INT. RADIO TELESCOPE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Pamela and Kyle isolate the sound waves on a computer.

Behind them, Roger hangs up his phone.

ROGER
 You're not going to believe this.

The signal plays clearer and louder on the computer.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 Doctor Nkrume has analyzed the signal
 and says it's some kind of coded
 message. There's nothing random or
 natural about it.

PAMELA
 A code? From where?

ROGER
 That's the thing - it seems to be
 coming from everywhere.

KYLE
 Maybe you weren't joking about the
 galactic phone calls.

PAMELA
 I hope it's not collect.

INT. ERIC WEISENKOPF'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: San Francisco

ERIC WEISENKOPF, 30s, lies in bed. He answers the phone.

ERIC
 What? Whoa, slow down, Roger. It's
 a what?

INTERCUT

INT. RADIO TELESCOPE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Roger, now alone, talks on the phone.

ROGER

It's a message from space and right now only I know what it says. This could be an exclusive for you.

ERIC

It's four in the morning. I'm going back to bed.

ROGER

You're a journalist for God's sake. This could be your big break.

A WOMAN, 20s, rolls over in bed. Eric puts his hand on her butt.

ERIC

That's fascinating but I've got my hands kind of full right now.

ROGER

What could be more important than getting back in the game?

ERIC

What game? I work for the San Mateo Shopping News. This is a bit out of my league, don't you think?

ROGER

If you break this story, you could write your own ticket at CNN.

ERIC

I really appreciate you thinking of me, but I'm going back to bed now.

Eric hangs up and turns the woman over.

ERIC (CONT'D)

So is it Cathy with a C or a K?

Roger slams down the phone.

INT. KNSF NEWS BROADCAST STUDIO - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco - September 23

TV news anchor, MICHELLE WASHINGTON, African-American, 30's, sits at the anchor desk.

News producer, JACK KLINGER, 50's, disheveled and overworked, barges onto the set.

JACK

(to Michelle)

We've got this as an exclusive, but it's not all typed out yet.

MICHELLE

That's fine. I'll handle it.

JACK

The general idea is something about a radio signal from outer space.

COORDINATOR

On the air in five, four, three--

The coordinator holds up two fingers, then one, then points at Michelle.

MICHELLE

Good morning America. This is Michelle Washington of KNSF Live with important breaking news.

Her eyes widen as she reads the news on the teleprompter.

INT. GOSPEL BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

SUPER: DeKalb County, Georgia

BEULAH WASHINGTON, 60s, a heavyset African-American woman, sings during choir practice.

ANOTHER African-American WOMAN runs in.

BLACK WOMAN

Beulah, your daughter's on TV for a special broadcast.

Beulah looks up at the crucifix mounted on the wall.

BEULAH

Sorry, Lord, I can't miss that.

She runs out from the choir into the break room. The other babbling WOMEN follow.

GROUP OF WOMEN

Do ya think it's important?

BLACK WOMAN

Has to be if Michelle's on TV in day-time.

Beulah turns on an old black and white television.

BEULAH

Shush, you'all.

ON TV

Michelle reports from the anchor desk.

MICHELLE

Radio astronomers today in major locations around the world have intercepted a coded radio signal coming from outer space. The code actually came with instructions explaining how to decode it--

INT. SAN MATEO SHOPPING NEWS OFFICE - DAY

Eric sits in his dingy little office, watching Michelle on a color screen.

ERIC

I'm an idiot.

T.V. - NEWS PROGRAM

MICHELLE

Astronomers from the Mauna Kea Observatories in Hawaii have already been able to translate part of the message and--

Michelle looks at the teleprompter with confusion.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

The message says that--

She glances away from the teleprompter. Jack signals her to continue.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

The message says that God or perhaps something very much like a god will be coming to Earth on October third.

The studio goes silent.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

That's just ten days from now, so we all might want to sneak in a few more good deeds this week, just in case. This is Michelle Washington, KNSF Live.

COORDINATOR

OK, off the air.

MICHELLE

Formerly from KNSF News.

She throws her papers on the counter.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?

(MORE)

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I didn't work my ass off for ten years to read some stupid lies like that on air. Live. On a national feed, with my face on camera.

She storms away from the desk showing the Nike sports pants and sneakers she's wearing under a stylish jacket.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

Who's supposed to believe that not only is there a God, but he phoned ahead that he's coming to Earth?

She heads to the exit.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what's going to happen in ten days - the whole KNSF News team will be working at Speedy Wash.

INT. GOSPEL CHURCH BREAK ROOM - DAY

The choir's members burst into cheerful applause.

A WOMAN

Oh my Lord, God is coming to see us.

ANOTHER WOMAN

It's about time.

Beulah wipes a tear from her eye.

BEULAH

And my daughter is the one who announced it. Thank you, Jesus, she's coming back into the fold.

ANOTHER WOMAN

What are we going to do?

BEULAH

I don't know about you, but I'm going to need a new hat.

MONTAGE - AROUND THE WORLD

NEWS ANCHORS of different races and nationalities deliver the news.

FRANCE

Dieu vient nous rendre visite.

VENEZUELA

En exactamente diez dias.

GERMANY

Am drei. Oktober.

Various giant radio telescope dishes move to point to a new location.

INT. ROGER WEISENKOPF'S HOME - DAY

SUPER: Hawaii

Roger turns the TV off.

Elita, a ten-year-old girl going on 30, runs into the room.

ELITA

Daddy, did you see it? They mentioned your telescope.

ROGER

Come here, honey. It's only TV.

Elita sits on her dad's lap.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I couldn't be here last night. It was a wild day.

ELITA

I'm ten years old now. Don't you think I know a little bit about what's going on in the world?

She puts her hand in her dad's hair to give it a bit of style.

ELITA (CONT'D)

God's coming and he doesn't do that very often.

ROGER

We don't really know that God is coming.

ELITA

But it's all over TV and the Internet.

ROGER

There must be some other explanation. Something a little more rational.

ELITA

Maybe he's bringing news from Mommy.

ROGER

Mommy?

ELITA

You said she was in heaven with God.

ROGER
Yes I did. But--

ELITA
Great, then I can ask him how Mommy's doing.

ROGER
Honey, different people think of God in different ways. Some people think of him as a real person or a being who rules the universe. Other people think of him as a kind of beautiful idea.

ELITA
I think of him as a real person. You don't think Mommy is just with an idea. Do you?

ROGER
I'm not saying that. I'm just trying to say that on October third, I don't want you to be disappointed.

Elita jumps off her dad's lap.

ELITA
I won't. I'll be there.

EXT. KNSF BUILDING - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco - September 24

Michelle exits the building. Jack rushes after her.

JACK
Michelle!

She stops to face him.

MICHELLE
This kind of blatant sensationalism is not why I got into the industry.

JACK
There's a difference between sensationalism and sensational. People are eating this stuff up. We're not backing off now.

He hands her a CHART.

JACK (CONT'D)
Have you seen the ratings? These numbers are off the charts.

MICHELLE

I'll give you a number. There's zero chance that God is coming to Earth on October third. Just think about it.

JACK

We don't care if it's true, everyone is talking about this. We've got quotes from the best scientists in the world. We're covered.

In the street, a CROWD of people holds signs with passion.

INSERT SIGN 1: Make peace with the Almighty.

INSERT SIGN 2: Watch out! "He" is coming.

INSERT SIGN 3: The end is near. I mean it this time.

JACK (CONT'D)

Michelle, we're running with this.

MICHELLE

Running with what? We had an exclusive and broke the story. By now, every journalist in the world is covering it.

JACK

You're the best, you're smart, just do it.

She watches Jack run back inside the building.

MICHELLE

That's what my mom always says.

INT. BEULAH WASHINGTON'S KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: DeKalb County, Georgia

Beulah and some GIRLFRIENDS cook in a large kitchen. Pots steam on an old stove.

FRIEND #1

What are we going to ask God when we see Him?

Beulah looks at the MEN having beers in the backyard.

FRIEND #2

I want to know what heaven is like. I mean, can we still cook together and have a barbecue?

FRIEND #3

You gonna ask God about a barbecue?
Heaven isn't about cookin'.

FRIEND #4

Sure Heaven's about cookin'. Heaven's
about people bein' together.

FRIEND #3

I'm sure that's why God's comin'.
To share some new recipes.

Beulah bangs her ladle to get everyone's attention.

BEULAH

I'm gonna ask God how come He's gone
so much. I raised seven children
and I know you got to be there all
the time to watch over them.

She tastes the beans.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

All the time.

FRIEND #1

But Beulah, your children did well.

FRIEND #4

Except the two who run off to
California.

FRIEND #2

Beulah, those two done great.
Michelle's a famous reporter.

BEULAH

Smart as a whip that girl. But she
ain't right with the Lord.

FRIEND #3

And Uhuru, he's famous too--

Beulah's face darkens. She goes back to stirring the beans.

FRIEND #3 (CONT'D)

I saw a whole article about him in
one of those fashion magazines.

The friends circle around Beulah.

FRIEND #1

The one about the dress that was so
tight the model turned purple and
she couldn't breathe.

FRIEND #4

That was a sight.

They all laugh. Except Beulah.

FRIEND #2

(to Beulah)

You should ask him to make a new dress for you. Special for October third.

BEULAH

Enough talk about Uhuru. He don't even use the name his Daddy and I gave him.

She throws the ladle into the sink.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

And I sure didn't raise my boy to design no dresses.

Beulah exits the kitchen with the pot of beans. The girlfriends exchange looks.

FRIEND #3

Some things even God can't change.

INT. MICHELLE WASHINGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco - September 25

Michelle and her TEAM watch a wall of TV screens, each tuned to a different world broadcast: NEWS ANCHORS of different nationalities, religious scenes, and chaotic street scenes.

Michelle pushes the mute button.

MICHELLE

Whether or not God is coming, the world has bought the story. We need to get a unique angle to get in front of it. I mean now.

TEAM MEMBER

Our best bet is to interview the astronomer who first got his hands on the code.

Michelle's assistant, KERRIE, 20s, yells from the other side of the room.

KERRIE

Doctor Roger Weisenkopf on Skype, now.

Michelle pushes the unmute button. Roger's face appears on the screen.

MICHELLE

Dr. Weisenkopf, Michelle Washington.
Thank you for taking my call.

ROGER

I saw your broadcast. What do you
want from me?

MICHELLE

I need facts from someone people
will believe.

ROGER

Ms. Washington, half the radio
telescopes on Earth picked up that
same signal. My name is associated
with it because I'm unlucky. As a
scientist, it makes no sense. The
last thing I need right now is more
publicity.

Elita enters Roger's office and appears on the screen with a
huge smile.

ROGER (CONT'D)

(to Michelle)

Sorry, I can't help you.

MICHELLE

You're funded by the American
government. I don't think they'll
appreciate your lack of cooperation
at such a crucial moment. Talk to
me, Roger.

Roger protects Elita from the camera.

ROGER

This is all happening too fast.

MICHELLE

I can come to see you and get some
good shots of the equipment you used
to make the discovery, what do you
say?

INT. RADIO TELESCOPE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

SUPER: Hawaii

Michelle and Kerrie enter and drop their travel bags on the
floor.

ROGER

(to Michelle)

You look different in person.

MICHELLE

This is Kerrie, my assistant and my friend when things get rough.

KERRIE

Pleasure to be here.

MICHELLE

She has a science degree. I don't. So I'll start with a few dumb questions if it's OK.

Michelle walks around the control room.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Are these the instruments you used that night?

Roger nods. Kerrie starts taking photos of the equipment.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

So what happened that night? Take me through it step-by-step.

Roger sits at the control panel.

ROGER

We were planning to use the radio telescope to listen for natural radio emissions from nearby galaxies.

MICHELLE

How did we get from there to a message from God?

Roger flips a switch. We hear the coded signal.

ROGER

When we used a new software filter to get rid of the normal cosmic background hiss, it should have erased the entire sound. This time, a clear signal remained.

MICHELLE

Keep going.

ROGER

Look at this. I'm using Nakamura's software and playing back a twenty year-old signal recorded from the Voyager spacecraft. The same signal was already there.

Roger faces Michelle.

ROGER (CONT'D)

It has to have originated with the Big Bang.

KERRIE

It all sounds a little spooky.

ROGER

Spooky doesn't begin to describe it. The signal contains an ingeniously encoded message. The first part was unimaginably easy to decode. You know its content.

MICHELLE

Could the message have come from Earth? Or could it be a hoax?

ROGER

The same message has been confirmed by radio telescopes all over the world. And from the Hubble telescope in orbit.

MICHELLE

OK, so the message seems real. But how could it have been sent from the beginning of time?

She gets a weird look from Roger.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

God?

A cell phone RINGS and Kerrie picks it up.

ROGER

I don't believe in God.

MICHELLE

Who else was there at the beginning of the universe? I've got millions of viewers at 6pm. You got a second name?

KERRIE

Michelle!

MICHELLE

Not now, Kerrie.

KERRIE

Yeah now. It's the White House. The president is not going to have a press conference.

Michelle gives her full attention.

KERRIE (CONT'D)

You're not going to believe it.
He's handling it through you instead
and expects you in D.C. tomorrow
morning.

ROGER

Looks like you're getting your big
break.

Michelle grabs her bag.

MICHELLE

Thank you for your time. I owe you,
if there's anything I can do.

Roger walks them to the door.

ROGER

Actually, there is one thing. My
brother, Eric, graduated with you in
journalism.

MICHELLE

Really, what's he doing now?

