

God's Other Son

written by

Brad Marlowe

*Contact: Josh Schechter
(310) 278-8070
The Irv Schechter Company
9300 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 400
Beverly Hills, CA 90212*

*WGAw 563256
Copyright Brad Marlowe*

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY - DAY

A heavenly conversation is overheard as billowing white clouds drift across the Grand Canyon.

GOD'S OTHER SON (O.S.)

Father?

GOD (OS)

Yes, my son?

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS)

I'm going down.

GOD (OS)

It's too late. I've made my decision.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS)

But you're wrong about them -

GOD (OS)

I will not discuss this again.

The conversation continues over downtown Los Angeles.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS)

There must be one good person left.
Maybe I can -

GOD (OS)

Absolutely not. I have no intention
of making the same mistake twice.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS)

But the world is different now. I'm
different.

GOD (OS)

They have exhausted my patience and
proven themselves unworthy of the
gifts they have been given.

Storm clouds gather over the leaning tower of Pisa.

GOD (OS) (CONT'D)

They are cruel, selfish creatures
that do nothing more than take up
space.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS)

But father -

GOD (OS)

I HAVE SPOKEN.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS)
 No! This time you're going to listen
 to me! I'm going - with or without
 your blessing. I'll find a good
 person and I'll prove you wrong!

An ominous rumble rolls across darkening Hawaiian skies.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS) (CONT'D)
 Father?

Thunder builds.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS) (CONT'D)
 Say something.

Wind whips storm clouds across the sky.

GOD'S OTHER SON (OS) (CONT'D)
 (nervous)
 Dad?

Thunder crashes and lightning cracks.

GOD (OS)
 I MADE THE WORLD IN SIX DAYS. YOU
 HAVE TWELVE TO SAVE IT.

Lightning flashes.

EXT. TIME SQUARE - LATE AFTERNOON

GOD'S OTHER SON stands alone in a rainstorm of Biblical proportions. Although presenting the physical appearance of an African American, God's other son doesn't think of himself or anyone else as any particular race. He radiates kindness, innocence and dignity. God's other son casts a worried glance up to the heavens and then surveys the city around him, seemingly unaware of the rain.

GOD'S OTHER SON'S POV

Of Sony's massive electronic billboard. Santa drives a Porsche across the screen, followed by a flashing message:

HO HO HURRY! ONLY 12 SHOPPING DAYS LEFT `TIL CHRISTMAS!!!

God's other son is fascinated by the Christmas shoppers hurrying in and out of the stores that line Time Square. He watches a package-laden MAN hail a taxi across the street. The cab splashes to a stop and the man hops in. God's other son sees a taxi with reindeer antlers fastened to the top approaching on *his* side of the street. The young Messiah steps out into the street, waving his arms in imitation of the other man.

THE TAXI DRIVER

Hits the brakes too late and the car slams into God's other son, sending him crashing to the flooded street.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The outside doors slide open and two AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS wheel God's other son in on a gurney. His clothes are sodden and torn and one shoe is missing. The overcrowded waiting room is brimming with activity. A harried NURSE approaches the ambulance attendants and checks their patient.

NURSE

Talk to me.

ATTENDANT 1

John Doe. Cracked ribs, possible concussion - assorted contusions. Jumped in front of a cab. Driver said he was standin' in the street smilin' and wavin' like some kinda idiot.

ATTENDANT 2

Crackheads.

The nurse uses a penlight to check the pupillary reflexes.

NURSE

Still bad out there?

ATTENDANT 1

Seems to be letting up a little.

Attendant 2 shakes the rain off his jacket as he grumbles.

ATTENDANT 2

Four solid weeks of this shit. Merry Goddamned Christmas.

The nurse checks vital signs.

NURSE

You say he's a John Doe?

God's other son begins to regain consciousness.

ATTENDANT 1

Yeah - no wallet, no I.D.

The nurse takes a tag from her pocket and begins to write.

ANGLE ON TAG

As the nurse notes that the patient has a cracked rib and a concussion. In the space for the patient's name she writes "J.D.". The nurse moves on to the next patient.

NURSE

Park him in A-12.

We FOLLOW God's other son as the attendants wheel him off to A-12. We see the nurse in the background as she's confronted by LIZ, a ruthless tabloid journalist and Q, her photographer (the world's hippest WASP). Liz and the nurse argue in the distance as we move away.

GOD'S OTHER SON

(groggy)

Why didn't he stop?

ATTENDANT 2

(amused)

Yeah, right.

ATTENDANT 1

Hey pal - you gotta name?

GOD'S OTHER SON

(reading the tag)

J...D...

The attendants exchange an amused look and leave JD in A-12, one of the many over-crowded emergency room holding areas.

BACK IN THE WAITING ROOM

The nurse tries to avoid LIZ and Q, who both wear press passes identifying them as representatives of THE STAR.

LIZ

We know she's here. Five minutes -

NURSE

Madonna is not here!

The nurse moves away as Q checks his watch impatiently.

Q

This is wack, man! I gotta tenderoni hangin' back at the hut and Miss thang here ain't droppin' no science on us, that's for damn sure -

LIZ

(annoyed)

English, Q. Speak English.

Q

Let's give it up. I gotta date.

Liz makes another rush at the nurse as she hurries past.

LIZ

We're not leaving until you give us a quote.

Q
Shit.

NURSE
(to Liz)
Why don't you just make something
up. Isn't that how you people usually
operate?

BACK IN A-12

Rain drips from cracks in the ceiling into strategically placed bedpans. JD sits up, trying to get his bearings. He raises his hand to the lump on the back of his head.

JD'S POV

Of the room as images double, triple and begin to spin. Abstract shadows and voices beckon from a distance.

NURSE
X-rays are ready, Doctor.

DOCTOR
Do you feel pressure or pain when I
do this?

PATIENT
Ahhhh! Pain, pain!

JD Stands on shaky legs and staggers toward the voices.

JD
You're a healer?

The DOCTOR continues to work on his PATIENT.

DOCTOR
Take a seat. Someone'll be with you
in a minute. Nurse!

JD
If you're a healer, you *must* be good.

JD's open smile worries the doctor.

DOCTOR
NURSE!

A NURSE approaches.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Sedate this man.

The nurse takes JD by the arm and tries to lead him away while signaling to an ORDERLY wearing a Santa hat. The orderly grabs JD.

JD
What are you doing?!

ORDERLY
Let's just take it down a notch,
Buddy. No one's gonna hurt you.

The doctor pulls the privacy curtain around himself and his patient.

DOCTOR (OS)
If he gives you any trouble - ship
him out to Bellvue.

The orderly twists JD's arm behind his back as the nurse prepares a hypodermic.

JD
Let me go!

The nurse approaches, needle in hand.

JD (CONT'D)
What's that?!

JD'S BLURRED POV

As the nurse brandishes the hypo.

NURSE
This'll help you relax.

JD
NO!

JD twists free of the orderly and stumbles away. He collides with a gun-shot GANG MEMBER, knocking them both to the ground.

GANG MEMBER
Shit, man!

JD puts his hand on the kid's wound as he helps him up.

JD
I'm sorry.

The orderly follows as JD staggers off down the hall. The gang member stands back up, holding his wound and looking confused. There is no pain.

GANG MEMBER
What the...

He rips the bloody compression pack away and discovers that his bullet wound has been healed.

GANG MEMBER (CONT'D)
DOC!

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

JD staggers through the crowded hallway, searching for an exit as the orderly pursues him. As JD bumps into PATIENTS, they are healed. Wheelchair-bound patients stand and walk, while OTHERS drop their crutches and do celebratory dances in the hallway, slowing the orderly's progress. The hospital PERSONNEL whisper in disbelief as they witness JD's miraculous healings.

A SURGICAL NURSE

Wheels a deceased patient from an operating room, blocking JD's path. JD falls onto the dead patient and then moves on. The DECEASED PATIENT sits up, pulling off the sheet that had covered her.

DECEASED PATIENT

I'm hungry.

The nurse screams at the sight of the resurrected patient and the resurrected patient screams back, startled by the nurse's screams.

INT. WAITING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

The hospital buzzes with news of JD's miracles. One of the staff "witnesses" hurries to the admitting nurse, who's still trying to shake Liz and Q. The STAFF MEMBER pulls the nurse aside and whispers excitedly in her ear.

NURSE

What?!

A PATIENT who'd been on crutches runs into the waiting room.

PATIENT

I CAN WALK! HE TOUCHED ME AND I CAN
WALK AGAIN! HE'S HEALING EVERYONE
HE TOUCHES!

Other injured PATIENTS surround the healed man, asking ad-libbed questions. The nurse rushes off to investigate, leaving Liz with the shaken staff member.

LIZ

What happened back there?

STAFF MEMBER

(lying)

I... I didn't see anything.

JD stumbles into the room and heads for the door.

PATIENT

THAT'S HIM! HE'S THE ONE!

Liz elbows Q and he readies his camera. Just then the orderly rounds the corner, Santa hat askew.

ORDERLY

Stop that guy!

JD makes a dash for the revolving door at the main entrance.

LIZ

(to Q)

C'mon!

Q grabs a shot just as JD runs out the door.

ANOTHER PATIENT

Wait! Please!

Liz, Q and everyone else runs after JD, overloading the revolving door and trapping everyone inside.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

JD staggers from the hospital - frightened, lost and confused. He rounds the corner just as Liz and Q fight their way through the revolving door. The rain has stopped. Liz scans the bustling holiday crowd.

LIZ

Did you get the shot?

Q

Straight up.

Liz heads back into the hospital.

LIZ

C'mon.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

JD wanders the flooded streets, still woozy from the accident. He shivers in the cold night air as passing pedestrians ignore him.

JD

Excuse me...

A well-dressed OLDER WOMAN passes by.

JD (CONT'D)

Can you help me?

A YOUNG COUPLE in matching wading boots laugh at some private joke.

JD (CONT'D)

I just want to talk to you...

The couple continues on, never making eye contact with JD.

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - NIGHT

JD enters and stands by the door, trying to warm up. It's apparent that he's not used to being cold or wet.

THE STORE MANAGER

Notices JD and leaves his CUSTOMER to browse.

MANAGER

Take a look around. I'll be right back.

We FOLLOW as the manager moves past banks of TVs, all tuned to the same channel. Regular programming is interrupted by a live news update. The blue-screen graphic behind the ANCHOR MAN reads, "The Floods of 2001".

TV ANCHOR MAN (FILTER)

We seem to have a break in the devastating global storm front that lasted twenty-eight days, causing flood damage in excess of fifty billion dollars. Not since Noah has the world taken this kind of punishment. Scientists are still trying to determine the storm's origin, why it's suddenly stopped and if it will return. In the meantime the world holds its breath, hoping and praying that the worst is over.

The manager reaches JD, who is fascinated by all of the electronic gadgetry.

MANAGER

C'mon. Let's go.

JD

Go where?

MANAGER

Out.

JD

I just came in to get warm.

The store manager grabs JD by the arm.

MANAGER

Sell it to the suckers on the street. You're bothering my customers.

JD

But I haven't done anything.

EXT. ELECTRONICS STORE - NIGHT

JD is ejected from the store and he stumbles, then falls into a huge puddle. He picks himself up moves back out into the flooded streets as a drunken sidewalk SANTA rings his bell for charity.

INT. EXCLUSIVE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING'S LOBBY - NIGHT

As JD passes, he sees the building's DOORMAN reading a newspaper inside. He tries to open the glass doors and finds them locked. JD knocks.

The doorman looks up, sees JD in his filthy clothes and returns his attention to his newspaper. JD continues to knock politely on the glass doors for another moment before realizing the futility of his efforts and moving on.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

JD wanders the streets in search of goodness. He makes token attempts to speak to passers by, but no one is interested in what he has to say. JD passes STREET MUSICIANS, PROSTITUTES and PANHANDLERS as they ply their trades.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - NIGHT

JD rounds the corner as the wind picks up. He hugs his soggy clothes to his body as he looks up to the sky.

JD'S POV OF THE SKY

The rain clouds have returned. We hear a distant rumbling, as if God was saying "I told you so".

JD
I'm not giving up.

BLIND BEGGAR (OS)
Neither am I, son.

JD looks around and finds an old BLIND BEGGAR with a tin cup and red-tipped cane.

BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)
I don't need eyes to look upon the face of the Lord, nor ears to hear the voices of angels. As long as I have breath to pray, God almighty will hear and comfort me in my hour of need.

(singing out)
He'll bring light to my ever-present darkness, yes he will. He'll bring food to my empty stomach - and warmth from the coldest heart. Can I get an amen?!

He extends his cup and flashes a huge toothless grin.

JD

Do you really mean that?

BLIND BEGGAR

A dollar, a dime... Anything at all, son. My needs are few and my time in this old world scarce.

JD

I haven't got any money, but -

The old man pours it on thicker.

BLIND BEGGAR

Surely son, you must have something for a wretched sinner in need of food...

(wetting his lips)

...and drink. It would be a gift from God.

JD removes the beggar's dark glasses and raises his hands to the old man's clouded eyes.

JD

No, *this* is a gift from God.

BLIND BEGGAR

Hey, what're you doing? Gimme back my glasses!

The beggar tries to back away.

BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

Get off me! HELP!

JD removes his hands and steps back. The beggar blinks, unable to believe his eyes.

BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

Sweet Jesus!

JD

Well, not exactly.

BLIND BEGGAR

(stunned)

Oh my God. I can see.

The beggar looks at JD and then down to his cup and cane.

BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

(horrified)

Oh my God - I CAN SEE!

JD smiles humbly, expecting gratitude, but instead the beggar grabs his cane and begins to beat JD with it.

BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

What did you do to me?!

JD hurries away, but the beggar follows - continuing to batter him with the cane.

JD

I thought -

BLIND BEGGAR

Who the hell asked you!? What am I supposed to do, now?! How am I gonna make a living?!

JD runs and the irate beggar follows a few steps, then throws his cane.

BLIND BEGGAR (CONT'D)

WHAT AM I GONNA DO NOW?!

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

JD finally stops running and gasps for air. A SKINHEAD jumps out from behind a tree, blocking his path.

SKINHEAD 1

Give it up, boy!

JD

Excuse me?

ANOTHER SKINHEAD approaches from behind, carrying a rusty length of pipe.

SKINHEAD 2

You heard him, boy - give it up!

JD

I don't understand.

SKINHEAD 1

Your money. Now!

JD

I told the last gentleman - I don't have any money.

The thugs move in.

SKINHEAD 1

Then it's slice and dice time, boy.

JD turns out his pockets.

JD

See - no money. Please, just let me by. I've had a horrible day. My clothes are wet, I've lost my shoe -

JD tries to pass. Skinhead 1 shoves him to the ground.

SKINHEAD 1
You stepped on my foot, boy. Who
the hell do you think you are?!

JD
I know who I am. Who are you?

SKINHEAD 1
Watch it, monkey.

JD's smile baffles the thugs.

JD
Did he put you up to this?

No answer from the bewildered Skinheads.

JD (CONT'D)
He did, didn't he? Well, you tell
him for me...
(to the heavens)
...I don't scare easy.

The punk pulls a knife and JD senses the danger.

JD (CONT'D)
Uh oh. I'm sorry. I thought -

The skinhead and his partner rush JD.

SKINHEAD 1
Where you hidin' it, boy?!

The thugs pile on top of JD as they tear at his clothes and pummel him with their fists. JD calls out loudly, unaccustomed to physical pain.

SKINHEAD 2
Nothin' man! He's got nothin'!

An icy wind whips leaves from nearby trees. JD offers little resistance as the punks tear through his pockets and beat him. A jagged bolt of LIGHTNING splits a nearby tree. The skinheads jump away from JD.

SKINHEAD 1
WHAT THE...!

The top of a tree crashes to the ground and becomes a burning bush. Another bolt of lightning splits the ground at the thugs' feet.

BOTH SKINHEADS
S-H-I-T!

The skinheads turn and run. A moment later JD struggles to his feet as the wind subsides.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK LAKE - NIGHT

JD limps down a walkway that encircles the lake as he blots the blood from his mouth.

JD
Ouch! Ow! OW OW OW!

He finds a bench in the shadow of a great oak tree and sits as another series of rumbles roll across the sky.

JD (CONT'D)
(to the heavens)
Go on. Laugh.

We hear sirens in the distance and some passing KIDS kicking over trash cans and being generally destructive.

JD (CONT'D)
You let him die for these creatures?

MINNIE (OS)
What a waste!

JD looks around and finds MINNIE, a craggy, off-centered bag lady, trying to sleep beneath a blanket of newspapers on the far end of the bench. Minnie's also missing a shoe, but has used newspaper and a plastic bag to make do.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
Let `em fry. That's what I tell him.

JD
Him?

Minnie jerks her thumb skyward.

JD (CONT'D)
Oh... HIM.

MINNIE
The end's comin'- that's a fact.
And there's nothin' you or me or anyone else can do about it.

JD
(defiantly)
That's what he thinks.

MINNIE
He who?

JD imitates Minnie's gesture to the sky.

JD
HIM.

Minnie smiles, pleased to meet a kindred spirit.

MINNIE

Name's Minnie. Who the hell are you?

JD

JD.

She looks him over.

MINNIE

Got a place to sleep, JD?

JD

Not really.

The old woman sizes him up.

MINNIE

Well, I guess you can share my bench. As long as you keep your hands to yourself.

Minnie lies back down and pulls her newspaper blankets close as she settles in for sleep.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Just don't you try nothin'.

JD is totally exhausted by his first day on earth. He tries to get comfortable, but it's going to be a long, cold night.

