

This Side of the Truth

by

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EXT. CAVEMAN VILLAGE - THE PALEOLITHIC ERA - DAY

A small caveman community made up of five large caves, all facing out towards a crackling fire.

Slack-jawed, yet strong and confident CAVEMEN stumble about, dragging haunches of meat, pounding the dirt with sticks, dragging the women.

WE PAN OVER to a small cave. Not even really a cave at all, but a crack in the rocks barely large enough to sleep in. Stepping out of this "cave" is a small, weak, nerdy-looking caveman.

The chief caveman, set apart by the large mallet he wields, steps towards the fire and grunts loudly to mark the beginning of a caveman meeting.

"Loser caveman" steps forward apprehensively, only to be met with laughter from the other cavemen. "Loser caveman" sighs and shrinks back into his sad, little cave, watching them from the shadows.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
(grunting; subtitled)
Me see beast today. Beast scary.
Beast danger for caveman.

The rest of the cavemen look nervous.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
If caveman kill beast? Caveman
safe. Caveman have food.

The cavemen grunt in understanding.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
Who kill beast?

The cavemen grunt amongst themselves. The toughest of the bunch steps forward, pounds his chest and grunts.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
Grob kill beast. Good Grob.

The chief notices "loser caveman" watching from a distance.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
Loser want kill beast?

All the cavemen turn and laugh at the "loser caveman".

CHIEF CAVEMAN
Loser kill nothing!

All the cavemen laugh hysterically.

CAVEMAN #1

Look at Loser cave! So small!

CAVEMAN #2

Loser dumb!

CAVEMAN #3

Fuck that guy!

All the cavemen pick up rocks and begin throwing them at the "loser caveman", who dives out of his cave and runs around the camp, dodging their blows.

EXT. CAVEMAN VILLAGE - THE PALEOLITHIC ERA - NIGHT

Everyone in the village is asleep. Everyone, that is, but "loser caveman" who sleeps uncomfortably in his tiny little cave, tossing and turning, unable to get comfortable.

A stirring in the trees causes "loser caveman" to sit upright. There's something outside of the village. Something big.

Suddenly a GIANT TUSKED BOAR pushes through the trees and stands, looking quite menacing, not ten yards from the village fire.

"Loser caveman" is practically shaking with fear. The boar makes eye-contact with "loser caveman" and charges directly towards his tiny little cave.

The giant boar runs head first into the cave opening, but the opening is too small for the beast to fit its head inside. "Loser caveman" screams like a girl.

The boar backs up to strike again -- this one sure to be the end of "loser caveman" -- when a large boulder, knocked loose by the Boar's first hit, tumbles down and lands smack on the Boar's head, killing it instantly.

The entire village runs out to see what has happened. The "Loser caveman" stumbles out of the cave and dusts himself off.

The chief steps forward.

CHIEF CAVEMAN

The beast! It dead!

CAVEMAN #2

Hey, look at loser! He almost die!
Look he scared!

Everyone laughs. The Chief looks towards Loser, standing nervously near the corpse of the Giant Tusked Boar.

CHIEF CAVEMAN

Loser, what happen?

LOSER CAVEMAN

(shamefully)

The Beast, it came at me. It smash
my cave.

Everyone laughs hysterically. WE PAN over the many laughing faces, pointing and hooting at loser caveman's cowardice. We watch as the "loser caveman's" face turns bright red, the veins in his neck pop out and his fists clench up tightly.

SUDDENLY WE FLY into the caveman's skull, traveling through his cerebral cortex and towards the frontal lobe of his small, homo erectus brain. Sparks are flying back and forth across his brain as his synapses fire in rapid succession.

There is a SMALL EXPLOSION.

We fly back out of "loser caveman's" skull -- his face contorted in rage.

He interrupts everyone's laughter.

LOSER CAVEMAN

Hold on one minute!

Everyone stops laughing.

LOSER CAVEMAN

Loser wasn't finished.

Loser caveman stands up straight and tall -- all of a sudden the Bruce Willis of cavemen.

LOSER CAVEMAN

After beast smash cave, Loser look at beast and say, "not on Loser's watch." Loser grab rock on ground, lift above head and smash it down... right onto motherfucker's head.

The entire village gasps.

LOSER CAVEMAN

Loser kill beast.

(pause)

Now fuck off, Loser going back to sleep.

The chief steps forward ominously, then proclaims:

CHIEF CAVEMAN

Loser kill beast! Loser caveman hero!

Loser steps forward, grabs the prettiest of all cavewomen and drags her towards his cave as the entire village erupts in cheer.

FREEZE FRAME:

NARRATOR

The world's first lie. A monumental occasion in the history of mankind.

(pause)

That lowly caveman who stumbled upon the ability to lie went on to become chief of his village, married dozens of cavewomen, and passed on the lying gene to hundreds of newborn cave-children.

(pause)

Over time lying spread throughout the world, sparking the eventual birth of imagination itself, storytelling, religion, and the oh-so-important polite lie, as in, "Oh Patty, have you lost weight? You look fantastic."

(pause)

The world would be a very different place if events had gone otherwise on that prolific, Paleolithic eve. If not for that night, man would have never acquired the ability to lie to himself and to others.

(pause)

A world without lying would be a world without dreams. A world without pretense. A world without fiction. A world without flattery. A world very *unlike* our own.

UNFREEZE:

The film rewinds about thirty seconds, to the point where the chief asked what happened with "loser caveman" and the boar.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
Loser, what happen?

LOSER CAVEMAN
(shamefully)
The Beast, it came at me. It smash
my cave.

AGAIN WE FLY into the caveman's skull, traveling through his homo erectus brain. Sparks are flying back and forth across his brain as his synapses fire in rapid succession...

But this time there's no explosion.

We fly back out of "loser caveman's" skull -- his face contorted in rage.

The rage slowly fades and Loser just stands there, everyone in the camp waiting for him to say something.

LOSER CAVEMAN
Rock fall on beast. Loser do
nothing. I think Loser even soil
bear pants.
(pause; sniffing)
Loser smell bad.

Everyone falls onto the ground laughing hysterically.

CHIEF CAVEMAN
Loser biggest loser ever! Caveman,
throw rocks at loser!

Everyone in the camp joins in on another round of throwing rocks at "loser caveman" as he runs around the camp, terrified and miserable.

FADE TO BLACK.

INSERT: "PRESENT DAY. LOS ANGELES, CA."

FADE UP:

EXT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

A completely indistinguishable Los Angeles mid-rent apartment complex.

MARK BELLISON pulls up in his early nineties Volvo, parks and enters.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - SAME

Mark (40's), average to semi-handsome, twists and turns through stucco hallways. He knocks on apartment "9C".

JENNIFER MCDOOGLES opens, her face flushed. She's beautiful.

JENNIFER

Hi. You're early. I was just masturbating.

MARK

That makes me think of your vagina. I'm Mark, how are you?

JENNIFER

A little frustrated at the moment. Also equally depressed and pessimistic about our date tonight. I'm Jennifer.

MARK

I hope this date ends in sex.

JENNIFER

Not me. I don't find you attractive. Come on in.

Mark enters.

ROLL CREDITS

Jennifer's apartment is new-adult, as if she just found out she was an adult yet hasn't had the time or the money to complete the transition.

JENNIFER

I need to finish getting ready. While doing that I might realize I'm still horny and try to finish masturbating without you hearing.

Jennifer heads towards the bathroom. Mark stands alone in her living room, looking around.

MARK

(shouting to her)
I feel awkward and I regret being early.

JENNIFER (O.S.)

(shouting back)

Yeah, I'm disappointed you're early and not really looking forward to tonight in general, but the thought of being alone the rest of my life scares both my mother and I equally.

It's completely silent for a long beat. Mark looks around, then sits on her couch.

MARK

(shouting to her)

I have an erection now because I assume you began masturbating once we stopped talking.

More silence.

MARK

(shouting to her)

I'm embarrassed because I think the restaurant I've made reservations at might not be expensive enough or hip enough to impress you, but it was the best I could do because I don't make very much money. You see, I'm forty years old and have no real financial assets to speak of, I've never owned a home, and never had a significant relationship. My boss even told me today that I'm most likely going to get fired tomorrow and...

Jennifer enters the room and Mark stops talking.

JENNIFER

I just masturbated.

MARK

That makes me very horny.

JENNIFER

Shall we go?

MARK

Sure.

Mark stands up. Jennifer picks up her purse and opens the door.

JENNIFER

After you.

END CREDITS

INT. MARK'S VOLVO - NIGHT

Mark and Jennifer drive in silence for a beat.

JENNIFER

I'm only doing this as a favor for my cousin Greg. He keeps begging me to go out on a date with you. He says you're funny.

MARK

Greg's a good friend.

JENNIFER

Where are we eating tonight?

MARK

A cute little place called La Bonisera in West Hollywood.

JENNIFER

You obviously don't have very much money but that's not necessarily a deal breaker.

MARK

I have very little money.

JENNIFER

I also don't really care about a guy who knows all the latest, hippest restaurants.

MARK

I don't know any of them.

JENNIFER

In fact, there are very few things in life that I care about all that much. The only things I have to offer myself or anyone else are my good looks and my affected sense of quirkiness which artistically inclined men interpret as intellect.

(MORE)

JENNIFER (cont'd)

In fact, I think my best trait is the fact that I've made very few mistakes: socially, academically, financially or romantically. I take very few risks and therefore lead a relatively happy and light-hearted existence. Mostly though, I'm a kind, sweet person with the potential of genuinely becoming a vital and interesting human being the day I take the energy I expend on hyper self-reflexivity and apply it to actual action in the reality of my life.

MARK

I found that boring and started thinking about this place's fish tacos.

INT. LA BONISERA - NIGHT

The Volvo pulls up in front of the restaurant and the valet parking guy opens Jennifer's door.

VALET PARKING GUY

I'm extremely bored.

JENNIFER

Hello.

The valet parking guy hands Mark a ticket.

INT. LA BONISERA - NIGHT

They enter the quaint Mexican restaurant.

JENNIFER

This isn't as nice as I remember it.

MARK

What are we going to talk about?

They approach the hostess.

HOSTESS

(to Jennifer)

I'm threatened by you.

MARK

Two, please.

HOSTESS

Of course, come with me.

The hostess seats them in the midst of the semi-crowded restaurant.

A young, awkward waiter approaches.

WAITER

I'm very embarrassed that I work here. Hi.

MARK

Hello.

JENNIFER

Hello.

WAITER

(to Jennifer)

And you're pretty and that only makes me feel worse. Can I get you two started on some drinks?

MARK

I'll have a Budweiser.

JENNIFER

I'll start with your Mango Margarita and probably have three more drinks by the end of the night.

WAITER

Excellent.

(to Mark)

She's out of your league.

MARK

Yup.

The waiter leaves. Jennifer and Mark peruse their menus. A woman screams out from a table on the other side of the room:

WOMAN

(screaming)

All of a sudden I got EXTREMELY angry!

No one in the restaurant reacts.

MARK

I'm going to ask you some questions about your life because that's what you do, but I'll only really listen to about half of what you're saying.

Jennifer nods.

MARK

How do you spend your days?

JENNIFER

I get up at eight in the morning because the noise from my alarm clock interrupts my sleep, so I lean over and...

MARK

That's a little more specific than I expected.

JENNIFER

Well what did you want to know?

MARK

Do you have a job?

JENNIFER

Yes.

MARK

What job do you have?

JENNIFER

I have a job at an office.

MARK

What do you do?

JENNIFER

Just typing and filing and stuff.

MARK

Do you enjoy it?

JENNIFER

No. But I enjoy the end result of the job which is money. And the hours are pretty good for the amount of money I make, which I spend on things I like, such as clothes, hiking, drinking -- even though I know it's bad for me.

(MORE)

JENNIFER (cont'd)

(pause)

But I'd rather just get all the money and not work for the results.

MARK

Sure. Tell me more. I'm trying to get a little insight into you.

JENNIFER

Well you already know a lot about me. You know I'm good looking because... well... here I am. You know I'm successful because you've seen my apartment and the clothes I'm wearing. And you know I'm happy because I'm smiling.

Jennifer smiles brightly.

MARK

Are you always happy?

JENNIFER

Usually. Some days I stay in bed eating and crying.

MARK

Sure.

The waiter returns with their drinks.

WAITER

(hands beer to Mark)

Here you go.

(hands drink to Jennifer)

I had a sip of this.

JENNIFER

Okay.

WAITER

Do you guys know what you want or do you need a moment?

MARK

I'm ready.

JENNIFER

I'll have a caesar salad with chicken because I think I'm fat but I also think I deserve something that tastes good.

MARK

I'll have the fish taco's because I had them once here and it's all I know.

WAITER

Excellent, I'll get those both started for you.

The waiter leaves. Jennifer's cell phone rings from inside her purse.

JENNIFER

Sorry, one second.

She pulls out her cell phone and checks it.

JENNIFER

It's my mother, this won't take long. Probably checking in on our date.

Jennifer answers the phone. She talks openly and in plain view of Mark.

JENNIFER (ON PHONE)

Hello? Yes, I'm with him right now. No, not very attractive. No, doesn't make much money. He's all right though. Seems nice. Kind of funny. A bit fat. Funny little snub nose. No, I won't be sleeping with him tonight. Nope, probably not even a kiss. Okay, you too. Bye.

Jennifer hangs up.

JENNIFER

Sorry about that.

MARK

Don't think twice. How is your mom?

JENNIFER

She's all right.

MARK

Fantastic.

TIME CUT: LATER THAT NIGHT

Both of their plates are now empty. Three empty Margarita glasses sit in front of Jennifer.

The waiter approaches with the bill and places it down in the middle of the table.

WAITER

(to Jennifer)

If I give you my number will you call me?

JENNIFER

No.

EXT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Mark walks Jennifer to the front door of her apartment complex.

MARK

Thanks for going on this date with me. You're way, way out of my league and I know you were just doing it as a favor to Greg, and that most likely I'll never hear from you again.

JENNIFER

I actually had a better time than I thought I'd have, but I won't know for sure how I feel about you until I'm less drunk.

MARK

Give me a call if you still like me once you're sober.

JENNIFER

I might.

Mark leans in for a kiss. Jennifer kisses him on the cheek and goes inside.

MARK

Thanks for kissing me on the cheek, I know you didn't have to do that and....