ROGER

He could use a break too.

Michelle hesitates, then takes out a business card and writes
on the back.

MICHELLE

This is my personal number. Get him
involved with this. When he's got
something big enough, have him call
me and he's on the team.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: White House - September 26

Michelle and the PRESIDENT shake hands.

PRESIDENT

How are you Ms. Washington? Or should
I say Michelle after all this time?

MICHELLE

I'm honored you've chosen me, Mr.
President.

PRESIDENT

You're one of those rare non-biased
journalists who never tried to twist
or take advantage of anything I said.
You know how it goes with news media
and Dobermans.

They exchange a smile.

MICHELLE

I know we have very limited time, Mr. President. May I ask you the most important question?

PRESIDENT

You never hesitated before.

MICHELLE

Mr. President, do you believe that God is coming on October third?

The President points to the grim MILITARY MAN standing in full dress uniform, with a briefcase chained to his wrist.

PRESIDENT

Chuckles here stands ten feet from me twenty-four hours a day with the 'go code'- wanting to know if I'd be interested in a nuclear exchange. And then--

The President opens a door.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Behind door number one there is a very angry Chinese ambassador wanting to know which countries will and will not be included in God's parade on October third.

Michelle joins the president as he opens a second door. A GROUP OF ALIENS of different races, babble together.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Behind door number two is a group of visitors you haven't even dreamed of, demanding to know why God is coming to Earth, of all places, and how I'm going to accommodate them.

MICHELLE

You don't suppose I could get an interview with one of those--

PRESIDENT

Their existence is classified, of course. Michelle, I'm up for reelection next year. If I ignore October third and God shows up, I'll be the president who ignored a message from God. If I go with a practical sense of doubt, but open to the possibility, then I'll be OK either way.

He puts his hand on her shoulder.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I want to prepare for a globally significant event on October third. That's not something I can do with a press conference full of screaming reporters and instant news analysis of what I said and did not say. I need you to help me communicate it to the world, offending or frightening as few people as possible. Yes?

MICHELLE

Yes, Mr. President.

EXT. KONA AIRPORT - DAY

SUPER: Hawaii

Eric exits the airport terminal as Roger pulls up in a Jeep. Roger motions to the back of the Jeep.

ERIC

I had a great flight. Thanks for asking.

Eric throws his bag in the back of the Jeep and gets in. They pull away from the curb.

INT. JEEP - DAY

ERIC

I dropped everything. Why am I here?

ROGER

Everything? You mean the San Mateo Shopping News, everything?

ERIC

Don't start.

ROGER

Remember Michelle Washington?

ERIC

The news anchor?

ROGER

And the girl you were in love with throughout college, though you never even had the guts to ask her out.

ERIC

Dad wouldn't have approved of her. She was black.

ROGER

She still is. I saw her yesterday.

ERIC

You did?

Roger sticks her business card in Eric's hand.

ROGER

That's her personal phone number.
She's expecting your call.

ERIC

You've been stargazing for too long.
She doesn't even know I exist.

ROGER

Now she does. For once in your life,
go for it.

Eric puts the card in his pocket.

ROGER (CONT'D)

There's an open position on her team
for someone with an exclusive on the
God story. That's your break.

Roger drives through an unpaved steep road.

ERIC

You don't believe in that crap any
more than I do.

ROGER

That's irrelevant. It's a media God
rush. You're a good journalist and
it's time to prove it.

ERIC

Where am I going to find a world-
class story like that?

ROGER

Right here. That's why I asked you
to come.

Roger hits the gas.

EXT. ROGER HOME - DAY

Elita jumps rope in the yard. Roger's Jeep pulls into the
driveway and she runs towards Eric.

ELITA

Uncle Eric.

She jumps into his arms.

ERIC
Hey my favorite niece.

ELITA
Of course I'm your favorite niece.
I'm the only one you have.

ERIC
You're so tall. Has your dad been
feeding you giraffe food?

ELITA
Can you take me to the beach?

ROGER
Maybe later. Right now we have some
work to do.

ELITA
You always have work to do.

Eric kisses her on the cheek and whispers in her ear.

ERIC
I promise we'll have some fun.

INT. ROGER'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Roger walks in and plops into his desk chair.

ROGER
I haven't slept well since the story
broke. I spent most of last night
looking at the message again, hoping
to be able to decode the second part.
But I couldn't. It's encrypted
differently.

ERIC
You expect too much of yourself.

Roger hands him a piece of paper filled with codes.

ROGER
Maybe a fresh eye from the outside
can figure it out better than I can.
Wanna give it a shot?

ERIC
Me?

ROGER
Why not? You always beat me at
Scrabble, Jeopardy and crossword
puzzles.

Eric looks at the paper.

ERIC

For God's sake, what language is that? Can you give me a clue?

ROGER

At least you admit to being clueless.

Roger grabs the paper back.

ROGER (CONT'D)

The first part of the message is here. These groups begin and end the first part, The times between the tones showed us how to translate them into binary numbers, which represent times and our location within the galaxy. It's precise enough to locate us here on earth and to denote October third.

He turns on an audio recording. Eric tries to follow.

ROGER (CONT'D)

This is the audio recording of it. Then, these two tones indicate an additional set of numbers. Only two long numbers, but we can't figure out what they mean.

He stands.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Try to make sense of it as if your career depended on it, because it does.

Roger walks to the door.

ROGER (CONT'D)

If you need me, I'll be taking my daughter to the beach.

Roger locks the door being him.

ERIC

Hey, you can't leave me here. I understand nothing of that mystical puzzle.

MONTAGE

Eric listens to the radio message over and over. He makes circles around the room. He shuffles pages of papers.

EXT. ROGER HOME - SUNSET

The Jeep pulls into the driveway.

INT. ROGER'S HOME OFFICE - SUNSET

Eric lies sleeping on the keyboard. Roger enters and wakes him up.

ERIC
Damn, I fell asleep.

Roger looks at the pile of notes on the desk.

ROGER
You've been putting in some effort.
Come up with anything?

Eric looks for one particular piece of paper.

ERIC
Are you ready for this? I think the
second part of the message is telling
us the location where God will be
coming.

ROGER
Should I get excited?

ERIC
Look at this. The two long numbers
translate into geographic coordinates
here on Earth. They're accurate
down to just a few feet.

ROGER
So tell me.

ERIC
Where's the last place you would
expect God to visit on earth?

ROGER
God's coming to San Francisco?

Eric unfolds a Muni map of San Francisco.

ERIC
Not only is He coming to San
Francisco, He's coming specifically
to Candlestick Park.

ROGER
I wonder if you should call Michelle
or release this through the Shopping
News?

Eric looks horrified.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Just kidding.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - NIGHT

SUPER: San Francisco - September 27

Michelle walks with JASON, an expensively dressed African-American, 30s.

JASON

All my life I wanted to be a professor and now I'd sell my soul just for a larger office.

MICHELLE

I don't even remember what my office looks like. My interns seem to enjoy it while I'm traveling.

They reach Michelle's apartment building.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

The dinner was great Jason. I really needed to take a break from all of the craziness.

JASON

Then I hope it's not the end of the evening.

She types the code to open the door.

MICHELLE

I still have lots to do. Maybe another night?

JASON

Michelle, we've been dating for three months. We seem to click but you never quite let me in.

MICHELLE

You know how much I like you. I just can't manage a relationship right now.

JASON

That's right, you're too busy with God.

MICHELLE

This is the biggest story of my career. I can't blow it.

JASON

Isn't it time you invite someone in?

She pushes the door.

MICHELLE
Give me a little time.

Michelle disappears into the building.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The modern decor has an empty feeling to it. It's purely functional. A giant stack of mail and empty shelves.

Michelle drops her jacket and pushes the switch on the answering machine.

MESSAGE ONE

(female voice)

Michelle, it's me. I can't believe you're canceling again. My kids are mad at you, too. I hope it's because you've got a hot date. That clock's tickin' girl. Later.

BEULAH (V.O.)

It's your mama. Can you believe the Lord is comin'? I'm so happy. Call me.

Michelle can't help a smile.

ERIC (V.O.)

Ms. Washington, this is Eric Weisenkopf. My brother Roger said to call you when I have an exclusive on something really hot. Well, I do.

Michelle stops what she's doing.

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

I'm in Hawaii heading back to San Francisco this evening. Call me on this number as soon as you get this message.

MESSAGE FOUR

Hello Michelle--

Michelle cuts it off and looks at the clock. It's 9 pm. She grabs the phone and dials the number.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - NIGHT

Eric stands in line, waiting for a cab. His cell phone RINGS and he answers it.

ERIC

This is Eric.

INTERCUT

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

MICHELLE

Eric, this is your old friend,
Michelle Washington. You called me
about an exclusive?

ERIC

That's right, "old friend." It's
exclusive and it's as hot as it gets.
Roger tells me that it'll buy me a
spot on your team.

MICHELLE

I'll be the judge of that. Spill
it.

ERIC

How do I know I can trust you?

MICHELLE

OK, call me when you do.

She hangs up.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - NIGHT

Hearing the dial tone, Eric is astonished.

ERIC

She hasn't changed.

He looks for Michelle's number, then pauses.

A taxi stops in front of him. He gets in.

INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Michelle looks at the phone and makes a gesture of prayer.

MICHELLE

Come to Mama. Never beg for a story
and never give'em the upper hand.

The phone RINGS. She leaps for it.

INTERCUT

INT. BEULAH'S HOME - NIGHT

Several photo frames of Beulah with her seven children stands
out from the Lime Peacocks And Vines Wallpaper.

BEULAH

Hi, Honey. It's Mama and I got some
good news. I bought me a ticket to
San Francisco.

MICHELLE

Hi, Mama, when's your flight coming in?

BEULAH

Flight? I ain't gettin' on no plane. I rode the bus all my life.

Michelle sees Eric's number appear on the caller ID.

MICHELLE

I know Mama, but you got me at a bad moment. I'm waiting for a really important call.

BEULAH

This is a really important call. I'm tellin' you I'm comin' to visit.

Beulah clears her throat.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

But I'm stoppin' in Los Angeles to visit your brother first.

MICHELLE

You're finally going to see Brandon?

BEULAH

What Brandon? I'm going to see Uhuru. He's my son and he needs to make some changes. God's comin'.

MICHELLE

Mama, Brandon is a grown man and a successful fashion designer. He's not going to change.

BEULAH

Honey, everyone can change.

MICHELLE

Actually, I'm waiting for someone to call me back on that story about God.

BEULAH

If it's about God, I'm happy to wait. Call me tomorrow.

MICHELLE

I will. Good night Mama.

Michelle hangs up, paces for a few seconds, and hits the redial button.

INTERCUT

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Eric's CELLPHONE RINGS. He grabs it a little too fast.

MICHELLE

Fair enough. You've got a job. But it better be damn good or you won't have a job. Where are you now?

ERIC

I'm in a cab on my way home.

MICHELLE

No you're not. You're on your way to my office at KNSF downtown.

She hangs up. Eric stares at the phone.

ERIC

It's nice working with you, too.

EXT. KNSF NEWS BUILDING - NIGHT

Michelle parks her BMW. As she gets out of the car, a cab pulls up next to her.

Eric exits the cab.

MICHELLE

Eric Weisenkopf, you're late.

INT. MICHELLE'S OFFICE - KNSF NEWS - NIGHT

Eric and Michelle come in the door.

MICHELLE

The Ballpark. Sports and religion. That's exactly what I need, Eric. We'll do this as a breaking news bulletin, before someone gets wind of it.

Eric looks pleased for a second.

Michelle grabs the phone on her desk and hits a button.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Set up right now for a breaking bulletin. We're on our way down.

She hangs up.

ERIC

A live bulletin? Dressed like this?

MICHELLE

What do you mean dressed like that?
You're sure not going on camera.

ERIC

But it's my story. I thought I had
a spot on the team.

MICHELLE

Just because you came by the
information first doesn't make you
the anchor. I've never even seen
you on camera, and judging from your
technique on the phone, you could
use some work. Let's get going.

INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - NIGHT

Michelle sits on a live set looking at the camera.

MICHELLE

Scientifically, it seems impossible,
yet we're now sure that the message
is authentic. It's astounding and
leave us with only one answer.

Backstage, Eric watches her.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

As of today, we now know that God is
coming to San Francisco on October
third. And we have to ask ourselves,
are we ready? And for what?

Jack signals the CAMERAMAN to get ready to cut.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

This is Michelle Washington, KNSF
Live. Stay right here for exclusive
coverage on a story that is truly
bigger than all of us. Good night.

COORDINATOR

Cut!

Michelle unplugs her microphone. She leaves the set followed
by her crew.

MICHELLE

Now we're on top.

Eric remains behind on his own.

INT. ROGER WEISENKOPF'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: Hawaii

Elita and her dad watch TV while having dinner. Kepler the dog lies on Elita's feet.

ELITA

Cool! God's coming where Uncle Eric lives. Daddy, we got to go visit. It'd be great.

ROGER

Sweetie, we can't go to San Francisco in the middle of all this.

ELITA

Why not?

ROGER

It will be crowded and miserable with all those people. And Uncle Eric will be busy covering the news.

ELITA

But dad, this only happens once. And we can ask God about Mommy.

ROGER

We can pray to God and ask about Mommy from here. God hears us in Hawaii too.

ELITA

But it's not the same.

Roger leaves the room with his plate.

ROGER

It will just have to do.

ELITA

(To the dog)

It's not fair. I want to go to San Francisco.