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT/WORLD TRADE CENTER - DAY

INT. STAR EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

JOHN BRASHER, the Star's editor in chief, talks on the phone as the CLEANING CREW finishes up in his office.

BRASHER

So, what's the problem - start a second run.

LIZ knocks at the door and Brasher waves her and Q in. Liz is disheveled and wears no make-up. Q yawns as he shuffles over to the couch, still wearing his Bullwinkle slippers.

BRASHER (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Okay a third, a fourth. Whatever!

Brasher hangs up and turns to Liz with a scowl on his face.

BRASHER (CONT'D)

What the hell have you done here, Camden?!

LIZ

(yawning)

It's 6 am. I haven't done anything, yet. Do you have any idea how hard it is to get a babysitter at 5 in the morning?

Brasher dismisses her comment with a wave of his hand and pushes the current edition of The Star across the desk.

ANGLE ON PAPER,

Opened to Liz's "Homeless Messiah" story. The accompanying photo of JD is blurred to the point of anonymity.

BRASHER

The phones haven't stopped ringing since this hit the streets.

Q

I know - the shot's crap.

LIZ

But the story was just filler -

BRASHER

Yesterday it was filler - today it's a Goddamned phenomenon! The old man woke me up at 4am demanding to know who our mystery guy is.

LIZ

I told you, he ran out before we -

BRASHER

Yeah, yeah - but the point was he *had* to know. Him and everyone else. We've gotta find this guy.

(thinking aloud)

Installments over the next ten issues. A modern Messiah's journey through the Big City. Maybe throw in a few more miracles - quote some nondenominational words of wisdom... You know, give our readers something to believe in.

Liz and Q exchange a worried look.

LIZ

You don't really believe this guy's for real?

BRASHER

Hell, no! We spend ten issues creating the myth and another ten exposing the fraud.

(MORE)

BRASHER (CONT'D)

Handle this thing right, Camden and we could outsell the Jackson strip-search series and the O.J. confession combined.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Minnie moves quietly away from the bench as JD sleeps with one arm draped over his eyes. He moves his bare feet, searching for warmth. After a moment he sits up, dazed and confused, staring down at his feet.

JD'S POV

One bare foot is dirty from the night before. The other is clean, but now missing its shoe and sock.

MINNIE

Rummages through a trash can in the background, wearing JD's shoe. She finds a half-eaten Big Mac as JD hurries to catch up, wincing as he steps on burrs and rocks in the grass.

JD

Hey! You stole my shoe!

Minnie smells the burger, eats the meat and tosses the bun to the pigeons.

MINNIE

Rent.

JD

Rent!? For what?!

MINNIE

My bench. One night - one shoe.

JD spits out a sigh and hobbles away.

JD

That's just great! I try to help you people and I get run down, drugged, chased, beaten - and now my one remaining shoe is stolen by a person who eats garbage.

JD sneezes.

JD (CONT'D)

Maybe he was right!

MINNIE

He who?

JD jabs his finger up at the sky as he continues to hobble-hop away. Minnie finishes with the trash and catches up with him.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Right about what?

JD grudgingly explains as they move across central park.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

JD and Minnie slosh their way through the still-flooded streets of New York city as JD finishes his explanation, sneezing every now and then. JD now has a plastic bag on each foot, held in place by rubber bands.

JD

...so that's it. Twelve days.
Eleven, now.

MINNIE

He sent you HERE?! Why not
Kansas...or Minnesota...
(laughing)
Somewhere in the Bible belt.

JD

(to the sky)
Because he's a jerk, that's why!

Two gun-toting THIEVES knock over a liquor store, nearly flattening JD and Minnie as they make their getaway. Minnie gives JD a sympathetic look.

MINNIE

You're screwed.

JD limps off, disgusted.

EXT. NEWS STAND - DAY

Today's edition of the Star is selling like crazy. RICO approaches the news stand, thumbs through several daily papers, as if looking for something, then picks up a Star. JD limps past the newsstand with barely a glance. Minnie follows, bumming change from passers by. JD pushes through the crowd, searching the sea of faces for any sign of goodness.

JD

One person and I'm outta here. I
only need one. There's gotta be
one...

Suddenly - something registers and JD stops. He hurries back to the newsstand.

MINNIE

What's wrong?

JD

That's me.

ANGLE ON AN OPEN ISSUE OF "THE STAR"

Covering Rico's face as he reads near the newsstand. JD's blurred photo and the headline "Homeless Messiah Heals the Sick!" Draw JD and Minnie closer.

JD

That's me! I was there - at that hospital last night.

MINNIE

You can heal people? Why didn't you say somethin'? I gotta bunion as big as your head.

JD

That's not why I came.

Rico lowers the Star, revealing his face for the first time. He is a charming Cuban with a deception nature, disguised by a handsome exterior.

RICO

Why you come then, carnal?

JD sees something in Rico's eyes that makes him wonder.

MINNIE

He's gotta find one good person to save the world. Know any?

Rico smiles and shakes his head "No".

RICO

Lo siento, amigo.

Rico looks JD in the eye, searching for some clue.

RICO (CONT'D)

So you're him, huh?

He holds up his issue of the Star.

RICO (CONT'D)

Can't really tell by the picture.

JD sulks away and Minnie extends her grimy hand to Rico.

MINNIE

Hey - how `bout a buck for a cup of coffee?

Rico looks past Minnie to watch JD stop and adjust the bags on his feet.

RICO

Get outta my face, bruja. You stink.

Minnie mutters a gypsy curse as she walks away, passing JD.

MINNIE

So, you want them shoes or not?

JD follows Minnie and Rico follows them both from a discreet distance. Rico pickpockets a businessman, wraps the stolen wallet in his copy of the star and tucks the paper under one arm. Rico's odd, spotted dog PECOS trails behind his master.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - DAY

Liz follows the shelter SUPERVISOR through a surly CROWD of homeless. Q follows Liz, who carries Morgan, her angelic five year old daughter - and the blurred shot of JD.

LIZ

At least take a look - he was wet and dirty and I think he was missing a shoe.

SUPERVISOR

I've got four hundred people that fit that description - and only enough food for ten of them. Tell you what, you break the news that the floods have cut off supplies to every shelter in the city and no one's gonna eat today and I'll stop to look at your picture.

Liz gives up and heads for the door.

LIZ

Let's get out of here.

Q

We've got two more shelters to check.

Liz pushes through the crowd.

LIZ

I'm through chasing ghosts. The guy was just in the wrong place at the right time.

(to Morgan)

Besides, this time tomorrow we'll be l-o-n-g gone. Right, Sweetie?

MORGAN

(to Q)

We're gonna see Mickey Mouse!

Q

But the boss said -

LIZ

Oh, please. In two weeks the world - and Brasher - will have forgotten all about the Homeless Messiah.

EXT. ANOTHER SHELTER - DAY

The food line is already around the block and the day's still young. Minnie looks toward the front of the line as JD studies his feet. Rico ducks behind a tall guy further back in the line as he divides his attention between JD and the billfold he lifted back at the news stand. Rico discards a library card and family pictures from the wallet.

JD
(to Minnie)
Do my toes look blue to you?

Minnie continues to study the head of the line with concern.

MINNIE
Why ain't the line movin'?

JD looks baffled as he holds his hand to his stomach.

JD
I feel strange. Except for my feet -
which I don't feel at all.

His stomach growls. JD panics.

JD (CONT'D)
What was that?

MINNIE
Hunger. You'll get used to it.
(annoyed)
What's goin' on up there?!
Everything'll be gone by the time we
get in.

JD hugs his thin jacket to his body.

JD'S POV OF THE CROWD

A shivering CHILD stares out from the meager warmth of her MOTHER's tattered raincoat. A frail OLD MAN's knees buckle and his BUDDY helps him remain standing. All in line look frightened and defeated.

JD

Is touched by their pain.

JD
How can they live like this?

A group of CAROLERS pass by, singing Joy To The World.

BURLY GUY
Most of them won't.

JD'S POV OF THE CROWD

As they listen to the music. Their sadness seems to melt away and, for a moment they forget the dismal reality of their wretched lives.

JD
They're smiling. How can they smile?

BURLY GUY
Too much Thunderbird. Kills the
brain cells.

Minnie's smiling, too. A wistful, bittersweet smile.

MINNIE
I almost forgot about Christmas.

JD suddenly steps out of line.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
If you leave you ain't gonna get
those shoes.

JD
This isn't right. These people need
food.

JD heads for the shelter doors. Rico follows, unnoticed.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER

The supervisor and her crew are coercing the last of the homeless from the shelter and preparing to lock the doors.

SUPERVISOR
I'm sorry. There's nothing we can
do about it. Hopefully tomorrow...

JD sticks his plastic-wrapped foot in the door just as the supervisor closes it.

JD
OW!

SUPERVISOR
I'm sorry. Maybe tomorrow.

JD pushes his way in, followed by the people who were just ejected - and Rico.

JD
Tomorrow?! What about today? These
people are cold and hungry.

The stressed-out supervisor gives up, allowing the homeless to flood the room once again.

INT. SHELTER KITCHEN - DAY

The supervisor throws open the kitchen doors.

SUPERVISOR

Fine, you tell me how *this* feeds
five hundred.

JD surveys the barren kitchen. Five pounds of hamburger, two dozen buns, a sack of potatoes and a withered head of cabbage is the total inventory. Rico watches through a small glass panel in the door as JD rolls up his sleeves.

OUTSIDE THE SHELTER

A shelter worker walks the line calling loudly.

SHELTER WORKER

MINNIE?! Anyone here know a Minnie?!

MINNIE

Who wants to know?

SHELTER WORKER

You Minnie?

MINNIE

Maybe. What do you want?

SHELTER WORKER

Your friend wants you at the head of
the line.

Minnie follows the worker.

BACK INSIDE THE SHELTER

Minnie is led to the head of the line, to the displeasure of the other hungry people. The room is packed to capacity and the natives are way beyond restless.

SHELTER WORKER

(to Rico)

Hey you! What are you doin' back
there?

Rico moves away from the swinging kitchen doors just as JD emerges - carrying trays loaded with hamburgers, fries and cole slaw. The crowd cheers as JD sets the food down at the head of the line and returns to the kitchen. The supervisor stares in amazement as Minnie takes the first burger and the other hungry people follow her lead, filling their trays.

MINNIE

JD - is that you? What're you doin'
back there?!

JD reemerges from the kitchen with more food.

JD
I'm not giving up.

MINNIE
What's the use - one good deed ain't
gonna save the world.

He gives her a wink as he returns to the kitchen.

JD
It's a start.

As Minnie thinks about it and smiles, an emaciated mother
and child push their way in front of her.

MINNIE
HEY!

Minnie's immediate angry response quickly recedes into a new
tolerance as she watches the child grab another burger and
cower, expecting to be yelled at. But instead, Minnie takes
a handful of fries from a serving bin and adds it to the
hungry child's plate.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
You forgot the fries. A burger ain't
nothin' without fries.

The supervisor hurriedly hands out food as JD delivers another
steaming tray of burgers and hurries back to the kitchen.
Rico peers through the kitchen door, troubled.

RICO'S POV

Of the kitchen, piled high with food: burgers stacked to the
ceiling, fries for days and enough cole slaw to feed an army.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOMELESS SHELTER - LATE AFTERNOON

JD exits the building, eating one of his own burgers as he
wades through the mass of hungry people jamming the streets.

JD
Don't worry - there's plenty for
everyone.

JD seems to be enjoying the new sensation of eating as he
finally makes it through the crowd and rounds the corner.

RICO

Pushes his way out onto the shelter stoop and scans the crowd.
No luck - he's lost JD.

RICO
Shit!

Pecos rejoins his master on the stoop in a similarly surly mood, having just squeezed between the legs of a hundred hungry people jamming the doorway. Pecos growls and bites the cuff of someone's pants as they nearly step on him.

INT. TAXI - LATE AFTERNOON

MORGAN

Look Mommy!

Morgan presses her nose to the window as the EAST INDIAN CABBY leans on the horn.

CABBY

Get out of the road, please!

Another blast of the horn does no good. The crowd outside the shelter has overflowed into the street, stopping traffic. Q hops out of the cab.

LIZ

Where are you going?

Q

Gonna 360 the place - see if I can get a little 411. Just chill, you ain't goin' nowhere.

As Q questions people leaving the shelter, food in hand, Liz closes the car door and locks it. The cabby continues to honk as people surround the cab. He taps on the windshield.

CABBY

EXCUSE ME, YOU MUST MOVE NOW.

LIZ

Don't be scared, Sweetie.

MORGAN

I'm not, Mommy. They don't look mean - they just look sad.

Q runs back to the cab.

Q

Yo - he was here.

LIZ

(annoyed)

Are they sure it was him?

Q

100 proof. Buzz is our boy made two thousand burgers out of five pounds of ground cow.

Liz sees the eager look in Q's eyes and sighs. She turns to Morgan.

LIZ
Stay *right* here, okay?

MORGAN
Okay Mommy.

Liz leaves the cab to catch up with Q.

LIZ
(to Morgan)
Lock the door.
(to cabby)
We'll be right back.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Rico talks at a pay phone.

RICO
I don't care about that - just get
the word out. I want this guy found.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

JD stands among a group of cackling HOOKERS awaiting an answer to his question.

REVEREND LOVE
Are we good!? Shit baby, we're the
best!

JD moves on in search of goodness as the hookers continue to laugh.

INT. LIZ'S APARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

HARRY the doorman puts down his copy of *The Star* to open the door for Liz. She carries Morgan sleeping on one shoulder and today's pre-vacation purchases under the other arm.

LIZ
(quietly)
Thanks Harry.

HARRY
Evenin' Ms. Camden. Hey, you think
that guy's for real?

LIZ
What guy?

Harry holds up his copy of the *Star*.

HARRY
Your guy.

Liz crosses the lobby to the elevator.

LIZ

Don't believe everything you read,
Harry.

HARRY

That's too bad. I was hopin'...
You know, just for a minute.
(laughing at himself)
It's nice to think about it, though.

Liz considers this as the elevator doors slide open.

LIZ

No, Harry - if I believed in him I'd
have to reconsider Santa Claus and
the tooth fairy, too.

She steps into the elevator and the doors begin to slide shut.

LIZ (CONT'D)

And I've got enough to worry about
without adding the possibility of
miracles.

INT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We FOLLOW Liz as she gently deposits Morgan into bed, turns out the light, closes the door half-way and moves through the quiet, upscale apartment to her own bedroom.

INT. LIZ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mellow jazz spills from the stereo as Liz transfers the last remaining vacation items from the closet to her suitcase. Liz seems distracted as she zips the suitcase closed and drags it to the doorway, then debates whether or not to add the small leather satchel containing her notebook computer. Finally, giving into her Boy Scout instincts, she sets the satchel down beside the other luggage. The phone rings and Liz picks up the cordless, still distracted.

LIZ

Yeah.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

Where's my picture?! You know we
can't run a front page story without
a picture?!

We FOLLOW Liz as she moves through the dark and lonely apartment to the living room's wet bar to pour herself a drink.

LIZ

I told you - we got there too late.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

I've got a feeling about this one -
I'd like you to stay on it. Who
knows, it might be your ticket to
hard news.

LIZ

I've been promising Morgan this trip
for two years Howard - and you've
been promising to put me on hard
news for four.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

But two miracles in two days -

Liz heads back to the bedroom, looking tired.

LIZ

You mean two coincidences in two
days. This guy's no more real than
those flying saucers Q shoots in his
brother's garage. It's another scam
and I'm too burned out to follow it
through. Maybe when I get back, if
anyone still cares -

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

You know full well this kinda crap
has a limited shelf life.

(beat)

Fine, I'll put Melniker on it. But
don't come whining when your Homeless
Messiah turns out to be the real
McCoy on a mission from God and
Melniker's writing the sequel to the
Bible.

Liz unlocks the sliding glass door that leads out to the
balcony and steps out into the night.

LIZ

Thanks, Howard. I appreciate it.
And my kid appreciates it, too.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

Yeah, yeah. Bring me back a set of
ears.

Liz smiles and switches off the cordless, then takes a sip
of her drink as she looks out at the twinkling lights of the
city. She thinks about Brasher's words and laughs.

LIZ

A mission from God.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

JD runs through the seedy side of town in the dead of night, exhausted and afraid. The shrill sounds of sirens and distant screams surround him. A cat fight breaks out in a nearby garbage can and JD jumps. He hears gunshots up ahead and ducks down an alley. Angry voices and heavy footsteps approach from behind and JD looks for a place to hide. The threatening sounds nearly upon him, JD opens the huge, hinged lid of a rusty dumpster and climbs in.

INT. DUMPSTER - NIGHT

JD listens, paralyzed with fear, as the voices move closer, hover, then move away. After a fearful moment JD quietly pushes aside the empty boxes and styrofoam packing chips that fill the dumpster and tries to get comfortable.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DUMPSTER - DAY

JD's sleep is shattered by a huge metallic thud that rocks the dumpster. He tries to stand, but the dumpster's sudden movements keep him off balance.

JD
Hey! What are you doing!?

JD clammers for a handhold as the dumpster is lifted into the air. He screams as his sleeping quarters begin to turn upside down and he falls crashing, along with the discarded packing materials, into a massive New York City refuse collection truck.

INT. REFUSE TRUCK TRASH COMPARTMENT - DAY

JD flails among tons of rotting food and rancid garbage, trying to climb to the surface as a greasy piston drives a huge steel plate which compresses the trash. His screams are muted by the truck's motors and mechanisms.