Jennifer waves and heads inside.

MARK

(shouting after her)

... you're very pretty. Thank you!

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark plops into bed in his boxers. His bedroom is bland, uninspired and completely furnished by the cheapest stuff found in an IKEA catalogue.

Mark flips on the TV and gets under the covers. A commercial comes on TV.

INSERT: COMMERCIAL

A man in a suit stands next to a single can of coke resting on a small table.

JIM

Hi, I'm Jim and I'm the spokesperson for the Coca-Cola company. I'm here today to ask you to continue buying coke. I'm sure it's a drink you've been drinking for years, and if you still enjoy it, I'd like to remind you to buy it again sometime soon. It's basically just brown sugar water, we haven't changed the ingredients much lately, so there's nothing new about it I can say. We changed the can around a little bit. See, the colors here are a little different, and we even put a polar bear on it for the kids. Also, coke is very high in sugar, can lead to obesity in children and adults who don't sustain a healthy diet, and has a Ph acidity level high enough to dissolve teeth and bones over extended periods of time. Coke also works great at removing corrosion from car batteries and loosening rusted bolts. So that's it, it's coke. Everyone knows it. It's very famous. I'm Jim, I work for coke, and I'm asking you to not stop buying coke. That's all. Thanks.

INSERT: Coke logo with tagline: "It's Coke. It's very famous."

Mark falls asleep with the TV on.

FADE TO:

THE NEXT MORNING

Mark's alarm clock blares. Groggily he rises and sighs deeply. He has nothing to look forward to today. Or any day.

INT. ELEVATOR - MARK'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Mark stands in his building's elevator. The doors open and FRANK, mid-forties and bald, enters.

FRANK

Hi Mark. How's it going?

MARK

Not so good. Last night I went on a date with a girl I've had a crush on for years who will most likely never call me again and I'm pretty sure I'm going to get fired today. You?

FRANK

I spent the whole night throwing up pain killers because I'm too afraid to take enough to kill myself.

The elevator doors open on the lobby. Mark nods at Frank.

MARK

See you tomorrow.

FRANK

Bye.

INT. MARK'S CAR -- MORNING

As Mark drives to work we take in a bit of his world.

A homeless man stands on a street corner with a sign that reads: "I don't understand why I'm homeless and all of you are not."

A business man talking loudly into his cell phone pulls up next to Mark at a red light.

BUSINESS MAN

I'm not talking to *anyone* on my cell phone. I only want people to assume I'm very busy.

At another red light Mark eavesdrops on a couple having a loud argument in front of a coffee shop.

GIRLFRIEND

I woke up this morning and realized that, not only do I not love you, but that the thought of touching you sickens me.

BOYFRIEND

The more you hate me the more I fall in love with you.

A Bus passes in front of Mark's car.

ANGLE ON: The bus ad simply shows a can of Pepsi, and reads: "Pepsi. When they don't have Coke."

A car honks behind Mark. The man leans out of his car and yells at Mark.

HONKING MAN

Move it, fatty!

Mark drives forward, waving to the man apologetically as the man zooms past him.

EXT. LECTURE FILMS - CAR LOT - DAY

Mark parks his car and walks towards a large office building. The sign on the building reads: "LECTURE FILMS MOTION PICTURE STUDIOS -- We Film Someone Telling You About Things That Happened."

In front of the building is a man in a suit standing on his briefcase with his tie around his head, screaming.

SCREAMING MAN

This isn't natural! None of this is natural! We're all animals! This doesn't feel right! Why am I wearing clothes? How can you people live like this? Where did all this concrete come from?!

Mark walks right by him. A woman in a business suit stops him on his way through the front door.

WOMAN IN BUSINESS SUIT

I don't want to go in there today. I just don't. You know?

Mark nods understandingly and enters the building.

INT. LECTURE FILMS - LOBBY - MORNING

As Mark walks through the lobby we get a brief glimpse of some of the movie posters lining the wall: "The Holocaust", "The Death of the Dinosaurs", "Napoleon", "The Civil War".

Each poster shows a different austere man sitting in a chair, holding a script in his lap, with a title above his head. The posters are extremely boring.

A tour guide leads a row of tourists through the lobby. As Mark enters we overhear the tour guide's speech.

TOUR GUIDE

All of Lecture Films' productions are written, filmed and edited right here on this very lot. In fact, this building is where Lecture Films' talented writers scour through the world's past events, searching for the most entertaining, dramatic and even hilarious moments of world history, which are then turned into scripts, handed over to our world-famous Readers, and filmed for your viewing pleasure.

The whole tour "oohs". The tour guide walks over towards a large flat-screen television embedded into the wall.

TOUR GUIDE

If you'll just follow me over to this monitor you'll get a sneak peak at Lecture Film's upcoming summer's blockbuster: "Napoleon 1812 to 1813."

Everyone "oohs" again. Mark, curious as well, stops to watch the trailer with the tour.

ANGLE ON: TV SCREEN. A black screen.

NARRATOR

Coming this summer from Lecture Films Motion Picture Studios. Written by Oscar winning screenwriter Rob Marlowe.

INTERCUT Mark scowling at this name.

NARRATOR (O.S.)

And starring Oscar winning Reader Nathan Goldfrappe, comes the epic sequel to last year's most talked about film: "Napoleon 1810 to 1811". Prepare for the adventure.

The black fades to NATHAN GOLDFRAPPE, a middle-aged austere man sitting before a fire in a velvet smoking jacket, holding a script.

NATHAN GOLDFRAPPE

(reading)

And so Napoleon invaded Russia with a brute force of nearly seven hundred thousand men behind him armed with muskets and supported by canon brigades.

NARRATOR (O.S.)

Learn of his defeat.

NATHAN GOLDFRAPPE

(reading)

Through the devastating snow they marched, crippled by disease and hunger, Napoleon's men marched on.

NARRATOR (O.S.)

Listen to his redemption.

INTERCUT the tour, enraptured by this trailer. A few of the tourists whisper to each other.

TOURIST #1

I love these films. Saves me reading the book.

INTERCUT the trailer title slamming onto the screen:

NARRATOR

Napoleon 1812 to 1813. Coming this summer from Lecture Films.

The trailer ends and the tour applauds. The tour guide turns to find Mark walking away.

TOUR GUIDE

Look everyone, there goes Mark Bellison, one of Lecture Films very own screenwriters!

The whole tour turns towards Mark. Mark turns around and dejectedly waves.

TOUR GUIDE

He's one of our least successful writers here at Lecture Films.

(pause)

I also hear he's most likely getting fired today.

The tour nods at Mark. Mark nods back.

TOUR GUIDE

Now let's head to editing bay where we can watch....

INT. LECTURE FILMS - WRITER'S OFFICES - MORNING

Mark walks past cubicle after cubicle until he comes to his office and SHELLEY, his attractive late-20's receptionist.

MARK

Hi Shelley. I'm still attracted to you today.

SHELLEY

Hi Mark. Everyday I realize more and more how over-qualified I am for this position and how incompetent you are at yours.

MARK

Any messages?

SHELLEY

Anthony's coming by within the hour to see if he can work up the courage to fire you. If he can't, he said he'll definitely do it tomorrow.

MARK

Nobody else called? No calls to do with actual work?

SHELLEY

Well, I told everybody you were getting fired this week and not to expect their calls returned, so no one left any messages.

MARK

Next time I'd rather you took down the messages just in case I don't get fired.

SHELLEY

You're almost definitely getting fired.

MARK

Well, it hasn't happened yet.

SHELLEY

Okay, but everybody knows you are.

MARK

Okay, I'll be in my office.

SHELLEY

Okay, I'll be searching for new jobs on Craigslist.

INT. LECTURE FILMS - MARK'S OFFICE - MORNING

Mark's office is completely boring and unremarkable, much like his apartment.

There's a knock on his door.

ANTHONY enters, looking very much the boss in his expensive suit, yet nervous and fearful as well.

ANTHONY

Wow, you look really depressed today. That's going to make this so much harder.

MARK

Anthony, don't fire me.

Anthony sits down on the other side of Mark's desk and leans forward.

ANTHONY

Mark, the 1300's are boring. Nothing interesting happened in that century. Nobody cares about the post-Roman, pre-enlightenment era. The last few scripts you turned in were depressing.

MARK

They were about the black plague! It's the 1300's Anthony, what else am I going to write about!

ANTHONY

It's not totally your fault, Mark.
You got stuck with a bad century.

MARK

No! I can make it work!

ANTHONY

Give it up Mark, it's not like something *new* is going to have happened in the 1300's. At Lecture Films we're no longer interested in searching through the less well-known historical periods for great events, we just want to take the big name Reader's of the day and have them read the historical events that people know and love: the holocaust, D-day, the birth of electricity. These are the stories people want to see, because they know them. They find comfort in them.

Anthony pauses.

ANTHONY

Do you think I could come back and do this tomorrow? I just got very nervous about firing you. I don't do well with confrontation.

MARK

Is there anyway you could do it now? I'd rather not put it off.

Anthony thinks for a moment, struggling to find the courage.

ANTHONY

(meekly)
You're fired?

MARK

Damn.

Anthony slinks out of the room. Mark looks down at his computer to see he has an email in his inbox.

ANGLE ON: MARK'S COMPUTER -- The email reads: "I woke up this morning, sober, and realized that, while I did enjoy your company, based on your looks, your financial situation and your position in life, I have no interest in you romantically. I'm just too far out of your league. -- Jennifer"

Mark sits back in his chair and sighs deeply.

MARK

She's a really good writer, too.

INT. LECTURE FILMS - WRITER'S OFFICES - MORNING

With all of his meager belongings stuffed into a box, Mark leaves his office, stopping in front of Shelley's desk.

SHELLEY

I loathed almost every minute I worked for you.

MARK

I often fantasized about you naked.

SHELLEY

What are you going to do now?

MARK

I have no idea. But I have very little hope for the future.

SHELLEY

I don't have much hope for you either, but I wish you good luck.

MARK

Bye, Shelley.

SHELLEY

Bye, Mark.

Mark heads towards the elevator and is stopped by ROB MARLOWE, a little weasel man with a hip haircut and expensive clothes.

ROB

So they fucking fired you, huh dipshit? I always knew the Black Plague would never work as a movie. Guess the 1300's were as much of a loser as you are.

MARK

Please don't make me feel worse. Or actually whatever, go ahead, I don't think I could possibly feel worse.

ROB

I fucking always hated you. You're a shitty writer assigned to a shitty century and you're a little man bitch. But I was always threatened by you because I knew there was something different about you that I didn't understand and I fucking hate things I don't understand. But you will always be a loser and I will always be more successful than you in nearly every way. That's just the way it is. And Shelley calls you an ass fag behind your back.

MARK

Well, now I feel worse.

Rob storms off. Mark slinks into the elevator and hangs his head in shame as the doors close.

EXT. ELDERLY HOME - DAY

ANGLE ON SIGN: "A SAD PLACE FOR HOPELESS OLD PEOPLE"

Mark enters the building.

INT. ELDERLY HOME - DAY

Mark walks up to the front desk to find a young receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST

Are you looking to abandon an elderly person?

MARK

I already have. Martha Bellison. I'm her grandson.

RECEPTIONIST

Ooh, it's good you're here. She's not doing well. You should say your final goodbyes today.

MARK

You say that every time I'm here.

RECEPTIONIST

She's at the top of our death pool.

Mark walks down the hall, passing different elderly people who reach out to him.

ELDERLY PERSON #1
You look like my dead son.

ELDERLY PERSON #3
Life gets worse with each passing minute.

ELDERLY PERSON #4
I'm on pills that make everything orange.

Mark opens a door and enters.

INT. MARTHA SCHIFFMAN'S ROOM - DAY

An elderly woman in a light blue robe sits on the side of her bed, with her back to Mark, staring at the wall only inches from her face.

MARK
Oh Grandma, that is so depressing.
Come on, at least stare at the ceiling or something.

Mark takes his grandmother by the hand and steers her to the other side of her bed.

MARTHA
The television is broken.

MARK
The television isn't broken. You probably sat on the remote and changed it to channel two again.

Mark flicks on the TV with the remote. Static fills the screen. He changes the channel and a picture comes into view.

MARK
See, you had it on the wrong channel. It needs to be on channel three in order for the satellite to work.

MARTHA
I don't understand anything you just said and that makes me scared and angry.

MARK

I can't understand what it feels like to be you so it just irritates me and makes me think you're stupid. But I also love you and wish things were better for you.

MARTHA

I do too.

MARK

Grandma, I lost my job today. I'm forty years old. I'm completely alone and I've got absolutely no prospects for anything.

MARTHA

I'm sorry, Mark. Things aren't any better for me here. I can't afford most of my medication, I'm very alone and I forget more and more every day.

MARK

I'm just so tired of life. Why does life have to be so... what's the word? Don't you sometimes wish you could change things? Don't you sometimes wish you weren't such a loser?

MARTHA

I don't think I'm a loser.

MARK

Of course you're a loser, grandma. Our family is made up of losers. We're all poor, we're all average looking, we're all only moderately intelligent, we're all lonely and unloved.

MARTHA

Well, we're poor because we weren't born with money and it's very hard to make enough money in a single lifetime to move from one social class to another. We're only moderately intelligent because there's been a lot of inbreeding in our lineage. And we're only lonely and unloved *right now*. Remember, I've had two husbands I loved very much in my lifetime.

(MORE)

MARTHA (cont'd)

And maybe one day you'll have a wife that you love very much too.

MARK

Yeah, but I'm not talking about the past, Grandma. I'm talking about right now. And right now we're both losers, Grandma. We're both shitty, shitty losers. Don't you know that?

MARTHA

I suppose we are. But things could be worse. We could be homeless.

MARK

I'd rather be dead than be homeless. That's why I need to get out there and find a job. If I have to be homeless, I'm going to kill myself.

MARTHA

Well that's sad. I love you, Mark. Good luck finding a job!

MARK

I love you too, Grandma.

Mark leaves. As he shuts the door from the hallway he hears the channel change and turn back to static.

MARTHA (O.S.)

Oops.

INT. BAR - AFTERNOON

Mark and his friend GREG (40'S), an even less attractive, less interesting and less intelligent version of Mark, are bellied up the bar with half empty beers in front of them.

MARK

I'll start looking for a job tomorrow.