Kepler wags his tail and gives her a big lick.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

SUPER: DeKalb County Georgia - September 28

At the ticket counter PEOPLE push and shove to buy tickets.

TICKET AGENT

I just told you we're sold out.

FRANTIC CUSTOMER

I've got to leave today. I'll give you an extra hundred. There must be one ticket left.

TICKET AGENT

Everyone listen. There are no more tickets to San Francisco. Half the planet wants to get there so we're completely sold out.

A few feet away, some lucky PEOPLE board the bus, protected by a wall of SECURITY GUARDS.

Beulah stands with one small bag at her feet, surrounded by her excited girlfriends.

FRIEND #1

I can't believe you bought that ticket before the news broke.

FRIEND #2

God gave you that ticket because He wanted you to come and see Him.

Friend Three gives her a poorly wrapped basket.

FRIEND #3

We made you this chicken so you don't starve during the long trip.

BEULAH

Thank you, Hattie. I never thought I'd live to see such a day.

FRIEND #4

To God be the glory for the things that He has done.

Friend Two gives Beulah a thick envelope.

FRIEND #2

And if you get to talk to God, these are our best wishes, our thanks and all of our prayers and questions.

FRIEND #3

This is so exciting, did you take your camera?

Beulah weighs the thick envelope.

BEULAH

I guess God can handle anything.

The BUS DRIVER leans out.

BUS DRIVER

OK ladies, leaving for Los Angeles.

Beulah looks at her girlfriends.

BEULAH

You are all in my prayers. God bless you.

The friends hug. Beulah climbs inside the bus.

The bus pulls away as the four girlfriends SING a gospel song.

INT. ROGER WEISENKOPF'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: Hawaii

Elita sits at her dad's desk and opens Facetime on her iPad. She dials a number.

ERIC

Hi Elita.

ELITA

Hi Uncle, Eric. Can I come visit you so I can meet God?

ERIC

Honey you'll have to talk to your dad.

ELITA

I won't be any trouble at all. I'm sorry about last time when I broke your DVD player.

ERIC

The problem is that I'm leaving on business tonight.

ELITA

No problem. You can leave the key under the mat.

ERIC

You know you're always welcome here, but this is the kind of thing I'd need to discuss with your dad. Sorry, Elita. You're a first-class kid.

Elita hangs up and looks at the computer screen.

ELITA

First class--

She clicks on the screen. A travel Web site opens.

INT. POLICE STATION - CELL - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco - 6th Precinct - September 29

MAX, a charming man in his 30s, sits in a holding cell.

Next to him sits a big and scruffy BIKER, 50s.

BIKER

(to Max)

Hey pansy, get away from the bench.
I'm gonna sleep and I don't want to
smell your perfume.

Max steps away.

BIKER (CONT'D)

Why are you here anyway? Taking a
survey?

Max ignores him.

BIKER (CONT'D)

We're gonna be here a while so we
might as well get cozy.

MAX

I'm not the social type.

BIKER

Hey pansy, you wanna leave here feet
first? What's your name?

Max hesitates to answer.

MAX

I'm Max.

BIKER

And I'm Jenks Hoffman. So what did
you really do, Max?

MAX

I'm kind of a Robin Hood. I lightened
up some rich people who were carrying
too heavy a load. It was all a
misunderstanding.

BIKER

Yeah, right. I was involved in a
misunderstanding, too. Did you give
the money to the poor?

MAX

I hadn't quite gotten that far when
the police intervened.

BIKER

I'm gonna sleep and don't be waking
me up, Robin Hood.

MAX

Wouldn't dream of it.

The biker rolls over and starts to snore.

A COP walks up in front of the holding cell, reading from his clip-board.

COP #1
Mr. Jeremiah Hoffman, it's your lucky day. The charges are dropped so you're outta here.

Max looks over at the biker, sound asleep, brightens up and turns to the cop.

MAX
I'm so glad to hear that.

He stands up.

MAX (CONT'D)
See, I told them it was all just a misunderstanding.

The cop looks at the biker asleep on the bench.

COP #1
Is he okay?

MAX
Yeah, he doesn't want to be disturbed.

The cop unlocks the door. Max steps out.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Max speed walks for two blocks. He flags down a cab and jumps in.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Max slides into the back seat.

TAXI DRIVER
Where to?

MAX
The airport.

TAXI DRIVER
You don't have any luggage. Business trip?

MAX
No. I had a stressful week and I just need to get away.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

INSPECTOR WONG, 40s, looks at a clipboard.

INSPECTOR WONG
 Max, you let him go? Not again.
 I'm gonna catch him and I'm gonna
 kill him this time.

INT. ROGER WEISENKOPF'S HOME - DAY

SUPER: Hawaii

Roger comes home, exhausted.

ROGER
 Hi, Elita, Daddy's home.

No answer.

ROGER (CONT'D)
 Elita -- Elita?

Roger enters Elita's bedroom and finds a note.

INSERT NOTE:

Dad, I went to San Francisco to see God. I have a return
 flight October fifth. Love, Elita. PS. Don't worry.

CUT TO

COPS take over the living room.

ROGER
 Who the hell would allow an
 unaccompanied ten-year-old girl to
 board a flight? She didn't even
 have a ticket.

COP #1
 She certainly did.

ROGER
 Did what?

COP #2
 Have a ticket.

Cop Two looks at her clipboard.

COP #2 (CONT'D)
 Elita Weisenkopf, unaccompanied minor,
 first class.

ROGER
 First class? She had eight dollars
 in her piggy bank.

COP #2
 It looks like you bought the ticket.

ROGER

Me?

Kepler the dog looks at the scene with a smirk.

COP #2

You bought one ticket online with your credit card for an unaccompanied minor to be met by an adult relative in San Francisco. An Eric Weisenkopf and he shows up in the California DMV with the address given.

Roger has difficulty breathing.

ROGER

This cannot be happening.

COP #1

Kids today, you have to watch out.

COP #2

Is there any reason your daughter would run away?

ROGER

She wanted to meet God. That's all she could talk about.

COP #2

We have to intercept her when she gets off the plane.

COP #1

It's landing even as we speak.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco International Airport

Max rushes into the airport lobby and bumps into JULIAN HARPER, a clumsy Englishman, 50s.

MAX

Sorry.

He helps Julian pick up his things from the floor.

MAX (CONT'D)

Let me help you.

Max takes Julian's wallet, slips out a credit card, and puts the wallet back with agility.

JULIAN

I'm fine. Really.

Julian leaves. Max looks at the credit card. The name on it says "Julian Harper." He walks to the ticket desk.

TICKET AGENT

May I help you?

Max looks up at the departure screen and gives the credit card.

MAX

I'd like a seat on your next flight to Hawaii.

TICKET AGENT

That flight is just arriving now, gate 14. We have seats left in 1st and business class.

MAX

First class will be fine.

TICKET AGENT

Any luggage, Mr. Harper?

MAX

I travel light.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Elita sits in the plane as it taxis. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT approaches.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(to Elita)

Sweetie, who's coming to pick you up?

ELITA

My Uncle Eric.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

That's right. That's written on your pass. Do you know what your Uncle looks like?

ELITA

Of course I know what my uncle looks like. I'm not a child.

INT. AIRPORT GATE - DAY

PASSENGERS deplane. Elita passes in front of the flight attendant. She sees a man seated in the departure lounge, hiding behind a newspaper and yells to him.

ELITA

Uncle Eric!

The man looks up, it's Max, surprised. Elita waves as if they were family. It's too noisy for Max to hear. He waves back.

ELITA (CONT'D)
 (to flight attendant)
 Thanks for everything.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Bye sweetie.

Elita walks through the departure lounge, carrying her backpack.

The CAPTAIN interrupts the flight attendant with a worried look.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
 (to captain)
 Ran away? She said she was being met.

The flight attendant looks over the crowd and points to Elita.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
 Stop that little girl, she's a runaway.

Elita pushes through the crowd passing Max.

ELITA
 Oh-oh --

Max looks over his newspaper and sees two POLICE OFFICERS talking to the gate agent. He looks for a way out.

Elita runs alongside Max, heading in the same direction. The police and airline security are after them.

MAX
 (to Elita)
 Hey kid, you're not coming with me.
 I'm a little busy right now.

ELITA
 I just need some help getting out of here.

MAX
 Yeah, you and me both.

MORE COPS pursue them. They're surrounded.

MAX (CONT'D)
 Damn, I'm trapped.

Elita sees a utility door with an alarm sign. She pushes the bar and pulls the fire button, setting off both alarms.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)
 Ladies and gentlemen, please remain
 calm. This is a security alert.
 Everyone please evacuate the terminal.

PEOPLE panic and rush for the exits.

Max and Elita melt into the crowd.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

A taxi comes to an abrupt stop. The passenger door flies
 open and Eric jumps out, holding his phone to his ear.

ERIC
 (into phone)
 I'm at the terminal now. It's a mob
 scene.

He runs into the terminal, fighting against the tide.

In the chaos, Max and Elita exit the airport unseen.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)
 Please remain calm and proceed in an
 orderly manner to the terminal exits.

Max extends his arms to stop the same taxi Eric used.

MAX
 (to Elita)
 That's it kid. We each go our
 separate ways here.

ELITA
 I need you to help me get to the
 City.

MAX
 I always work by myself. You're a
 clever kid. You'll figure something
 out.

The TAXI DRIVER honks.

ELITA
 Yeah, I figure that if I start
 screaming you won't be getting into
 this cab, partner.

POLICEMEN appear. Max pushes Elita into the cab.

MAX
 OK, OK, get in.

INT. TAXI - DAY

TAXI DRIVER

Where to?

ELITA

221 Baker Street.

Max looks at her puzzled.

ELITA (CONT'D)

I have connections.

The driver accelerates away.

EXT. ERIC'S APARTMENT BUILDING - SUNSET

The taxi arrives at 221 Baker Street. The building is surrounded by police cars.

Elita and Max scrunch down into their seats.

ELITA

Maybe we shouldn't stop here.

MAX

(to driver)

Keep driving.

TAXI DRIVER

Okay, make up your mind.

MAX

Take us to an inexpensive hotel.

ELITA

Take us to the Fairmont. My dad and I stayed there. They have good room service.

MAX

The Fairmont? Mr. Harper is going to be a very unhappy dude.

INT. BUS - MOVING - NIGHT

Beulah sits on the bus next to a shy middle age white MAN.

BEULAH

Cause you see, when my husband died I was left with seven kids. If I hadn't had the Lord, who knows how we would've made it?

(to the man)

You have children?

The man shakes his head, no.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 And now look at me. I'm heading to
 this place where everybody does as
 they please. The hippies, the--

She looks at the man.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 You know--

He looks at her clueless.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 --the homosexuals.

The man rolls his eyes, hiding a smile.

BEULAH (CONT'D)
 What has this world come to? Here
 is a question I must ask God when I
 see Him. Why did He choose San
 Francisco? Of all places.

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

SUPER: San Francisco

Elita sits on a luxurious couch. A KNOCK on the door.

Max exits the bathroom in a robe, drying his hair with a
 towel.

MAX
 Who's there?

Elita acts innocent.

Max looks through the peephole and opens the door for room
 service.

The BELLHOP enters, pushing a cart with silver service.

BELLHOP
 Good evening, Sir, and happy birthday.

Max looks at the fabulous meal. There is enough for ten.

He gives Elita a harsh look, takes the bottle of Champagne
 off the cart and hands it to the bellhop.

MAX
 Take this back and bring us some
 ginger ale.

The bellhop leaves.

MAX (CONT'D)

(to Elita)

Look kid, in the morning you and I
part company. It's one night, I
travel alone and I go my own way.
Clear?

ELITA

Sure, right. Can we eat now?

EXT. KNSF BUILDING - SUNSET

Eric strides to the building. A well-dressed CNN PRODUCER
stops him.

CNN PRODUCER

Eric Weisenkopf?

ERIC

Yes?

CNN PRODUCER

I recognized you from your picture.
I've been waiting for you most of
the afternoon.

ERIC

Am I in some kind of trouble?

CNN PRODUCER

No, not at all.

The man gives him his business card.

CNN PRODUCER (CONT'D)

I'm John Dough from CNN. I've been
dying to meet you, but you don't
seem to answer your e-mails or
voicemails.

Eric looks at the business card.

ERIC

I've been a bit busy.

CNN PRODUCER

Of course, it's getting crazy out
there with this news. That's why
I'm here. I'd love to have you on
my team.

ERIC

Why?

CNN PRODUCER

I have this new show in mind.
Something really good.

(MORE)

CNN PRODUCER (CONT'D)

We need a new face. A new voice.
And you seem like you could be the
perfect guy.

ERIC

You do know that I'm already part of
the KNSF's team? Right? I've got
to go. I really had a tough day and
I'm late.

CNN PRODUCER

Please, keep my card and think about
it.

The producer steps back.

CNN PRODUCER (CONT'D)

Imagine, a great meaningful show on
October 3rd. And you get to present
it.

INT. KNSF NEWS BUILDING - SUNSET

Eric enters the news room.

MICHELLE

You look awful. Are you OK?

ERIC

My niece Elita is missing. She ran
away.

MICHELLE

Ran away?

ERIC

Somehow she got on a flight to come
here. I raced to meet her plane,
but she escaped in all that chaos at
the airport. My brother is going
crazy.

MICHELLE

Dr. Weisenkopf's daughter missing?
That belongs on the morning news.

ERIC

Oh no, this is not some news story.
It's my niece we're talking about.

