

ACT 1

INT. NICOLE'S BEDROOM – DAY

A glorious morning. Sunlight beams through ornate curtains and spills across a sanitary and boring teen's bedroom. White furniture. White linens. White paint. A water glass on a coaster.

A colorful array of dry-erase markers at the base of a wall calendar. A series of trite activities listed in clusters of blue or yellow.

Some disruptive kitchen noise.

NICOLE, 18, lanky and sheepish, sits up and rubs her eyes. Expressionless. She searches for how she feels as she studies herself in the mirror. An attempt to smile fails. Something is troubling her.

She moves to the window. With some forced motivation she swipes the curtain open.

Some small birds fret outside the window as they play among the barren trees. A tiny smile breaks across her face as she taps the glass and seeks engagement.

The startled birds flutter off.

The branch's final leaf falls. She stares at the barren tree and some despair takes over.

She tugs the curtains closed.

INT. HOTEL SUITE – DAY

Darkness.

A distant metallic ping of a hammer striking a spike. The echo resounds and fades.

A moment of silence.

A sharp ping noticeable closer. A man gasps.

A series of pings grows closer, louder with greater frequency. The pace of gasps rises and overlap a heartbeat. Damp air muffles the frenzy of piercing strikes.

Out of breath. Heartbeats blur. A cacophony of panic.

The unsettling sound of cartilage torn. A man's primal scream.

The bedside lamp topples and flickers on.

JARED, 45, plotting jackal, snaps awake from a nightmare. His trembling fingers push his glasses high upon his nose and scans the room.

Shaken, he's slow to settle. He's had this dream before. He takes a big bite from a half-eaten Mounds bar.

JARED

Get a grip, J. You got it. We're getting close. We got time. Keep the eye on the prize.

Sharp knocks on the door and he jumps.

JARED

Damn, J. be the apex! Pull yourself together man!

He drapes himself in a bedsheet Toga and slogs over. He struggles to replace the fear on his face with a smile as he swings the door open and feigns dancing.

JARED

C'mon in! Party is starting! You look so pretty. Please, call me J.

A sliver of light between closed blinds leads to shadowy figures alive upon a tossed bed.

Jared's heavy breaths.

A slap and a girl's muffled yelp.

Jared kneels behind GAËLLE, 18, dissolute youth. He raises his hand. Off-balanced, he slaps. Gaëlle twists her face from the pillow and shrieks. A series of grunts and Jared sighs and collapses.

JARED

Ya know it makes perfect sense. I had no control around food either. No matter what was in front of me, ended up in my mouth. Turns out, I wasn't helpless... I was cursed. When you're cursed, breaking it consumes you. And it wasn't the weight but I was damn sure there was a connection. Didn't make any damn sense. One night it came to me... a sign. 245. Powerful. Finite. The number glared in my mind's eye. When premonition throws you a parachute....

He retrieves his eye glasses and turns on a lamp.

JARED

I had no choice. Life or death, right? I always knew I had to eat healthier. I just didn't have the drive. That was me! Smart, no self-control. What I saw had changed everything.

Her sunken eyes register concern as his smile fades and eyes settle seemingly upon her.

JARED

You ever feel like something bad is going to happen? I mean really bad. The train left the station. Chugging along. Choo...choo. Closer and closer. It's going to arrive. When it gets here... well....

GAËLLE shuffles back against the headboard as Jared leans close.

JARED

I know the day I'm gonna die. I know where. I know how. I've seen it. Isn't that something? Since then every single moment I spend to stop it. I once thought I knew... I lost 245 pounds. I was wrong... but some good came from it. I had to dig deep. So very deep. Self-realization has a twisted sense of irony. The fat kid with a lost youth shares the burden. I know the path. Can't say its all been a grim rediscovery. Some bumps in the road are more fun than others. Aren't they?

Nose to nose.

JARED

But you know what I really love to do? I mean, really, really love.

She shrieks as he lunges and grabs the last of the Mounds bar on the nightstand.

JARED

Coconut and dark chocolate! Who would have thought? Gotta appreciate the genius. With the eat right thing off the table, heck, why not! God, I miss you.

Sweat drips down his forehead as he takes a big bite.

Spittle and crumbs slip from his mouth as he chomps.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Some straggling Lucky Charms and a small pool of milk at the bottom of a cereal bowl.

Nicole corrals and scoops the last of cereal as DAD 40, doughy and unsure, ensures cleanliness of a final dish as he tidies up.

The door flings open as MOM, 40 lanky and hawkish, struts inside with a volleyball and kneepads cinched underarm.