GREG

Lately I don't like Indian people.

(pause)

I don't like white people even more though. I fucking hate white people. I fucking hate *people*.

MARK

Hey, thanks for setting me up with your cousin by the way.

GREG

Third cousin. She's hot right?

MARK

Very.

GREG

Way out of your league. Dunno why you bothered.

MARK

It felt nice to go out with someone that pretty. Like for just one moment I experienced what it would be like to be the type of person someone like that would date. It felt good. Doesn't matter anyway. I will always be just who I am right now: average looking, of average intelligence with an average personality. Just a completely generic human being.

GREG

Your life is still better than mine.

MARK

By a good margin.

A sad beat.

GREG

Lately I've been crying in my sleep and waking up in a pool of urine.

MARK

I really wish I had a better friend than you.

GREG

So, what are you going to do now?

MARK

I don't know. Guess I'll start looking for another crappy job.

GREG

Doubt you'll find one. Not much
need for an out-of-work writer
specializing in the Black Plague.

Mark downs his last shot.

MARK

I'm going to go now. You're
seriously depressing me. I really
wish I was cool enough to have a
better friend than you.

GREG

I'm the best you're gonna get, man.
Call me later.

MARK

Yeah.

Mark gets up and drunkenly stumbles out of the bar.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark drunkenly lies in bed. He picks up the phone and dials.

JENNIFER (ON PHONE)

Hello?

Mark just breathes, too scared to say anything.

JENNIFER (ON PHONE)

Hello? I can hear you breathing. Is
this a rapist?

MARK

(quickly)
No, it's Mark. I'm sorry.

Mark hangs up quickly, embarrassed and ashamed. He sighs and
turns off the light.

FADE TO:

THE NEXT MORNING

The alarm clock goes off.

MARK

Shut the fuck up, I don't even have
a job!

Mark tosses the alarm clock across the room and goes back to bed.

LATER.

A loud banging wakes Mark who groggily stumbles out of bed.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Mark opens the door to find his landlord, a middle aged, well-groomed man.

LANDLORD
I'm here for the rent.

MARK
I was going to come talk to you about that. I got fired yesterday.

LANDLORD
I know. That's why I'm here for the rent.

MARK
Well, I haven't got it.

LANDLORD
How much do you have?

MARK
I think I've got about three hundred dollars in my bank account.

LANDLORD
The rent is eight hundred dollars.

MARK
I know. I haven't got it.

LANDLORD
Then you're evicted. I'll help you with your things.

A stunned Mark stands helpless as the Landlord pushes past him, grabs a lamp from his living room and carries it out into the hallway.

LANDLORD
Help me with the couch. It looks heavy.

Mark sighs and follows the Landlord back into his apartment.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

With all of his belongings piled up in the hallway, a tired and sweaty Mark stares defeatedly at his landlord.

LANDLORD

You have one day to get your things out of this hallway.

MARK

How am I supposed to do that?

LANDLORD

You've got three hundred dollars. Rent a truck.

MARK

Oh, fuck me.

Mark grits his teeth in rage.

INT. BANK - DAY

Mark steps up to the female teller at the bank. Mark is at the lowest point in his entire life.

BANK TELLER

How can I help you today?

MARK

I'd like to make a withdrawal.

BANK TELLER

Okay, sir. I'm confident I can help you with that.

MARK

I've just been evicted from my apartment so I need to withdraw what I have left in my account so I can move my things out. I guess I need to close out my account to do that.

(pause)

I think I'm about to be homeless.

CLOSE ON MARK: This sinks in.

BANK TELLER

Unfortunately sir the system is down right now so I'm not going to be able to perform an account closure until the system is back up. But I can assist you in a withdrawal. How much would you like to withdraw?

MARK

Well, I'd *like* to withdraw eight hundred dollars.

The bank teller smiles at Mark.

BANK TELLER

How much are you going to withdraw today, sir?

MARK

All of it. Just whatever is left.

BANK TELLER

The system is down, sir. Please tell me how much you have in your account?

At the peak of his despair something suddenly comes over Mark. His face turns a light shade of red as the wheels begin to spin in his brain. He is fighting something within.

WE FLY into Mark's skull, traveling through his cerebral cortex and towards the frontal lobe of his brain. Sparks are flying back and forth across his brain as his synapses fire in rapid succession.

There is a small explosion.

We fly back out of Mark's skull -- his eyes are locked on the Bank Teller's like a deer in the headlights.

BANK TELLER

Sir?

MARK

(awkwardly fast)
Eight hundred dollars.

BANK TELLER

Pardon me?

MARK
(more confident)
I have eight hundred dollars in my
bank account.

The teller locks eyes with Mark... then looks towards her
computer.

BANK TELLER
Wait a second here. The system just
came back up.
(to co-worker)
System seems to be back up, guys.
(to Mark)
Just one second while I access your
account. You said you're
withdrawing eight hundred, correct?

Mark breaks out in a cold sweat.

MARK
Yup.

The bank teller types on her keyboard.

BANK TELLER
Well, look at this. It says here
you've only got three hundred
dollars in your account. But you
said you wanted to withdraw eight
hundred?

Mark doesn't know what to say. He tries to speak but nothing
comes out.

BANK TELLER
I apologize for this sir, but it
seems our system has made a
mistake. Hold on one second while I
go and get your eight hundred
dollars. Did you want that in large
or small bills?

Mark gulps.

MARK
Large bills.

The teller walks away. Mark looks around nervously, awkwardly
smiling at the other tellers.

BANK TELLER

(to co-worker)

Guys the computers seem to be a bit buggy. Will someone call James to come in and look into it, please?

Moments later the Bank Teller returns and begins counting out eight hundred dollars for Mark. Mark stares at the money with wide eyes.

BANK TELLER

There you are. Eight hundred dollars. Anything else I can do for you today?

In shock, Mark shakes his head. The bank teller smiles big at him.

BANK TELLER

Sometimes our computers can get a bit buggy, especially when the system goes down. Sorry for any inconvenience.

MARK

It's no problem.

Mark takes his money and hurriedly walks away.

EXT. STREET

Bursting out of the bank, Mark is a caveman who just invented fire.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- UNIT 1A

Mark knocks on his LANDLORD'S door. A short, stodgy old man opens the door.

LANDLORD

What are you doing here?

Mark holds out a wad of money.

MARK

Paying my rent.

The landlord looks at the money and slowly reaches out to take it.

LANDLORD

Where did you get this money?

MARK

It was amazing. I went in to the bank and the system was down and I was going to take out three hundred dollars but she asked me how much I'd like to take out and...

Mark stops himself. Something else takes over within.

MARK

I found it. Lying on the street.

The Landlord and Mark both lock eyes for a tense beat.

LANDLORD

Okay. Lucky.

MARK

Give me my key back.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mark jumps around his apartment, dancing and screaming. Mark is a caveman who just invented sex.

MARK (V.O.)

Today I stumbled upon something no man has ever stumbled upon before. What I have done today they will write about in history books for generations to come. And yet, only moments ago... it was unfathomable not only to myself, but to mankind as a whole. What I have found there is no word for. And it was as simple as...

(long pause)

... how do I explain this...

(long pause)

CUT TO:

EXT. BAR - DAY

Mark and Greg sit at the bar, Greg half listening as an inspired Mark ends his monologue.

MARK (CONT'D)

... I said something... that *wasn't*.

Greg perks up.

GREG

Huh?

MARK

I said something... that... *wasn't*.
I... what's the word I'm looking
for? Well, there is no word. Of
course there's not, I just invented
it.

Mark is frustrated by his inability to explain.

MARK

Here. Watch.
(calling over bartender)
Jim.

JIM, mid-40's, short and stout, waddles over.

JIM

What?

Mark, stands up, clears his throat, and holds his hands out
like "gimme some room".

There's a long pause as Mark summons his newfound talent:

MARK

(profoundly)
My name is Doug.

Greg and Jim look at Mark confusedly.

GREG

(dead serious)
Your name is Doug.

JIM

(without hesitation)
Hi Doug.

GREG

It amazes me that I never knew your
real name.
(pause)
Doug is good. It suits you.

Mark is flabbergasted.

MARK

Come on guys. Are you serious?
What's my name?

GREG
It's Doug.

JIM
Doug.

MARK
No. My name is Mark.

GREG
(still dead serious)
Your name is Mark.

JIM
(still without hesitation)
Hi Mark.

GREG
Mark suits you much better.

JIM
Mark-o.

MARK
You guys aren't following me.
(thinking)
Okay, guys...I'm black.

GREG
I knew it.

JIM
You're very light skinned, but I
can see it.

GREG
I've always wanted a black friend.

Mark punches the bar in anger.

MARK
Fuck it, I'm an Eskimo.

GREG
Fantastic.

JIM
I've never seen a black Eskimo.

MARK
Okay, I'm a pirate.

GREG
I didn't know they still had those.

JIM
Are you a dangerous pirate?

MARK
Okay then, I'm a lion tamer... and
I have purple hair.

GREG
Aren't you scared you'll get bitten
one day?

JIM
(to Greg)
I want to die my hair purple just
like Mark's.

Greg nods. Mark sighs.

INSERT: "TWO HOURS LATER"

Mark sits at the bar looking completely bored.

JIM
I'm a one-armed Jewish space
explorer.

GREG
When's your launch date?

JIM
Shalom. How'd you lose your arm?

MARK
I invented the bicycle.

GREG
I love your work.

JIM
Can you get me a discount on a ten
speed?

Mark sighs, finishes his beer and gets up to leave.

MARK
I give up. And I'm bored.

Mark heads towards the door, dejected. He turns back.

MARK
Guys, if you had the power to make
things the way you wanted them,
what would you do first?

GREG
If I could do anything in the
world?

JIM
Anything at all?

MARK
Pretty much.

Greg and Jim think this over long and hard.

GREG
I'd bone bitches asses.

JIM
Right in the ass.

MARK
Specifically the ass?

GREG
If I could change things I would
make all the hot chicks bone me.

JIM
Agreed.

Mark mulls this over.

MARK
Alright then, let's try that.

Mark downs his beer and heads towards the exit.

GREG
Where are you going?

MARK
Out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mark walks the street, a hunter looking for his prey.

Within seconds Mark spots a gorgeous blonde walking right
towards him. He stops in his track, quickly trying to decide
how best to proceed.

But as the blonde passes him he just stares at her like a
deer in the headlights.

BLONDE
 Don't look at me, I'm not attracted
 to you.

The blonde walks away. Mark stands on the sidewalk staring off into space, the wheels in his mind working overtime. Then it hits him.

MARK
 Wait!

BLONDE
 Don't bother. I've heard it all
 before.

MARK
 (blurting)
 THE WORLD IS GOING TO END IF WE
 DON'T HAVE SEX RIGHT NOW!

Immediately the blonde's eyes well up in tears. She is terrified.

BLONDE
 Do we have time to get to a motel
 or do we have to do it right here?

Mark is a caveman who just invented his penis.

EXT. A MOTEL -- DAY

The neon sign outside reads "A Cheap Motel for Intercourse with a Near Stranger".

We slowly PUSH IN on the door of room 206. We hear noises inside that at first sound like moaning, but as we get closer... they sound more like crying.

INT. MOTEL - ROOM 206 - DAY

Bawling her eyes out and sitting on the bed doing her best to get her shoes off, is the hot blonde.

Mark sits across from her, a look of guilt and revulsion on his face. This is *not* what he expected.

BLONDE
 (bawling)
 I'm sorry, I'm just so scared. I
 don't want the world to end.
 (MORE)

BLONDE (cont'd)
I don't want to die in this motel
room. I think I'm going to throw
up. Help me get my pants off.

Mark stands up. The blonde grabs him and pulls him towards
her. He pulls away.

MARK
This isn't right.

The blonde screams and drops to her knees.

BLONDE
No! We have to have sex! The world
is going to end! Think of the
children and little babies!

Mark looks down at this panicked, helpless girl and feels
really, really bad about himself.

MARK
Just calm down for one second.

Mark walks over to the phone and picks it up.

BLONDE
How can I be calm? The world might
end any second! DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND?! WE'RE ALL GOING TO
DIE!!

MARK
(to phone)
Hello... NASA? Yes, it's... me. Oh,
good. That's very good news. Good
news indeed.

Mark hangs up the phone. The blonde is rocking back and forth
on the bed in a fetal position.

MARK
We're going to be okay. The world
isn't going to end. Everyone is
going to be fine.

The blonde tackles him in a bear hug, sobbing and laughing.

BLONDE
WE'RE GOING TO LIVE! We're going to
live! Thank you! Thank you!

The blonde falls onto the bed in exhaustion.

BLONDE
This has been the worst... and the
best... day of my life.

MARK
Okay, I gotta go.

BLONDE
Oh no, please stay. We've been
through so much together.

Mark stares at this helpless girl for a moment.

MARK
I'm an asshole.

The blonde's face and mood do an instant 180.

BLONDE
(spiteful)
Well, I hate assholes. Get out of
here.

The blonde chucks her shoes at Mark as he closes the door.

EXT. MOTEL -- DAY

Mark walks across the parking lot. A look of total shock on
his face.

INT. BAR - DUSK

Greg is in the exact same position Mark left him in, but he's
twice as drunk.

Mark plops down next to him, dazed and upset.

MARK
That was one of the worst
experiences of my life.

GREG
(shit-faced)
Did you invent a new kind of bike?

MARK
What else would you do if you could
do anything in the world?

GREG
Bone chicks asses. That's what I'd
do.

MARK
What else though. What's the *second*
thing you'd do.

Greg nods off. Mark nudges him.

GREG
What else would you do, dipshit?

MARK
I'd get money. I'd get all the
money.

Greg passes out. Mark nods his head, takes the three full
shots sitting in front of Greg and does them all.

MARK
Yeah. Let's do that. Greg, let's
go.

GREG
What?

MARK
We're going on a trip.

Greg immediately perks up.

GREG
I'll drive.

INT. MARK'S CAR -- NIGHT

Greg is driving, Mark rides shotgun, both of them are
completely plastered.

MARK
Thanks for driving man, I'm
completely plastered.

GREG
I'm just as hammered as you. But I
don't care if I get arrested. I'm
trying to hit bottom.

WHOOP-WHOOP come the flashing lights of a cop car right
behind them. Greg begins to pull over.