MICHELLE

And this is the fastest way to get
her back. We'll put her picture on
the morning news and half a million
people in San Francisco will recognize
her face.

Eric looks at Michelle, torn.

ERIC
All right, whatever it takes to find
her.

INT. FAIRMONT HOTEL - SUITE - DAY

SUPER: September 30

Max comes out of the bathroom, showered and dressed.

KMAX
Hey kid, if you're gonna take a shower--

He sees Elita sleeping on the couch. She rests peacefully,
adorable. Max smiles then catches himself.

He grabs the remote control and turns on the TV.

T.V. - NEWS PROGRAM

Split screen: Michelle Washington on one side and Elita's
picture on the other.

MICHELLE
Elita Weisenkopf, ten-year-old
daughter of well known astronomer
Dr. Roger Weisenkopf has been missing
for twenty-four hours.

MAX
Oh Christ!

Elita wakes up during the news cast.

ELITA
That's me.

MICHELLE
(on T.V.)
Elita was last seen leaving the San
Francisco International Airport in a
taxi accompanied by an unidentified
middle-aged Caucasian male.

MAX
Hey, I'm not middle-aged.

Max turns off the TV.

MAX (CONT'D)
I'm trying to keep a low profile
here and I might as well be holed up
with the Lindbergh baby.

ELITA
I'm not a baby.

MAX

That's not the point. Why did you run away anyway?

ELITA

I want to meet God.

MAX

Oh, that's the dumbest thing I ever heard.

ELITA

Why were you running from the airport? Like you had big plans?

MAX

Hey, I've always got a plan and it doesn't include any little girls.

ELITA

I'm not a little girl.

The PHONE RINGS. Max answers.

RECEPTION DESK (V.O.)

Mr. Harper? This is reception. I'm afraid we have a problem. The credit card you checked in with was reported stolen.

MAX

My apologies. I misplaced my card yesterday and reported it stolen. I'll come right down and give you another card.

Max hangs up and looks at Elita.

MAX (CONT'D)

Okay kid, time for us to go.

ELITA

Go where?

MAX

I'm thinking.

ELITA

Maybe you should let me do that.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: White House

Agitated ADVISORS surround the president. They all speak at the same time, interrupting each other.

SYDNEY

Three days. Mr. President, we don't have enough time to set it up.

The president turns to ADVISOR Sydney, 40s.

PRESIDENT

Important point, Sydney, I'll talk to God about it.

AIDE

Mr. President, San Francisco is going to be a zoo.

PRESIDENT

Yes, unlike the orderly stage of world politics.

PERSONAL SECRETARY

The Italian prime minister is on the phone, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Tell him I still have England and Russia on hold.

A large blustery SENATOR with a southern accent pushes his way through the crowd.

SENATOR

Mr. President, I hope this is not going to be some damn California circus with my state being ignored.

An ALIEN interrupts in his Alien dialect, subtitled.

ALIEN

Who cares about that fat man's little state? Our entire planet is being ignored.

SYDNEY

Mr. President, we don't have the proper contingency plans in place.

The president turns to a MILITARY MAN.

PRESIDENT

Major, if Sydney complains one more time, I want you to shoot him.

Sydney makes a pained face. A secretary interrupts.

PERSONAL SECRETARY

Mr. President, Michelle Washington has arrived.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SEPARATE ROOM - DAY

The president enters.

PRESIDENT
Michelle, thank you for coming right
away. You're my savior.

They shake hands.

MICHELLE
It's no problem, Sir.

PRESIDENT
And I think you'll find it's worth
your time. Please have a seat.

They sit.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
Tonight I will announce during my
speech to the world that you,
Michelle, will have exclusive rights
to all of the divine interviews.

Michelle contains her joy.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)
But, your feeds will be shared
simultaneously with all the
international media. No one gets a
broadcast advantage. That's day
one. Day two, they are all on their
own. God willing, I'll be out of
there.

MICHELLE
Okay, but--

PRESIDENT
No buts. That's how it's going to
be.

MICHELLE
Yes, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT
And one more thing, Michelle, on a
more personal note - the First Lady
has asked your brother to design her
outfit for the occasion. I have no
influence with either one of them,
so could you please ask him to design
something reasonable?

INT. BRANDON DIGIORNO CREATIVE STUDIO - DAY

SUPER: Los Angeles

BRANDON DIGIORNO, 30s, a tall, slim, sophisticated African-American grabs one of his DESIGNERS by the collar.

BRANDON
Reasonable? Fool, I ask you for
ideas and you suggest reasonable.

Brandon runs him across the room and throws him out the door.

He turns towards the other terrified DESIGNERS.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Let's hear some ideas, people. I
want to hear about foil. I want to
hear about metal. The First Lady
didn't call me to look like she just
got her outfit at a bargain outlet,
so reasonable is going out the window.

He points to a scared designer, CYRIL, gay, 20s.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Starting with you, Cyril.

CYRIL
I see the First Lady in a beautiful
angelic dress with wings. Metal
wings. I see sequins made of foil, I
see rhinestones, I see--

BRANDON
I see Cyril standing in the
unemployment line. I see Cyril taking
new orders at Burger Biggy.

He points to another designer, ALLOIN, 30s.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Alloin, your turn. Erase this man's
memory and give me something real.

Alloin clears her throat.

ALLOIN
I see the First Lady -- naked.

A long silence in the room.

ALLOIN (CONT'D)
If I had to meet God, I wouldn't
wear anything, because God sees
through everything.

No one dares to react.

ALLOIN (CONT'D)
Doesn't He?

BRANDON

That's just brilliant Alloin.
Brilliant. The First Lady is naked
before God anyway. So she might as
well be naked in front of two billion
people for the most-watched event in
the history of mankind.

Alloin looks relieved.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

The First Lady calls Brandon DiGiorno
and asks for a creation, and I tell
her to go naked. And we charge her
for the idea.

He shouts in Alloin's face.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Why did Brandon DiGiorno ever let
one of his models become a designer?
Please, tell me you didn't quit your
day job.

He points his finger at a third designer, JULIUS, 30s, who
cringes. The phone RINGS.

The young ASSISTANT picks it up.

ASSISTANT

Mr. DiGiorno, it's Amelia on your
private line.

Julius collapses in his chair.

BRANDON

Amelia who?

ASSISTANT

Amelia, your date from last night.
Amelia to whom you sent \$200 worth
of flowers.

BRANDON

Do I look like I have time to talk
to some bimbo? Get rid of her.

He turns to Julius.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Showtime Julius. And don't let me
down.

The phone RINGS again.

ASSISTANT

Mr. DiGiorno, I'm sorry, it's your
private line again.

BRANDON

Private line? It's Grand Central station. You're supposed to keep my private line -- private.

ASSISTANT

It's your mother.

Brandon's face contorts and becomes rigid with stress.

BRANDON

Oh, not here, not now.

ASSISTANT

(on phone)

I'm sorry, ma'am, Mr. DiGiorno --
Yes ma'am.

She gives the phone to Brandon.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

You're going to have to handle this one yourself.

Brandon takes the phone.

BRANDON

Mama, I can't talk to you right now. I'm right in the middle of -- of course I know you're my Mama -- Where are you? I'll call you right back. Where? No--

Beulah pushes the door open, with a SECURITY GUARD trying to hold her back.

BEULAH

Uhuru Washington, I'm your Mama and I came all the way from Georgia to see you and these people think they're gonna keep me waiting outside?

CYRIL

Uhuru Washington?

BRANDON

OK everybody, out, out, out. We'll work on the First Lady's outfit later. Out.

They all run out.

Brandon and Beulah face each other.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Mama, I'm Brandon DiGiorno now. Please don't call me Uhuru.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

It sounds like a hip hop gangster.
I'm the most successful designer in
the country. At least give me that
respect.

BEULAH

Respect? I gave you that name when
I still had to ride in the back of
the bus. Uhuru was good enough for
you then and it's why you have what
you have now. Maybe it's you who
should show a little respect.

BRANDON

Did you bust into my office after
seven years just to criticize me?

BEULAH

I'm on my way to see God. This time
I'm sitting in the front of the bus.
And I stopped by to square things
with my own son the way I ought to.

Beulah looks at the garments hanging all over the room.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

If you can't talk to me now, have
dinner with me tonight. Unless you're
too busy with one of your boyfriends.

BRANDON

My boyfriends? You never give up,
do you Mama?

He wraps his arm around his mother.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I'll have dinner with you if you
leave your judgment at the door.

BEULAH

Alright.

EXT. MODEST MOTEL - NIGHT

A limousine stands in front of Beulah's motel. An elderly
white chauffeur, PATRICK, opens the rear door for her.

Beulah looks inside the limousine.

BEULAH

Uhuru ain't in here?

PATRICK

Who?

BEULAH
I mean Brandon.

PATRICK
Mr. DiGiorno will be meeting you at
the restaurant for dinner, ma'am.
I'm to drive you there and to make
you comfortable.

Beulah gets into the limousine acting like she never saw one before.

INT. LIMOUSINE - MOVING - NIGHT

The chauffeur rolls the barrier window down. Beulah's startled by the noise.

PATRICK
Would you like some Champagne, ma'am?

BEULAH
Oh no, I don't drink.

PATRICK
If there's anything else I can do
for you, please let me know.

He rolls the barrier window up.

Beulah tries to make herself comfortable. She inadvertently pushes buttons with her arm. A mini bar swirls around and ice cubes spill onto her.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The place is exquisite. A MAITRE D' leads Beulah to the table. He pulls out the chair for her to sit.

MAITRE D'
Mr. DiGiorno called. He will be a
few minutes late.

BEULAH
He can't even be here on time for
his own mother.

She looks at all the well-dressed PATRONS then down at her simple cotton dress.

All heads turn toward Brandon, who appears in an eccentric Versace suit, greeted by PATRONS and WAITERS.

Brandon swirls his coat and hands it to the Maitre D'.

BRANDON
Hi Mama. Was the limousine OK?

BEULAH

The driver was nice. I didn't need the bar.

Brandon sits. They both hide behind their menus.

Beulah's eyes open wide.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

What do they mean by a "lazy tail lying on a bed of confit cabbage?"

Brandon looks worried.

BRANDON

Oh you picked the best mama. You might like it.

BEULAH

There's another one, "leg of lamb with a raspberry nipple."

BRANDON

Just a way to make you want to eat it.

BEULAH

Eat it? I ain't eatin' no tails and nipples.

BRANDON

Oh mama, just try something different. The food is wonderful. The chef is very talented.

BEULAH

Talent is God's gift to us. What we do with it is our gift back to God. You use yours to design women's dresses.

BRANDON

That's right, the First Lady called me -- Brandon DiGiorno, not Uhuru -- and asked me to design her outfit when she goes to see God. I'm an artist and the whole world knows it except you.

Other DINERS listen to the heated conversation, pretending not to.

BEULAH

Uhuru, that don't mean nothin'.

BRANDON

What do you mean, it doesn't mean anything. Let me show you.

Brandon stands up and taps his spoon on his glass to get people's attention.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, I just want a moment of your time.

BEULAH
What are you doing? Sit down.

Brandon addresses the whole room.

BRANDON
I've noticed that there are mostly two kinds of people in this world.

People stop eating and listen.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
There are people like me who are born to create, to explore, to try new things and truly express themselves. And--

He turns to Beulah.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
--there are people who hold on to their principles, criticizing people who aren't like them and who don't follow the rules.

He turns toward the patrons.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
You Sir, with your yellow polka dot tie. You've chosen to express yourself.

Brandon turns to the wife.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
And you ma'am, looking at your husband funny, you're going to give it to him as soon as you leave this room.

BEULAH
That's enough Uhuru. Sit down.

BRANDON
You heard my mother. Sit. Don't be loud. Don't disturb people.

He drops his glass on the table and throws his napkin.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I've chosen my side. I know who I am. And that takes talent too.

He kisses Beulah on her cheek.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 Sorry you've wasted your time with
 me, Mama. Have a good trip to San
 Francisco.

He strides away, then turns back to his mom.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 By the way, I'm not gay. But it
 should be OK if I were.

Brandon leaves the restaurant.

The man with the yellow polka dot tie stands and applauds.

MAN WITH TIE
 Well done.

His wife shoots him a look.

EXT. BRANDON'S BUILDING GARAGE - NIGHT

Brandon's Porsche stops in front of the DOORMAN.

DOORMAN
 Good evening, Mr. DiGiorno.

BRANDON
 No it's not.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Brandon pours himself a drink and turns on the TV to hear
 the last few bars of "Hail to the Chief."

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
 (on TV screen)
 And now the President of the United
 States will be addressing the citizens
 of the world.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

The president stands on the podium.

PRESIDENT
 Ladies and gentlemen of the world, I
 speak to you today not just as the
 President of the United States, but
 rather I speak to you humbly as the
 leader of a nation chosen to host
 this unbelievable world event.

The president's staff watches, supportive.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

I must tell you with honesty that I first heard the news of this visit at the same time as the rest of you. When my five-year-old grandson Jeremy asked me "Who is God?" and, "Is he really going to come?" I must tell you what I told him, that none of us really know.

EXT. CHINA - BEIJING STREET - DAY

PEOPLE watch the speech, crowded around a television set in an open air shop.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT

We have consulted with the most reputable experts on our planet. None have been able to discount or discredit the message. As a result, we do expect an extraordinary visit on October third.