EXT. REFUSE COLLECTION TRUCK - DAY

PAULIE waits for the dumpster to be lowered back down to the ground, then shoves it back to its place in the alley.

PAULIE
OKAY - WE'RE CLEAR!

INSIDE THE TRUCK'S CAB

MAURICE devours a jelly donut as he reads a discarded copy of the Star. He turns back to Homeless Messiah story.

PAULIE
HEY - MAURICE!

Maurice looks up to find Paulie on the platform at the window, waiting to move on to the next stop.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

We goin' or what?!

Maurice holds the donut in his mouth as he tosses the paper aside, turns off the compressor and throws the truck into drive.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

They ever run those Polaroids you found in Trump's trash?

MAURICE

Not yet. But the reporter told me to keep in touch.

INT. REFUSE TRUCK TRASH COMPARTMENT - DAY

JD tries to climb out, but the walls of the trash compartment are covered with years of putrid sludge. He falls back into the stinking waste heap as the truck turns a corner.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Rico walks the streets, stopping occasionally to check in with his network of DEALERS, PIMPS and THUGS who all shake their heads "No" in answer to his inquiry.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Maurice pulls up around back and Paulie hops off the truck, grabs the station's dumpster and rolls it onto the heavy steel forks that hold the bin in place while dumping.

PAULIE

Okay!

Maurice engages the motor that lifts the dumpster into the air and turns it upside down into the collection compartment.

INSIDE THE COLLECTION COMPARTMENT

Trash rains down on JD as he struggles to grab hold of the dumpster.

BACK OUTSIDE

Paulie watches as the dumpster is lifted back out of the compartment, with JD hanging onto it - legs dangling and eyes bulging with fear.

JD

Help me!

PAULIE

What the... Maurice! HEY MAURICE!

The dumpster and JD are lowered back to the ground as Maurice hurries from the truck's cab.

MAURICE

We're fallin' behind, Paulie. What's up?

Maurice sees JD picking trash out of his hair and off of his shabby clothes.

PAULIE

This guy was in the trash. In back.

MAURICE

What the hell you doin' in our truck, Buddy?! You tryin' to get us fired? We ain't no friggin' cab.

JD hurries off toward the station, not wanting another confrontation. Maurice returns to the truck's cab.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

C'mon - let's get outta here before he decides to sue.

BACK IN THE CAB

Maurice notices the Star article as he's about to drive off and does a double take. He picks up the paper takes a closer look, squinting his eyes as he tries to make out the blurred photo of JD.

MAURICE

I'll be damned...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY - ANGLE ON VAN'S LICENSE PLATE

The plate reads; SEXXXY and the plastic frame around it warns; "If This Van's Rockin' - Don't Bother Knockin".

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the "Love Mobile" navigates still-flooded streets of New York, en route to JFK. The vintage van boasts custom painted flames on the side panels, polished chrome bumpers and titanium rims.

INT. VAN - DAY

Q drives as Liz sits in the passenger seat with Morgan on her lap, looking over Disney World and Epcott Center brochures. Liz and Morgan's luggage waits in the back of the van, which has been upholstered in crimson velvet.

LIZ

You're taking the Van Wyck, right?

Q
Would you just chill - we got plenty
of time.

LIZ
I haven't taken a vacation in five
years. It just...makes me nervous.

Q adjusts something up his coat sleeve and extends his arm
toward Morgan.

Q
Hey, little sister - how `bout
flashing uncle Q those pearly whites.

Morgan smiles and we hear a faint click.

LIZ
C'mon Q, watch the road. What are
you doing?

Q pulls back his sleeve, revealing a micro camera strapped
to his forearm.

Q
New gizmo I been workin' on for
undercover capers.

Liz looks exasperated and on edge.

LIZ
Great. Could you just concentrate
on getting us there in one piece,
please?
(looking around)
This thing is disgusting - it's like
a bordello on wheels.

Q
Hey, your lucky my brother likes
you. This van is his baby.

Q turns onto the expressway as Liz's cellular phone begins
to ring. She ignores it.

MORGAN
Mommy, your phone's ringing.

LIZ
I know, Sweetie, but we're on
vacation.

The phone continues to ring. Liz is itching to answer it.
Morgan reaches into her mother's purse and hands the phone
to Liz.

MORGAN
It's okay, Mommy. I don't mind.

Liz takes the phone and flips it open.

LIZ
This better be good - and quick.
I'm on vacation.

Liz listens.

LIZ (CONT'D)
I don't know a Maurice. Oh, right -
the trash guy.

Morgan sees the look on her mother's face and puts the vacation brochures aside.

LIZ (CONT'D)
No. No. No, absolutely not.

Liz switches off the phone, stuffs it back into her purse and stares at the road ahead as she chews her nails.

MORGAN
Was it important, Mommy?

LIZ
No, Sweetie. Don't worry about it.

Morgan takes her mother's hand away from her mouth and holds it as she smiles. It's clear who is the emotional adult in this relationship.

MORGAN
It's okay, Mommy. Honest.

Q reaches the intersection of several different expressways.

Q
Where to, Boss?

Liz hesitates before answering.

LIZ
Grand Central.
(to Morgan)
But just for a minute. We're still
gonna make our flight.

Q
You got it. Hold tight.

Q cuts across three lanes of traffic and exits the expressway at the first off-ramp.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

JD wanders through the station at rush hour, amazed by the volume and diversity of people that fill the cavernous structure. Some recoil at his appearance and odor, but most are in too much of a hurry to notice anything.

UP AHEAD

LOUIE, a slight, middle aged man with slicked back hair and a ready smile approaches an impeccably dressed BUSINESSMAN.

LOUIE
Hey - how's it going?

The businessman looks around, certain that the stranger isn't addressing him. Louie extends his hand and the other man accepts the handshake instinctively.

LOUIE (CONT'D)
It's been a long time.

BUSINESSMAN
Sorry, you must have me -

Louie pumps the other man's arm excitedly while undoing the catch of the mark's Rolex and sliding it onto his own wrist.

LOUIE
Johnny Valducci.
(offended)
Don't tell me you don't remember -

The other man searches his memory as he hides behind a social smile.

BUSINESS MAN
Oh yeah... We met at that thing,
right?

LOUIE
Right!

BUSINESS MAN
Yeah, that's right. Great to see
you again, Johnny - but...

The man tries to let go of Louie's hand to check his watch, but Louie is still pumping and the watch has now slid onto the thief's wrist.

BUSINESS MAN (CONT'D)
I'm late for my train. Why don't
you give me a call at work next week.

Louie lets go and tries to pocket the watch as the other man hurries for his train, but the watch drops to the floor. Louie covers the Rolex with his foot before the departing mark notices. The other man waves as he rounds the corner and Louie waves back.

LOUIE
Putz.

As Louie stoops down to retrieve the stolen watch, JD tumbles into him - propelled by a rude, rushed traveler.

Both men fall to the floor.

JD
Oh, I'm sorry.

JD goes to help Louie up.

LOUIE
Just don't touch me, all right!?
Jesus Christ - this is a new suit!
What the hell's wrong with you?!

Louie dusts himself off as JD retrieves the Rolex.

JD
Is this yours?

A cop approaches. Louie gets nervous.

LOUIE
Shit. No, it ain't mine. Get lost.

Louie hurries off through the crowd as JD extends the watch to passers by.

JD
Excuse me, did you lose this?

Louie emerges from the crowd near a bank of pay phones and is suddenly struck by a thought. He turns back to take another look as JD moves toward the ticket counter, then grabs the phone, plunks in a quarter and dials.

JD

Approaches the counter and addresses the tank-like female EMPLOYEE on the other side.

JD
I think someone lost this.

The woman, unfazed by JD's appearance, leans forward to inspect the watch.

EMPLOYEE
Ten bucks.

JD
Excuse me?

EMPLOYEE
I'll give you ten bucks for it.

JD
I'm not trying to sell it. I just want to find the owner so I can give it back.

EMPLOYEE

Okay, leave it with me. I'll find em' for you.

BACK AT THE PAY PHONE

Louie waits for Rico to come to the phone.

LOUIE

Hey Rico - it's Louie. I'm around the corner at Grand Central and I think your guy might be here.

THE EMPLOYEE

Reaches for the watch and JD pulls it back.

JD

Why should I give it to you - you just told me you're not a good person?

EMPLOYEE

I said I'm not as good as I used to be - before I moved to this hell hole of a city.

She looks around, wets her lips and reaches for the watch again.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

That don't mean I'm a thief.

JD

How do I know you'll even look for the owner?

EMPLOYEE

Listen Pal, I don't know what you're looking for, but -

JD

I just told you what I'm looking for.

EMPLOYEE

Oh yeah, a good person. In New York?! You're even crazier than you look. Babe, I gave up on that dream years ago.

JD

Then where *should* I look?

EMPLOYEE

I used to know some pretty decent folks back in El Paso, but that was years ago.

JD

So why did you come here?

The sincerity in JD's voice slips beneath the woman's radar and touches something nostalgic. Her hardened expression seems to soften.

EMPLOYEE

I don't know. Grass is greener and all that, I guess.

JD

And was it?

The employee's smile is bittersweet.

EMPLOYEE

No. It was just further from home.

RICO

Hurries into the terminal, followed by Pecos.

RICO

Window seven...window seven...

JD

Hands over the watch and accepts a bus ticket in return.

EMPLOYEE

Okay, that's one round trip to El Paso. The company will never miss it.

She looks around before stealing a second ticket.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Hell, let's make it two.

She drops the second ticket into her purse and calls to JD as he hurries off to the bus.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Good luck!

JD

Thanks. You promise to look for the owner?

EMPLOYEE

Cross my heart.

As soon as JD rounds the corner - the employee's smile fades and she puts the Rolex into her purse. Rico hurries up to the window as he reaches for his wallet.

RICO

Gimme a ticket to wherever the bum
went.

INT. BOARDING GATE - DAY

JD hands his ticket to the TICKET AGENT at the gate and she studies him with suspicion. The filthy bags on his feet are in shreds and his clothes are hopelessly soiled.

INT. BUS - DAY

Heads turn as JD enters and limps to an empty seat near the back of the bus.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

Oh great.

JD sits, feeling shame and embarrassment for the first time in his life. Several seated passengers lower their windows in an attempt to vent JD's smell. The DRIVER follows the last of the boarding passengers into the bus and takes his seat behind the wheel. He turns in search of the horrible smell, spots JD and mutters something cruel under his breath. The driver starts up the engine, turns the air conditioning fans to high and closes the door. Rico runs to the bus and pounds on the door, carrying Pecos hidden in a zippered tote bag.

RICO

Open up! I got a ticket!

Rico presses his ticket to the door and the driver opens up.

DRIVER

Take a seat. We're pullin' out.

Rico takes the last empty seat, next to JD, as the bus pulls out of the station.

RICO

Hey, I know you. The news stand...
Lookin' for a few good men, right.

JD

Just one.

RICO

What the hell happened to you, man?
You really stink.

INT. VAN - DAY

Q, Liz and Morgan sit in gridlock traffic, the tail of the van hanging out into the intersection on the other side of a red light - right outside Grand Central.

JD'S BUS

Approaches, then stops in the intersection, its passage blocked the van. The driver honks.

INSIDE THE VAN

LIZ

Pull up.

Q

I can't. Tell him to go around.

Morgan rolls the window down and sticks her head out.

MORGAN

GO AROUND!

The bus driver continues to lean on the horn. Liz gestures out the window with her arm.

LIZ

GO AROUND! WE CAN'T MOVE!

More honking from the bus. Traffic is still not moving.

Q

If this guy scratches my brother's van I'm in deep -

LIZ

Q -

Q catches himself, Morgan giggles and Liz steps out of the van as the bus driver continues to honk.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

LIZ

BACK OFF, BUDDY!

As Liz approaches the bus, ready for a shouting match, she notices that nearly every window on the bus is down - in the middle of December. As she sees the shivering passengers peering out from the open windows, Liz suddenly recognizes JD.

Q (OS)

Liz - c'mon!

Liz looks back at JD as she returns to the van and the traffic up ahead begins to move. She reclaims her seat and closes the door, trying to think.

Q (CONT'D)

What's up?

LIZ

It's him.

Q
Him? Him who?

LIZ
Brasher's Homeless Messiah. He's in
the bus.

The car in front of the van moves, but Q stays put.

Q
What do you want me to do?

The bus's horn is joined by those of the other cars.

LIZ
I don't know. Follow him.

Q
But we're in front of him - going
the opposite direction!

Liz buckles up and holds on to Morgan.

LIZ
Hold on tight, Honey.
(to Q)
Back up.

Q
BACK UP?! Are you outta your mind?!

ANGLE ON STREET

As horns blare while the van backs up into the intersection,
the bus passes and the van follows.

BACK IN THE VAN

Q
What about your flight?

Liz whips out her cellular phone and dials the office.

LIZ
We'll still make it - unless I get
what I want. Hard news the minute
we wrap this story.

Q
You go girl.

MORGAN
But what about Disney World, Mommy?

LIZ
It'll still be there in a month,
Sweetie. And you'll have two
vacations instead of one.

Morgan is on the verge of pouting, but hasn't quite made up her mind.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Okay?

MORGAN

So this one wouldn't count?

LIZ

Like it never happened.

(into phone)

Zoe, it's me. Tell him it's important.

Morgan thinks about it for a moment and decides to get into it. She turns her attention to the road and speaks with her best "street-slang" intonation.

MORGAN

Step on it homes - he's losin' us.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Rico steps out of the tiny lavatory in the back of the bus and spots a sleeping WOMAN with a thousand page novel on the floor beside her. Rico sees the bookmark placed near the end of the book. He crouches down, pretending to tie his shoes, and secretly tears out the last page of the book and stuffs it into his pocket. As Rico starts back to his seat - we can see the van's headlights through the back window, following the bus out of the city.

RICO'S POV

Of JD near the front of the bus, trying to find goodness among the passengers. Everyone he approaches turns away, disgusted and ignores him.

RICO

Notices a burly, off-duty soldier asleep in a window seat and an equally huge Army duffel bag stored in the compartment above. Rico casually unzips the duffel, acting as if he was looking through his own bag and takes a flowered shirt, a pair of pants, sneakers and a stick of deodorant. He carries the stolen clothes back to his seat. Most of the windows in the bus are still down and the other passengers are huddled against the freezing wind. A moment later JD returns from his unfruitful search.

RICO

Any luck?

JD

They won't even talk to me. This is gonna be harder than I thought.

Rico hands the pilfered items to JD.

RICO

Do everyone a favor - put these on.

JD looks at the clothes and then back to Rico. For the first time since his arrival, we see hope in JD's eyes.

JD

What's your name?

RICO

(shivering)

Rico. Rico Del Santo.

JD smiles, wondering if this might be the one?

JD

Thanks, Rico. My name's JD.

Rico sees the hopeful look and recoils as if struck.

RICO

Hey, I didn't do it for you - I did it for me. I'm freezin' my cojones off in here and you really stink. I ain't gonna get no sleep unless you burn those Goddamned clothes.

JD is disappointed.

JD

Oh.

Pecos squirms in the zippered tote bag at Rico's feet.

JD (CONT'D)

What's that?

Rico looks around, then unzips the bag to give Pecos some air as he whispers.

RICO

My partner - Pecos.

Pecos stares up at JD, cocking his head in curiosity. JD reaches down to pet him.

JD

Hi Pecos.

RICO

I wouldn't do that, man. He hates everyone but...

Rico stops, amazed. Pecos is sniffing and licking JD's hand.

RICO (CONT'D)

...me.

(MORE)

RICO (CONT'D)
(offended)
You got raw meat in your pocket or
something, Carnal?

JD pats Pecos on the head and then sits up as he starts to unbutton his shirt.

JD
Thanks for the clothes.

Rico is disgusted.

RICO
Not here, man!

He points to the lavatory.

RICO (CONT'D)
Back there.

JD steps into the aisle and heads toward the back. Rico tosses him the deodorant.

RICO (CONT'D)
Don't forget this - please. And
don't be afraid of a little soap and
water.

JD passes the sleeping service man and enters the lavatory.

INT. LAVATORY

JD stands bare-chested in front of the lavatory mirror, trying to make sense of the water faucets, soap and paper towel dispensers. He takes the lid off of the half-used deodorant and smells the translucent blue gel that looks more like candy than chemicals. Intrigued by the smell, JD takes a big bite and immediately regrets it.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

JD steps out of the lavatory a new man. The grime is gone and he wears the oversized, brightly colored clothing that Rico lifted from the sleeping giant. JD takes his seat, beside a sleeping Rico and watches the passing moonlit scenery as he relaxes for the first time since his arrival. It only takes moment for exhaustion to overtake him.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Christmas oldies play on the radio as Q yawns and drives. Liz dozes in the passenger's seat while Morgan sits on the floor in the back, between the seats, eyes at half-mast.

MORGAN
(whispering)
Uncle Q?

Q
Talk to me, beautiful.

MORGAN
What's the buzz on that skeezer that
dogged you down at the shake a booty
club last week?

Liz shoots Q a scathing look through drooping eyelids.

Q
Uh...

MORGAN
You know, the one with the nasty
headlights.

LIZ
Q!

Q
(playing innocent)
You know, you really ought to consider
a private school.

MORGAN
It was wack, Mommy. She played him
like a sucker.

Q
(under his breath)
I hear that.

EXT. VAN - NIGHT

We hear laughter as the van follows the bus across the
picturesque farmland of northern Pennsylvania.