GREG
Here comes bottom.

Mark looks worried. The cop comes to Greg's window.

COP
Nothing safer than pulling over two
nerdy white guys in their forties.

GREG
I don't want to go to jail.

COP
Are you drunk?

GREG
Yes.

COP
Then you're going to jail.
Blow in here, son.

The cop pulls out a Breathalyzer and holds it up to Greg's mouth.

MARK
Wait, officer. Don't do that.

COP
I don't think you can afford my
bribe, son.

MARK
How much does it cost to bribe you?

COP
At least five grand.

MARK AND GREG
Wow, that's high.

COP
I need to feel that I've got some
sense of integrity.

Greg blows in the Breathalyzer.

COP
Whoa, that's off the charts. Step
out of the car, son. You're drunk
and going to jail.

Greg opens the door.

MARK
Wait.
(pause)
He's not drunk.

Greg stumbles and falls, passing out in the dirt. The cop stares at Mark for a long beat while his brain wraps around this.

COP

Oh.

The cop bangs his Breathalyzer against his leg.

COP

Damn thing must be broken.

In the background we can hear Greg vomiting profusely. The cop picks up Greg and puts him back in the driver's seat.

COP

(to Greg)

Son, you might want to drive yourself to the nearest hospital. You have food poisoning or some kind of flu.

Mark is basically passed out, vomit drooling down his chin. He couldn't look more drunk. The cop and Mark stare at him for a beat.

COP

(to Mark)

Maybe you oughta drive, son.

MARK

Good idea.

MOMENTS LATER

Driving away with Greg in the passenger seat, a giant smile comes across Mark's face as he begins to laugh.

MARK

That was awesome!

GREG

Stop laughing, I'm sick.

MARK

You're gonna be all right, Greg.

GREG

Oh good!

Greg vomits all over himself.

GREG
Stupid stomach flu.
(pause)
Where are we going?

MARK
Vegas, baby. Vegas.

EXT. BELLAGIO - NIGHT

Mark pulls in front of the Bellagio hotel and casino. Both Mark, and a very hungover looking Greg, pop out of the car. Mark hands the keys to the valet and they both stumble inside.

INT. BELLAGIO - NIGHT

It's the Bellagio. We've all been there.

GREG
What are we doing here? We don't
have any money to throw away.

MARK
Sure we do.

Mark pulls out a small wad of money.

GREG
What is that, a few hundred bucks?
That's not going to last us very
long.

MARK
Sure it will.

Mark and Greg step up to the chip counter. Mark slides his small wad through the window.

MARK
Chips please.

The CHIP WOMAN looks at his money.

CHIP WOMAN
There's a very good chance you'll
lose all this money here tonight.

MARK
I know.

CHIP WOMAN

And even if you do happen to win,
there's an even better chance that
in the long run we'll win it back.

MARK

I know.

CHIP WOMAN

Some of the games are fixed. Like
all the ones that use computers.

MARK

I know.

The woman slides him a short stack of chips. Greg frowns.
Mark and Greg walk towards the tables.

Mark and Greg look around. A cocktail waitress approaches.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

If I could be a stripper I would,
but I'm not attractive enough.
Drinks, guys?

GREG

No. I have a stomach flu.

MARK

We'll both have beers and we'll
take them at that roulette table
over there.

Mark points to a table and walks away. The waitress nods.

GREG

Oh come on, roulette is the
stupidest game of them all. It's
pure chance, no skill whatsoever.

MARK

It's okay. I'm feeling lucky.

GREG

You've never had a lucky day in
your life.

MARK

Just watch.

They arrive at the roulette table.

ROULETTE DEALER

Get your bets in, get your bets in.
The house always wins in the long
run. Because of the zero's on the
board every bet is slightly favored
towards the house.

Mark puts his chips down on seventeen black. The dealer starts the wheel. The ball comes to a stop on twenty-seven red.

ROULETTE DEALER

Twenty-seven red. No one wins.

In full view, Mark slides his chips over to twenty-seven red.

MARK

I'm on twenty-seven red.

The dealer looks at this. His brain takes a moment to respond.

ROULETTE DEALER

We have a winner. Congratulations,
sir.

The dealer stacks up Mark's new chips and pushes them over to him.

GREG

You did it. You just, like,
quadrupled your money. You lucky
son of a bitch.

MARK

That's nothing. Watch this.

Mark puts all of his chips on double zero. A bunch of other people scatter their chips around the table as well.

ROULETTE DEALER

Get your bets in, get your bets in.
The house always wins in the long
run. Fork over your money right
here folks. I say this so often I
want to kill myself.

The dealer spins the ball. It comes to a halt on nine black.

ROULETTE DEALER

Nine black. No winners.

Mark takes ALL of the chips on the table, both his and EVERYONE ELSE'S and slides them together into a giant pile and sits them right on nine black.

MARK

I'm on nine black. These are all mine.

The table cheers for Mark. Some people are a bit confused, and a slight hubbub arises in the background: "I thought I had chips on the table." "Yeah, me too." "We must be drunk." "That guys is lucky!" Even the dealer looks a bit confused... but gets over it quickly.

ROULETTE DEALER

Nine black wins. Big winner. Congratulations, sir.

The roulette dealer slides about five grand in chips over to Mark. Greg's jaw is on the floor.

GREG

Do it again.

Mark notices the confused people around him.

MARK

I don't think I should. Lets go play slots.

MOMENTS LATER

Mark is talking to a Pit Man right in front of a slot machine.

MARK

Hi, I just won a major jackpot on this slot machine but no money came out.

PIT MAN

I'm sorry about that, sir. Let me get that fixed for you. And can I say congratulations, sir.

MARK

Thank you.

The Pit Man whispers a few words into his lapel mic.

MOMENTS LATER

Mark and Greg, each carrying four giant buckets overflowing with chips, waddle through the casino.

GREG

This is the most amazing night of my life.

INT. BELLAGIO - PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Mark and Greg lounge around the Bellagio penthouse suite, piles of chips and cash lying around them. Greg is pacing delightedly. Mark lies on the couch, unsatisfied.

GREG

It amazes me the winning streak you're on. You must be the luckiest man in the world.

MARK

Well, sort of.

GREG

It was like we couldn't lose.

MARK

We couldn't lose.

GREG

Do you have a system?

MARK

I've got a system.

GREG

Well, with your system in just a few weeks I figure we could be the richest people in the world.

MARK

And then what?

GREG

Well, here's what I'm thinking. We take all the money in the world... and put it on black.

MARK

Why put it on black? Why stop there? Put it on a number and get thirty five times back.

Greg's eyes widen at the thought.

GREG

That's exactly what we'll do.

MARK

Hold on, I think I found a flaw in your plan. How can they pay us if we have all the money in the world?

GREG

Well, they'd just have to.

MARK

Well, they can't because we've got it all.

GREG

Well, they'd better find it. They can't let us bet if they're not going to pay us back. They'll have to just give us the casino.

MARK

We already own the casino. We've got all the money in the world. We'll be betting against ourselves.

GREG

Then we'll go to another casino.

MARK

We own that one too. We won that.

GREG

So we own all the casino's?

MARK

Yup.

GREG

And if we win we can't pay us back because we already have all the money?

MARK

Yes.

Greg thinks this over for a long beat.

GREG

Only one thing we can do then.

MARK

I'm listening.

GREG

Take ourselves into the back room and break our own fingers.

MARK
Brilliant.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - MORNING

Mark, exhausted from his long night, waits for the elevator to arrive. The elevator doors open and Frank, the depressive neighbor, steps out.

MARK
Hey there, Frank.

FRANK
Mark. How's it going?

MARK
Pretty good, thanks.

Frank stops and turns around, this is a different response.

FRANK
Really?

MARK
Yeah. You?

FRANK
Awful. I was doing some internet research last night about suffocation suicide. I'm probably going to give that a try tonight.

MARK
Oh.
(pause)
All right. Bye, Frank.

FRANK
Bye.

Mark gets in the elevator, Frank walks away. A short beat. Mark exits the elevator and yells after Frank.

MARK
Frank!

Frank, halfway out the building, turns around.

FRANK
Yeah?

MARK
Don't do it.

Frank thinks this over.

FRANK

Why not? I'm miserable. And no one will care.

MARK

I'll care.

FRANK

You're a loser, though.

MARK

Don't do it, Frank. Things are going to be all right.

FRANK

They are?

MARK

Yes. You're going to meet someone soon. You won't be so lonely. Things are going to turn around at your job.

FRANK

My job's actually fine.

MARK

Well, things are going to get better. Better than they are.

FRANK

What about the depression?

MARK

It will go away very soon. You're going to be happy soon, Frank. You just need to wait for it. Listen to me: you don't need to kill yourself.

Something changes in Frank. A slight smile comes over him.

FRANK

Really?

MARK

Really.

Frank laughs.

FRANK

Wow. Man, and that suffocation thing really seemed like a good idea.

MARK

It wasn't.

FRANK

Okay. Well, my night's open now. You want to hang out later?

MARK

I don't know. Not really.

Frank's smile fades a tiny bit.

MARK

Sure. Of course. Let's hang out.

FRANK

I'll see you after work.

MARK

Great.

Mark gets back in the elevator to the sound of Frank laughing to himself as he exits the building. We hold on Mark for a moment as he smiles and nods his head.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mark sits at kitchen table, pen and paper in hand.

MARK (V.O.)

(writing)

I've discovered something today very important... and very powerful.

MONTAGE

Mark doing various good deeds throughout the day. V.O plays throughout.

Marks walks up to the homeless man with the "I don't understand why I'm homeless and you are all not" sign. He says something to the homeless man, who quickly drops his sign and follows Mark.

MARK (V.O.)

I'm as excited as I've ever been in my entire life, and equally scared.

(MORE)

MARK (V.O.) (cont'd)

I'm writing this down in a letter in case this thing I've discovered somehow ends up killing me. I want to ensure that, even if I wasn't strong enough to use it, that my invention doesn't once again disappear, never to be discovered again.

Mark and the homeless man are at the bank. Mark is talking to the bank teller. The homeless man looks at Mark nervously. The teller leaves and comes back with stacks and stacks of cash.

MARK (V.O.)

In just a few hours since I stumbled upon my discovery I have seen its potential for evil and I have seen its potential for good.

Outside Lecture Films, Mark talks to the woman who was adamant about not wanting to go to work. He whispers a few words into her ear. She smiles, picks up her briefcase and gladly walks into work.

MARK (V.O.)

I must be careful with my discovery, for at this point I barely understand it, let alone think I have the power to control it. All I know is that if I'm not careful I could easily do irreparable damage to the world, or even cause my own premature death.

Mark walks up to the arguing couple at the coffee shop, who are now sitting at different tables, not even looking at each other. He pulls up a chair next to each of them, individually, and says a few words to them. Within moments, the two of them are running into each other's arms and making out passionately on the floor of the coffee shop.

MARK (V.O.)

Now, to explain my invention. In essence, my creation is the act of saying words that simply are *not*. For example, if I tell someone that my eyes are blue, then it simply becomes fact. I still know that, indeed, my eyes are brown, but no one else is aware of this fact, so therefore I have blue eyes.

(MORE)

MARK (V.O.) (cont'd)

It's a game of numbers: there is only one of me who knows I have brown eyes, and so many of them who do not. The numbers always win.

Mark is at the elderly home, walking the halls and whispering to his grandmother and each elderly person he passes, leaving each one of them with a smile upon their faces, and some with tears streaming down their cheeks.

MARK

Whoever is reading this, go ahead and try it. Tell someone your eyes are a different color than they are. I think you'll be amazed at the results. It's so simple and yet... so powerful... this thing I've invented.

Mark and Frank are watching TV in Mark's apartment. The two of them are drinking beers and having a good time watching television.

MARK (V.O.)

Au Revoir, future reader, au revoir.

Mark signs his letter, seals it in an envelope, writes "MY INVENTION" on the outside of it and sticks it in a drawer in his kitchen.

END MONTAGE

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark lies in bed watching TV. He picks up the phone and dials.

MARK

Jennifer. It's Mark.

JENNIFER

Are you gonna hang up on me again?

MARK

No. Maybe. Who knows. I'm calling because I want to ask you out on another date.

JENNIFER

Why would you do that?

MARK

I discovered something yesterday. I found out I can pretty much have my life anyway I want it from now on.

JENNIFER

Congratulations. I gotta go.

MARK

Wait, and I know you said you didn't want to date me ever again, but I'm different now. Things have changed. I think I'm in your league now.

JENNIFER

You're better looking?

MARK

No. I'm not better looking. I'm just more... powerful. I think you have to see it for yourself.

JENNIFER

Have you been to the gym?

MARK

No, I haven't been to the gym. It's just... it's amazing. Things are different for me now. You have to see this. I think you'll hardly recognize me.

JENNIFER

Did you buy better clothes?

MARK

No, look can we just meet up?

There is silence on the other end of the phone.

MARK

Jennifer, If there was even a glimmer of something about me that you liked, please say yes. You even admitted that we got along well. Just give me one more chance. Just one little teensy, tiny date.

JENNIFER

Okay, fine.

MARK

Fantastic. Tomorrow night. I'll pick you up at eight.

JENNIFER

Most likely it'll be our last date though, so just know that.

MARK

(sarcastic)

That's very sweet.

JENNIFER

No it wasn't. Did you not hear what I said?

MARK

Yeah, no I was being...

(pause; searching)

...there's no word for it. See you tomorrow night.

JENNIFER

Bye.

Mark hangs up happily.

MOVIE TRAILER VOICE (ON T.V)

In Our World.... in the 1800's...

PAN ON TV: The screen is all black.

MOVIE TRAILER VOICE (ON T.V)

... came the greatest revolution of them all.

(climactic music)

The Industrial Revolution.

The black fades to ANGELO BADSMITH, a middle-aged African American man sitting before a fire in a green smoking jacket, holding a script.

MOVIE TRAILER VOICE (ON T.V)

Written by famed screenwriter Rob Marlowe and read by Oscar winning Reader Angelo Badsmith.

ANGELO BADSMITH

Hello, I'm Angelo Badmsith. Come watch me read about the exciting events that took place during the Industrial Revolution.

(MORE)

ANGELO BADSMITH (cont'd)
 Also, I will tell you all about my
 personal misfortunes, such as my
 wife who cheated on me with a man
 named Perry.