INT. GOD'S GOSPEL BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

Beulah's girlfriends and their husbands are locked onto the television set, mesmerized.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT

Because the visitor has announced his intention to come to San Francisco, it is my responsibility to arrange with very little time a fair and adequate reception with the resources of our planet. I have taken the following measures. One, I am sealing all non-public routes to the city of San Francisco.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Aerial view of a highway entering San Francisco showing a massive traffic jam.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT

Two, the event will be staged at Candlestick Park. I have invited approximately ten thousand of the world's political, intellectual, religious and cultural leaders to attend. The remaining seats will be assigned by a global lottery.

EXT. CHAMP ELYSEES, FRANCE - SUN RISE

Thousands of PEOPLE watch the translated speech on a gigantic screen near the Arc de Triomphe.

Their faces reflect a mix of fascination and panic.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT

Three, I am designating Ms. Michelle Washington, a journalist of integrity long known to me, to orchestrate the news coverage of this event.

INT. KNSF BUILDING - NEWS ROOM - NIGHT

The whole crew cheers.

Eric is the only one to notice that Michelle is scared.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

PRESIDENT

This coverage will be made available simultaneously and in real time to all journalists and all countries, without exception. I know that in the end these hasty preparations will be imperfect. I apologize to you all for that. I wish you all well. Thank you and in God we trust.

INT. ROGER WEISENKOPF'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: Hawaii

Roger zips his travel bag. A car HONKS.

PAMELA (O.S.)

Taxi's here.

ROGER

Coming.

Roger bumps into Kepler the dog.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Sorry big boy.

He kneels to pat the dog on the head.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Kepler, you're the only one who doesn't care about October third.

Kepler barks, like he actually cares.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I named you after a brilliant scientist who was convinced that God had made the universe according to a mathematical plan.

Kepler wags his tail, like he understands.

ROGER (CONT'D)

But that's all crap. If there were a God, he wouldn't have taken my wife away, and now my little girl.

Pamela watches from the doorway.

PAMELA

Maybe you should have a little faith for once.

Roger grabs his bag.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

You're lucky they sent you a private jet. Go, find Elita.

Another HONK. Roger runs out.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

(to Kepler)

He'll find what he's lost.

INT. LIMOUSINE - MOVING - NIGHT

SUPER: Los Angeles

Beulah looks out at the city, holding her left-over dinner wrapped in aluminum foil in the shape of a swan.

BEULAH

(to the driver)

After all this time, riding in the back with a white driver again. But it's a lot nicer this time.

PATRICK

Welcome to California.

BEULAH

I don't know what it is, my boy and I still don't know how to talk to each other.

PATRICK

I guess Mr. DiGiorno can be a little insensitive, if you don't mind me saying so.

Beulah nods and listens.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

But he certainly is admired for what he does.

BEULAH

Keep talkin'.

PATRICK

I can remember, ma'am, when your son had that tiny studio in Woodland Hills. Look at how much he's accomplished since then, without cheating or stomping on other people. I have to respect him for that.

BEULAH

I guess I should, too. Tell me, Patrick, you must know where Brandon lives.

PATRICK

Indeed I do ma'am.

The limousine turns around.

INT. BRANDON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Brandon watches TV. Above it, a picture of Beulah.

BRANDON

(to the picture)

Stop staring at me.

He grabs his keys and rushes to the door. Upon opening it, Brandon finds himself face-to-face with his mom.

They freeze.

BEULAH

Since I'm the mother of the best fashion designer in the country, I think I need to take a look at that dress.

BRANDON

You do?

BEULAH

I wanna see it.

INT. BRANDON DIGIORNO'S CREATIVE STUDIO - NIGHT

Brandon and Beulah enter.

BRANDON

I'm glad you're here, Mama. But there's nothing to see yet.

BEULAH

What do you mean nothin'?

BRANDON

The truth is that I have no idea how to design a dress to be in front of God.

BEULAH

You know son, God don't care.

Her face lights up.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

He just wants colors. He wants the world to be happy, cheerful and in peace. Maybe I can give you a little help.

BRANDON

You?

BEULAH

Who do you think dressed you and your siblings when you were a kid? Give me scissors. I'll cut right to the heart of it.

They laugh.

BRANDON

All right. Let's do it.

Brandon grabs bolts of colorful fabrics. They sit around the cutting table.

Beulah feels the material.

BEULAH

That'll do. Nice and soft.

Brandon sketches some designs, absorbed by his drawings.

BEULAH (CONT'D)

Remember the days when you were coming to church with me?

BRANDON

Yeah, the Reverend White was wearing the ugliest sweaters. I wanted to change his look so bad.

BEULAH

Son, I'm taking the bus to San Francisco the day after tomorrow and I bought a ticket for you too.

BRANDON

I appreciate it, but I can't go to San Francisco right now. You can see that I'm not ready.

BEULAH

Can't your fancy assistants handle that?

Brandon chuckles.

BRANDON

I don't think that would be a very good idea.

He realizes that his mom is disappointed.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Let's see how much I can do before then.

BEULAH

Your old mama's tired now.

Brandon walks over to her.

BRANDON

Patrick will take you back so you get some sleep. I'll pick you up for breakfast.

He grabs her and they hug.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

It'll be a lot better than our dinner.

INT. BRANDON'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Inspired, Brandon works on the First Lady's dress, alone.

INT. SMALL SAIL BOAT - NIGHT

SUPER: San Francisco Marina

Elita and Max sleep on bunks, wrapped in blankets.

INT. KNSF NEWS BUILDING - NIGHT

SUPER: KNSF News building

Eric works late, editing tapes.

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - NIGHT

Roger looks through the plane window.

PILOT (V.O.)

Ladies and gentlemen, due to an overcrowding situation at the San Francisco airport, we're going to have to reroute to Los Angeles. I apologize for the inconvenience.

INT. BEULAH'S MOTEL - NIGHT

SUPER: Los Angeles

Beulah sleeps with a smile.

INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY

SUPER: October 1st - San Francisco

Michelle sits on a table. Behind her, a wall of televisions play world newscasts.

KERRIE

(to Michelle)

We're hoping you'll be impressed with our opening sequence. We worked on it most of last night.

She pushes a button and political figures appear on screen.

KERRIE (CONT'D)

We were thinking of presenting presidents from around the world in a debate about God's visit.

Michelle registers the idea. Eric raises his hand. Others follow.

MICHELLE

Tom, what's your idea for tonight's program?

Eric raises his hand higher.

TOM

I think we should show how other countries are preparing for the event. China, Greece, Peru. Let's focus on the cultural aspect of it.

MICHELLE

Good idea, but RCB is already on it.

Eric is desperate to catch Michelle's attention.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Natalie, what's your scoop?

ERIC

Michelle, excuse me, can I say something here?

MICHELLE

What is it?

ERIC

You all know that my niece has been missing for three days. It's been a very emotional time. A lot of people are scared about what's going to happen. I know I am.

The rest of the team nods.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Is there anything more moving than a kid who runs away to meet God, or a low-income family sharing their meal with a passer-by, or someone, anyone wondering what the heck is going to happen tomorrow?

MICHELLE

Can you get to the point?

Eric walks to the monitor.

ERIC

I want to put my camera on my neighbors and colleagues. I want to capture their joy and fears. I'm not interested in the rich and famous. I want to play it real.

He pushes the play button and a documentary starts:

- A street gathering of Muslim, Jewish and Christian families.
- A 20-something WOMAN paints a giant postcard to God on a street mural.
- Churches overflow with people.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I've been shooting people on the street for the past week. Watch this - sixty percent of them believe that they will see God on October third.

Everyone pays attention, including Michelle.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Thirty percent don't believe in it and intend to go about their day as
(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)
 if it were totally normal. The final
 ten percent are waiting to see and
 some of them have left just in case
 it turns out to be a catastrophe.

Eric fasts forward.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 Now let me show you how our sixty
 percent believers imagine tomorrow--

Michelle stands up.

MICHELLE
 Ok, let's slow down here. It's a
 nice concept, but that's not where
 KNSF is heading.

Eric pushes the pause button.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 (to a journalist)
 Now Mike, your idea of showing 24H
 of the life of the President and the
 First Lady as they are preparing for
 the big moment, that's sensational.

INT. KNSF LOBBY - DAY

Eric rushes to Michelle's office.

ASSISTANT
 She said no interruptions.

Eric knocks on the door.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
 I warned you.

INT. MICHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Michelle works at her desk.

ERIC
 I need to talk to you.

MICHELLE
 You're upset because I didn't pick
 your segment. You've got good ideas,
 but it takes a lot of stamina to
 make it in this field. Honestly, I'm
 not sure you can pull it off.

ERIC
 You have an insult for every occasion,
 just like when we were in college.

MICHELLE

You were a wuss then and you're a wuss now.

ERIC

Why I am here, Michelle? I really want to add to the team but you're stopping me at every corner.

MICHELLE

You're right. I'm sorry, but I only gave you a spot on the team because your brother asked me for a favor.

ERIC

Then I should go. Please consider this my resignation.

Eric walks to the door.

INT. BRANDON'S BUILDING GARAGE - DAY

Brandon jumps in his Porsche convertible and waves at the doorman.

BRANDON

Good morning, Carl.

CARL

Good morning, Carl?

EXT. BEULAH'S MOTEL - DAY

Brandon parks his car at the motel in a great mood. He jumps over the door, whistling.

As he approaches, he sees an ambulance, a white van and a CROWD of people. ATTENDANTS carry his mom on a gurney.

BRANDON

Oh my God, that's my mother. What happened?

PARAMEDIC

I'm sorry, Sir. She had a massive heart attack. She died before we got here.

Brandon's face collapses. He turns to look at his mom's face. She's smiling.

PARAMEDIC 2

For what it's worth, she didn't suffer.

The CORONER'S ASSISTANT comes up.

CORONER
You're her son?

BRANDON
Yes, I'm Uhuru Washington.

He hands Brandon a small bag.

CORONER
Those are all the belongings that we
found with her. She didn't have
much.

Brandon takes the bag.

BRANDON
She never did.

He opens the bag and pulls out two bus tickets to San
Francisco.

INT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT - DAY

SUPER: LAX Airport

Roger maneuvers his way through the noisy crowded terminal.

He bumps into a man who drops his bag.

ROGER
Oh, excuse me.

He bends down to the bag.

ROGER (CONT'D)
Let me help you.

The man turns around and we see Julian Harper.

JULIAN
That's alright. I wasn't looking.
I was worried about getting a cab in
this mess.

ROGER
A cab, jeez, I don't even have a
hotel yet.

JULIAN
I've got a room but someone stole my
credit card.

Roger looks at the chaos around them.

ROGER
If you're willing to share your room,
I'd be happy to pay for it.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Roger and Julian ride in the cab.

JULIAN

It's been a real hassle. I reported it stolen as soon as I noticed it missing but they already used it at a hotel. Who could spend \$3500 in one night?

ROGER

Sounds like something my kid would do.

JULIAN

What about you? Coming to LA without a room at a time like this. That's a real act of faith.

ROGER

Actually it's a family emergency. I was supposed to be looking for my daughter in San Francisco, but we couldn't land there so now I'm stuck in LA.

JULIAN

Hey, you're that astronomer on TV - the one who discovered the message.

ROGER

Yeah, big deal. I might be a good astronomer, but I've lost my daughter and now I don't even have a way to get to her.

Julian looks at Roger with empathy.

JULIAN

I can get you to San Francisco on October third.

ROGER

How could you do that?

EXT. PIER 39 - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco - Pier 39

Max and Elita walk among the TOURISTS, wearing matching "I left my heart in San Francisco" t-shirts.

MAX

Keep your sunglasses on.

ELITA

Can I have some ice cream?

Max gets two cones from a pushcart vendor.

ELITA (CONT'D)

You're a thief, aren't you?

MAX

It's not like I shoplift or boost cars. I do owe a few bucks on other people's credit cards.

ELITA

Yeah, me too. But I only did it so I could come to see God.

MAX

That's better than doing it to go to Hawaii? How come you want to see Him so bad?

ELITA

'Cause I've got to ask God about my mom. She's in heaven with Him.

MAX

You lost your mom?

ELITA

When I was seven. She had a car accident.

MAX

What about your dad?

ELITA

He's a professor. He's kind of like you - he doesn't believe in God.

MAX

God or Santa Claus. I gotta deal with real life.

ELITA

How come old people don't believe in anything?

MAX

God's sure never helped me any.

ELITA

Maybe you haven't given Him a chance.

Max tosses the rest of his ice cream cone in the trash.

MAX

I've learned to manage my own chances, and hanging out with public fugitive number one isn't helping them. What am I doing with you anyway?

ELITA

We did better together, but it's OK
if you don't want me.

She finishes her ice cream cone.

ELITA (CONT'D)

I'll find my way. Thanks for the
stuff.

She starts walking off.

ELITA (CONT'D)

Good luck, Max.

Max watches her for a moment.

MAX

Wait a minute, kid.

He catches up with Elita and the two of them walk together.

MAX (CONT'D)

We'll have to sneak back onto the
boat before they start checking people
entering the Marina.

He puts his arm on Elita's shoulder.

MAX (CONT'D)

Partners?

ELITA

No more yelling at me.

MAX

And no more preaching.

ELITA

Can I have another ice cream?

MAX

No.

ELITA

Cause I was preaching?

MAX

Cause we've only got three bucks
left.

INT. BRANDON'S DESIGN STUDIO - DAY

SUPER: Los Angeles - October 2

Brandon is surrounded by his team of designers.

ALLOIN

What do you mean you're leaving?

BRANDON

I've got to go to San Francisco now.