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

The dust-covered bus pulls in to the rest stop with its engine
clanging. The van follows the bus off the highway, pulling
into a dirt lot adjacent an all-purpose country store. The
only other vehicles in the lot are two horse-drawn buggies.
The bus driver opens the doors and steps out, followed by
the passengers. The SECOND SHIFT DRIVER approaches the bus
to greet the original driver.

INSIDE THE BUS

JD and Rico follow the others out. As they pass the burly
soldier, still asleep, Rico intentionally kicks the sleeping
giant's foot in an attempt to wake him up. The soldier
withdraws his foot, mumbling in his sleep, but does not
awaken.

OUTSIDE THE BUS

In the background we see Liz and Q watching JD from the van while Morgan runs in to the country store. The bus passengers mill around stretching their legs as the exhausted driver opens up the engine panel and peers in. The second shift driver addresses the passengers.

SECOND SHIFT DRIVER

Don't go too far folks, we're gonna refuel and check out this noise, then we'll be off again in about an hour. I'll honk three times when we're ready and wait ten more minutes after that - then I'm outta here. So keep an ear out.

The second shift driver rejoins the original driver at the engine as the passengers disperse. Rico turns around to locate JD, but he's gone.

INT. COUNTRY STORE - DAY

JD wanders down one aisle and Morgan browses through another as two AMISH FARMERS carry their purchases up to the register. JD inspects several items from the shelves before picking up a chocolate-covered marshmallow Santa. He smells the candy through the foil wrapper, then tears it open without a second thought. He touches the tip of his tongue to the chocolate carefully, mindful of the deodorant experience and then takes a big bite as Morgan rounds the corner into his aisle.

JD

Mmmm...

MORGAN

(whispering)

You're not supposed to do that.

JD

(mouth full)

Do what?

MORGAN

Eat the candy before you pay for it.

JD continues to chew as he reluctantly returns the uneaten portion of the candy bar to its place on the shelf.

PROPRIETOR

Hey - what do you think you're doin' back there?!

MORGAN

Uh oh, you're in trouble.

Morgan sighs and takes JD by the hand.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

C'mon. Better let me do the talking.

Morgan leads JD up to the counter as he chews. The Amish farmers tip their hats to the PROPRIETOR and head out to the buggies with their purchases.

PROPRIETOR

You think I didn't see that?

JD lowers his eyes.

JD

I'm sorry. I was hungry.

MORGAN

My dad's a diabetic. He had to have sugar right away.

The proprietor studies them both with suspicion.

PROPRIETOR

Your dad, huh?

Morgan returns her own candy bar to the shelf and pulls two quarters from her pocket, then hands the money to the owner of the store.

MORGAN

Yes, sir. And you wouldn't wanna see him when he has an attack.

She leads JD toward the door.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

He screams and twitches and foam shoots out of his mouth like a... like a fire extinguisher.

Liz hurries into the store.

LIZ

There you are! Why didn't you tell me you were...

Liz notices JD and is caught off guard.

MORGAN

Mommy, Daddy almost had another attack.

Liz sees the tense expression on Morgan's face, the confusion on JD's and the skepticism on the proprietor's and decides to play along.

LIZ

He did? Oh, that's...not good.

PROPRIETOR
(concerned)
He gonna be all right, ma'am?

Liz hurries them all out the door.

LIZ
Yes. Thanks a lot - for whatever it
was you did.

OUTSIDE THE STORE

Before Liz has a chance to scold Morgan or make up a story
for JD - Rico hurries up to the group.

RICO
Hey JD, some old lady told me there's
a diner up about a half a mile. You
comin'?

JD
Okay.

LIZ
JD. That's your name?

JD
Not really. It's just what people
call me.

Liz watches as JD crouches down to Morgan's eye level.

JD (CONT'D)
Thank you, little one.

She extends her hand.

MORGAN
My name is Morgan.

JD enfolds her little hand in his.

JD
It was nice to meet you, Morgan.
It's too bad kids don't count. If
they did - I'd be home right now.

As Morgan looks into JD's smiling eyes she is drawn by his
innocence. It's as if she knows who he is without having
the words to explain it. She suddenly throws her arms around
his neck and gives him a huge hug.

LIZ
Morgan!

Morgan gives JD a kiss on the cheek before releasing him.
JD smiles and gives her a conspiratorial wink.

JD

Take care of your mom.

Liz calls to JD as he walks away.

LIZ

What does that mean - kids don't count?

JD

They're all good, until they hit puberty.

LIZ

I don't get it.

JD

I'm sorry. It's a long story and I'm running out of time.

Rico walks ahead of JD.

RICO

Vamonos, carnal! We only got an hour.

JD hurries to catch up with Rico.

JD

Bye, Morgan.

MORGAN

Bye.

Morgan sighs as she watches JD move down the road with Rico.

LIZ

What's wrong, Sweetie?

MORGAN

He's got a lot to learn.

Liz takes Morgan by the hand and leads her back to the van.

LIZ

C'mon - we'd better find Q.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Pecos follows behind JD as he and Rico walk. There's no restaurant in sight - just clapboard shanties, Amish farm homes and flooded farmland as far as the eye can see. JD's stomach growls.

JD

I'm making that sound again. Can't we just go to one of these houses and ask for food? Maybe that's how I'll find the one I need.

Rico laughs.

RICO
 Cono, man - tu estas bien loco! You
 think Farmer John's gonna open up
 for a black guy and a spic?

JD
 Why not?

RICO
 Okay man - go for it. This I gotta
 see.

JD and Rico approach a farm house with Q's van following way
 behind.

MONTAGE

We see a rapid-fire succession of silent "Nos" and closing
 doors as suspicious Amish farmers and their wives reject
 JD's request.

EXT. SHANTY - DAY

JD gathers his courage and knocks on one last door. VELMA,
 a bored and disheveled young housewife, opens the door with
 a screaming baby boy on each hip and TV soap operas playing
 loudly in the background. The woman is annoyed.

VELMA
 What do you want?

JD turns away, defeated.

JD
 Never mind.

As JD and Rico walk away.

VELMA
 That it? You drag me away from my
 stories for that?

JD continues to walk away.

JD
 I was going to ask for food, but I
 can see -

The woman checks JD out and likes what she sees.

VELMA
 I got some leftover shepherd's pie
 in the fridge.

JD stops and turns back.

JD
Is that food?

VELMA
My husband thinks so.

RICO
(concerned - to JD)
Forget it. We gotta get back to the
bus, anyway.

JD approaches the woman, a glint of hope in his eyes.

JD
You'll give us food?

WOMAN
What am I, talkin' French? Get on
in here before I change my mind.
These boys gotta be fed.

One of the babies sees Pecos' and begins to cry.

PECOS

Cocks his funny-looking face and growls in return and the
babies both begin to wail.

VELMA
Well, c'mon in then. But you'll
have to leave that ugly mutt of yours
outside.

JD enters the shabby little house, followed by an increasingly
nervous Rico.

RICO
We're gonna miss the bus, carnal...
(to Pecos)
Sit down and shut up.

Pecos watches the door close, then sits unhappily with his
head on his front paws.

INT. SHANTY KITCHEN - DAY

Velma leads JD and Rico into her modest kitchen.

JD
Can you tell me a little more about
yourself?

VELMA
Sit down.

The men sit at the kitchen table and the housewife plunks
her babies down in hand-me-down high chairs, then goes to
the fridge and extracts the casserole dish containing the
cold ground beef and mashed-potato pie.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Ain't nothin' to tell.

She keeps her eyes on JD as she smells the food to make sure is hasn't gone bad. JD's eyes roam from the apparently promising candidate to the much-needed food.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I was born and raised in this crummy little town and I'll most likely die here. Arlin, that's my husband, he's out back there mendin' the Amish's fence. He'll be out all day. Don't even come in for lunch no more. Just eats his sandwiches in the barn while he reads them girlie magazines and plays with that little thing of his. Least that's my guess, 'cause he sure as hell don't play with me no more.

She undoes the top three buttons of her blouse as she approaches JD, making direct eye contact.

VELMA (CONT'D)

You like it hot?

She smiles seductively and JD takes the cold dish from her hand and begins to shovel the food into his mouth with his hands.

JD

(mouth full)

No, this is fine. Mmmm... This is very good.

She lifts her babies from the high-chairs, takes a seat and begins to breast feed the boys as she smiles at Rico.

VELMA

What about your friend - don't he want some?

RICO

No thanks. I'm not hungry.

Rico seems relieved as he moves to the window.

RICO (CONT'D)

Your husband doesn't mind you having guests?

Her smile is mischievous.

VELMA

Don't know, never had one before.
(MORE)

VELMA (CONT'D)

But like I said - he'll be out there
all day...and I'll be right here.
So if you get hungry, you just let
me know. There's plenty to go around.

JD drops a handful of food down his shirt in his hurry.

JD

Oh...

Velma returns her babies to the high-chairs and hurries over to JD.

VELMA

Better let me have that shirt. That
grease is gonna stain unless I get
to it right now.

JD allows her to unbutton his stained shirt. He is clueless as to her motives.

VELMA (CONT'D)

(to Rico)

If you ain't hungry - maybe you wanna
take a walk or somethin'.

(to JD)

Boy, you gotta nice body on you -
anyone ever tell you that?

JD

Uh...

She starts to undo JD's pants.

VELMA

Is it true what they say `bout you
dark fellas?

JD

Um...I didn't spill any down there.

Rico is amused by JD's evolving predicament. He has an idea and steps outside.

JD (CONT'D)

(nervous)

Where you going?

VELMA

Don't let Arlin see ya.

We can see Rico through the kitchen window as he makes a beeline for Arlin. JD giggles as Velma caresses his chest, inadvertently tickling him.

JD

(giggling)

Stop that.

VELMA

What's the matter, Mama ticklin' her
little brown baby?

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY

Liz, Morgan and Q eat sandwiches as they wait on the far side of the river that separates the road from the shanty.

Q

Damn, these hillbillies know how to
make a sandwich!

A shotgun blast rings out from the shanty. Everyone drops their lunch.

Q (CONT'D)

What the -

POV OF THE SHANTY

We hear another shot and then Velma's screams as Rico dashes out and away from the shanty. A second later JD follows, his unbuttoned shirt flapping in the breeze.

RICO

(running)

Guess you'll have to keep looking!

JD follows Rico over a fence and across a flooded field as Arlin emerges from the house and reloads his shotgun. He jumps into a tractor and throws it into high gear as Velma runs after him screaming.

VELMA

Jesus H., Arlin! We was only talkin'!

ARLIN

Get back in the house, Velma!

The tractor's oversized wheels churn the soggy ground to mud as it crashes through the newly mended fence, in pursuit of JD.

VELMA

WE WAS JUST TALKIN'!

BACK AT THE VAN

Q rummages in the back as Liz slides into the driver's seat and turns over the engine and Morgan calls the play by play.

Q

Where's my camera?!

MORGAN

JD and the other guy are almost to
the river, but the man with the gun
is gaining on them!

Q finds his camera and hurries out of the van as JD and Rico's bus approaches in the distance.

Q
Their bus is coming.

Rico jumps into the river and begins to swim towards the other side and the main road.

JD stumbles, falling face first into the mud as the tractor closes in and Arlin leans out to take a shot. JD winces as the bullet whizzes past. He regains his feet and runs for the river with his head turned back to keep an eye on Arlin.

Q clicks off several shots with his camera as he moves closer.

LIZ
Let's get outta here - this guy's nuts!

Q
Just a few more...

Rico emerges from the river on the other side, soaked to the bone and runs for the road. He takes a quick look back.

TIGHT ANGLE ON JD

As he runs for his life, still looking back.

ARLIN

Suddenly stops at the bank of the river, unable to believe his eyes.

ARLIN
VELMA!

Morgan jumps out of the van and joins Q as he shoots away.

MORGAN
Mommy!

Q
What the hell...

Liz steps out of the van, sure that her eyes are playing tricks on her.

TIGHT ANGLE ON JD

As he stops running and looks around, wondering why everyone is staring at him.

RICO

Watches JD, annoyed.

RICO

Shit.

WIDER ANGLE ON JD,

Still confused as he stands atop the water of the overflowing river. After a moment he realizes where he is and what he's done. At that moment the bus rumbles past.

JD

HEY! THAT'S OUR BUS!

The magic of the miracle is broken along with JD's concentration and he drops into the icy river water with a splash. As Q, Morgan and Liz struggle to help JD - Velma joins Arlin on the other side of the river.

ARLIN

(dumbfounded)

Did you see that, Velma?

VELMA

I told you we was just *talkin'*.

Velma hands one of the boys to their Daddy and they all share an awkward family hug. Velma seems a changed woman. She and her husband kiss as Liz and the others help JD out of the water and into the van.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Contemporary Christmas tunes play on the radio as Q drives and JD guzzles sodas, devours chips and samples assorted mini-mart junk food from his place in the passenger's seat. Pecos sits on JD's lap, sharing the food. Rico sits on the floor behind the front seats.

JD

I'm fillin' my grill.

JD stuffs another handful of chips into his mouth. He seems to really enjoy eating.

JD (CONT'D)

(with attitude)

Fillin' my grill.

(chewing)

I like that.

JD checks his hand-written notes.

JD (CONT'D)

So fly and dope mean good, chillin'
means relaxing and dishing -

Q

Dissin' man. Dissin'.

JD
Dissin'...is disrespecting.

Q
Word.

JD looks up from his list, confused.

JD
Which word?

Q
Yo, man - just give it up. Eat some
more Ho-Hos or somethin'.
(looking ahead)
Where's that damned bus of yours?
There's only one road out here.

Liz secretly jots down a few notes.

LIZ
So what exactly is your definition
of a "good" person?

JD thinks as he chews.

JD
I guess a good person is someone
who's willing to make a sacrifice
for someone else - even though it
may not be in their own best interest.

LIZ
You guess? You don't know?

JD
I hope I'll recognize him or her
when I find them. I don't really
know. I've never done this before.
All I know is that I only get one
shot at this, so I've got to pick my
person carefully.

Liz takes a sip of her cola, amused.

LIZ
You make it sound like some kind of
game show.

MORGAN
What about the President? He's good.
Isn't he, Mommy?

Liz chokes on her drink, spraying the van's interior.

Q
Yo, square up back there!

When Liz recovers she returns her attention to JD.

LIZ
So you really think you're God's
son?

JD
His other son.

Liz revises her notes.

LIZ
That's right - his *other* son. And
which God is this?

JD
There's only one.

LIZ
Just checking. And do you have any
words of wisdom - you know advice on
the world's problems.

JD
I'm not here to tell people what to
do.

LIZ
(to Rico)
And what's your part in this?

RICO
(lying)
Me? Nothin'. I'm just on my way to
El Paso to see my sister.

MORGAN (OS)
Mommy...

Liz moves to the back of the van under Rico's watchful eye.

IN THE BACK OF VAN

Liz tucks Morgan back into bed in the custom-built waterbed,
grimacing at the van's bordellan interior. The bed's furry
red comforter matches the van's red velvet upholstery.

LIZ
You're supposed to be asleep.

Liz tucks Morgan in.

LIZ (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Sweetie, I guess this was
a bad idea.

MORGAN
It's okay, Mommy. I'm having fun.
Aren't you?

LIZ
Off the record?

MORGAN
Off the record.

LIZ
(quietly)
This guy's a kook, but his routine
is entertaining.

MORGAN
(disappointed)
He's not really God's son?

Liz answers carefully.

LIZ
Well...no.

MORGAN
Then how did he walk on the water?

LIZ
He didn't, Honey. I mean, he couldn't
have - could he? It's like Q said,
it was probably just the combination
of where we were standing and the
angle of the light. It was just a
trick our eyes played on us.

MORGAN
It looked real to me.

LIZ
Try to get some sleep. We'll stop
at the next hotel for the night.

Liz smiles as she looks down at her daughter.

MORGAN
Mommy?

LIZ
Yes, my love?

MORGAN
Can I ask you two questions?

LIZ
Sure.

MORGAN
Are we lonely?

LIZ
(taken aback)
Why do you ask that?

MORGAN

Mary Ellen Schwartz says people who don't believe in God are lonely 'cause they walk through life by themselves.

LIZ

Oh, does she?

MORGAN

And since we're not sure if we believe in God I thought maybe we were lonely.

Liz is deeply touched by this. She kisses Morgan on the forehead.

LIZ

How could I ever be lonely with you around? Are you lonely, Sweetie?

Morgan furrows her brow as she mulls it over.

MORGAN

Sometimes.

Liz doesn't know what to say.

LIZ

I'm afraid to hear the second question.

MORGAN

(very seriously)

May I sleep over at Becky's house next Saturday?

LIZ

(relieved)

Yes you may. Now, it's bedtime.

Morgan smiles and rolls away.

MORGAN

Good night, Mommy.

Liz clears her throat and Morgan responds by rolling back over to kiss her mother good night.

LIZ

Good night.

Morgan rolls back over to sleep. Liz thinks about Morgan's question as she watches JD eat. Rico has something on his mind as he watches Liz, watching JD. Liz doesn't like Rico's eyes on her.

LIZ (CONT'D)

May I have my purse, please?

Rico hands Liz the purse lying at his feet and Liz puts it as far away from him as possible.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Liz lets herself into the darkened room. She carries Morgan over one shoulder, sound asleep. Q sets Liz's suitcase inside the door.

Q
(whispering)
Me and the messiah are in 12. I'll see if these chemicals I bought in town are any good and show you what I've got in the morning.

LIZ
Where's the other guy - Rico?

Q
He sprung for the honeymoon suite.
Nite.

LIZ
Good night.

Liz closes the door.