The screen reads: "The Industrial Revolution. Summer '07."

BACK ON MARK: His eyes are wide. The wheels in his head are spinning again.

MARK
 Rob Marlowe, your streak of success
 has finally come to an end.

Suddenly Mark jumps and runs to his kitchen table. He grabs a pen, pulls out a sheet of paper... and begins writing.

SERIES OF JUMP CUTS: Mark writing furiously throughout the night, piling up page upon page. By the time the sun comes up Mark is exhausted, with barely the energy to keep his head up as he writes "the end" and places the final page on his large stack of finished pages.

FADE TO:

EXT. LECTURE FILMS - CAR LOT - MORNING

Mark hustles through the parking lot, manuscript in hand. He reaches the door and then stops -- remembering something.

Mark runs to the curb and throws his manuscript onto the dirty, filthy street. He gets down on his hands and knees and rubs his manuscript into the grime, making sure to get every page equally filthy.

Satisfied, he organizes the pages into a neat pile and enters Lecture Films.

INT. LECTURE FILMS - WRITER'S OFFICES - DAY

Mark walks the aisles of Lecture Films. People stop to stare at him. There is a whispered hubbub from the many cubicles and offices.

Mark passes his old office, stopping to read the sign on the door: "14TH CENTURY -- CLOSED."

Mark grimaces and keeps walking.

SHELLEY (O.S.)
 He's gone crazy!

Mark turns his head to see Shelley, standing down the hall, terrified, staring at Mark.

Mark ignores her and keeps walking. Leaning against his door jamb, is Rob, smirking as Mark passes him.

ROB

Come to beg for your old job back?
Hey everybody, here's the loser who
thought the Black Plague would make
for an interesting film. Good luck,
douche bag. Freaking loser.

Mark walks right up to the door that reads, "Head of Development -- Anthony James."

Mark opens the door.

Anthony is on the phone, his back to Mark.

ANTHONY (ON PHONE)

They're going to fire me any
moment, I just know it. I'm really,
really horrible at my job. I don't
know anything about movies. I don't
even like movies. I like sports.
Head of development, what does that
even mean? I'm not a smart person.
Okay, talk to you later.

Anthony turns around to find Mark. His face becomes very, very scared.

ANTHONY

That was the head of the studio.
(pause)
I'm very scared that you're mad at
me about the whole firing thing.

MARK

I'm not mad at all.

Anthony is relieved.

ANTHONY

Oh good, because I feel really bad
about it. I mean, I would be
horrible at your job too. I would
be horrible at any job in this
place.

(pause)

I love sports.

They both stare at each other for a long beat.

ANTHONY
Why are you here?

Mark pulls up a chair.

MARK
When you fired me, I was very
depressed.

ANTHONY
I knew it.

MARK
And so I left this building and I
just started walking. And I walked
all the way out of town. And then I
walked into the desert and I fell
asleep under a tree.

ANTHONY
I don't do well with other people's
life changing events.

MARK
And when I woke up I found this
strange old chest sticking out of
the ground. So I started digging.
And I unearthed a very old and
ancient box. Probably, oh...
about... seven hundred years old.
And inside the box...
(holding up manuscript)
... was *this*.

Mark places his muddy, dirty, manuscript down on Anthony's
desk. Anthony is scared to touch it.

ANTHONY
What is it?

MARK
It's a never-before-heard
historical event from the past.

ANTHONY
When does it take place?

MARK
The 1300's.

The excitement drains from Anthony's face.

ANTHONY

I told you we're not interested in Black Plague movies here, Mark.

MARK

This one isn't about the black plague. Well it isn't *just* about the black plague. Let me read you some of this.

Anthony rolls his eyes.

MARK

Anthony, get excited about this. This is a brand new event from history that no one has ever heard before. It's a great human discovery.

ANTHONY

Yeah, but is there a movie there?

MARK

The greatest movie Lecture Films has ever made.

Anthony's eyes widen.

ANTHONY

Start reading.

Mark picks up the manuscript and opens the first page.

MARK

(reading)

On the very first day of the fourteenth century, a momentous occasion occurred. It began as a day much like any other. The sun rose, the people awoke, workers began to work, babies began to cry. But all of that was interrupted when a giant flying space ship crashed down from the skies and landed in the heart of Babylon.

Anthony's mouth drops to the ground.

ANTHONY

What?!

Mark smiles. Anthony picks up his phone and presses "intercom".

ANTHONY (ON PHONE)

I want everyone in here now! We've got a BIG ONE.

Anthony hangs up.

ANTHONY

Please, Mark. Continue.

MARK

(reading)

As the smoke cleared, the door to the spaceship opened and inside, were hundreds of beautiful, half naked alien women.

DISSOLVE TO:

The room is filled with people now, all of them hanging on every word Mark reads from his manuscript. Even Rob and Shelly lean against the back wall, their minds blown by the story Mark is telling.

MARK

(reading)

And then the ninja army unleashed a giant fireball that brought the robot dinosaur to its knees, saving Mars, Earth and the Nude Amazonian Alien Women all in one sweeping motion. The earth was saved. Jebediah and Aleena were allowed to marry by alien king Xardon. It was to be the First Human-Nude Amazonian Alien Woman wedding, and no expenses would be spared. All of Babylon and Mars were invited to join in the celebrations.

People around the room wipe tears from their eyes.

MARK

(reading)

The wedding was held on a brisk summers day on Mars, with all of the survivors of the Great Ninja War and the Black Plague present. They feasted and danced and laughed and it was a joyous occasion.

(MORE)

MARK (cont'd)

The moment the bride and groom kissed, King Xardon performed a mind-wipe on all of the humans, thereby erasing all knowledge of these events from their minds, and sent them back to Babylon. For seven hundred years these events would be forgotten by mankind until one day, a great writer by the name of Mark Bellison, would stumble upon them in the desert, after being fired by his shit boss Anthony and mocked by Rob and Shelly, two huge douche bags. Lecture Films Motion Picture Studios would go on to make the picture and it would be a big success, and Mark would become very wealthy and famous from it. The End.

The entire room bursts into applause. Not just normal applause, but massive, epic applause.

Everyone crowds around Mark, hugging him, touching him, blown away by the magnanimity of the moment.

ANTHONY

Mark, tell us what it's called.

Mark thinks it over for a moment and looks right at Rob.

MARK

(to Rob)

The Black Plague.

Rob sneers. Everyone "aahs" and claps again.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Mark and Jennifer sit at a candlelit table in the corner of a hip and fancy restaurant. Jennifer looks beautiful. Mark is on cloud nine.

JENNIFER

Congratulations on selling your script today.

MARK

Thanks. Thank you for having dinner with me.

JENNIFER

Everyone needs to eat.

(pause)

And I enjoy your company.

Mark smiles. They both sip their drinks and look at their menus. The waiter comes up.

WAITER

I'm an extremely important waiter.

(pause)

What can I get you?

MARK

I don't want to know what it is, I just want to order the most expensive thing on the menu.

JENNIFER

I'll have the duck. And I think you look like a little rat faced man.

WAITER

Okay, I'll have those right up for you.

The waiter leaves. Mark and Jennifer stare at each other for a short beat. Something has changed between them and they can both feel it.

JENNIFER

Things seem to be turning around for you.

MARK

Today is the best day of my life. Hands down. Easy. Best day.

JENNIFER

It's not every day you unearth a monumental historical event and sell it for a ton of money.

MARK

That wasn't the best part. It was great, but it wasn't the peak of my day.

(pause)

I've had a crush on you ever since I saw a picture of you on Greg's refrigerator two years ago.

JENNIFER

Oh.

MARK

The best part of my day today is right now, sitting at this table here with you.

JENNIFER

Oh.

MARK

You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life, and you're *special*... and it makes me happy to be around you.

JENNIFER

Thank you.

Jennifer is touched...but she doesn't reciprocate Mark's feelings. Jennifer moves on.

JENNIFER

Tell me something about your family. I really don't know much about you.

MARK

Ah, my family. We're what you'd probably call "not lucky". My whole family is kind of marked by tragedy, bad luck and general... shittiness. It goes back a long ways and could probably drive someone to suicide just hearing about it, so I'll keep it simple. My mom died when I was six. Cancer.

JENNIFER

Sad.

MARK

And my dad got real depressed and lost his job. Out of work and with a kid to raise he had no choice but to turn to a life of crime.

JENNIFER

What kind of crime?

MARK

He was a robber. Houses mostly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Nice, mid-to-upper class home. Lots of white wood. The house is very quiet, until... the phone rings and the answer machine picks up.

MARK'S DAD (O.S.)

(on answer machine)

Hi, I'm calling to let you know
I'll be robbing your house today.
I'll probably be there within the
hour.

(pause)

I hope you're not there.

The message ends. PAN OVER to a SOCCER MOM standing in the doorway. She drops her coffee and screams.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MARK

He was a very unlucky man. He spent his last days behind bars. I never really knew him.

(sad moment; pause)

But I guess I've also had a little luck in my life. I did have a wonderful grandmother who raised me.

JENNIFER

Oh, that's sweet.

MARK

Yeah, she's great.

JENNIFER

Where is she?

MARK

Old person's home obviously. Who wants to live with that? Gross.

JENNIFER

I know, right?

MARK

But I'm going to get her out of there tomorrow.

(MORE)

MARK (cont'd)
I'm going to buy her a big
beautiful mansion where she can
spend her few remaining days in
luxury.

JENNIFER
That's nice.

The waiter arrives with their food.

WAITER
I don't know what's wrong with the
chef today, but these just look
awful.

He places them down.

MARK
They look fine to me.

WAITER
Well, you're stupid.

Mark and Jennifer begin eating. Mark wants to say something
and takes a moment to summon the courage.

MARK
Right. I was thinking that since
I'm going to be rich and successful
now that I might be in your league.
(pause)
And that maybe we could be
together. Romantically.

JENNIFER
What would be the point?

Mark didn't expect this answer.

MARK
Well, I don't know, maybe we might
enjoy it. Maybe we'd be good
together and could have a happy
life, raise a family together.

Jennifer thinks this over.

JENNIFER
Well, I do like you. And I enjoy
your company.
(MORE)

JENNIFER (cont'd)

And if we were to get together and procreate I would like the offspring that are carrying half my genetic code to be well taken care of and financially stable. I also think you'd make a good father and a good husband, which I like.

Mark smiles. This is going well...

MARK

Good. Fantastic.

JENNIFER

Unfortunately, none of that changes the fact that you'd still be contributing half of the genetic code to our children.

(pause)

I don't want short, fat kids with little snub noses.

And that's the end of that. Mark nods.

MARK

Sure.

Mark takes a bite of his food. Jennifer smiles and does the same, oblivious to Mark's pain.

Mark's cell phone rings.

MARK (ON PHONE)

Hello?

(pause)

What?

Mark's face melts in terror.

MARK (ON PHONE)

(loudly)

WHAT?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Mark bursts into the hospital room to find his grandmother, MARTHA looking tired and scared, hooked up to dozens of machines, the heart monitor beeping ominously.

MARK

Grandma, they just called me.
What's going on? Are you okay?

MARTHA

I don't know, I fell on my way back to my room.

MARK

What do the doctors say?

MARTHA

They say I'll probably die tonight.

MARK

What?

There's a knock on the door. The doctor enters.

DOCTOR

Oh, hello. I was just coming in to check on her, you must be Martha Bellison's grandson.

MARK

What are you talking about she's going to die?

DOCTOR

I'm sorry. It just doesn't look good. She's suffered a major heart attack and her heart is very weak, her pulse not very strong, her blood pressure is dropping rapidly and most likely she'll have a fatal heart attack during the night.

MARK

Fuck.

The doctor checks Martha's chart.

DOCTOR

Yup, still going to die.

Mark sits down next to Martha, in total shock.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, guys. I wish I felt something for you two, but I really don't. I do this exact thing about thirty times a night and it's really hardened me to human suffering. On a side note, it's fajita night at the cafeteria downstairs. You might think about grabbing a bite to eat there after your grandma dies.

The doctor leaves. Mark holds his grandmother's hand, her hand is shaking.

MARTHA

I'm so scared, Mark. I don't want to die. You know, people don't talk about it much, but death is a horrible thing. One minute you're alive, there's a whole world around you, humming and jumping, people coming in and out, doors opening and closing, love and anger and the whole mess of it all, and then like that, it's all gone.

(crying)

This is it Mark, only a few hours left of *this* until an eternity of nothingness.

The wheels in Mark's head are spinning again. Suddenly the heart monitor starts beating rapidly and Martha lurches in pain.

MARK

Grandma!

Mark immediately slams on the big red "call nurse" button, holding his grandmother down as she lurches in pain.

Seconds later three nurses burst into the room.

NURSE #1

She's seizing.

Nurse #2 begins filling a syringe. Mark sits by his grandmother's head, they're both looking right at each other.

MARTHA

I'm scared.

MARK

Listen closely to me, Grandma. I have a surprise for you.

We focus on Mark and his grandmother, inches from one another as the paramedics busy themselves around Martha's dying body.

MARK

You're wrong about what happens when you die. It's not an eternity of nothingness.

Martha is hanging on to every word Mark is saying.

MARK

When you die you're going to go to your favorite place in the whole world. And you're going to be with all of the people you've ever loved and who have ever loved you. And you're going to be young again, and you'll be able to run through the fields and dance and jump, and there will be no sadness, no pain, just love and laughing and happiness. There will be ponies made of gold, and everyone will live in giant mansions, and everything will smell like cookies. And it will last for an eternity, Grandma. An eternity.

Tears are rolling down Martha's face as a glimmering smile overtakes her face.

Mark looks up to see the nurses, paramedics and doctors all staring at Mark in total shock.

NURSE #1

Go on.

DOCTOR

What else happens?

The cardiogram flat lines.

MARK

Do your jobs!

Everyone distractedly goes back to helping the grandmother.

MARK

You're going to be happy forever, grandma. I promise you. Say hello to my mom for me. Tell her I love her.

Again, everyone has stopped helping Martha, they're all listening intently. Some of them are crying.

NURSE #2

(tearfully)

I'm going to see my mother again when I die.

DOCTOR

Tell us more, please.

Martha stops breathing. The machine flatlines. And with that Martha is gone.

MARK

Damn it.