CYRIL

What about the dress? We're not done.

BRANDON

I know and that's why I'm putting you in charge, Cyril. Have it finished. Make sure it fits the First Lady perfectly. And deliver it to her personally.

Cyril looks nervous.

CYRIL

You put me in charge of delivering the dress?

BRANDON

I decided to trust you.

Cyril chokes back a tear.

CYRIL

We all love the dress, Mr. DiGiorno. What an incredible combination of fabrics, and those colors--

The team nods in agreement.

BRANDON

They were chosen by someone very special.

Brandon picks up his bag and walks to the door.

CYRIL

Don't worry, we'll make you proud.

EXT. BUS TERMINAL - DAY

Brandon waits in line to board the bus. A noisy CROWD surrounds the ticket booth. In the crowd is a quiet OLDER LADY.

Brandon walks over to her.

BRANDON

Pardon me, ma'am. Are you traveling alone?

OLDER LADY

Alone, yes. But traveling, I don't think it's going to happen. I know it sounds stupid but I felt like I should at least try to go to see God.

Brandon holds up a ticket.

OLDER LADY (CONT'D)

I don't have a lot of money.

BRANDON

Don't worry about it. The ticket was for my mother, and I'm sure she would want you to have it.

INT. BUS - MOVING - DAY

Brandon looks out the window deep in his thoughts. Seated next to him, a quiet but elegant black woman, TANISHA, 30s.

TANISHA

(to Brandon)

I saw you give your mother's bus ticket to that lady. That was a really nice thing to do.

BRANDON

Thanks. My mama passed before she had a chance to use it.

TANISHA

I'm so sorry. Were you close to her?

BRANDON

Not as close as I should have been. I'm sorry, my name is Bran-- Uhuru. Uhuru Washington.

TANISHA

Freedom. I love that name.

BRANDON

What do you mean, freedom?

TANISHA

Uhuru means Freedom in Swahili. Didn't you know that?

Brandon bursts into laughter.

BRANDON

I can't believe it. I've been fighting my whole life for freedom and--

TANISHA

People sure can make fools out of themselves. My name's Tanisha.

BRANDON

Pleased to meet you. I think we are on our way to something quite incredible.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

SUPER: San Francisco

The bus pulls into the San Francisco bus terminal.

A HOMELESS MAN sits on the ground. He holds a sign that says, "Famished. Feed the homeless for October 3rd."

Next to him is a shopping cart full of junk. A pizza delivery car stops at the curb.

The PIZZA GUY hands him a pizza and the homeless guy gives him some crumpled cash.

HOMELESS MAN

Keep the change.

He turns toward a MAN wearing a tin foil hat, holding a sign that says, "Repent. The world ends on October 3rd."

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

You ain't going to get much with that sign. You like pepperoni?

Brandon and Tanisha exit the bus terminal.

BRANDON

You made a long ride seem very short.

TANISHA

The pleasure was all mine.

They shake hands and part in the middle of the dense CROWD.

Brandon takes two steps, stops, and turns back.

BRANDON

Tanisha, maybe we can--

He looks but Tanisha is nowhere to be seen.

INT. EDITING ROOM - DAY

Michelle and her team watch Eric on TV. He shows his footage on CNN.

KERRIE

How could he betray us like this?

TOM

I'm just as shocked as you are.

MICHELLE

Guys, we have some work to do.
October third is tomorrow.

KERRIE

You're just going to let him go with
it?

TOM

CNN will have a booth just in front
of ours.

MICHELLE

This isn't about competition. I've
watched Eric's show. We're fine.

KERRIE

All right, then let's see what we
have ready for the big day.

Brandon DiGiorno walks in.

BRANDON

I have a hundred and fifty questions
for the big day.

He holds the thick envelope from Beulah's friends, reading.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

God, is it going to be the end of
days? God, are men gonna stop
fighting? God, is my sister going
to marry my ex-brother-in-law?

They all laugh.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

These are just a few questions from
Georgia. I hope the rest of the
world isn't going this crazy.

Michelle hugs her brother.

MICHELLE

Everyone, this is my brother, Brandon.

BRANDON

I didn't mean to interrupt.

MICHELLE

(to her team)

Thanks for all your good work. I'll
get back to you with our final
rundown.

Brandon and Michelle exit.

INT. MICHELLE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Michelle closes the door behind her and wraps her arms around Brandon, sobbing.

BRANDON

I know, I can't believe she's gone.

MICHELLE

God was all her life. She was so excited about coming here. She was calling every five minutes.

Michelle calms herself.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I was so busy, I wish I had made the time to share this with her.

BRANDON

She'd be happy to see us together today.

MICHELLE

I just have to hold it together to make the interview with the President and I'm supposed to stage a worldwide simulcast with God. I should be the happiest woman alive, but all I can think about is Mom.

Brandon puts his arm around her.

BRANDON

When all this is over, I'd like to go spend some time back home. Maybe we can go together.

Michelle wipes her tears and walks to her purse to get her keys.

MICHELLE

Make yourself at home. I'll do my very best to come back early so we can share a nice dinner.

She takes him to the door.

BRANDON

That guy on TV when I came in looked an awful lot like the Eric Weisenkopf we went to college with.

MICHELLE

It is Eric Weisenkopf.

BRANDON
 Didn't you have a crush on him?

MICHELLE
 Don't even start.

BRANDON
 Just because he's white doesn't mean
 you can't be together.

MICHELLE
 I don't have a crush on him.

BRANDON
 You know God will see through that.

EXT. MARINA - SUNRISE

SUPER: OCTOBER 3rd

A white MAN walks his DOG in his pajamas.

The sky darkens into a roaring STORM.

The man and his dog look up as the storm changes back into a
 clear blue sky. A sparkling GREEN LIGHT illuminates
 everything like a blanket of electricity.

The man pulls the dog's leash.

MAN
 You can pee another time.

INT. SAIL BOAT - GALLEY - DAY

Elita sits at the table, holding her spoon.

Max brings two bowls.

MAX
 Breakfast at "Chez Max." Today,
 Chef Max is serving oatmeal with
 raisins.

ELITA
 Are you sure there's no more trail
 mix?

IN THE BILGE

Water seeps in through a hole in the hull.

IN THE GALLEY

ELITA
 It's October third, Max. It's today.

MAX

I know.

ELITA

Now do you believe in God?

MAX

Nope. I've got oatmeal, I've got friends, I've got a yacht. What do I need God for?

ELITA

I believe in God and I had a suite at the Fairmont with roast beef and Champagne.

IN THE BILGE

The water comes in faster. The boat lists to one side.

IN THE GALLEY

MAX

Until I switched it to Ginger Ale. And it was my credit card.

The boat tilts. A loud NOISE comes from below.

ELITA

What was that?

MAX

We've got to get out of here.

ELITA

There's water's coming up.

MAX

Let's try the hatch.

Max pushes up on the overhead hatch. It opens a few inches and then stops. It's blocked.

ELITA

Max, I'm scared.

MAX

I'm trying. It's stuck.

They stand knee deep in water. The water rushes in.

ELITA

Max, you have to take me to see God. You promised.

He scoops Elita up and moves her to a dry spot, then walks through the water back to the hatch.

Max hits the hatch.

MAX

Help! Can anyone hear me?

The boat lists more. Elita loses her balance, falling into the water. One of her feet gets stuck under the wood table.

ELITA

Max, I'm stuck.

MAX

I'll get you out of here.

The cockpit groans and creaks. Max dives under-water to unstick Elita's foot. He can't budge it.

The water rises up to Elita's chest.

ELITA

I'm a goner. I've seen "The Titanic."

Max dives again and yanks on the table leg, to no avail.

Water rises to Elita's neck.

ELITA (CONT'D)

I just wanted to ask God about my mommy.

Max is horrified to see the water rising.

MAX

You're mom's with God. God takes care of people.

Tilting her head up, Elita can barely breathe.

ELITA

You really mean that?

Max smiles at her.

Water goes into Elita's mouth and she starts choking.

MAX

Oh God, at least let the little girl out.

A sparkling GREEN LIGHT illuminates the top of the hatch and the boat shakes, freeing Elita's foot.

Max grabs her by the waist and pushes with all his strength on the hatch. This time it gives away. He lifts Elita up through the opening.

MAX (CONT'D)

Get to the dock.

He pulls himself up and climbs out.

EXT. DOCK - DAY

They collapse on the dock soaking wet and exhausted. The boat has almost sunk. Elita coughs up water.

MAX

Maybe someone's up there after all.

They collapse on the dock soaking wet and exhausted.

SIRENS WAIL as police cars, paramedics and media vans fill the area.

TWO COPS grab Max from behind and handcuff him.

COP ONE

Max Monroe, you're under arrest.

Elita leaps up.

ELITA

Please don't take him away.

A FEMALE COP wraps a blanket around Elita's shoulders, rubbing her arms to warm her up.

FEMALE COP

Don't worry, honey. We're going to take care of you until your family arrives.

Inspector Wong approaches.

INSPECTOR WONG

Kidnapping, Max - not your style. We won't be seeing you for a long time.

ELITA

No. He saved my life.

MAX

She kidnapped me. I was on my way to Hawaii.

The cops take Max away.

MAX (CONT'D)

You're not taking me to Hawaii, are you?

Max looks back at Elita.

MAX (CONT'D)

Bye, kiddo. Tell your mom I said she did a nice job raising you.

Elita starts crying.

ELITA

He's my friend. Don't take him away.

NEWS PEOPLE push cameras in Elita's face.

ELITA (CONT'D)

(to the female cop)

Do you think my Dad is going to be angry?

EXT. BIG OPEN FIELD - DAY

SUPER: Los Angeles

Dressed in a pilot's uniform, Julian stands by a commercial blimp ready for takeoff.

The commercial message displays: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness. Visit Speedy Wash on October Third."

ROGER

Wow, this is a life saver, Julian.

JULIAN

There's a seat for you in the passenger compartment.

They walk to the blimp.

ROGER

I wish Elita could see this.

EXT. CNN PARKING LOT - DAY

The CREW loads the truck.

Eric and PRODUCER carry suits on hangers to the truck.

CNN PRODUCER

We were very lucky to get you a spot in front of the President's podium. You're going to have the most incredible background ever.

ERIC

I'm still not sure if I should introduce the segment on life as an atheist first, or wait until after the one on modern spirituality.

CNN PRODUCER

Your two previous shows have done great. Trust your judgment.

A sparkling GREEN LIGHT shines below their feet and across the parking lot, like electricity. Eric drops his suit.

As he bends down to pick it up, his cellphone RINGS.

ERIC

This is Eric. Are you sure? Where?
I'll be right there.

Eric grabs his suit.

ERIC (CONT'D)

They found my niece at the Marina.
She was kidnapped. I've got to go.

CNN PRODUCER

Hey, hold on here. You can't be
going anywhere. I need you at the
stadium.

ERIC

I can't leave Elita alone at the
police station. I'll be back in an
hour, max.

CNN PRODUCER

I'm not kidding, Eric. We have too
much riding on today's broadcast.
If you leave now, I'll have no choice
but to replace you with another
anchor.

ERIC

What other anchor?

CNN PRODUCER

You really think I was going to put
a new-comer on air without a backup
plan?

Eric starts walking to his car.

ERIC

Don't give my job away. I'm your
man. Let me do the right thing,
please.

Eric throws his suit inside the car.

ERIC (CONT'D)

If I'm not back within two hours,
then do whatever you want. But I
will be back.

INT. KNSF VAN - MOVING - DAY

Michelle rides in the passenger seat, watching the MASS
HYSTERIA on the street.

MICHELLE
We're barely moving. We'll never
get through.

The engine sputters and stops.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
What's going on?

DRIVER
I don't know. It just died.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

The crew gets out of the van.

CREW MEMBER
I don't understand. It's a brand
new van.

CREW MEMBER #2
We'll never find a mechanic today.
Thanks a lot, God.

PEOPLE fill the streets, surging around the van.

MICHELLE
C'mon guys. No time to mess around.
I don't care what you do, but do it
pronto.

CREW MEMBER
Easy, Michelle. It's God-speaks-to-
the-world day, not bite-the-head-off-
the-crew day.

Pissed, Michelle sits on the curb.

Her eyes stop on a HISPANIC FAMILY trying to make their way
through the crowd. The parents carry their children on their
shoulders, looking elated.

A tattooed GUY passes by singing along with his boom box.
PASSERS-BY sing along with him.

GUY + PASSERS BY
(singing)
All you need is love, love. Love is
all you need. Nothing you can know
that isn't known. Nothing you can
see that isn't shown. Nowhere you
can be that isn't where you're meant
to be. It's easy--

As the singers pass, Michelle notices a modest neighborhood
church across the street.

Some crew members look under the van's hood.

CREW MEMBER

Try again.

The driver turns the key. Nothing happens.

CREW MEMBER (CONT'D)

Don't look at me like that. I'm a camera-man, for god's sake.

Michelle rises and walks toward the church.

COLLEAGUE 3

Now where's Michelle's going?

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Michelle enters the holy place where SEVERAL PEOPLE pray together. She kneels by the table of votive candles.

A YOUNG WOMAN prays behind her.

YOUNG WOMAN

Please, my Lord, help me. I've believed in you my whole life. Give me a sign.

Michelle lights a candle. She focuses on the steady burning flame and prays.

MICHELLE

I haven't been in a church since I was a kid. I liked it then. It was warm and felt a lot safer than my life today. We went as a family. We would sing, although I'm a pretty bad singer, and we would cook soul food together.