INT. ROOM 12 - NIGHT

Q smuggles his camera and chemicals into the bathroom.

Q
You're sure your done in here - `cause
I like a long shower?

Q'S POV OF JD

Sleeping like a baby in one of the two single beds with his shirt half-unbuttoned and one shoe off.

Q

Smiles to himself, steps into the bathroom and closes the door. A moment later we see the red light of the bathroom's heat lamp spilling out from under the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - SUNRISE

Cars zip past the hotel on the nearby highway as the sun begins to rise.

INT. HONEYMOON SUITE - SUNRISE

Pecos grumbles as Rico gets out of bed and opens the curtains of the tacky-plush suite complete with gas log fireplace.

Rico seems distracted as he sits in a chair near the window and watches the sun rise.

ANGLE ON UNLIT FIREPLACE

As the phony concrete logs burst into flames and a sinister voice fills the room.

SATAN (OS)
ENJOYING THE SUNRISE, BOY?

Pecos burrows under the covers as Rico answers without a hint of his Cuban accent.

RICO
(shaken)
Yes, Father. I mean...no father.

The devil laughs, enjoying his son's fear.

SATAN (OS)
YOU ARE TRULY PATHETIC! HOW COULD
YOU FAIL AT SUCH A SIMPLE TASK?

RICO
I haven't failed. He hasn't found a
good person.

SATAN (OS)
NO THANKS TO YOU. YOU HAVE DONE
NOTHING TO PREVENT IT.

RICO
What about that bohunk in Pennsylvania -
Arlin?

A flaming chunk of rock log hurtles out from the fireplace and explodes against the wall near Rico.

SATAN (OS)
I WARN YOU, BOY - IF HE WINS -

RICO
How can he win if there are no good
people to find? I'll stay close,
just in case, but I don't think we
have anything to worry about.

SATAN (OS)
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU THINK, BOY.
THERE ARE SIX BILLION SOULS AT STAKE
AND I WANT THEM ALL. THE OLD MAN'S
SON MUST FAIL.

RICO
He will.

INT. HOTEL COFFEE SHOP - DAY ANGLE ON PHOTOGRAPH

The shots of JD standing on the water are perfect - except for the fact that JD's face is always blurred, as before.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Reveals Liz talking at a pay phone while Q, JD, Rico and Morgan eat breakfast at a table in the background.

LIZ

You have my fax in front of you?

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

Story and pictures. So you're telling me we're not capable of taking a single shot of this guy that's in focus. Is that it?

LIZ

Q shot three rolls with two different cameras. I don't get it.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

You don't get it, I don't get it and THEY don't get it! What they do get are these abstract piece of shit shots that could be anyone - or anything. It looks like one of our UFOs, for Christ's sake. I didn't even know he was black until you told me. We should've been pushing that from day one. A Homeless Black Messiah. That doubles our numbers right there. Outraged fundamentalists battling smug minority leaders -

LIZ

He can't be photographed because of who...and what he is.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

What?

LIZ

That's what we tell them. It makes him more mysterious. Creates a kind of mythology around him.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

What, like a vampire? Wouldn't it be simpler to just get a decent shot of the guy?

LIZ

Apparently not.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

How do we back up our stories if they can't see him?

LIZ

They have to have faith - in us. People who see him in person will spread the word and the legend of the Homeless Messiah will grow as the story gets passed around. Those who don't actually meet him will be totally dependent on us.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

So we can print whatever the hell we want.

LIZ

If he flakes on us - we just put someone else in his place.

BRASHER OS (FILTER)

And our readers don't know the difference because they've never seen his face.

(beat)

Not bad, Camden. Stay on him - and don't let Q get a clean shot.

INT. VAN - DAY

Liz and Q talk quietly in the front as JD and Morgan play cards in the back, watched by Rico. Pecos sits beside JD, who studies his cards.

JD

Do you have an...eight?

MORGAN

Go fish.

JD draws a card from the stack.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Do you have a three?

JD's face lights up as he plucks two threes from his hand.

JD

Yes! And I've got some fours and kings, too. Do you want them?

MORGAN

You're not supposed to tell.

JD

Oh. Sorry.

Morgan studies her cards.

MORGAN
Is God really your Daddy?

JD
Yes.

MORGAN
I don't have a Daddy.

JD
That's okay. You can share mine.

MORGAN
Can I Mommy?

Liz doesn't know how to respond.

LIZ
You gettin' hungry, Babe?

MORGAN
Sorta.

Morgan lays down her cards.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
I win.
(to Rico)
You wanna play?

RICO
Me? No.

JD makes a mess of the cards as he attempts to shuffle them.

JD
C'mon.

Rico sighs and moves closer.

RICO
Fine. But I'm warning you - I always win.

JD
(deadly serious)
Not this time.

RICO
(taken aback)
What's that supposed to mean?

JD deals the cards.

JD
Morgan's really good at this game.

Everyone collects their cards and adjusts them in their hands. Rico lays his cards down, all neatly arranged in complete groups of four.

RICO

I win.

MORGAN

Cheater! Mommy - Rico cheated!

JD watches with growing suspicion as Rico returns to his corner with a smug smile on his face.

RICO

Told you.

EXT. REST STOP - NIGHT

JD is the first to emerge from the restrooms. He walks to the edge of the trees that surround the park-like rest area and looks up into the night sky. Liz and Morgan exit the ladies room. Morgan rushes back to the van as Liz approaches JD. As she watches him watching the stars, Liz's hard veneer seems to soften a bit.

JD

(to the sky)

I have to admit - you do good work.

Liz looks up.

LIZ'S POV OF THE SKY

Between the storm clouds we can see a sky filled with stars. As we watch, a shooting star emerges from behind one cloud, crosses the sky and disappears behind another.

LIZ

Hey! Did you see that?

JD

A showman to the end.

JD's smile is touched by sadness and this causes Liz to sober.

LIZ

I'm sorry, but even if he does exist... If he's decided to end the world, one good person isn't gonna make a damned bit of difference.

JD

How can you be so sure?

For a moment Liz's cynicism begins to falter, but then she catches herself.

LIZ
I don't believe in magic, I don't
believe in miracles and I don't
believe in...

She stops herself. JD smiles sweetly and completes her thought.

JD
Me.

Liz turns away, avoiding his eyes.

LIZ
We'd better get going.

JD
Then what's Morgan?

Liz turns back.

LIZ
Excuse me?

JD
What's Morgan, if not a miracle?

LIZ
A product of science.

JD laughs.

JD
Science? She's a product of love
and that's a whole other miracle.
His best, if you ask me.

LIZ
Love had nothing to do with it. I
never met Morgan's father.

JD is confused.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Morgan's father was specimen number
50561 at the West Side Fertility
Clinic. I told you, I don't believe
in miracles.

She heads toward the van.

LIZ (CONT'D)
And that includes love.

JD
I remember an immaculate conception
that was considered pretty miraculous
for its time.

Liz stops.

LIZ
All right, let's pretend all this is
on the level. Morgan's good.

JD
I told you - kids don't count. Their
goodness is by design, not by choice.
I think it has to be a choice.

LIZ
You think? Shouldn't you know?

JD
I forgot to ask and he's not speaking
to me these days.

LIZ
Oh, that's right - he's a wrathful
God.

JD returns his attention to the sky.

JD
Not wrathful, exactly.
Just...stubborn.

Liz sighs and climbs back into the van.

LIZ
Sorry, but it still sounds like
bullshit to me.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The group rides in weary silence, lulled by the drone of the engine and the rhythmic thumping of the tires crossing seams in the highway.

Q'S POV OF THE ROAD AHEAD

As the van's headlights find a ragged man standing in the middle of the road, waving his arms.

Q
What the...

LIZ
He looks crazy - keep driving.

JD is suddenly wide awake.

JD
No. Stop the car.

LIZ
What if this guy's...

JD

Stop the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The van pulls to a stop and JD jumps out, listening while the CRAZED MAN talks a mile a minute and points off into the distance. JD follows the man in the indicated direction over a rise in the road.

EXT. ACCIDENT SITE - NIGHT

As JD and the crazed man reach the crest of the hill.

JD'S POV OF THE ACCIDENT SITE

The bus that JD had been on has crashed. Bodies and flaming bits of debris are strewn everywhere with the picturesque Blue Ridge mountains of Kentucky as an inappropriately beautiful backdrop.

JD

Runs down the hill, towards the victims, as Liz and the others reach the hill's crest and are horrified. Q raises his camera and begins to shoot the horrific scene as Liz holds Morgan close to block her view of the carnage.

LIZ

Oh my God...

AT THE SCENE

JD walks among the dead and dying, appalled. Calls for help and cries of pain come from every direction. A child lies dead beside a gift-wrapped Christmas present.

JD

(stunned)

Why?

JD looks up to the heavens with tears streaming down his face.

JD (CONT'D)

WHY?!

The only answer is a distant rumble in the clouds - as if God knew JD's thoughts and was warning him against them.

JD (CONT'D)

N-O-O-O-O-O!

JD kneels and takes the dead CHILD in his arms, then kisses him on the forehead. When JD lowers the child back to the ground, the boy's eyes flutter open and he begins to cry out in fear, as if remembering the last moment before the crash.

CHILD

DADDY!

JD

It's okay. You're safe.

LIZ AND RICO WATCH

In amazement as Q continues to document JD's activities. Liz tries to comfort Morgan, who is crying, while never taking her eyes from the scene.

LIZ

Don't cry, Sweetie. It'll be okay.

Q POV - THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS

As JD revives victims. One after another, the passengers rise to their feet after being touched by JD. Backlit by the beams of the toppled buss's headlights, JD appears in silhouette as a miraculous angel on a mission of mercy as the shutter clicks off frame after frame.

JD CROUCHES

To lay hands on the burly soldier who unwittingly donated his clothes. When the man opens his eyes, he immediately recognizes JD's flowered shirt.

SOLDIER

(groggy)

That's my lucky shirt.

JD

Guess it worked, huh?

LIZ

Can't believe her eyes.

LIZ

This can't be happening.

RICO

They were probably just unconscious.

Q

(still shooting)

Wait `til you see these shots and then tell me that. This guy may not be from heaven, but he sure as hell ain't from around here.

LIZ

(to Morgan)

Look, Sweetie - they're okay.

Q hurries down the hill and the others follow.

AT THE ACCIDENT SCENE

Disoriented passengers mill around. They study the smoldering wreckage, then study each other and are confused by the incongruity. Liz and the others arrive at the scene and try to corral the dazed passengers. Liz takes a little OLD LADY by the arm.

LIZ

Why don't we go sit down over here -
away from the bus.

OLD LADY

Thank you, dear. Where did that
nice young man go?

LIZ

I'm sure he's around somewhere. Q!
Can you give me a hand over here?!

Liz takes the woman away from the burning bus and then returns with the others to gather the rest of the passengers.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

JD wanders, exhausted and glassy-eyed, down the road. We can see the lights of the toppled bus back in the distance.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The station is closed, but there is activity beneath the yellow street lamp. Several CLEAN CUT MEN in ties and shirtsleeves are literally beating the bushes around the building. JD stops in front of the station as if he lacked the energy to take another step.

LUKE

You all right, friend?

JD's response is inaudible. The man puts aside his stick and moves closer.

LUKE (CONT'D)

What was that?

JD

I'm very tired.

LUKE

Nearest hotel is five miles down the
road there.

JD sits in the dirt.

JD

Okay.

JOHN

Luke - over here!

LUKE and the others converge on the bush near JOHN as they put on thick gloves.

LUKE
Okay John - you flush him out and we'll catch him.

One of the other men stands by with a burlap sack as John and the others beat the bush.

JOHN
Here he comes!

A large rattlesnake slithers out from beneath the bush and rears its head at Luke.

LUKE
Okay fella, just take it easy...

Luke eases a long pole with a loop on the end toward the agitated snake.

LUKE (CONT'D)
We ain't gonna hurt you...

The snake strikes and Luke barely avoids its deadly fangs.

JOHN AND THE OTHERS

Rush the rattler as it slithers toward JD.

JOHN
Hey - watch out over there!

JD

Looks up as the snake stops within two feet of him and prepares to strike.

LUKE
You best not move, friend.

JD yawns as he looks the snake in the eye.

THE SNAKE

Sways as he locks eyes with JD.

JD
It's okay. Don't be afraid.

JD reaches out and pets the snake on the top of the head, to the amazement of the other men.

JD (CONT'D)
You wanna go with them or not?

THE SNAKE

Stays put as JD continues to stroke him.

JD

Lifts the snake gently as he stands, then approaches Luke.

JD

You said you wouldn't hurt him, right?

LUKE

(stunned)

Right.

JD offers the snake.

JD

Okay. But be gentle - he's still a little nervous.

Luke gestures to the others and the guy with the bag hurries over - allowing JD to deposit the rattlesnake.

JOHN

What's your name, Mr.?

JD

JD.

LUKE

You wanna come with us, JD? We got an extra bed back at the camp.

JD

(yawning)

Okay.

Luke helps JD over to one of the two cars nearby.

JD (CONT'D)

But my friends will probably be looking for me...

LUKE

John'll bring `em on over if they come by.

Luke gets behind the wheel as the others return to the bushes.

EXT. ACCIDENT SCENE - NIGHT

Liz joins Q, Rico and Morgan after finishing up with one of several highway PATROL MEN now on the scene. All of the passengers are up and around.

LIZ

Okay, he said we can go.

Liz suddenly remembers.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Where's JD?!

Q
(looking around)
I don't see him.

Liz takes Morgan by the hand and hurries back to the van.

LIZ
Great!

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT/REVIVAL MEETING CAMP SITE - NIGHT

Workers raise the circus-style tent as REVEREND LOVE, a man in his mid-fifties is led into one of the Winnebagos by Luke.

INT. WINNEBAGO - NIGHT

JD sleeps in a tiny bed in a small compartment of the Winnebago. Luke and Reverend Love watch from the doorway.

REVEREND LOVE
(quietly)
You didn't tell me he was colored.

LUKE
That won't matter - will it?

REVEREND LOVE
I heard on the CB there was a big accident on 57. A bus.

LUKE
He coulda come from there.

REVEREND LOVE
Some of the passengers are saying they were healed by a colored man.

LUKE
This could be him.

REVEREND LOVE
Send some people into town. Get the word out.

Reverend Love turns to leave.

LUKE
What about his friends? John called in - said he was bringin' them on up.

REVEREND LOVE
They gonna give us trouble?

LUKE

Don't know.

REVEREND LOVE

(exiting)

Give them a bed and we'll deal with
it in the morning.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The rustic shopping center has been decorated for Christmas. Last minute shoppers duck in and out of the little stores that line the lane as John and his crew hand out flyers. A PEDESTRIAN who accepted a flyer stops to look at it.

ANGLE ON FLYER

It reads:

"BROTHER LOVE'S TRAVELING REVIVAL MEETING - TONIGHT!"

"With Special Guest - The Highway Healer"

INT. JD'S SLEEPING COMPARTMENT - DAY

JD stirs and Reverend Love looks up from his Bible with a big phony grin firmly in place.

JD

Where am I?

REVEREND LOVE

Ozark Mountains, son. Most beautiful
place on God's green earth. Fresh
air, blue skies and the friendliest
people you'd ever wanna meet.

He extends his hand.

REVEREND LOVE (CONT'D)

The right Reverend Howard T. Love at
your service.

JD accepts the other man's hand, still exhausted from last night's efforts.

JD

JD. Did you say you're a Reverend?

REVEREND LOVE

Yes sir, I most certainly did.

There is a certain desperation to the hopeful expression of JD's face.

JD

You're a Holy man?

REVEREND LOVE

No son, I'm as much a sinner as you
or any other man in this imperfect
world of ours -

JD sighs and turns away.

REVEREND LOVE (CONT'D)

- for the Lord sayeth `Let he who is
without sin cast the first stone'.
And I'm not here to cast stones,
son. No sir. I'm here merely to
guide the wretched along the path to
enlightenment.

(beat)

I'm told you've got a way with
serpents, son.

JD

Huh?

(remembering)

Oh, that.

REVEREND LOVE

(testing)

Guess you had a pretty big night -
with the crash and all.

JD

It was horrible. I can't believe he
allows things like that. There were
children on that bus.

REVEREND LOVE

He?

Reverend Love catches on and holds up the Bible.

REVEREND LOVE (CONT'D)

Well you know what they say - He
moves in mysterious ways.

JD

(yawning)

What's that?

The Reverend is dumbfounded.

JD (CONT'D)

Fine. Don't tell me.

JD rolls over to continue sleeping.

REVEREND LOVE

Are you a savage, son? Because only
a savage could claim total ignorance
of the Holy Bible - the one and only
true word of our Lord and savior...

JD rolls back.

JD
Did you say the Bible?

Reverend Love hands the worn leather-bound volume to JD, who begins to thumb through the pages.

JD (CONT'D)
I've heard of this.

EXT. WINNEBAGO - DAY

Reverend Love steps out and closes the door behind him as he addresses John, who is posted at the door.

REVEREND LOVE
No one gets in or out. I don't know
what this punk's game is, but I'll
be damned if I won't find out.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Liz, Q and Rico move through the line as Morgan plays with some of the resident KIDS.

LIZ
Morgan - come eat something.

MORGAN
I'm not hungry, Mommy.

LIZ
Fine, but don't come complaining
later.

Q and Rico follow Liz to a table. She's in a foul mood.

Q
What up, Ms. Thang - someone pee in
your Wheaties?

Liz stares at her food as she pushes it from one side of the plate - to the other.