Mark turns away from his grandmother. Standing outside in the hallway is Jennifer, watching Mark with true empathy in her eyes.

INT. MARK'S CAR -- MORNING

Mark and Jennifer pull up in front of Jennifer's apartment. There is a long beat of silence.

JENNIFER

I'm so sorry, Mark.

MARK

I think I just did something bad.

JENNIFER

Do you want to come inside?

Mark nods his head.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mark and Jennifer sit side-by-side on her couch. Mark holds a can of beer in his hand, gently turning it around in his palm, staring down at it vacantly.

Jennifer sadly watches Mark.

Slowly and almost absentmindedly, Jennifer's hand moves over and rests gently upon Mark's wrist, settling there.

We hold on them for a long beat.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP:

THE NEXT MORNING

Mark and Jennifer have fallen asleep in the exact same position, both of them sitting side-by-side on the couch, her hand still on his wrist.

Mark opens his eyes and looks down at her hand, then up at Jennifer who slowly opens her eyes and smiles at him.

JENNIFER

Hi.

MARK

Hi.

They share a moment.

INT. MARK'S CAR - MORNING

A bleary eyed Mark drives home from Jennifer's. As he turns onto his street he finds hundreds of cars blocking the way. A massive crowd of people are leaving their cars and walking.

Mark gets out of his car to find a wild scene: hundreds of people camped out on the lawn of his apartment building.

Standing by his door is the NURSE from the hospital. She immediately points at Mark and screams.

NURSE #1

There he is!

Mark is bum-rushed by a question-asking throng. All of them are pelting Mark with questions, all of them confused and hopeful and desperately looking for answers.

PERSON #1

Is there only one place you go when you die?

PERSON #2

Will everyone who has ever died be there?

PERSON #3

What's this place called?

PERSON #4

Will I get to have sex with people there?

Mark pushes through the crowd, overwhelmed by it all. He gets to his door and opens it, only to have the Nurse step in his path and block the door.

NURSE #1

You owe us an explanation. If you know something this important, you better tell us all.

MARK

Who are you people?

NURSE #1

The words you spoke last night, to your grandmother, spread like wildfire. Please, tell us more. Explain what you said.

MARK

Fine, fine, just give me a minute.

Mark pushes past her and into his building, closing the door behind him.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mark goes to his fridge and pulls out a beer. His mind is reeling. As he opens a drawer to get a bottle opener he sees the letter: "MY INVENTION". Mark eyes it ominously.

The phone rings. Mark screens the call.

JENNIFER (V.O.)

(leaving message)

You've been gone for twenty minutes and I turn on the T.V to see you on every station. What's going on? This is seriously the weirdest thing...

Mark picks up the phone.

MARK

Remember last night when I said I think I did something bad? Well now I know I did something bad.

JENNIFER

They're saying that you know something different about what happens after you die.

Mark walks into his bedroom and turns on the TV. Sure enough there's a newscaster on his lawn, giving a report, with a banner on the screen that reads, "New Death Discoveries".

MARK

Hold on.

Mark puts down the phone and listens to the T.V.

REPORTER (ON T.V)

Twenty-four hours ago, Mark Bellison was just your typical nobody writer.

(MORE)

REPORTER (ON T.V) (cont'd)
Today, people are saying he knows
new information about what happens
after you die.

Mark puts the phone to his ear again.

MARK

Fuck.

JENNIFER

Mark, what do you know? What did
you tell your grandmother last
night? What's going on?

MARK

I can't explain it all right now.
Why don't you come over?

JENNIFER

Okay.

EXT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jennifer pushes through the throng of people, which is now
even larger than before. As she reaches the door Mark opens
it for her and slides her through.

MARK

Come up quick, they look like they
could get out of hand any second.

Mark hurries Jennifer into the elevator.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Jennifer sits on the couch while Mark, agitated beyond
recognition, paces the room.

JENNIFER

Just tell me what you told your
grandmother.

MARK

I don't think I should. Who knows
what could happen next? I'm just
going to keep my mouth shut from
now on.

JENNIFER

What you said obviously affected a
lot of people. I don't think you
have the choice to keep it in now.

MARK

Sure I do. I could just walk out that door and get on a plane and go to Namibia. No one knows me in Namibia.

JENNIFER

Just tell me what you said. Please, Mark.

MARK

My grandmother was dying, and she was terrified, shaking all over. She didn't want to just become nothingness. So I told her that when she died there wouldn't be nothingness. That she would be with all of the people she loved who had died and that she would live an eternity of joy and happiness.

Jennifer's heart skips a beat.

JENNIFER

(barely able to speak)

How do you know these things?

Mark sighs and looks out the window. The crowd extends down the block, all of them sitting calmly on his lawn, talking quietly to each other, trying to make sense of it all.

Jennifer gets up and stands beside Mark.

JENNIFER

You have to tell them everything you know. This is too big. You have no choice.

MARK

But you don't understand. The words I said... they weren't... it's not right.

JENNIFER

How did your grandmother feel when you told her these things?

MARK

Happy. At peace.

JENNIFER

And how did that make you feel?

MARK

Good.

JENNIFER

(sweeping her hand over
the crowd)

Think how good it will feel to do
the same for all of these people.

Mark thinks this over.

MARK

Okay. But I need a few hours to get
my thoughts together.

JENNIFER

I'll go tell them.

MARK

Wait! Are you sure this is right?

JENNIFER

Of course it is. You know something
that's going to change mankind
forever. It's the most important
thing the world has ever heard.

Jennifer leaves the room. Mark, alone with his thoughts, sits
down at his kitchen table, pulls out a few sheets of paper,
grabs a pen and starts writing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Mark's neighborhood is a sea of candles. The crowd has grown
beyond measure. A massive sea of people, all holding candles,
all waiting quietly like serene cows for Mark to come down
and make his announcement.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mark is hunched over his table writing. There's a knock at
the front door. Greg walks in with a large pizza and beer.

GREG

I brought pizza. How come you never
told me we all get mansions?

MARK

I didn't...

Jennifer comes out of the bedroom and quickly "shhh's" Greg.

GREG

Inventing the bicycle is one thing,
but this...

JENNIFER

Shut up. Let him work.

Jennifer pulls Greg away from Mark. Mark goes back to work.

TIME CUT: LATER

Mark puts down his pencil and places both written sheets next to each other. He has finished.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark opens the door. Jennifer and Greg are on his bed watching T.V. The same newscaster stands outside the building.

NEWSCASTER (ON T.V)

In Seoul Korea, they wait. In Rome,
Italy, they wait. In London,
England, they wait. In New York
City, they wait. The world has come
to a standstill, everyone at their
televisions and radios, or here on
this lawn, waiting for Mark
Bellison to come forth and tell the
people what he knows.

Mark waves his manuscript in the air.

MARK

I'm done.

Jennifer and Greg jumps off the bed.

JENNIFER

Are you ready?

MARK

I guess.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They head towards the door.

MARK

I feel like I should be reading these off of something other than just notebook paper. I wish they were like, written on large tablets or even just nicer paper or something.

Greg grabs an empty pizza box off of the counter, rips it into two pieces and tapes his two pages onto them.

Mark holds the two halves of the pizza boxes awkwardly and nods his head.

MARK

Feels better.

Mark looks at Jennifer and Greg with fear in his eyes.

JENNIFER

Just tell them what you know

GREG

Good luck out there, man.

EXT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

OTS of Newscaster cameraman. The newscaster is interviewing a young man, with Mark's apartment building in the background.

YOUNG MAN

I heard that he said we all get mansions, and that there's even ponies.

NEWSCASTER

(to cameraman)

Ponies. Mansions. Ice Cream. These are the things we can all expect when we die. What else can we expect? We won't know until Mark Bellison steps out of that...

YOUNG MAN

(shouting)

THERE HE IS!

Mark cracks open the front door and steps out onto his front steps, with Jennifer right behind him. The newscaster and cameraman run to get into position.

Mark looks out at the sea of people staring silently at him, waiting for answers.

MARK

Hello.

A man runs up and hands Mark a microphone.

MARK

Oh, thanks.

His voice echoes through the neighborhood.

MARK

Wow.

You could hear a pin drop. No one is even breathing.

MARK

So. I guess you've all heard the things I told my grandmother last night and... I understand why you're here.

(pause)

I know... some things. Some very important things. And I'm going to share these things with you now.

Intercut throughout: different video feeds, people listening to radios, standing in the cold watching TV's through store windows -- all around the world.

Mark takes a deep breath and holds up his "pizza box commandments".

MARK

Everything you want to know is written here. On this old pizza box.

Mark looks out at the crowd, all of them so hopeful, so needy. Mark looks back at Jennifer and Greg who give him a proud nod.

MARK

(reading)

Number one: There is a man who lives in the sky who controls everything. Number two...

MAN #1

(interrupting; shouting)

Whoa, whoa whoa. What does he look like?

Mark wasn't prepared for questions.

MARK
(struggling)
Tall. Big hands. A good head of
hair.

WOMAN #1
What ethnicity is he?

MARK
(making it up as he goes)
He's a new ethnicity. It's like a
mix of all of our ethnicities.

MAN #2
Does he live on a cloud?

MAN #3
Can we see him?

MARK
(becoming confident)
No. He lives much higher than the
clouds, too high to see.

WOMAN #2
So he lives in space?

MARK
No, not that high.

MAN #3
So you mean the Thermosphere?

MARK
Look, people I got a lot to get
through here. I'm just telling you
what I know: Man. Lives in the sky.
You can't see him. Controls
everything. Cool?

Everyone nods.

MARK
Number two: When you die you don't
disappear into an eternity of
nothingness. Instead, you go to a
really great place.
(pause)
Number three: In that place every
person will get a mansion.

MAN #4
What kind of mansion?

MARK

I don't know. Whatever kind of mansion you're thinking of right now.

WOMAN #3

Oh no! I wasn't thinking of a mansion!

A lot of people echo this sentiment.

MAN #5

Shit! I was thinking of a horrible mansion!

MARK

Look, it's the best mansion you can think of, not just now, but ever. Whatever the best mansion for you can possibly be, that's the one you'll get.

(continuing)

Number four: When you die, all the people you love will be there too.

MAN #6

Will they have their own mansions?

MARK

Yes, of course. Everyone gets a mansion.

MAN #6

What if I want them to live in *my* mansion?

MARK

If they want to live with you, they can leave their mansion and live in yours.

MAN #6

What happens to their mansion?

MARK

I don't know, it goes back on the market.

WOMAN #4

What about the people I hate? Will they be there too?

MARK

No.

WOMAN #4

Where are they?

MARK

Okay, they're probably there, but you'll never see them. They're far off, too far for you to get there.

WOMAN #4

But what if they try to find me?

MARK

They won't. They hate you too.

WOMAN #4

But what if they don't? What if they love me but I hate them?

MARK

Well then you're just... you'll both be fine with it. There's only love there, okay?

(continuing)

Number five: When you die there will be free ice cream. All day. All night. Whatever flavor you can think of.

WOMAN #5

What, even bad flavors?

MARK

But why would you eat bad flavors?

WOMAN #5

Well, you just said every flavor I can think of.

MAN #8

Oh no, I just thought about vanilla and skunks!

MARK

Well don't eat it then!

WOMAN #6

I've just thought the chocolate sauce is diarrhea!

MARK

Well don't put it on then! What's wrong with you people? I mean...

(continuing)

(MORE)

MARK (cont'd)

Number six: If you do bad things
you won't get to go to this great
place when you die.

MAN #9

Where will you go?

MARK

A terrible place. The worst place
imaginable.

A rumble of terror moves through the crowd.

WOMAN #7

What constitutes a bad thing?

MARK

Murder. Crime. Rape. Things like
that.

WOMAN #7

You have to tell us *all* the things
or else we might do them and it
wouldn't be our fault!

The whole crowd echoes this sentiment.

MARK

Fine.

MAN #9

Is punching someone bad?

MARK

Yes.

MAN #9

What if they're trying to hurt you?

MARK

Then it's fine.

WOMAN #7

Is cursing bad?

MARK

No.

WOMAN #1

What about being late for work?

MARK

That's fine too. I mean, you might lose your job if your boss doesn't like it, but it won't effect what happens after you die.

WOMAN #2

What about if you forget to feed your dog?

MARK

That also is fine. Unless the dog dies. Then it's bad.

MAN #1

If you do just one bad thing do you go to the bad place?

MARK

No. You get...
(thinking about it)
... three chances. If you do three bad things you're out.

MAN #1

Like baseball!

MARK

Kind of, yes.

There's a hubbub throughout the crowd: "It's like baseball", "I love baseball" "I'm scared of the bad place".

MARK

Any more?

About fifty people stand up and ask their questions at the same time.

MARK

Look, can we just move on?

MAN #2

No! We have to know everything that's bad!

MARK

Fine. Let's start with you...
(pointing)

MAN #3

Is it bad to wear pants?

Mark sighs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT: "SIX HOURS LATER"

MARK

No. There's no hairstyle that will put you in the bad place. Like I've told you, the main things are hurting people physically on purpose, taking people's stuff, doing things to people they don't want done, killing people on purpose. Okay? Are we good?

The crowd nods apprehensively. Many of the people in the crowd are crying.

One of the crying men, shaking like a leaf, stands up, with terror in his eyes.

CRYING MAN

(shameful)

I've done many of those bad things. Is there anything I can do to not go to the bad place? Help me, I'm so scared.

MARK

Well, you didn't know about these bad things until I told you just now so you're fine.

MAN #8

(crying)

Am I fine?

WOMAN #5

(crying)

What about me?

Tons of people shout similar sentiments.

MARK

You're all fine! I'm only talking about people who do bad things starting right now. Everyone else is fine.

The crowd erupts in a massive cheer. People hug each other passionately, wiping tears from their eyes.

MARK

(reading)

Number seven: The man in the sky who controls everything decides if you go to the good place or the bad place. He also decides who lives and who dies.

MAN #4

Does he cause natural disasters?

MARK

Yes.

WOMAN #3

Did he cause my mom to get cancer?

MARK

Yes.

WOMAN #4

Did he cause that tree to land on my car last week?

MARK

Yes.

The crowd is quiet for a long beat....they're mulling this over. The first man to speak is a blue collar guy with a thick Brooklyn accent.

BLUE COLLAR GUY

I say fuck the guy that lives in the sky!