Michelle's face darkens.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I know you're coming today and the truth is that I don't feel so good about my life.

The candle light sparkles.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about that because you have given me so many opportunities. You brought Eric back into my life. I've done nothing but push him away. I've pushed everyone away.

A HONKING HORN shakes Michelle from her reverie.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 (to the candle)
 I hope you're coming today.

Michelle rushes out of the church.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The van's engine is now running.

CREW MEMBER
 (to Michelle)
 We didn't know you were going to church.

Michelle throws her purse on the passenger seat.

MICHELLE
 And so are you. Give me the keys and get inside that church, all of you.

CREW MEMBER #2
 You're kidding. We're an hour late.

MICHELLE
 Just get your butts inside and have a moment with yourself before the big thing.

They all walk to the church reluctantly.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 I like to be the boss.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Eric rushes in the police station and sees Elita sitting on a bench.

ERIC
 Oh my God, Elita.

Elita runs towards Eric. He holds her tight.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 We were all so worried about you.

ELITA
 Did you see me on TV?

ERIC
 I think the whole world saw you.

She holds him tight.

ELITA

You won't believe everything that happened to me. I made a friend but they took him away.

Eric looks at the clock on the wall.

ERIC

You can tell me all about it while we drive.

Eric takes Elita's hand and walks to the front desk.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'm here to pick up my niece. Where can I sign her release papers?

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - DAY

Eric and Elita rush toward the gate, through a heavy crowd.

ELITA

You don't have to hold my hand, Uncle Eric. I'm ten, you know.

ERIC

Sweetie, you know today is a very big day.

ELITA

Yeah, I know.

ERIC

I have a very important job to do once we get to the stadium and I need your help.

ELITA

Really?

ERIC

You're going to be my assistant. You standby me. You'll have to look everywhere for signs that God's has arrived. Can you do that?

Elita perks up and nods.

Eric shows his media pass at the security gate. They go through.

Elita's eyes are everywhere. They pass a woman wearing outlandish hippie clothes.

ELITA

Can God be a woman?

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Eric and Elita approach the CNN area. A CREW prepare the set with lights and cables.

SECURITY GUARDS struggle to control a MOB of people selling T-shirts, trinkets and hot dogs.

ERIC

Are you coming, assistant?

Elita follows, taking her job seriously.

Eric sees his producer talking with a nicely dressed MAN.

He grabs Elita's hand and approaches the producer.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'm here. I've got my niece, my suit and I'm ready to work.

The producer seems embarrassed.

CNN PRODUCER

Eric, you remember Aaron Schmidt?

The two men shake hands.

ERIC

I've always been an admirer of your unique style of reporter-centered investigation.

CNN PRODUCER

I'm glad you approve my choice. Aaron is going to anchor our broadcast today.

ERIC

But that's my job.

CNN PRODUCER

I'm sorry. The president of the network stopped by earlier and you weren't here.

Michelle witnesses the scene from the KNSF booth.

MICHELLE

Kerrie, can you do the sound test for me?

At the CNN booth:

Michelle interrupts the CNN producer.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 John, Aaron, it's been a while since
 we were all in the same room.

She turns to Eric.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 I was wondering if you were ever
 going to show up. Are you ready?

She turns back to the producer.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 You're letting him go, right?

CNN PRODUCER
 I--

MICHELLE
 I bless your decision. You wouldn't
 want such a fine anchor to shine
 over God today. But at KNSF, we
 only want the best anchor reporting
 our news.

She turns to Eric.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 Shall we go?

Michelle and Eric walk away. Elita pops up between them.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 And this must be Elita.

ELITA
 (to Michelle)
 I saw you on TV. You're pretty.

MICHELLE
 How would you like to spend this
 extraordinary day with a TV crew?

ELITA
 I'm Uncle Eric's assistant. I'm
 here to meet God.

MICHELLE
 Sounds like you have big plans.

Eric wraps his arm around Elita's shoulder.

ERIC
 She sure does.
 (to Michelle)
 What's that change of attitude about?

Michelle looks at the dozens of TV cameras setting up around them.

MICHELLE

We've never faced so much competition before, so I'm thinking, two heads and two faces may do better than just me.

ERIC

You're serious?

MICHELLE

I know you usually like to be prepared, but if you're up to an improvised last-minute duo, I'm sure we can find a second chair to place next to mine.

ERIC

You and me on camera? Together?

She looks at the suit he's holding.

MICHELLE

Nice suit. Better put it on.

Kerrie approaches.

KERRIE

Michelle, we've got to start.

ERIC

Just one thing. We've lost Roger. He's not answering his phone.

KERRIE

Maybe he's out of range. With the right equipment we can locate him.

ERIC

Do we know anybody with the right equipment?

MICHELLE

I do.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - DAY

The president sits at a desk, surrounded by his busy staff.

PILOT (V.O.)

We expect to arrive in San Francisco in twenty minutes. The weather is clear.

Sydney brings the phone to the president.

SYDNEY

Excuse me, Mr. President, Michelle
Washington on the phone.

He picks up the phone.

PRESIDENT

Yes Michelle--

INTERCUT

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

MICHELLE

The arrangements are all on schedule
here, Mr. President. But we can't
locate Roger Weisenkopf so I need to
ask you a personal favor.

PRESIDENT

A personal favor? Your timing could
be a little better.

INT. BLIMP - MOVING

Roger enjoys a great view through the large windows. His
cellphone RINGS. The CREW exchange odd looks.

JULIAN

How do you have reception up here?

Roger answers his cellphone.

ROGER

Roger Weisenkopf.

INTERCUT

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - COMMUNICATION ROOM - DAY

TECHNICIAN

You have a call from the President
of the United States.

The technician flips a switch.

TECHNICIAN (CONT'D)

Got him, Mr. President.

ROGER

Yes, Mr. President, this is Roger
Weisenkopf. Elita. You're sure she's
ok?

PRESIDENT

She's safe with your brother Eric.
(MORE)

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

That's all I have time to tell you right now because we've had NORAD reposition our Nimbus satellite just to make this phone call and we need to return it pronto.

ROGER

I understand, Mr. President. Thank you, thank you. Good bye, Mr. President.

Roger puts away his phone.

The crew members all stare at him in amazement.

ROGER (CONT'D)

What?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

A street overflows with cars and pedestrians.

We see the whole scene through GOD's eyes. But we don't see what God looks like.

God's DEEP BOOMING VOICE calls out.

GOD (O.S.)

Taxi.

Every passing taxi is taken.

Further away, a yellow taxi runs the light, cuts cross three lanes of traffic and stops in front of God.

The SIKH DRIVER sticks his head out the window.

SIKH

You are wanting taxi?

INT. TAXI - DAY

God sits in the back of the taxi.

SIKH

Where we are going?

A SPARKLING GREEN LIGHT fills the interior of the taxi.

SIKH (CONT'D)

Why is so bright?

GOD (O.S.)

Take me to Candlestick.

SIKH

In this traffic? Not possible.

GOD (O.S.)
Have some faith, you'll get through.

SIKH
I am having faith. But you are paying
for time on meter.

GOD (O.S.)
Do not worry, you will be paid.

The taxi takes off with sparkling light coming out the windows.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS - DAY

The driver accelerates through impossible traffic. As if by magic, each vehicle blocking him simply moves out of the way just before a collision.

The street clears as traffic on each cross street is blocked by bizarre events:

- Three ZOO-KEEPERS chase two escaped giraffes.
- A broken fire hydrant spews a huge geyser, making a rainbow.
- TWO ALIENS argue in front of two small spaceships that have been damaged in an accident.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - DAY

A chaotic CROWD with people of every nationality, mounted POLICE, honking traffic and a contingent of chanting HARE KRISHNAS.

In front of the stadium entrance, a tow truck lifts a small alien spaceship. A COP writes a ticket.

An angry ALIEN looks at him, babbling in English.

ALIEN
I am closer to God than you are and
I came a very long way for this.

COP
(Irish accent)
I don't care who you know. If you
got a problem, you can call the city
impound and work it out with them.
Now move on or I'll run you in.

Brandon, dressed in a white silk suit, struggles against the tide.

A few feet away, he spots Tanisha.

BRANDON
Tanisha.

He fights to get to her and puts his hand on her shoulder.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Tanisha, it's--

The woman turns but it's not Tanisha.

INT. TAXI - DAY

SIKH
Park. Here? Who you are thinking
you are?

GOD (O.S.)
You got this far.

SIKH
OK I'm trying. You are paying time
on meter. And you are paying for
ticket too. And you are -- oh, look--

The Sikh pushes the accelerator and makes a reckless move to
take the parking space that just opened.

SIKH (CONT'D)
So lucky I am today.
(to God)
I'm waiting for you here. You are
paying for the time on meter.

GOD (O.S.)
You're a good man. Why don't you go
in?

SIKH
To see God? I would wish. Admission
is very special. Not for taxi
drivers.

God hands him a ticket.

GOD (O.S.)
This is your tip. Enjoy the show.

INT. POLICE STATION - CELL - DAY

The GUARDS have great difficulty containing the PRISONERS.
Everybody's SCREAMING.

INMATE #1
It should be amnesty day.

INMATE #2
Yeah! Today could be the end of the
world. God would want you to let us
out.

The guards try to keep their cool.

On the side, Max sees an open gate and walks toward it. When he touches the metal gate, the SPARKLING GREEN LIGHT appears like a door of electricity.

Max steps back.

MAX

I've seen this light before--

On the other side of the room, the guards struggle to contain the riot.

GUARD

Shut up everybody. You're in here for a long time. Get used to it.

INMATE #3

Let us out! Let us out! Let us out!

Everybody joins in.

ALL INMATES

Let us out!

Max comes back and intervenes.

MAX

Listen up! We put ourselves in here. We're the ones who screwed up, not them.

INMATE #1

Whose side are you on?

MAX

I want to be on the right side, pay my dues and start all over again.

The inmates calm down.

MAX (CONT'D)

I want to see the sunrise in Hawaii but I want to earn it this time.

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Michelle brushes lint from Eric's suit.

MICHELLE

Showtime. I have thirteen minutes with the President before the event.

KERRIE

Eleven minutes, actually.

MICHELLE

(to Eric)

Take Elita to the media box. I'll join you before the President's address.

Eric and Michelle exchange a look.

ERIC

Thank you.

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

A MAKE-UP ARTIST prepares the president.

Michelle enters.

MICHELLE

Good afternoon, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Michelle. Are we ready?

MICHELLE

As long as God shows up. If He does, we'll have enough material to last until the next ice age.

She tries to look OK.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Jeez. What do we do if God doesn't show up?

PRESIDENT

We? Yeah right. You get to report on what a jackass the President was. As for me, I have a helicopter waiting outside the stadium with the engine running. But I can assure you I have every confidence.

They smile at each other.

MICHELLE

I'll see you on the podium, Mr. President.

She leaves as Brandon enters.

BRANDON

Mr. President.

PRESIDENT

Brandon, do I get to see this dress now?

BRANDON

The truth is I haven't seen it on the First Lady myself. She's putting it on now.

A shriek comes from the next room. The First Lady's excited VOICE carries through the wall.

FIRST LADY (O.S.)

Cyril - I love it. It's beautiful and it's so unique.

Cyril barges into the room.

CYRIL

Oh, Mr. President. And Mr. DiGiorno. The dress fits perfectly. You're going to love my changes.

Brandon's eyes open wide.

BRANDON

What changes?!

Brandon grabs Cyril by the wrist and pulls him out of the room.

CYRIL

Here we go again--

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - CORRIDOR - DAY

Brandon and Cyril walk down the hall.

BRANDON

(to Cyril)

You better hope God's going to be here soon. Cause he's the only one who can save you if you screwed this up.

They enter the changing room.

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Sydney comes charging into the room.

ADVISOR

One minute, Mr. President.

The advisor opens his briefcase and gives a paper to the president.

ADVISOR (CONT'D)

The last draft, Sir.

The president sets the document aside.

PRESIDENT
I'm not going to go with the script.

ADVISOR
Mr. President?

The President walks to the door.

PRESIDENT
It'll be OK, Sydney. Have a little faith.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - PODIUM - DAY

Michelle and Eric stand in their broadcast location. Behind them, the stadium is filled to capacity with an excited throng of SPECTATORS.

MICHELLE
I can't believe this is happening.

ERIC
If we survive today, would you go out on a date with me?

MICHELLE
You're asking your boss out?

ERIC
I'll quit if it improves my chances.

Michelle looks at the camera.

MICHELLE
Okay, fine. But only if we make it through the day.

The countdown begins.

COUNTDOWN (V.O.)
Fifteen, fourteen, thirteen--

INT. BLIMP - DAY

Julian throws a parachute bag at Roger.

JULIAN
It's time.

ROGER
What do you want me to do with that?

JULIAN
Jump and go find your daughter.

ROGER
Jump? What do you mean jump?

JULIAN

Sorry, Roger. We can't get permission to land.

ROGER

What? I get scared backing my car out of the garage.

Julian leads Roger to the window. He points at the stadium under them.

JULIAN

Come on. Next to God, you'll have the coolest entrance of the day.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - PODIUM - DAY

In front of Michelle and Eric, the camera light turns red.

MICHELLE

Assembled here today are ten thousand of the world's greatest thinkers and leaders.

Faces of well-known PERSONALITIES appear on the screen overhead. Brandon and Cyril are among them.