Q (CONT'D)
Yo, Liz?

Liz meets his eyes, looking badly shaken.

LIZ
What if...he's for real?

Rico chimes in a little too quickly.

RICO
But he's not.

LIZ
I know he's not, but what if he is?!

Q
Then I guess I owe a lotta Catholic girls I corrupted an apology.

RICO
But he's *not* real.

LIZ
If we really saw what we saw last night, that means what we saw at the river could be real, too. And if that was real - then the stuff in New York was also real.

Q
So, what do we do now?

LIZ
I don't have a clue. I only know how to deal with frauds and phonies.

Q
And if he *is* for real...

LIZ
He's only got, what, five days left to find a good person -

She pushes her tray away.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Whatever *that* is? And we have to help him.

RICO
And if he's not for real?

Liz has no answers, just a head full of uncomfortable questions.

EXT. WINNEBAGO - AFTERNOON

JD opens the door and is immediately stopped by John.

JD
What day is it?!

JOHN
Sunday. The 20th.

JD tries to push past John.

JD
I have to go. I'm wasting my time here.

JOHN

Whoa - hold on a second. Maybe you oughtta talk to the Reverend.

INT. REVEREND LOVE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A knock at the door pulls Reverend Love away from his computer screen.

REVEREND LOVE

Yes?

John pokes his head in. Reverend Love switches the monitor off.

JOHN

Reverend - JD wanted to leave and I thought you might want to talk to him first.

REVEREND LOVE

Sure would. Bring him on in here.

JD enters.

JD

Thank you for the place to sleep, but I have to go now.

REVEREND LOVE

What's your hurry, son? You think there's no good people anywhere in these parts?

JD

I don't know, but I'm running out of time.

REVEREND LOVE

Why we attract good people each and every Sunday, son. Stay for tonight's service and you're bound to find one or two that'll fit the bill.

JD

You're sure good people will come?

REVEREND LOVE

Our flock comes looking for the love of the Lord - that's a pretty good start in my book. Why don't you go on and get some rest - I'll send Luke around to get you fixed up.

JD allows himself to be ushered out.

JD

I guess so - if you're sure.

REVEREND LOVE

Trust me, son.

JD leaves and Reverend Love returns to his computer.

ANGLE ON MONITOR

As it flickers back to life. We see a miniature of the Star's stories on JD, offered on a on-line database of periodicals. The Reverend scrolls from one to the next. The headline that accompanies the river photo reads:

"MIRACLE MAN HAS UNTIL XMAS TO FIND 1 GOOD PERSON!"

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Scores of townsfolk file into the brightly-colored tent. Rico stands off to the side with a group of LOW-LIFES, giving instructions, along with crisp twenty-dollar bills.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Liz, Morgan and Q sit near the stage, munching on popcorn. The tent is filled to capacity.

MORGAN

Where's JD?

LIZ

I don't know, Sweetie, they wouldn't let me see him.

(to Q)

I hope Brasher got our stuff. No telling how often the town post office picks up.

Q is preoccupied with a BUXOM BLONDE as he snaps a few shots with his hidden camera apparatus.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Q.

Q

Huh? Oh, sorry.

He adjusts the camera beneath his sleeve.

Q (CONT'D)

I can't believe you made me develop my shots at that one-hour photo lab.

LIZ

Didn't make any difference. They came out blurred like all the rest. Where's the creep?

Q

Rico? No idea. What's up with you and him?

LIZ
Nothing. He just bugs me.

BACK STAGE

JD fidgets in an ill-fitting pale blue polyester suit as Luke adjust his tie.

LUKE
Okay - you look great.

JD
Really?

LUKE
Well, it's a little out of date, but
it was the best fit we could find.

JD looks toward the stage as a tape recorded musical intro starts and then the choir bursts into song.

JD
When do I meet the good people?

LUKE
Abel will come out, talk a little -
and then introduce you. Just follow
his lead.

JD
Abel?

LUKE
Reverend Love's son. He has visions,
you know.

IN THE ENTHUSIASTIC AUDIENCE

Morgan watches from Liz's lap as the choir, dressed in purple satin robes, sings the praises of the Lord. The whole thing is very tacky and over the top.

LIZ
Oh, please.

LIZ'S POV

Of the stage as the music builds to a crescendo. Suddenly ABEL, a pimply-faced thirteen year old dressed in a white suit, runs out onto the stage carrying a microphone.

ABEL
Stop the music! Please - let's just
stop it right now. There's no time
to waste.

The music stops.

ABEL (CONT'D)

Because I've just had a vision, ladies and gentlemen, that I must share with you. Now, those of you who have worshipped with us in the past may know that I have been visited by Holy apparitions since the age of five when I fell from my tricycle and lay in a coma for three solid months.

Abel looks out into the audience as he lets the moment build.

ABEL'S POV

Of his father in the back of the room, raising his arms to the heavens in demonstration.

ABEL

Three months of darkness and despair -
He raises his arms to the heavens.

ABEL (CONT'D)

Until the Lord came unto me and showed me the light -

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

Amen!

ABEL

And showed me the way -

ANOTHER VOICE

Hallelujah!

ABEL

But this vision, tonight's vision, was different than the others. I saw darkness again, oh yes, but this time - this time it fell over the whole world like a blanket of death.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

No!

ABEL

Oh yes! The world fell into darkness and every man, woman and child was condemned to the fires of hell!

A HEAVYSET WOMAN in the audience swoons and those around her hurry to her aid.

ABEL (CONT'D)

And the instrument of His wrath was the flood, just as it was in the days of Noah.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

The flood!

IN THE AUDIENCE

Q snaps a few shots with his hidden camera as Morgan hugs her mother, afraid.

MORGAN

Mommy?

LIZ

It's okay, Sweetie.

BACK STAGE

JD watches, wondering how this boy knew.

ANOTHER VOICE

What can we do?!

ABEL

Purge yourself of the Devil's seed before it's too late! Selfishness is the Devil's candy, greed is his wicked, wicked wine - and the love of money, as Paul warned us in Timothy 1, chapter 6, verse 10: is the root of all evil.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

Praise God!

ABEL

Amen!

He signals to the wings.

ABEL (CONT'D)

So I want you to dig deep! I want you to tear that evil from your pocketbooks and wallets and I want you to place it in the receptacles as they pass among you. And together we will set this evil afire on this very stage tonight and cast out Satan!

The audience places their money in the collection plates. Liz and Q pass the plate without contributing.

ON STAGE

Luke emerges from the wings carrying a writhing handful of snakes in each gloved hand. The audience gives a collective gasp as Luke hands the venomous snakes over to Abel, who allows them to slither across his body.

ABEL

Fear not the serpent once the evil
has been purged! For the serpent
knows the power of God and dares not
challenge it!

LIZ

Whispers to Q as Morgan watches, transfixed.

LIZ

Those are fake, right?

Q

Maybe we should move to one of those
seats in the back. You know, just
in case.

People dig deeper into their purses and pocketbooks, driven
by fear.

ABEL

Will anyone among you bear witness
to the power of the Lord?!

BACKSTAGE

John nudges JD.

JOHN

That's your cue - go on.

JD walks from the wings out onto the stage feeling awkward
and self-conscious.

ABEL

Praise the Lord! This man fears not
the serpent, for evil has no place
in his life!

Abel turns to hand JD a snake and makes eye contact with him
for the first time. The young evangelist does a double take
before continuing.

ABEL (CONT'D)

Brother, tell us of the miracle that
moved through you on that highway of
death last night.

JD squirms and suppresses a giggle as the snake slithers
under his shirt.

JD

There was no reason for those people
to die.

ABEL

Did you hear that brothers and sisters -
there was no reason! But the Devil
had a reason!

THE CROWD

AMEN!

Rico is jostled by the unruly crowd.

ABEL

But this man faced the demon down to
save those God fearing folks on that
dark and lonely highway.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

PRAISE THE LORD!

ABEL

Amen, brother!

Abel hands the snakes off to John and turns the microphone
to JD.

ABEL (CONT'D)

Tell us, friend, when did you come
to know the love of the Lord?

JD

Well, I've always known him.

ABEL

PRAISE GOD!

JD winces at intensity of the pronouncement and Abel sticks
the microphone back in JD's face, awaiting more information.

JD

He can be a little bossy sometimes,
but overall he's not bad.

ABEL

He moves in mysterious ways, Amen!

JD

But he's not happy with the way things
are going down here.

ABEL

The Devil's got a hold on us and
we've got to break free!

JD

Well, basically. But he's pretty
much given up. In fact, he's going
to -

ABEL

Given up!? Did you say God has given up?! I don't think so, brother. My God loves me. And he loves you -

He addresses the mesmerized crowd.

ABEL (CONT'D)

- and all of you out there. And I know my God will never give up as long as Satan toils at his dirty deeds!

THE CROWD

Hallelujah!

BACK STAGE

Luke accepts the sack of collected money as he stuffs an identical bag with bundles of paper.

ON STAGE

JD tries to be heard over the enthusiastic crowd.

JD

But he has -

ABEL

BRING THAT BAG OF EVIL ON OUT HERE, LUKE!

Luke brings the dummy bag of money out onto the stage, along with a can of lighter fluid and a box of matches. JD watches, confused, as Abel squirts lighter fluid all over the burlap sack and strikes a match.

ABEL (CONT'D)

Should we send the Devil's seed back to hell?!

Rico laughs as the crowd gets into it.

THE CROWD

HELL YES!

Abel drops the lit match and ignites the bag.

ABEL

PRAISE THE LORD!

The crowd goes wild and Q documents it all with his hidden camera. JD steps forward.

JD

Wait a minute. This isn't why I came.

Abel slings an arm around JD's shoulder like a good friend.

ABEL

That's right, brother, it's time to
do some healin'!

Liz holds tight to Morgan as the majority of the crowd leaps to their feet and pushes toward the stage, calling out their specific ailments.

JD

What's this?

ABEL

It's time to share the Lord's gift
of health with our flock, brother.

JD studies the faces of the crowd.

JD'S POV

Panning across the desperate people in both real and imagined pain. Their collective stare is impatient and demanding.

JD

Is there one good person among you?

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

I've gone to church every Sunday for
sixty-five years - can you cure my
gout?

JD

Isn't there anyone here who wants to
give and take nothing in return?

ANOTHER VOICE

Why should we?! We already gave our
money.

One of Rico hired SKEPTICS stands.

SKEPTIC 1

He's a phony!

SKEPTIC 2

He ain't nothin' but a con man!

The crowd voices its agreement. JD helps a frail and pallid young woman with a hacking cough up onto the stage.

JD

I'll help everyone who's sick, but
one - starting with her. But only
if one of you willingly agrees to
sacrifice your place in line for
this woman.

The crowd is silent for a long moment as each person looks to their neighbor for a volunteer.

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

Why her and not me?!

The crowd erupts in argument and hostility. JD looks defeated.

ABEL

Everyone wants something, brother.
Don't you?

JD studies the judgmental eyes of the selfish crowd for a moment, then turns and walks off stage - disgusted.

JD

Not any more.

Rico seems troubled as he watches JD storm out of the tent.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

JD runs from the tent into the surrounding forest. Q emerges.

Q

Hey, man - wait up!

JD

Leave me alone!

EXT. TOP OF THE HILL - NIGHT

JD emerges from the trees, out of breath. He pulls off the tacky polyester jacket and hurls it over the side, then looks up at the clear, starry sky and screams.

JD

TALK TO ME!

He collapses onto the grassy hillside.

JD (CONT'D)

Help me.

A moment later we hear a rustling in the trees.

JD (CONT'D)

Go away!

Abel emerges.

ABEL

It's me. Abel.

JD makes a disgusted sound and turns away. Abel moves closer with none of his former on-stage artifice.

ABEL (CONT'D)

You kinda blew it at the end there,
but I thought you were doin' pretty
(MORE)

ABEL (CONT'D)
good until then. Tomorrow dad wants
to go over some stuff with you.

JD
What?!

ABEL
He hasn't talked to you yet?
(beat)
He, uh...wants you to join us. My
dad thinks all that publicity you
got in those big city papers will be
good for business. And with last
night's accident...

JD
I'm leaving tomorrow. I've only got
four days left.

Abel shrugs it off and turns to leave.

JD (CONT'D)
Abel, what you said on stage - about
your visions... Was that true?

ABEL
I guess the visions are real, but
the coma story's just somethin' my
dad cooked up.

JD
You guess? You're not sure?

ABEL
I used to be, but now they seem more
like dreams than visions.
(laughing)
At least I hope they're just dreams,
'cause this last one was a doozy.

JD looks Abel directly in the eye.

JD
It wasn't a dream.

As Abel searches JD's weary face for signs of deceit, we see
the same vague recognition that sparked at his first glance
of JD, on stage.

ABEL
Hey, do I know you? From before...?
Cause you look real familiar.

JD
I don't know. Do you?

EXT. REVIVAL CAMP - NIGHT

Abel returns from the hill to find his father, Liz and the others waiting.

LIZ
Is he all right?

REVEREND LOVE
Is he staying?

Abel seems distracted as he hurries to his quarters.

ABEL
I don't know.

EXT. HILL TOP - NIGHT

JD sits staring up into the night sky, awaiting guidance.

INT. LIZ AND MORGAN'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Liz exits the bathroom with a freshly scrubbed face, dressed in an oversized t-shirt. Morgan sits on the edge of the bed with her head bowed and her eyes closed.

LIZ
You okay?

MORGAN
I'm saying my prayers.

LIZ
(amused)
Your what?

MORGAN
(eyes still closed)
My prayers.

Liz doesn't know how to react.

LIZ
Your prayers? This is new.

MORGAN
I need to talk to God.

Liz sets her folded clothes aside and goes to Morgan.

LIZ
Aren't you supposed to kneel or something?

Morgan opens her eyes and changes positions so that she's kneeling at the foot of the bed.

MORGAN
Like this?

LIZ
 (uncomfortable)
 I guess so. And your hands - I think
 they're supposed to be, I don't know,
 up more.

Morgan lifts her hands into standard prayer position.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 Okay, I think that's it.

Liz smiles at her daughter's seriousness as she moves to the mirror to brush her hair. Morgan speaks as if dictating a letter.

MORGAN
 Dear God, I wanted to ask you to
 help JD find a good person because I
 like my school and my friends and
 Rico's dog Pecos and it would be
 scary if the world ended like that
 boy said tonight. Plus my Mommy's
 going to be doing real news stories
 soon and it means a really lot to
 her and she'd be sad if the world
 ended before she got a chance.

(beat)
 There's some other reasons, too, but
 I'd like to keep it short tonight
 because it's my first time and I'm
 sure you're real busy with other
 people who are better at this than I
 am. Sincerely, Morgan Elizabeth
 Camden. Amen.

Liz sets down the brush, touched by Morgan's innocence.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. REVIVAL CAMP - DAY

JD emerges from the trees and makes a beeline for Reverend Love's office.

JD
 Abel!

INT. LIZ AND MORGAN'S SLEEPING QUARTERS

Liz sits bolt upright at the sound of JD's voice.

INT. REVEREND LOVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Reverend Love, Abel and Luke sit counting last night's take as JD barges in.

JD
 Abel -

REVEREND LOVE

Luke, I told you to lock that door.

JD looks around at all the money.

JD

What's this?

REVEREND LOVE

Profit, son. And some of it's gonna be for you if you join us on our little crusade.

JD looks to Abel, but the boy averts his eyes.

JD

I saw you burn that. You said it was the Devil's seed.

REVEREND LOVE

Well then, son, let's grow us a fiery rose garden 'cause we got plenty of seeds.

Reverend Love and Luke share a laugh, until JD grabs the can of lighter fluid from the desk and begins to saturate the bills.

REVEREND LOVE (CONT'D)

What the hell -

EXT. REVIVAL CAMP - DAY

Liz and Morgan meet Q, Rico and Pecos outside the Reverend's office as a crowd gathers. Raised voices and toppling furniture inside can be heard.

LIZ

What's going on?!

Q hurries to the window.

Q

Looks like a fight!

INT. REVEREND LOVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Luke and the reverend try to control JD as he squirts lighter fluid everywhere and Abel watches from his seat.

REVEREND LOVE

(to Abel)

YOU JUST GONNA STAND THERE?! DO SOMETHING!

Q snaps photos of the scuffle from outside as Rico boosts Morgan so that she can see.

REVEREND LOVE (CONT'D)
 GODDAMNIT, BOY - I SAID DO SOMETHING!

Abel recovers the box of matches from the floor, then lights one.

ABEL
 Let him go, Daddy.

REVEREND LOVE
 Are you outta your mind, boy?! Do
 you know who you're talking to?!

Abel looks JD in the eye and sets the money ablaze.

ABEL
 Yes. I know.

EXT. REVIVAL CAMP - DAY

LIZ
 Jesus Christ - he lit the money!
 (nudging Q)
 Did you get that?!

Q
 You know it.

Q steps back from the window.

Q (CONT'D)
 We're good to go!

RICO
 (concerned)
 They're gonna kill him.

LIZ
 Get the van!

INT. REVEREND LOVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Luke and the Reverend try to put the money fires out as Abel lights new ones.

REVEREND LOVE
 Boy, have you lost your mind?!

Abel pushes JD toward the door.

ABEL
 Go!

LUKE
 (to JD)
 You're not gonna get away with this!

JD runs out of the room.

INT. VAN - DAY

Q floors the gas while trying to steady the van as it careens down the rocky mountain road. We can see the revival camp back in the distance.

LIZ

They could have killed you!

JD sits in the back, defeated and depleted.

RICO

(nervous)

What's your problem, Cabron? You found him, right?