The whole crowd erupts in agreement. People stand up shouting, flicking off the sky.

MAN #5

Yeah! That guy's a fucking asshole!

WOMAN #5

That motherfucker better hope I never see him face to face!

MAN #6

That guy's a fucking coward! Hiding up there and doing bad shit to us! Why doesn't he do it to our faces?

WOMAN #6

We need to stop that motherfucker before he kills us all!

Mark looks worried. He didn't anticipate this. Suddenly a thought occurs to him.

MARK
(shouting)
WAIT!

Everyone quiets down.

MARK
This guy who lives in the sky and controls everything is also responsible for all the good stuff that happens.

The whole crowd "aaaahhs".

MAN #7
He's the guy who saved my life on that fishing trip when the boat capsized?

MARK
Yup.

MAN #7
Did he capsize the boat?

MARK
Well, yes.

WOMAN #7
He's the one who killed my grandmother and left me those millions of dollars?

MARK
You betcha.

WOMAN #3
So is he the same one who *cured* my mom's cancer?

MARK
That too.

The crowd thinks this over.

MAN #8
So he's kind of a good guy, but he's also kind of a prick too?

MARK

Right. But check this out:

(continuing)

Number eight: Even if the man in the sky does bad shit to you, he makes it up to you by giving you an eternity of good stuff after you die.

The crowd "aaahhs" again.

WOMAN #1

As long as you don't do any of the bad stuff you listed, right?

MARK

Right. Of course.

WOMAN #2

So it's kind of a test?

MARK

Yes. Right.

(pause)

Well, that's it. That's everything I know.

Mark looks out at the crowd, they're all exhausted, their minds completely blown. The Nurse who started this all steps forward.

NURSE #1

How do you know these things?

MARK

(thinking)

The man in the clouds told me.

NURSE #1

Yeah, but how come we're just learning these things now, millions of years into our existence?

MARK

I don't know, he forgot or something. I gotta go people, good night!

Mark takes Jennifer by the hand and pulls her back inside his building.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Mark, Jennifer and Greg wait for the elevator, all of them exhausted.

MARK

You think that went well?

The doors open and they get inside. All three of them stare ahead, Mark looking exhausted, Jennifer and Greg with their minds completely blown... as the doors close and we

FADE TO:

MONTAGE

Spinning magazines and newspaper headlines proclaim "Mansion for Everyone (almost)", "NASA searching for Man in the Sky", "Finally -- A Reason to Do Good", "Time: Man of the Year: Mark Bellison", "Mansion Prices Plummet Worldwide", "Cult of Bellison Await Further Answers", "Man in Sky Murders forty-two in Earthquake", "Man in Sky Continues to Give AIDS to Babies", "Workplace Productivity down Fourteen Percent -- Everyone Daydreaming About Mansions".

Mark is at Lecture Films turning in the script for "The Black Plague" to Anthony. Rob gives Mark a dirty look as he passes him in the hall.

Mark, smiling proudly, stands behind the camera while Nathan Goldfrappe reads his script. In the background are Jennifer and Greg, hanging out on set. Jennifer can be seen chatting with Rob by craft services.

Mark removes the "For Sale" sign from the front yard of a brand new, beautiful home. Jennifer and Greg congratulate Mark enthusiastically.

Mark and Jennifer are walking down the street together when Mark stops to point out a new building with a sign that reads, "A Quiet Place To Think About the Man in the Sky". The building boasts a large stained glass window portraying Mark holding the two halves of the pizza box.

Mark, Jennifer and Greg laugh it up in a stretch limousine as it pulls up to the movie premier of "The Black Plague".

Mark, Jennifer and Greg walk the red carpet at the premier of "The Black Plague". Mark is the center of attention. Rob stops by on the red carpet to say hello to Jennifer and whisper something into her ear. Jennifer laughs.

Mark and Jennifer have dinner together, the best of friends, but as they cheers their champagne glasses there is a tinge of sadness in Mark's eyes.

END MONTAGE

DISSOLVE TO:

SCREEN READS: "TWO MONTHS LATER"

INT. MARK'S MANSION - DEN - EVENING

A disheveled Mark, unshaven and sloppy looking, sits in a reclining chair, wearing boxers and a bathrobe, drinking a beer. Beer cans are littered everywhere.

A young gay man in a suit stands before him with a pad and a pen writing down everything Mark says.

MARK

So then the flying duck flew all the way to Alaska where it met up with a polar bear who could talk. And the polar bear's name was Martin. And the polar bear was wearing a green cape. And Martin and the flying duck both had race cars with their names printed on the side and...

Jennifer enters the room, upset.

JENNIFER

I just saw three people climbing the fence into your backyard. You really need to think about getting better security.

(noticing beer cans everywhere)

Mark, how many of those have you had?

Jennifer grabs the beer out of Mark's hand.

MARK

(continuing; glaring at Jennifer)

But then the evil goblin witch came in and stole the flying duck's race car and made the flying duck very angry.

(grabbing at his beer)

(MORE)

MARK (cont'd)

Luckily the Polar Bear was there to snatch the race car back...

(But he misses)

Unfortunately, the witch was a smart witch and the polar bear was powerless.

ASSISTANT

Is that the end?

MARK

Yeah.

ASSISTANT

That's a strange ending.

MARK

Hey, don't look at me: it's the Man in the Sky's story.

ASSISTANT

You want me to take this over to Lecture Films?

MARK

Yeah. Tell them to shoot that one this week.

The assistant walks away.

MARK

(yelling)

Tell them it's for kids!

Jennifer glares at Mark, disappointed.

MARK

What?

JENNIFER

You haven't left the house in weeks. Every time I come by you're just sitting here writing down stories you get from the Man in the Sky.

MARK

Hey, he's the boss.

JENNIFER

Don't you think you should go outside sometime? You know there's about five thousand people on our lawn waiting to ask you questions.

MARK

Yeah, yeah.

Jennifer sits down next to him.

JENNIFER

What's with you? You seem sad.

Mark shrugs.

JENNIFER

I don't get it. You're a very successful writer, you've won countless awards and Oscars...

Jennifer waves towards a shelf full of Oscars and various other awards.

JENNIFER

You've changed the way people see the world, the way they see death and life. You've made the entire world happy.

MARK

Not the entire world.

JENNIFER

I know. Not you. The one person who should be happy, the person who has everything...

MARK

(interrupting)
Not everything.

JENNIFER

What else do you want?

Mark sits up in his chair and looks right at Jennifer.

MARK

I'd trade it all in for you. All of it.

Jennifer sighs and sits down beside him.

JENNIFER

Well, you've got me. As a friend.

MARK

(not sarcastic)
Yeah. That's important.
(MORE)

MARK (cont'd)

But why can't we be together. Why can't you be with me?

JENNIFER

Because of the whole snub nosed thing. With kids, your genetics. You know, fat, short...

MARK

(stopping her)

Yeah. Okay. Yup.

(pause)

It's almost a shame that being rich and powerful and famous doesn't change your genetics.

JENNIFER

What?

MARK

It would be great if it changed your genetic material because I really love you but I just don't...

Suddenly Mark has an idea. He looks right at Jennifer.

MARK

It does change your genetics.

Jennifer lights up.

JENNIFER

Does it?

Mark stares at her for a short beat. He can't go through with it.

MARK

No. No, it doesn't. Our kids would be short and fat with little snub noses.

JENNIFER

Right. Too bad.

(pause)

Anyway, I've come to tell you I can't go to the movies with you tonight.

MARK

Why not?

JENNIFER

I've got a date.

MARK
What? With who?

JENNIFER
Rob Marlowe.

Mark stands up.

MARK
You've got to be fucking... Rob
Marlowe?!? He's a complete and
total asshole.

JENNIFER
Not to me. He's very sweet and kind
to me.

MARK
Well of course he is, look at you.
I mean, for fuck's sake, a shark
would be nice to you...

JENNIFER
It would?

MARK
Well no, I mean...
(pause)
Don't go out with him.

JENNIFER
Why not? He's a great match for me.

MARK
What's he got that I don't?

JENNIFER
We talked about this. If you and I
got together it wouldn't be fair to
our kids. They have the right to be
attractive and have good genes.

(pause)
If Rob and I get married You can
move into our mansion with us when
we all die.

MARK
I don't want to move into your
fucking mansion. And what are you
doing thinking about marriage with
him already? You haven't even gone
on one date.

Mark sits down.

MARK

It's like nothing's changed.

JENNIFER

A lot of things have changed. I wish you could be happy.

There's a knock at the front door.

JENNIFER

That's him. Gotta go.

MARK

He's picking you up here?

JENNIFER

It was his idea.

Mark stands up, in shock and follows Jennifer to the front door. She opens the door to find Rob looking handsome and arrogant.

ROB

What's up? Wow, I can't wait to have sex with you.

Rob notices Mark in his boxers and a bathrobe.

ROB

Oh hey there, Mark. You look like trash.

(to Jennifer)

Come on Jennifer, let's go have some fun. And then have some sex.

Jennifer turns back to Mark, sad that he's upset.

JENNIFER

I'll call you tomorrow.

The door closes and Mark is left standing there alone.

Greg, dressed in a bathrobe and looking even more slovenly than Mark, waddles up behind him.

GREG

Who was that?

EXT. MARK'S MANSION - POOLSIDE - NIGHT

Mark and Greg are shit-faced, sitting around Mark's giant swimming pool.

MARK
 Hey, watch this.
 (yelling over the fence)
 HEY PEOPLE!

About forty voices shout back: "He's talking to us!" "Maybe he has more answers!" "Finally!"

MARK
 The man in the sky just told me
 something!

Mark snickers to himself. Greg, drunk and stupid, can't help but snicker too.

MARK
 You're all gay!

Mark and Greg explode laughing. From the other side of the fence we can hear people mumbling shock. "I *am* gay." "I always knew it." "This is going to be awkward for my husband."

MARK
 And adopted!

Mark and Greg almost roll into the pool they're laughing so hard. The people on the other side of the fence *aren't* laughing: "Who's my real mother?", "This explains so much", "Dad, why didn't you tell me?"

GREG
 I don't know why we're laughing.
 It's really probably very sad for
 those people.

MARK
 I'm gettin' a beer.

Mark hobbles up and walks into the house. Moments later he emerges with two cokes.

MARK
 Out of beer. Just Coke.

Mark tosses Greg a Coke and sits down on his chaise lounge, cracking open his Coke and taking a sip.

MARK
 I want to do something big again.
 Like telling the people what
 happens when they die. That felt
 good. I gotta do something big like
 that again.

GREG

Maybe the Man in the Sky will tell you something new.

MARK

Maybe.

Mark looks down at his can of Coke.

CLOSE ON COKE CAN: The warning label is extremely long and written in very small type. It starts with, "COKE IS VERY BAD FOR YOU. The following are diseases, physical ailments and general health issues that coke might cause:"

The label then goes on to list dozens of ailments. Mark's eyes scan down to the very bottom of the label where it says simply, "If you still want to drink Coke, do so at your own risk."

Mark looks over to find Greg staring at the depressing label as well.

GREG

Ugh, this shit is so bad for you. I really shouldn't drink this.

Mark stares at this label for a moment, thinking. With his hand he covers everything on the label except for "Please Enjoy Coke."

He smiles widely.

MARK

Hey, Greg. What if I told you that drinking Coke was *good* for you?

Greg turns to him, his face full of hope.

MARK

And not just Coke. But all the delicious foods you're not supposed to eat. What if they were all of a sudden really, really good for you?

GREG

It would be the happiest day of my life.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A dozen high powered executives from all over the globe sit around a massive board room table. The head seat at the table is unoccupied.

They mumble back and forth to each other, unsure why they're there.

Mark bursts into the room in a suit, looking very manicured.

MARK

Gentleman, thank you all for coming here on such short notice. I have some very big news for you all today.

EXECUTIVE #1

Is it from the Man in the Sky?

MARK

Nope, this one I came up with all on my own. And it's going to change the way you all do business... forever.

Mark hits a button and a projection screen comes down on the far wall. Mark starts a slide show.

MARK

Up until now, all products sold worldwide have warning labels printed on them. Warnings like these.

SERIES OF SLIDES: We see the same warning we just saw on the Coke can, a commercial jet with "This Plane Might Crash -- Four Of Our Other Ones Did" printed on its side, a car dashboard light reading "This Car will Ignite Upon Impact - Always", and a sticker on a grocery store package of ground meat that reads "Injected with hormones that make it taste better -- but will eventually give you cancer".

MARK

As you can see, a lot of these products can be very depressing. They remind people of all the horrible things that can happen to them in life. People hate thinking about horrible things.

EXECUTIVE #2

Yeah, but they have to know those things.

(MORE)

EXECUTIVE #2 (cont'd)
 They have to be able to protect
 themselves.
 I don't want to hurt anyone.
 Especially now that I know about
 the "bad place".

Everyone in the room shudders.

MARK
 Hear me out, fellas. Allow me to
 introduce you to the future of your
 companies.

Mark changes the slide to a can of coke that simple reads,
 "Coke -- Tastes Great! And It's Good For You!"

Everyone in the room "ahhhs".

EXECUTIVE #3
 Where can I get some of that
 healthy coke?

MARK
 It's the same Coke as before.

The executives all squint their eyes.

EXECUTIVE #4
 But this one is healthy! And it
 tastes great!

EXECUTIVE #1
 Do you have any samples?

MARK
 Guys, it's the same Coke on the
 inside. I've just changed the
 outside.

EXECUTIVE #1
 (revelation)
 Somehow by changing the outside,
 he's also changed the inside!

Everyone "aaahs" in understanding. Mark sighs and changes the
 slide to that of a commercial airliner with the words
 "Completely Safe" writing on the outside.

EXECUTIVE #2
 Oh, thank goodness. I've always
 hated flying!

EXECUTIVE #3
 Me too!

EXECUTIVE #4

What an invention! How did you do it?

MARK

I didn't do anything, guys. I made this on my computer last night. The plane is exactly the same as it was before.

Nobody in the room gets it.

EXECUTIVE #1

That's the only plane I'll ever fly on again!

MARK

That's the point here guys. With these new advertising strategies, people will buy your products with abandon.

EXECUTIVE #2

But it will take years to replace all of our stock with these new improved products you've invented.

MARK

No. It won't. All you have to do is print these words on the packaging. That's it.