ERIC

As well as a hundred-thousand lucky people chosen by lottery. This may well be the most amazing event of the millennium. The truth is, we don't know what exactly will or will not happen here today. But the hopes of humanity are riding high on the outcome of today's events.

MICHELLE

Many countries expressed their disappointment for not being chosen. Why San Francisco?

ERIC

We may never know. But as late New York mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, once said, "God took the beauty of the Bay of Naples, the Valley of the Nile, the Swiss Alps, the Hudson River Valley, rolled them into one and made San Francisco Bay."

An ORCHESTRA next to the podium plays "Hail to the Chief." Everyone stands up, eyes turned to the gigantic screens.

The President and First Lady come onto the podium. Her DRESS is a stunning combination of all the world flags in colored silks, with a long red trail. On the First Lady's chest is the distinct African print pattern from Beulah's cotton dress.

The full dress marine GUARDS are present, without guns.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, the President
and First Lady of the United States
of America.

The cameras focus on the president who begins his speech.

PRESIDENT

Citizens of the world, it is with
profound humility that I announce
that today is the first day since
the beginning of time that all wars
and conflicts across the globe have
ceased.

In the presidential box, hundreds of INTERNATIONAL LEADERS
stand up and applaud.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

Among us today, the leaders of every
single nation. Together we can say
that the world is at peace.

The audience cheers. Many cry, many smile.

PRESIDENT (CONT'D)

And to celebrate this exceptional
moment of brotherhood, each country
has sent their best singer, musician
or dancer. Please welcome the Voices
of the World.

A superb woman's voice resonates a cappella. Tanisha,
singing, enters the podium, wearing the colors of Tanzania.

Brandon sees Tanisha's face on the giant screen.

BRANDON

Tanisha!

Following Tanisha, many singers, dancers and musicians wearing
the colors of their country enter the podium.

The cameras focus on all of them interpreting "Hymn to God"
together.

EXT. TOKYO - SHIBUYA STATION - NIGHT

A huge CROWD watches the event on a giant television screen.

EXT. BRAZIL BEACH - DAY

Some YOUNG BRAZILIANS watch the event on their cell phones.

EXT. MOSCOW - NIGHT

Near the Kremlin, a CROWD watches television through a shop window.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

View of Castor Street. A CROWD OF ALIENS watches the event on a television screen at a bar.

Two aliens enjoy a beer.

ALIEN

Intergalactic mathematics professor,
and you couldn't even rig a simple
lottery ticket?

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - DAY

A descending object appears in the sky. Everyone in the stadium looks up.

ERIC (O.S.)

(on T.V.)

Something's coming down from the
sky.

A parachute comes into view. It's Roger Weisenkopf.

There is a trembling like a small EARTHQUAKE and a low rumbling sound begins. The SOUND becomes louder.

People on the podium look concerned.

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

TECHNICIAN

It's an earthquake. We're having an
earthquake.

EXT. TOKYO - NIGHT

The same shaking and rumbling. The CROWD watching television is frightened.

EXT. BRAZIL BEACH - DAY

Same shaking and rumbling. The CROWD on the beach is frightened.

The daylight begins to dim. People look up to see what's wrong.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - PODIUM - DAY

The daylight turns to BLACK.

The audience panics and SCREAMS. Then the shaking and rumbling fade.

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

TECHNICIAN

We better get some lights.

TECHNICIAN #2

I can't get anything to work.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - PODIUM - DAY

Now in pitch blackness, a beautiful SPARKLING GREEN LIGHT appears and illuminates everything.

EXT. TOKYO - NIGHT

The same green light gets brighter and brighter.

EXT. MOSCOW - DAY

Same situation. The green light becomes brighter and brighter.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - PODIUM - SAME

With his deep profound voice, God speaks out and the whole world listens.

GOD (O.S.)

It is good that we are all together
today, seeing eye to eye at the same
moment.

Beulah's spirit appears in the stadium. She wears her new hat and cotton dress.

GOD (CONT'D)

I know that all of you have questions.
Why am I here? Why now?

Everyone in the stadium is mesmerized by the green light.

GOD (CONT'D)

So many of you are worried about
your future and have been asking me
for a sign. It's time for me to
explain and to do so I have chosen
the most tolerant city you have
created.

A mosaic of people: gays, people of color, punk, three piece suits, people of every shape and form.

GOD (CONT'D)

Tolerance is incredibly difficult to feel, but it is the only way you can live together and find the harmony you all crave.

The image reappears on the giant screen.

INT. CANDLESTICK PARK - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

TECHNICIAN

We're back on.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK- PODIUM - DAY

GOD (V.O.)

The line between good and bad is thin, like the lines on the palm of your hand. But rather than give you answers today, I have come to apologize.

The audience roars in shock.

GOD (CONT'D)

Why did I give you the power to kill each other? Envy each other? Betray each other? Why did I allow you to idolize me and make me separate from you? Why did I allow you to create all those religious scriptures to justify the countless wars you waged in my name?

All the world leaders watch from their section.

GOD (CONT'D)

Do you really think that I want you to kill your neighbors, the ones living behind geographical lines that you invented, because they do not see me like you see me? Or they do not pray the same way at the same place you do? Or wear the same clothes?

Roger Weisenkopf has finally gotten rid of his parachute and found a spot to watch. He searches the crowd for his daughter.

GOD (CONT'D)

I know that so many of you hate me or doubt me. It's all right. But you only do this because you forget that I gave you endless possibilities to create life, beauty and to fraternize with each other.

Max and his cell-mates listen.

GOD (CONT'D)
Blaming me will not help you find
the peace and harmony you all need.

Brandon DiGiorno stands among his creative team, watching.

GOD (CONT'D)
I am not a cruel or vengeful God. I
am life. I allow you to see me as
you wish. White, black, man or woman -
is it really important? Life has no
one color and no single physical
form. Life is the sum of everything
existing and you are part of it.
Like a delicious feast made of so
many different dishes and ingredients.
There would be no life and
possibilities without such incredible
variety.

Michelle and Eric watch from the podium.

GOD (CONT'D)
I am not angry, but I am sad. I
hear your tears as they resemble
mine.

Pamela, Kyle and Kepler the dog watch from Hawaii.

GOD (CONT'D)
Is it too late to build the peace
you aspire to? No. I have given
each and every one of you, no matter
where you stand today, the same power
and will to maintain and embellish
life. Just like truth, I am in all
of you.

The Sikh taxi driver appears on screen.

GOD (CONT'D)
(talking through the
Sikh driver)
This man could not believe he could
be chosen to be in my presence.

God continues with his own voice.

GOD (CONT'D)
But he was.

Beulah's spirit appears on the screen.

GOD (CONT'D)
 (talking through Beulah)
 This woman could not believe she
 could understand her son.

God continues with his own voice.

GOD (CONT'D)
 But she did.

All our main characters appear on the screen.

GOD (CONT'D)
 Tonight, I will give one of you a
 key, which can open the door to a
 better world.

INT. POLICE STATION - CELL - DAY

Max sits alone in the cell, illuminated by green light.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - PODIUM - DAY

GOD (O.S.)
 The future is in your hands.

Beulah's friends are glued to their TV.

GOD (CONT'D)
 And I'm asking you to feel compassion
 and humanity, and to drop your
 weapons, your extreme beliefs, and
 your insatiable thirst for control,
 power and greed, to simply become a
 creator of life, and to come together
 as one, as it was always intended to
 be.

The green light starts to fade and the daylight returns.

People look at each other, still in shock.

Elita jumps out of her seat.

ELITA
 Where's Uncle Eric? I better go
 home.

She finds her way out through the crowd.

Not far away, Roger sees Elita run towards the exit.

ROGER
 Elita, it's Daddy. Wait.

She doesn't hear her dad and keeps running.

Near the podium, Brandon searches for Tanisha. He sees her and climbs to meet her.

BRANDON

(to Tanisha)

You have the purest voice I've ever heard. It can't be an accident. This time I hope you'll stay with me a little longer.

Tanisha smiles at Brandon's pure white attire.

TANISHA

How can I lose you in that suit?

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - DAY

Elita leaves the stadium by a side exit.

She waves for a taxi. The taxi pulls up. The door opens by itself. Elita is bathed in the GREEN EMERALD LIGHT.

Elita looks inside the taxi.

ELITA

Is that you?

God's deep voice responds.

GOD (O.S.)

Who else could get a cab at a time like this? Come on, I'll take you to the airport.

Elita gets in.

Roger sees Elita disappear into the cab. He throws himself in front of the next taxi and gets in.

INT. GOD'S TAXI - DAY

Elita notices that there is no driver.

ELITA

Hey, where's the driver?

GOD (O.S.)

I wanted to be alone with you.

ELITA

Cool. I'm not sure I understood everything you said.

GOD (O.S.)

I talk a lot.

She turns to the green light.

ELITA

God, is my mom in heaven with you?
Is she OK?

GOD (O.S.)

Your mother was a loving woman and I
take good care of her.

ELITA

Does she miss me?

GOD (O.S.)

Yes she does and your dad too. She
loves you both very much. But she's
no longer sad. She accepted her
destiny. You will always be her
little girl and she doesn't want you
to use your dad's credit any more.
OK?

ELITA

How did you know that?

GOD (O.S.)

Seriously?

ELITA

Okay, Okay. I know.

Elita turns serious.

ELITA (CONT'D)

God, why did you let my mom die?

GOD (O.S.)

I love each and every one of you.
So I gave people free will to choose
what they do. Sometimes they make
mistakes. That's how they learn and
grow.

ELITA

Like kids?

GOD (O.S.)

Yes, that's right. But kids are
meant to turn into something bigger.

ELITA

Is there a Devil? Is he here in San
Francisco, too?

GOD (O.S.)

Yes, but he's not so important here
because people don't pay him much
attention.

(MORE)

GOD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Mostly he's in charge of parking,
 and sometimes I let him take charge
 of the weather for the Fourth of
 July fireworks.

ELITA
 My friend Max made mistakes, but he
 helped me too. Would you forgive
 him?

GOD (O.S.)
 I already have.

ELITA
 Will I see him again?

GOD (O.S.)
 He's going to write to you.
 But don't tell him I told you.

The cab pulls over. The door opens.

GOD (CONT'D)
 And here we are -- but before you
 go, I want to give you something.

Elita's face lights up.

INT. ROGER CAB - DAY

Roger and the cab driver scan the crowds at the airport.

CAB DRIVER
 I see her.

Roger spots Elita standing at the curb.

ROGER
 Don't lose her.

EXT. PRIVATE PLANES AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

Elita waves as God's taxi pulls away.

ROGER (O.S.)
 Elita.

Elita turns around and sees her dad running towards her.

ELITA
 Daddy.

They run into each other arms.

ROGER
 Honey, I was so worried about you.

Roger squeezes her against his chest.

ELITA
I love you Daddy. I was going to go home. I promise.

ROGER
I know you were. You're so brave.

ELITA
I talked to God, Daddy. I really did.

ROGER
I'm sorry I didn't listen to you.

Elita steps back.

ELITA
And he gave me something.

She takes a purple velvet pouch with a star designed in silver out of her pocket.

ELITA (CONT'D)
Look.

She holds a beautiful key made of crystal and silver.

ELITA (CONT'D)
What should I do with it, daddy?

ROGER
The key. God has chosen you to hold the key.

ELITA
What does it mean?

ROGER
It means you're a special girl, Elita. It means we never know what we can learn from our children.

Roger puts the key back in the pouch.

ROGER (CONT'D)
We're going to keep it in a safe place until the time is right. Elita? Did God say something about Mommy?

ELITA
He said she was happy where she was and that she will always love us both very much.

Roger holds his daughter tight.

ELITA (CONT'D)

So you're not mad at me?

ROGER

No, but let's not make a habit out of this, OK? Hey, where's Uncle Eric? Does he know where you are?

Elita looks guilty.

INT. POLICE STATION - CELL - DAY

The green light fades into regular daylight.

MAX

Jeez.

Footsteps echo down the hall.

Inspector Wong and a GUARD enter.

Max stands up.

INSPECTOR WONG

I can't believe it.

MAX

Now, what did I do?

INSPECTOR WONG

Incredibly enough, Dr. Weisenkopf has dropped the charges and paid your bail.

MAX

So I'm free?

INSPECTOR WONG

For now. God may have smiled upon you, Max, but I have not. If I see you again--

Max exits the cell.

MAX

You won't be seeing me again, Inspector. I'm finally on my way to Hawaii to see a friend.

INT. TV SET - DAY

Michelle and Eric broadcast from the anchor desk.

MICHELLE

So, on this very special day, I end our broadcast with some words from my recently departed mother, Beulah
(MORE)

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 Washington. "What we need are people
 who make a difference. A big
 difference in the kitchen."

She looks at Eric.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)
 This is Michelle Washington--

ERIC
 And this is Eric Weisenkopf--

TOGETHER
 Live from KNSF, San Francisco.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW - DAY

San Francisco glows below, then the Earth, then the universe.

EXT. UNIVERSE - NIGHT

The green light appears from behind and continues to expand.
 Earth now looks like just a little dot in the sky.

GOD (O.S.)
 Elita, I chose you for your courage,
 your innocence and honesty. Take
 good care of the key I gave you.
 One day, not so far away, you will
 know when to use it and how to lead
 the world to a better place.

The universe zooms by, stretching out into the distance,
 surrounded by sparkling green light.

GOD (CONT'D)
 It is time for all of you to rise to
 your destiny.

A beautiful explosion of SHOOTING STARS, like a fireworks
 grand finale.

FADE OUT.