DAD

We're going to be late.

NICOLE

Mom?

MOM

For Christ sake, it's Sunday.
Do we really have to--

DAD

--We're going! No buts.

Two sad faces exchange displeasure.

MOM

Of course we won, thanks for asking.... Game tied, guess who had serve...and Wham! Ace! I'll grab a shower... be ready in 10.

DAD

What!

Mom shares a sly smile with Nicole.

MOM

Kidding. Down in 2. The losers are hosting a BBQ. And we are invited. All of us.

DAD

We have a busy day. Nicole has her uh... meeting. After, there's orientation for the retreat.

MOM

Yeah, about that... Can't we just write a check? Maybe mail some canned good or something? To spend summer slogging around some 3rd world disease ridden dump.

DAD

The Pastor said it will be good for us. All of us.
You're something else! You, you, you. All about
you. Tell your friends we'll take a raincheck. I'll
be in the car.

Dad fumbles and drops the car keys. Shaken, he repeatedly fumbles as he tries to pick up the car keys.

Nicole hangs her head and sadly stirs the milk. The current whips the helpless cereal about.

The door slams and her spoon drops.

INT. HOTEL AUDITORIUM – DAY

A live mic strikes the floor.

A CLERK picks it up and sets it atop a podium and arranges some chairs.

A spacious room packed with an eager AUDIENCE. Antsy and impatient, some guests intermittently clap and gasp.

A SPICY WOMAN, 30, jittery and frail, scans the stage. Her face registers disappointment as a silence spreads across the crowd.

SPICY

Nope. Ain't him.

The Spicy Woman applies an excess layer of makeup. She spills a yellow and green Railcar logo adorned Styrofoam coffee cup.

SPICY

Crap. Damn it.

The Clerk makes some final adjustments and fumbles with a microphone.

CLERK

Testing, testing.

The Clerk steps back and takes it all in. The microphone rolls. He reacts in anticipation as it falls.

The microphone rolls off the ledge.

INT. PAPA KENSON'S PETIONVILLE ESTATE - DAY

An oversized warped door barges open.

The clamor of men in panic. Boots to the floor. Guns gathered and readied. Rugged fingers grasp an imposing machete and raise it high.

A gaudy smoke-filled room in an upscale Haitian compound. A soiled shag rug packed with unkempt luxury furniture. Heel scuff marks cover a mahogany coffee table littered with ashes, chicken bones and high-ball glasses.

Several MERCENARIES, 20-25, gear-heavy hacks, whisper indiscernibly as they settle. One picks at fried chicken. A few blank stares as they slump in tattered chairs.

The LACKEY, 25, disheveled and craven, frozen in the doorway, softens as the barrels drift from him.

The CHIMERA, 20, adversarial and suave, steps close and taps the machete on the Lackey's soiled satchel as he sizes up the lesser man.

CHIMERA

You are late.

Nervous, the Lackey notices the fresh blood on the machete. He bites his lip and scans the floor for a body. He sighs and displays the satchel's contents.

LACKEY

I was taking precaution. To ensure the police do not follow me.

CHIMERA

The police? Please. They dare not come here.

The Chimera grabs a fistful of bundled bills and waves them at PAPA KENSON, 30, chiseled, corrupt and unreadable.

Papa Kenson lowers his feathered copy of Mere Christianity. He picks toe jam from his scaly toes and flicks it. Disinterested, his gaze returns to his book.

The Chimera tosses the satchel into a pile.

CHIMERA

Good.

The Lackey notices some scared young women on a couch with unkempt hair and smeared makeup. He recognizes LOVELY 16, simple beauty with a puffy lip in a ripped fluorescent pink dress.

LACKEY

What of them?

The Chimera notices Lovely eavesdrop.

CHIMERA

It is of no matter. Perhaps a ransom?

LACKEY

Yes, a good idea. I would need time to plan.
Two cars. A hotel room. I will create a list.

Kenson flips a page.

A Mercenary's head shake conveys doubt.

CHIMERA

Too complicated. Dispose of them. Bring more
when you return.

The Lackey glances at Lovely and shuffles away.

CHIMERA

Don't slam....

The door slams and the Mercenaries react and settle.

Kenson sits straight and wags a finger at the slouching men.

PAPA KENSON

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart
from Himself, because it is not there. There is
no such thing.

Kenson returns to the book as the Mercenaries share confused glances.

The Chimera searches for a sliver of couch space between broad shoulders.

MERCENARY 1

No God?

CHIMERA

No peace.