LIZ

He has to be the one. Did you see what he did?!

JD

But he'll be back on stage next Sunday. If there is a next Sunday.

Q

How do you know that, man?

JD spits out a sigh and gives Q an impatient look that says "Yeah, right".

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The van pulls in, running on fumes and everyone steps out to stretch their legs. Liz looks back down the highway.

LIZ

Still no sign of the cops.

MORGAN

Maybe they didn't call them, Mommy.

Q moves to fill the tank.

Q

They called all right. The cops just don't know where to look.

Rico gets an idea.

RICO

Be right back.

LIZ

We're gone in five minutes. Gotta keep moving, just in case.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Rico ducks behind a corner to use the pay phone while keeping a close eye on the others.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

The van is fueled and all are awaiting Rico.

Q
Rico! C'mon!

LIZ
Let's leave him.

JD
No, it's okay.

We hear the sounds of approaching sirens.

MORGAN
Mommy?

LIZ
I hear it, Sweetie.
(to Q)
Let's go!

Q starts up the van, but now we see a line of police coming from the opposite direction, as well.

Q
They're comin' from both ways! What do we do?!

JD looks toward the restrooms.

JD'S POV

Of Rico peeking around the corner. He makes eye contact with JD and we see twinges of guilt and regret in his eyes.

JD

Suddenly "recognizes" Rico and is visibly disappointed.

JD
(to Q)
It's okay. Stop the engine.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

Rico watches as the police arrive, pull everyone out of the van and cuff JD.

INT. POLICE BOOKING ROOM - NIGHT

JD holds a numbered board chest high and poses for his mug shot. The camera flashes.

RICHEK, THE IMPATIENT COP

Photographs JD and pulls the Polaroid from the camera, then tears it open and studies the image as a line of waiting CONS and their accompanying OFFICERS voice their displeasure.

COP
What's the hold up, Richek?!

RICHEK
Damn it!
(to JD)
Are you sure you're not moving?

JD's pleasant attitude is driving Richek crazy.

JD
I don't think so.

Richek wipes the sweat from his brow, throws the blurred shot of JD onto a pile of similar Polaroids on the floor and approaches the camera with renewed determination.

RICHEK
This time - DON'T MOVE!

INT. PRINT ROOM - NIGHT

Richek rolls JD's thumb over an ink pad and then transfers his print onto the rap sheet.

ANGLE ON RAP SHEET

As JD's inked thumb is rolled onto the appropriate place on the record and then removed. Although an inked outline of a thumb is left on the form, there is no actual fingerprint.

RICHEK

Stares at the "print", unable to believe his eyes. He glares at JD, too frustrated to speak.

INT. "PHYSICAL INSPECTION" ROOM - NIGHT JD'S POV

Of Richek as he shines a flashlight right at us.

LOW ANGLE ON JD,

At calf-level as we see his face turned upside down - looking back at Richek through his own legs.

JD
If you tell me what you're looking for, maybe I can help.

Richek switches off the flashlight and gives JD a look of utter disbelief.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

JD is led to a holding cell and locked in. His cell mates study him with murderous intent, except for a NERVOUS LITTLE MAN clutching a recent issue of the Star who seems to recognize him. Several sweaty BEHEMOTHS encircle JD.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Rico approaches the station on foot and starts up the stairs to the station house. The TV reporter and crew from today's confrontation swoop down upon him, shining their lights in his eyes and sticking their mikes in his face.

REPORTER

You spent time with the man who claims to be on a mission from God. Can you tell us any more about him?

RICO

I represent him, so yeah - I can tell you anything you want to know.

REPORTER

Did you say you represent him? But this man claims to be the Messiah.

RICO

I don't know about the Messiah, but he's a hell of a performer.

INT. POLICE STATION WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Although the room is decorated for Christmas, the atmosphere is far from merry. An endless parade of THUGS, THIEVES and HOOKERS pass Liz as she talks on a grimy pay phone. We can see Morgan sleeping on Q's lap in the background and Rico continuing his interview even further in the background.

LIZ

(into phone)

Two or three days! We need him out tonight. We've been telling the world that he's got until Christmas day or we're all dead. That's only four days away.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

JD sits encircled by his grungy cell mates. They look worried by what JD's been telling them.

BALD GUY

Shit, I'm a good person. I give money to bums all the time.

BUM

You never gave me any.

The BALD GUY gives the BUM a shove.

BALD GUY
Get outta my face.

TATTOOED GUY
I gotta seventy-five year old aunt
who's never been laid. That's gotta
count for somethin'.

The nervous guy steps forward, still clutching his tattered
copy of the Star.

NERVOUS GUY
It is you... You're The One.

He shows the Star to the bald guy.

NERVOUS GUY (CONT'D)
He's the one.

JD reaches for the paper.

JD
What are you talking about?

Rico enters the cellblock, unaccompanied by a guard and
approaches JD's cell. The bald guy is the first to spot
him.

BALD GUY
This guy a friend of yours?

JD stands and meets Rico at the bars.

RICO
(nervous)
Que Paso, Amigo?

JD studies Rico with suspicion.

JD
How did you get in? They said I
couldn't have visitors.

RICO
I got connections.

JD looks Rico in the eye.

JD
I know.
(beat)
I wasn't sure at first, but now...

RICO
You know? What's that mean? Why
you starin' at me like that, man?

JD

I know who you are. And I know why you're here.

RICO

I'm here to look out for you. So what?

JD

There's no place for you here.

RICO

What?

JD's cold stare is relentless.

RICO (CONT'D)

This is bullshit, man! You need me... You need me.

JD's cell mates step forward.

BALD GUY

You heard the man - ain't no place for you here. Step off.

Rico backs away.

RICO

That's it. You're on your own. I'm outta here.

Rico starts to say something, but catches himself and exits without another word. As JD watches Rico go, the tattooed guy puts his hand on JD's shoulder.

TATTOOED GUY

You okay, man?

JD

(disappointed)
Yeah.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Liz works on her laptop as Morgan goes to the foot of the bed and assumes the position.

MORGAN

Is this right, Mommy?

Liz puts her computer aside and kneels beside Morgan, adjusting her daughter's hand position.

LIZ

There.

Liz stays beside her daughter as Morgan closes her eyes and moves her lips silently as she prays.

After an awkward moment Liz puts her hands together, just to see how it feels and ultimately closes her eyes to join Morgan in prayer.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 Oh, what the hell.

MORGAN
 (scolding)
 Mommy.

LIZ
 Sorry.

EXT. STATION HOUSE - DAY

The front steps are jammed with REPORTERS, lights and cameras - all awaiting JD's release.

JD AND LIZ

Exit the station house.

REPORTER
 THAT'S HIM!
 (to another reporter)
 IS THAT HIM?

ANOTHER VOICE
 I don't know if it's him, but that's
 Camden.

The reporters rush JD, screaming ad-libbed questions. JD and Liz try to push through the crowd to the street.

Q AND MORGAN

Pull up in the van and Q hops out to snap a few shots of his own. Morgan opens the van door from the inside.

MORGAN
 Mommy! JD! Over here.

Liz and JD finally reach the van. They jump in, Morgan closes the door and the van speeds away.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Liz answers a knock at the door and JD hurries inside.

JD
 Can I hide in here for a while - the
 other reporters found my room?

Liz finds the subtle barb in JD's tone.

LIZ
 Sure.

Morgan runs in from the other room and leaps into JD's arms.

MORGAN

JD!

JD smiles at the ferocity of her embrace.

JD

What's that for?

MORGAN

I missed you while you were in the joint.

JD and Liz share a laugh that helps release the tension. JD lowers Morgan to the ground.

LIZ

Teeth?

MORGAN

Not yet, but -

LIZ

Go on. Be true to them -

Morgan runs toward the bathroom as she completes her mother's axiom.

MORGAN

And they'll never be false to me.

After Morgan leaves, an uncomfortable silence settles in.

LIZ

I'm sorry. I should have told you about the paper.

JD's weary smile carries the weight of the world.

JD

It's okay.

The next uncomfortable silence is broken when Liz suddenly kisses JD on the lips. JD doesn't know how to respond. Finally, he puts his arms around her and gives in to his newly human impulses. Liz pulls away.

LIZ

Oh my God.

JD

(flustered)
You're tellin' me.

Liz backs away.

LIZ

I'm so sorry.

(babbling)

I started out so sure that I knew everything. I thought I had all the answers, but then I met you and you weren't what I expected. Not at all... Then I saw you talk to people and you really do care... And the way you are with Morgan... The way you make me feel...

Liz is in near hysterics. Her whole world is suddenly in question and her perceptions have been turned inside out. JD moves to comfort her. She backs away.

JD

How do I make you feel?

LIZ

Good.

Liz blushes.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I didn't mean it like... I meant...

She looks him in the eye.

LIZ (CONT'D)

You give me hope. And I don't know if I can forgive you for that.

JD

What?

LIZ

At first I thought the way you made me feel was just some sort of attraction. But then I started to wonder if you might really be...

(feeling stupid)

...you know - for real. But I kept finding myself drawn to you and it felt safer to be drawn to you as a woman to a man than...

(confused)

...spiritually, if that's what you'd call it. But now... Either way, I lose.

JD

Lose what?

LIZ

If you are who you say you are, I lose a man who has touched me like no one else ever has.

JD
And if I'm not?

She takes a deep breath.

LIZ
If you're not... It's gonna break
my heart.

JD responds with a gentle smile, which sends Liz into a rage.
She pounds his chest and pushes him into the wall.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Don't smile at me! I hate you for
giving me hope! And I hate you for
doing this to me! What do I do now?!
How can I go on, feeling this way?!
Nothing in my life can ever be the
same again! I'm either in love with
a con man or having fantasies about
God's son... Just tell me! TELL ME
THE TRUTH!

Liz runs out of strength. JD holds her.

LIZ (CONT'D)
And don't tell me to have faith,
because I ran out years ago. I swear
I won't tell anyone else. I've gotta
know - is God your...
(feeling ridiculous)
...Daddy?

JD cups Liz's face in his hands and looks into her eyes.
Liz searches JD's eyes for the lie, but finds only truth.

LIZ (CONT'D)
He is. Isn't he?

JD smiles and after a moment the full impact of this truth
hits Liz. She faints. JD carries Liz to the bed. After a
moment she starts to come around.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(mortified)
Oh my God, I made a move on the
Messiah. What is that - four, five
hundred years in purgatory?

Liz tries to sit up, but is still light-headed.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(humiliated)
And I fainted! If you tell anyone
I'll kill you.

Liz turns to look at JD and is still amazed.

LIZ (CONT'D)
So you're really...

JD nods his head "Yes". Liz closes her eyes.

LIZ (CONT'D)
This whole thing has been way too
much for me.

JD tucks Liz in and goes to the door.

LIZ (CONT'D)
(mumbling)
I can't believe I made a move on the
Messiah.

JD smiles as he exits the room.

INT. MASSAGE PARLOR - NIGHT

Rico lays face down on a massage table with a nubile YOUNG LADY working on his back. He doesn't seem to be enjoying himself nearly enough. Suddenly the girl's eyes roll back in her head and her hands clamp down on Rico's shoulders like a vice.

RICO
Hey!

The girl slams Rico back down, pinning him with unnatural strength and she speaks with the Devil's voice.

SATAN (OS)
YOU HAVE FAILED!

Rico struggles to speak, his face smashed against the table.

RICO
What - he hasn't found anyone, yet!

SATAN (OS)
BUT HE MIGHT - NOW THAT HE'S ON HIS
OWN.

The girl digs her thumbs into Rico's back muscles, causing him to scream.

SATAN (OS) (CONT'D)
IF HIS SON FAILS AND THE WORLD IS
DAMNED - THEY'RE ALL MINE. BUT IF
HE SUCCEEDS... FOR THAT YOU WILL
PAY DEARLY, BOY!

Rico hides his contempt for his father.

RICO
But he knows who I am. He's not
going to -

SATAN (OS)
HE KNOWS YOU'RE WEAK. YOU'LL USE
THAT TO CONVINCE HIM THAT YOU'VE
TURNED AGAINST ME.

RICO
And then what?

SATAN (OS)
DISTRACT HIM! CORRUPT HIM! I DON'T
CARE - JUST MAKE SURE HE FAILS!

RICO
I'll do my best.

SATAN (OS)
I DON'T WANT YOUR BEST, BOY! I WANT
IT DONE!

The room shakes and the girl convulses before collapsing to the floor. Rico sits up as the sounds of his father's dramatic exit recede. Rico pumps his hand in the air in imitation of masturbation.

RICO
Yeah...right.

INT. JD'S ROOM - NIGHT

There's a knock at the door. JD calls out from the bed.

JD
GO AWAY! YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG ROOM!

RICO (OS)
It's me, Carnal.

JD
GO AWAY.

RICO (OS)
C'mon man, I'm freezin' my cojones
off out here.

EXT. JD'S ROOM - NIGHT

JD opens the door a crack, but leaves the chain in place.

JD
Make it fast.

RICO
I gotta talk to you, man. Five
minutes - that's it.

Pecos squeezes through the partially opened door and jumps all over JD, thrilled to see him.

JD
I've got nothing to say to you.

JD closes the door.

RICO
At least gimme my dog back, man.

After a moment JD opens the door and allows Rico to enter.

JD
Five minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. JD'S ROOM - LATER

JD shares his room service food with Pecos as Rico paces.

JD
And you expect me to believe this?

RICO
I can't take his shit anymore. You know how it is.

JD
So you wanna switch sides. Just like that.

JD studies Rico's eyes, searching for the truth. Rico squirms.

RICO
Cono, man - not that X-ray eyes shit again! Look, what he wants - I just don't got it in me, okay? I wanna help.

JD makes his decision and offers his hand.

JD
Okay.

RICO
Okay? Just like that?
(pleased)
All right. Rico's gonna take care of you, man. You got my word on that.

EXT. JD'S ROOM - NIGHT

JD sees Rico and Pecos out.

RICO
Okay, man - so I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

JD hugs Rico.

JD
I'm glad you switched sides. It suits you.

RICO
(guilty)
Go on. You better get some sleep.

JD returns to his room and closes the door. Rico sees the accusing look on Pecos' hairy little face and feels like a heel.

RICO (CONT'D)
(mocking)
It suits me.

A ROOM SERVICE WAITER passes by. On impulse, Rico trips him and walks away. The waiter and his tray crash to the ground.

JD
(half-heartedly)
That suits me.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Liz returns to her seat in first class carrying a plate of freshly baked cookies and passes them around. JD, Morgan and Q are all seated in the same row - JD at the window. "Miracle on 34th Street" is the in-flight movie in progress.

JD
Why's Rico in the back?

LIZ
His penance is gonna be five hours in coach on an overbooked flight. I still can't believe you bought that story of his.

JD looks out the window at the passing clouds.

JD
(distracted)
Everyone needs a second chance sometime.

Liz touches JD's hand.

LIZ
Hey - don't give up on us yet, okay? It's not over.

JD manages a smile.

JD
Okay.

Liz turns her attention to her notes.

LIZ

Okay, the show goes on live at 10pm tomorrow night. The paper received over ten thousand letters from people claiming to be the one you're looking for, but most of them are probably crackpots - so going on the air live is probably our best shot.

JD

One day left. I guess this is really it.

Liz puts down her pen.

LIZ

Oh my God.

JD gives her a disapproving look.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(beat, horrified)

I just remembered - I haven't bought one single present yet.

Morgan looks to her mom and Liz smooths her daughter's hair.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Sweetie.

MORGAN

That's okay, Mommy. If we can help JD save the world that'll be enough for me.

Liz and Q laugh as JD continues to stare out into the night.

JD

You know, it's not much different than that.

LIZ

Huh?

JD

Heaven. It's different, but sort of... I don't know - it's hard to explain.

Liz and JD make eye contact.

JD (CONT'D)

It's not scary or anything.

LIZ

I hope I don't find out for a long,
long time.

Liz returns her attention to her notes, then stops - suddenly concerned.

LIZ (CONT'D)

That is where I'm going... Right?

JD smiles, but doesn't answer as he studies the moon.

BACK IN COACH

Rico is indeed suffering, cramped between the archetypal OBNOXIOUS KID and an incredibly OBESE WOMAN. Rico squirms in his seat, trapped in his own personal hell.

EXT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Rico and Q hustle JD through the adoring CROWD. As JD passes, a wholesome-looking YOUNG MAN jumps the barrier.

YOUNG MAN

Please, wait! I want to help!

Rico pushes JD on ahead as he tries to shake the sincere young man. The guy grabs Rico's coat.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm the one he's looking for!

Rico senses goodness in this guy and recoils, but the guy won't give up.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Tell him there are still good people
in the world -

JD turns back, straining to hear over the screaming crowd.

JD

What?! What is he saying?

Rico shuts the young guy up by stomping on his foot. The guy cries out in pain, but is unable to speak. Rico shoves him back into the crowd and catches up to JD.

RICO

Nothing. The jerk tried to pay me
to get an autograph.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Rico hurries JD into the building and down the hall as Q and Liz trail behind.

Q

We'll wait in the green room.

Liz and Q head off into another hallway. Pecos follows JD.

RICO
 (to Pecos)
 Go with them.

Pecos looks to JD.

JD
 (to Pecos)
 It's okay.

Pecos follows Liz and Q.

RICO
 Pendejo.

A stressed-out P.A. rounds a corner and pulls JD into passageway as she barks into her walkie-talkie.

P.A.
 Twelve to base. I've got the Messiah
 and we're on our way in.