Mark changes the slide again: The car dashboard light now reads, "This Car Prevents Crashes", and another slide that shows a package of meat with a sticker reading, "This Meat Actually Cures Cancer".

MARK

Even if you don't understand it, just start shipping these products out to people as you see them here and you're all going to get very, very rich.

EXECUTIVE #3

How did you do it?

MARK

Look, they're still the same products you have on the shelves right now. The only difference now is that people won't get bummed out or scared when they use them. Isn't that a good thing?

The executives all nod their heads in agreement and rise to shake Mark's hand.

MARK

Gentleman, if you'll excuse me, I have five thousand gay orphans on my front lawn that are going *bananas*.

Mark exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUPER MARKET - DAY

We follow a suburban housewife as she pushes her shopping cart through the aisles of a bright and shiny super market.

She picks up a six pack of Coke and notices the label: "New Coke -- It Tastes Great! And it's Good For You!"

The housewife smiles widely and enthusiastically tosses it in her cart.

SERIES OF CUTS: The housewife grabbing different products, marveling at the new, improved features: "Cures Sadness!", "Tastes Better than Real Chicken!", "This Candy is All Your Body Needs To Survive!"

With a full cart the housewife wheels it to the checkout counter to find swarms of people already there, all of their carts bursting to the brim with new, exciting products.

Everyone looks excited and happy.

INT. BAR - MORNING

Back at his old stomping ground, Mark sits at the bar by himself drinking coffee and watching the TV.

Greg sits next to him, with two boxes of cookies and a liter of coke in front of him.

Different newspapers are spread out on the bar, all of them with similar headlines, "World Rocked By New Healthy Products", "People Everywhere Line up for Guilt-Free Treats", "YOU CAN EAT CAKE -- ALL THE TIME!".

ANGLE ON TV: A FAT MAN is being interviewed in front of a super market, he holds a bag full of junk food in front of him.

FAT MAN

Thank the Man in the Sky for this.
I've never been happier in my life.
Now I can eat whatever I want,
whenever I want.

The man takes a bite of a Twinkie and wavers a bit like he's going to pass out.

REPORTER

Are you all right, sir?

The man steadies himself.

FAT MAN

Yeah. I must just be real happy. It says on the wrapper that they help boost your happiness.

The man smiles, but he's obviously not feeling well.

BACK ON MARK

He's watching the TV with a bit of worry on his face. He turns to Greg who is eating a stack of cookies and washing it down by gulping from a liter of coke.

MARK

You should slow down there, Greg.

GREG

Why's that?

MARK

Just because the package says it's not bad for you doesn't mean you have to gorge yourself on it.

GREG

But it tastes so good.

Greg shoves three more cookies into his mouth.

MARK

That's just stupid.

GREG

No it's not.

Greg holds up the package of cookies and points to the disclaimer which reads, "These cookies make you smarter".

GREG

See?

Mark sighs.

GREG

You look sad. Here, have a brownie.
They'll cheer you up.

Greg hands Mark a brownie that, sure enough, says "They'll cheer you up!" right on the package.

MARK

I wish that worked for me, Greg.

GREG

What?

MARK

Nevermind. I'll see you around.

Mark gets up and leaves.

INT. MARK'S CAR -- DAY

Mark drives while we take in a bit of his world, highlighting the various changes he's wrought.

A homeless man stands on the street corner with a sign that now reads, "Screw it. I'll be in my mansion soon." He has a big smile on his face.

The same business man pulls up beside Mark's car, this time eating a giant donut and talking loudly into his cell phone.

BUSINESS MAN

I'm not talking to anyone on my
cell phone. But from a distance I
look very important and busy.

At a red light Mark eavesdrops on the same arguing couple.

GIRLFRIEND

No, I won't move into your mansion
with you when we die. You're really
smothering me.

BOYFRIEND

The more you push me away, the more
attracted I am to you.

A bus passes in front of Mark's car. The ad now reads,
"Pepsi. Just As Good as Coke."

A car honks behind Mark. The man leans out of his car and yells at Mark.

HONKING MAN
Move it, fatty!

As the man passes him, he looks at Mark and pulls up beside him.

HONKING MAN
Hey you're Mark Bellison!

MARK
Yeah. So are you going to apologize?

HONKING MAN
For what?

The honking man speeds away.

INT. GRAVEYARD - AFTERNOON

Mark sits in front of the gravesite of his grandmother.

ANGLE ON: Her tombstone which reads, "Martha Bellison 1918-2007. Lived an average life for a woman in her time."

MARK
Nothing's really changed. I gave people the Man in the Sky, made myself rich and successful, told the world they can eat whatever they want and feel good about it. Everyone's happy but me. Because I'm the only one who knows it all... *isn't*. I made it all up.
(pause)
You're not up there living in a mansion. You're right here. In the ground. That's all. And I'm the only one who knows that.
(pause)
And the one thing I want I can't have. Because the world is too stupid to change. The world only cares about what they can see, and what they can know, and what they're used to and what... makes sense. No one listens to what they really want. And that's why I'll always just be a loser, grandma. And that's why I'll always be alone.

FADE TO:

INT. MARK'S MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

With a beer bottle in his hand Mark searches through his kitchen drawers for a bottle opener. He opens a drawer and something catches his eye.

ANGLE ON: The envelope which reads, "MY INVENTION".

Slowly Mark pulls it out of the drawer and stares at it.

The sound of his front door opening startles him and Mark shoves the envelope into his back pocket.

MARK

Who's there?

JENNIFER (O.S.)

It's me. Can I come in?

MARK

Sure.

Jennifer enters the kitchen.

MARK

Haven't seen you much lately.

JENNIFER

I know. I've been busy with work and things. And I'm getting married. That's why I came over. To tell you.

Mark nods.

MARK

Don't do it.

JENNIFER

The wedding is tomorrow.

Jennifer pulls out an invitation, Mark waves it away.

JENNIFER

I hope you'll come.

Mark shrugs and Jennifer puts the invitation back in her purse.

MARK

No point really.

JENNIFER

It would make me happy. Being around you makes me happy.

Mark turns towards her.

MARK

So don't marry him.

JENNIFER

I only have a few years to marry someone with good genes and financial stability so I can have children and the family I've always wanted. One day I'll be old and wrinkly and ugly.

MARK

No you won't. Not to me you won't. I love you. If you really love someone it doesn't matter what they look like.

JENNIFER

What do you mean?

MARK

Do me this favor. Just one favor. Don't accept everything you see. Don't just do something because that's the way it's done.

JENNIFER

You're confusing me.

MARK

Think about what you want. Find out what *you really want*. And if it's not the same as what I want, well then I'll know that and I'll never darken your doorstep again.

(pause)

I want *you*. What do *you* want?

Jennifer and Mark stare at each other for a long beat.

JENNIFER

I'm going to go.

MARK

Please don't. Will you just stay a little bit longer? I don't want to be alone. Just sit with me.

Jennifer nods. Mark leads her into the living room and they sit down far apart from each other on the couch. Mark turns the TV on and they both sit in silence.

LATER.

Mark has fallen asleep on the couch. Jennifer checks her watch and stands up. She takes out her wedding invitation and lays it on the coffee table by Mark.

She unfolds a blanket and is about to place it on him when she notices an envelope sticking out of his back pocket. She pulls it out and looks at it.

JENNIFER
(reading)
My invention.

She opens the letter and begins to read. Once finished, she folds up the letter and hurriedly leaves, scared and confused.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE NEXT MORNING

Mark wakes up and sees Jennifer's wedding invitation on the coffee table. He sighs.

INT. MARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Mark stands before the mirror, dressed in a suit, putting on a tie.

Greg pokes his head into the room, dressed in a suit as well.

GREG
We're gonna be late.

EXT. "CHURCH" - DAY

The sign outside reads, "A QUITE PLACE TO THINK ABOUT THE MAN IN THE SKY".

GREG
Makes sense people would start getting married at these places. I mean, who you marry decides who's mansion you're going to live in one day. It's a big decision.

MARK

Yeah.

They enter the building.

INT. "CHURCH" - DAY

A small stage sits before a large stained glass window portraying Mark holding the two halves of the pizza box.

Rob stands at the altar.

Mark and Greg take their seats amidst a crowd of people sitting quietly in their chairs.

INT. "CHURCH" - BRIDAL ROOM - DAY

Jennifer sits in a small room in a beautiful white dress, looking as beautiful as any woman has ever looked. She stares absentmindedly out the window.

There's a knock at the door. JENNIFER'S MOTHER pokes her head in.

JENNIFER'S MOTHER

It's time, dear.

Jennifer doesn't answer. We PUSH IN on Jennifer to see she's clutching Mark's letter in her hand.

JENNIFER'S MOTHER

Jennifer?

JENNIFER

I don't feel all right.

JENNIFER'S MOTHER

What's wrong? Do you have food poisoning?

JENNIFER

No. I don't think there's a word for what I have.

INT. "CHURCH" - DAY

"Here's comes the Bride" plays over an organ and Jennifer walks down the aisle towards a smiling Rob.

Mark watches her in awe, stunned by her beauty. Rob notices Mark staring at Jennifer and mouths "loser" at him.

Jennifer reaches the altar and stands across from Rob. The WEDDING OVERSEER, an elderly man in a suit, stands between them holding a few sheets of paper in his hand.

WEDDING OVERSEER

We are sitting here in this building today to share in the wedding of Rob and Jennifer. Two young, attractive people who have agreed that this union would be mutually beneficial and that their genetic match-up would most likely produce favorable offspring and a life of financial stability and physical security.

Both Rob and Jennifer nod at each other.

WEDDING OVERSEER

Rob, do you promise to stay with Jennifer for as long as you want to and to protect your offspring for as long as you can?

ROB

I do.

WEDDING OVERSEER

Jennifer, do you promise to stay with Rob for as long as you want to and to protect your offspring for as long as you can?

Jennifer doesn't respond.

WEDDING OVERSEER

Jennifer?

JENNIFER

(to Overseer)

I'm sorry, hold on one second.

(to Rob)

Rob, can I ask you something?

There's a slight hubbub in the room. Mark perks up.

ROB

(concerned)

Sure. But what are you doing?

JENNIFER

What color are my eyes?

ROB
 I dunno...
 (looking)
 Oh, they're brown.

CLOSE ON Jennifer's eyes. Indeed, they are brown.

JENNIFER
 No Rob, they're blue.

Rob looks again. Mark stirs in his seat, amazed by what he's hearing.

ROB
 Oh, look at that. So they are.
 You've got pretty blue eyes.

PUSH IN on Jennifer. It works. Her mind is reeling.

ROB
 Can we get on with this?

WEDDING OVERSEER
 Jennifer, do you promise to stay
 with Rob for as long as you want to
 and to protect your offspring for
 as long as you can?

Jennifer is confused. Her mind is fighting it, but she doesn't know what exactly she's fighting. Finally...

JENNIFER
 I do.

There is a sigh of relief from the room. Mark shakes his head in sadness.

WEDDING OVERSEER
 Before I pronounce these two man
 and wife, is there anyone here who
 thinks they'd offer either of these
 people a better genetic match-up?

Mark bolts up in his chair.

MARK
 Me.

The whole room gasps.

ROB
 Oh come on. Look at you. You can't
 be better.

MARK

Yes I can. You've got shmuck genes.

ROB

Schmuck genes? What's that?

MARK

And I love her.

(to Jennifer)

Jennifer, don't marry him. Is this what you really want?

JENNIFER

I don't know.

(pause; unsure)

Yes?

Mark thinks this over for a beat.

MARK

All right. I'm done. Goodbye.

Awkwardly Mark makes his way to the aisle and leaves the room. The room is thick with tension.

ROB

Are we married yet? Because I've got plans this afternoon.

EXT. "CHURCH" - DAY

Mark loosens his tie as he walks out of the building and towards the street.

In the background we can see the "church" door open.

JENNIFER

(shouting)

Hold on a minute!

Mark turns, confused and tired.

Jennifer runs to him. She stands before him, they both stare at each other.

MARK

What?

Jennifer pulls out Mark's letter and shows it to him.

JENNIFER

I'm confused.

MARK

So am I.

JENNIFER

Is any of it... the things you said... are they... I can't think of the word.

(pause)

Is there a Man in the Sky?

MARK

No.

JENNIFER

Why'd you say there was?

MARK

Because I couldn't cope with the look on my grandmother's face.

JENNIFER

But how could you say something that... *wasn't*.

MARK

I'm not sure. I just did it.

JENNIFER

And what did you mean that I could grow old and ugly and still be beautiful to you?

MARK

I mean just that. You'll always be beautiful to me.

JENNIFER

But what if my looks...

MARK

It doesn't matter.

JENNIFER

I feel funny.

MARK

Me too.

(pause)

Everything is so hard. Nothing is easy anymore.

There is a long moment of silence. Jennifer moves closer to Mark and looks directly into his eyes.

JENNIFER
I know what I want.

MARK
What?

JENNIFER
I want short, fat kids with little
snub noses.

The biggest smile we've ever seen comes across Mark's face.

MARK
(jubilantly)
Easy! That's an easy one.

Just like she did the night on her couch, Jennifer reaches over and puts her hand on Mark's wrist. They both stare at each other for a long beat, holding hands, love beaming from both of them.

The world is changing before their eyes.

JENNIFER
Does anyone else know about your
invention?

MARK
No. But I'm sure it won't be long.

JENNIFER
Should we tell them right away?

MARK
I'm not sure. I don't think
everyone will understand.

Greg sticks his head out of the church door.

GREG
What's going on out here?
Everyone's just sitting in there.
Are we gonna finish this wedding?

Jennifer smiles at Mark.

JENNIFER
Yes.

Mark smiles back.

MARK
Praise the Man in the Sky.

WE RISE UP as Mark and Jennifer walk hand in hand towards the church -- and an unknowable future.

NARRATOR

The world's last moment of honesty.
A monumental occasion in the
history of mankind.

(pause)

That lowly writer who stumbled upon
the ability to lie went on to
become one of the most important
men of his age, married to one of
the most beautiful women of his
time, and passed on the lying gene
to generations to come.

(pause)

A world without honesty is a world
with dreams. A world with pretense.
A world with fiction. A world with
flattery. And most importantly, a
world with true love. Put simply, a
world very much like our own.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.