We FOLLOW as JD is hustled through double doors and the backstage area of the show. MAKE-UP AND HAIR PEOPLE pounce on JD as he's rushed to the stage.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT ANGLE ON MONITOR

A commercial ends and Oprah returns.

OPRAH (ON TV)
 Twas the night before Christmas and
 all through the house, not a creature
 was stirring - except a mysterious
 young man who claims to be God's
 other son on the final day of his
 mission to save the world. He's
 only got until midnight tonight, but
 we've got him for the next hour - so
 stay tuned to this special live
 edition of the Oprah Winfrey Show to
 find out what you can do to help.

A commercial touting a stun gun as the ideal stocking stuffer fills the screen as Liz rocks Morgan in her lap and bites her nails as Q paces.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT ANGLE ON WALL CLOCK

The time is 10:03pm.

JD

Is rushed into his seat, center-stage and wired for sound.

OPRAH

Circulates through the audience.

OPRAH

Hi, how are you? Great outfit, girl.
 (a general announcement)
 Anyone have any questions for our
 guest when we get back into the show?

A FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER, seated near Oprah, stands.

FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER

I don't care if he's related to God
 or working down at Happy Burger -
 that boy's got it goin' on.

Some of the other women in the audience hoot their agreement.
 The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR counts Oprah back in from the
 commercial.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Back in five...four...

He continues to count silently, displaying three fingers,
 two, one...

OPRAH

(to camera)

Our guest today is the man you've
 all been reading about. A man who
 claims to be God's second son and
 who some believe can do miracles.
 Please welcome the man known only
 as...JD.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Liz and Q watch the green room TV as the audience applauds.

LIZ

(disgusted)

They're turning him into a sideshow
 freak.

Q

Like we had nothin' to do with that.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The applause dies down.

OPRAH

JD, they say that cameras can't
 capture your image. Your supporters
 claim the reason has something to do
 with your spiritual purity.

JD

Uh...I don't know - maybe I'm just
not very photogenic.

The audience laughs as a few enamored women call out lusty
reassurances to JD.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH - DAY

The DIRECTOR is going nuts, running to each of the camera
monitors. He speaks into his headset.

DIRECTOR

Don't do this to me, guys! No one
has a decent shot?!

INT. STUDIO - DAY

ANGLE ON CAMERA MONITOR

The CAMERA OPERATOR whispers into his headset as we see JD's
image on the monitor. His face is little more than a glowing
blur on the screen. The cameraman adjusts his equipment.

CAMERA OPERATOR

He's lit up like a goddamned Christmas
tree.

OPRAH

I know everyone has been eager to
get your advice on the world and its
current problems, but according to
you there is a bigger issue at hand.
You claim that God, the Divine Being -
Higher Power, or whatever we want to
call it, has decided to destroy the
world at midnight tonight. Not in
five years or on New Years Day of
the year 2,010 - but tonight. Why
now?

JD

He believes a spiritual evolution
has taken place on earth.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

A CROWD with last minute Christmas gift purchases in hand
gathers at a store window to watch JD's distorted image on
the display of big screen TVs. Among them is Minnie, the
bag lady.

JD (ON TV)

Man's core was once good, but over
time you found that the pursuit of
wealth, power, liberty and equality
required a near total denial of that
goodness.

INT. SHANTY - NIGHT

Arlin and Velma sit huddled in their tiny bed with the twins, watching the broadcast on their crummy black and white TV.

JD (ON TV)

These goals, though sometimes noble, demanded blind devotion which often excluded the good in man and even destroyed it when it got in the way. As you passed this belief from generation to generation, the goodness in Mankind began to wither and die.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD PUB - NIGHT

A group of total strangers stand in silence, eyes glued to the screen and JD's blurred image.

JD (ON TV)

And the few in your world who managed to remain good have been despised and ultimately destroyed by the rest of you. Like any other evolving life form, as man used kindness and compassion less and less, the goodness in man grew weaker and less necessary.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Abel drives as he listens to JD on the radio. The car is packed with his belongings.

JD (FILTER)

Until it finally became obsolete in your modern world. He believes that goodness in man is now extinct and he regrets his creation of you and your world.

INT. GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

Liz kisses Morgan on the forehead as she rocks her.

JD (ON TV)

You've become a real sore spot with him. I thought I'd come down, find a good person and call it a day. You know, prove to him that he was wrong and deal with his sulking later... But it hasn't worked out that way and I'm beginning to think he might be right.

INT. STUDIO ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Brasher and Rico lead a group of police officers through the halls. Brasher carries a large manila envelope.

We FOLLOW them to the green room.

LIZ

Howard? What are you doing here?

Brasher gestures to the police, who continue down the hall toward the studio.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Why are the police -

Brasher tosses the envelope in her lap and she opens it. Rico stands off to the side, looking miserable.

BRASHER

You'd better take a look at these.

ANGLE ON ENVELOPE

As Liz extracts the contents. We see a photocopy of an out of state rap sheet with JD's picture on it.

LIZ

How did they get his picture?

RICO

I don't know. They just did.

LIZ

(crushed)

You gave this to him?

RICO

I got a call from a guy a while back. He wanted money to keep it quiet.

LIZ

But how could you... You've been on the road with us -

BRASHER

It doesn't matter, Liz, he got it, we've got it - and now it's time to expose the fraud. Let's get you back to the office so you can write this up.

ANGLE ON DOCUMENTS

As Liz flips through newspaper clippings with stories of a con man specializing in "Messiah" scams. JD's picture accompanies these, as well.

LIZ

Swallows hard, fighting back tears.

LIZ

I can't believe this.

Liz looks to Q, who seems every bit as devastated as she.

MORGAN

What's wrong, Mommy?

Liz puts the papers back into the envelope and smooths her daughter's hair.

LIZ

Everything, Sweetie.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

The POLICE push their way onto the stage and handcuff JD to the protestations of the studio audience.

OFFICER 1

Sir, you are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say...

INT. JAIL RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

JD's cell mates initiate a riot as the capacity crowd of prisoners eat their Spartan Christmas dinners and watch JD being dragged off the stage on their community television.

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

As the cops hustle JD through the crowd, the sky suddenly opens up and floods the world with a torrential downpour. Thunder cracks above like a monstrous whip as blue-green lightning cracks the sky. The bystanders scream and run for cover as the end of the world begins. The cops shove JD in the squad car and drive away.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Oprah is hustled off into the wings as the building shakes and the walls split. Rico watches from the wings as panels of lights explode and the audience stampedes.

A SECTION OF THE CEILING

Topples inward, nearly crushing a group of panicked people crawling over each other to escape. Lightning strikes a large set piece near Rico through the hole in the roof.

RICO

Jumps back as the set piece bursts into flames.

RICO'S POV OF THE BURNING SET PIECE

As the fire dwindles, then flares and spreads as it takes the shape of a man. A very large man.

SATAN (OS)

(laughing)

I'll BE DAMNED - YOU ACTUALLY PULLED
IT OFF, BOY. THE WORLD IS MINE!

RICO

(cowering)

He still has until midnight.

SATAN (OS)

TO THE WORLD HE IS A FRAUD. HE HAS
LOST! GO OUT AND ENJOY THE END,
BOY. SOON THIS WORLD WILL BE OURS!

INT. SQUAD CAR - NIGHT

As the black and white navigates the flooded roads, filled with screaming people, we hear constant reports on the police radio of disasters striking all over the city.

OFFICER 1

(to JD)

Hey, pal - wanna stop and say one
last goodbye to your slimy buddies
over at the Star? It's comin' up on
the left there - two floors from the
top. Wave goodbye, dirt bag.

The officer laughs.

JD'S POV THROUGH THE SIDE WINDOW

Hurricane winds toss trash cans like paper cups. PEOPLE
scramble for protection against the elements. A WELL DRESSED
COUPLE, unable to find shelter, climbs into a dumpster.

JD

Leans back and sighs in weary resignation.

JD

All right... You win.

The cops are too busy responding to radio calls and trying
to navigate the treacherous road ahead to care about JD.

JD (CONT'D)

They're selfish and messed up, but I
liked these people. There's something
about them. Maybe if you weren't so
worried about being right...

(frustrated)

My time's not up, yet.

OFFICER 1

Watch out!

Officer 2 swerves as a lamppost crashes down across the hood
of the car, stopping them dead.

OFFICER 2

Jesus Christ.

Officer 1 tries to open his door.

OFFICER 1

My door's stuck.

OFFICER 2

Mine, too.

JD sits up and tries to get his bearings. The back door creaks as it falls open. JD smiles, his hopes revived, and jumps out of the car.

JD

Thanks, Dad.

JD's cuffs drop from his wrists as he runs into the rainstorm and the cops continue to fight the doors up front.

EXT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

JD runs for the World Trade Center building and the offices of the Star.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Liz sits at a desk outside the main office, staring at the incriminating documents. Morgan sleeps curled up on a nearby reception couch with Liz's coat as a blanket. In the background we can see Brasher inside his office.

The floor is dark except for the light at Liz's desk which flickers as the power surges.

LIZ'S POV

Of the documents. They look absolutely real.

LIZ

Mulls the situation over in her mind. After a tortured moment she takes a lighter from the desk, sets the documents on fire and drops them into an empty metal trash can. As she watches the papers burn we see a look of relief spread across her face. The lights flicker and then go off for a second. When they return, we see...

JD

Standing in the doorway, dripping wet. He notices the fire.

JD

What's that?

We see nothing but love in Liz's eyes.

LIZ
Campfire. Got any marshmallows?

Brasher jerks open his door.

BRASHER
Camden - you got that rough, yet?!

JD turns to find Rico in the doorway behind him and his expression turns dark.

RICO
(hang dog)
I just wanted to say I'm sorry. I
hope there are no...

He laughs at the ridiculousness of his own words.

RICO (CONT'D)
...hard feelings.

Another thunderclap is heard, followed by lightning. A second later the lights go out, just as JD makes a move for Rico.

JD (OS)
Rico! Where are you?!

In the darkness we hear Rico making a run for it, stumbling over the furniture in the process.

MORGAN (OS)
Mommy!

LIZ (OS)
It's all right, Sweetie.

MORGAN (OS)
I'm scared.

LIZ (OS)
Stay where you are! We'll get out
when the lights go on.

When the emergency lights kick in we see...

THE DOOR TO THE HALLWAY

As it slowly swings shut.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

JD bursts through the door and follows the sounds of Rico's footsteps. Pecos runs after him.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Rico takes the stairs two at a time as he heads for the roof. JD and Pecos are only seconds behind.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Rico emerges from the stairwell and looks for a way out. JD runs out onto the roof and tackles Rico as the building trembles.

RICO

I'm sorry!

Pecos barks as JD and Rico fight.

JD

(grabbing him by the neck)

Do you have any idea what you've done!

RICO

I know, I know! I said I'm sorry!

JD punches Rico, sending him sprawling back toward the edge of the building.

ON THE GROUND

Police and rescue crews have gathered to rescue the trapped policemen. Liz, Morgan, Q and Brasher look up to the roof.

LIZ

I don't see them.

ON THE ROOF

Rico offers no resistance as JD pummels him. A ring of fire springs up around the two men.

JD

You're sorry? YOU'RE SORRY?!

JD closes in on Rico, hatred in his eyes. The rain quenches the fire and Rico backs toward the edge of the roof.

RICO

I didn't want to!

JD

Don't tell me - the Devil made you do it!

The building shakes and roof beneath JD's feet cracks. JD falls into Rico and they both go over the side. JD catches the edge of the building and Rico catches JD's legs. Both dangle hundreds of feet above the ground.

ON THE GROUND

Morgan points.

MORGAN

Look, Mommy!

Police and paramedics gather.

PARAMEDIC

C'mon, let's get that bag inflated.

ANOTHER PARAMEDIC

Like it's gonna do any good from
that far up.

ON THE ROOF

JD struggles to maintain his grasp on the edge of the building
as Rico climbs up his body toward the roof.

JD

Get off me -

RICO

(climbing)

You can't let me die. I know your
type.

Rico makes it onto the roof, using JD's face as his last
step. JD's running out of strength.

JD

And you won't let me die, either.

More flames break out on the rooftop. God and the Devil do
battle through rain and fire.

ON THE GROUND

MORGAN

Mommy, I'm scared.

Liz hugs Morgan tight.

LIZ

Me, too.

BACK ON THE ROOF

Rico does battle with his conscience as he watches JD dangle.
Pecos barks.

RICO

Shut up!

JD

(straining)

Help me.

Rico's emotions battle his nature as the wind howls, the
ground shakes and the end of the world draws near.

RICO

I can't!

Lightning crackles all around as JD starts to lose his grip.

JD

Yes you can.

After a torturous moment Rico starts to reach for JD. A wall of fire suddenly flares up between them. The flames are so intense that the rain can't quell them.

JD (CONT'D)

RICO!

ANGLE ON JD'S HANDS

As he finally lets go. Rico reaches through the flames and catches JD's hands at the very last second..

RICO

AAAAAAHHHHH!

Rico pulls JD up through the wall of fire and both men collapse onto the rooftop.

RICO (CONT'D)

(out of breath)

I can't believe I did that.

Pecos licks Rico, then JD.

JD

Thanks.

RICO

Man, is he gonna be pissed!

JD laughs.

RICO (CONT'D)

No, really... You don't know him.
I'm never gonna hear the end of this one.

They laugh as the fire and rain stops as suddenly as it began. It takes JD a second to "get it". He turns to Rico.

JD

You?

(to the heavens)

He's the one?! All this time and it was HIM?!

RICO

Oh, no...there's gotta be some mistake.

JD
(sarcastically)
He doesn't make mistakes.

Pecos runs in happy circles as he chases his tail and barks.

RICO
Oh yeah? What do you call that?

JD and Rico laugh together.

INT. LIZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Liz enters, carrying Morgan - who is fast asleep. JD, Rico and Pecos are right behind.

LIZ
(whispering)
I'll put her in with me.
(to JD)
Why don't you sleep in her bed.
(coldly to Rico)
You're on the couch.

Rico follows Pecos into the living room, still trying to make sense of this whole thing.

RICO
(to himself)
I'm the good guy?

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

JD steps outside as Liz puts Morgan to bed in the background.

JD'S POV

Of the night sky, crystal clear and filled with stars.

JD

Closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, savoring the moment. He looks a little older and a little wiser.

JD
It wasn't just him. They all have
it in them. Every smile and kind
gesture... They're all seeds.
Dormant, but not dead.

JD smiles, content, and goes back inside. Morgan sleeps in her mother's bed with Pecos in her arms. JD kisses Morgan gently on the forehead and whispers:

JD (CONT'D)
You will have the most amazing life.

JD exits, turning off the light as he leaves.

INT. MORGAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Liz puts aside the stuffed animals that cover Morgan's bed and pulls back the blankets. JD watches from the doorway, touched and a little saddened.

LIZ

Are you gonna be okay in here?

JD smiles as he memorizes Liz's face. Liz stops at the door.

LIZ (CONT'D)

What?

JD

Nothing.

Liz suddenly feels awkward.

LIZ

Is it okay to hug you?

JD

Sure. A kiss might even be permissible.

(serious)

But no tongue.

Liz smacks him on the arm, then hugs him tightly.

LIZ

Is it really over?

JD

It's never over, just different.

Liz studies JD's face, trying to glean the hidden meaning in his words.

LIZ

Good night.

Liz heads toward her bedroom and JD watches for a moment before closing the door.

INT. LIZ'S BEDROOM - DAY

Liz towels her hair dry as she heads for the coffee. She calls to Morgan.

LIZ

Rise and shine sleepy head, it's Christmas day! Go wake up that jerk in the living room...

There's a knock at the front door. Liz moves to answer it.

INT. ENTRYWAY - DAY

Liz opens the door for Q. He comes bearing gifts.

Q
Ho ho ho. Where's my present?

Liz and Q hug.

LIZ
Merry Christmas.

Q
Right back at ya. Where's the man?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Liz stops at the door to Morgan's room and knocks.

LIZ
JD?

She knocks again.

LIZ (CONT'D)
You decent?

Liz enters and closes the door behind her.

INT. MORGAN'S ROOM - DAY ANGLE ON DOOR

We hear a knock from outside the door.

MORGAN (OS)
Mommy... Rico's eating all my Fruit
Loops.

RICO (OS)
The box was empty when I got it.

Morgan opens the door and peeks in.

MORGAN
Mommy?

Liz sits in a chair by the window, smiling and crying as she reads a note left by JD. Morgan and Rico move closer.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Mommy... Where's JD?

Liz lifts Morgan up onto her lap. Q steps into the room.

LIZ
He had to go, Sweetie.

Rico moves closer as Liz reads JD's letter aloud.

LIZ (CONT'D)

(reading)

As hard as this is for me, I had to leave you. Everyone will look to me now for guidance, but I came to inspire...not to lead. I came to give hope, not answers.

The camera drifts to the window and we see a beautiful blue sky with billowing white clouds.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Man must choose his own destiny and that cannot happen by following another. You must make your own decisions and your own mistakes.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

We see the back of JD's head as he moves, unnoticed, among the bustling Christmas morning foot traffic. The busses of Grand Central Station wait up ahead.

LIZ (VO)

But know that I walk with you in this world, although I cannot tell you where. And we will meet again, though I cannot say when. I will be watching, with pride and love and hope.

(beat)

And when they ask you what my parting words were, tell them I said to treat every man with kindness, as if it were me. Because it could, in fact, be me.

As JD approaches the bus to who-knows-where, the clouds part and a golden ray of sunshine shines down upon him.

FADE OUT.