

FADE IN:

INT. CORWIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

PROFESSOR JOSEPH CORWIN sits at his desk, brightly lit by a reading lamp. He is wearing reading glasses, and grading student papers. Little of the rest of the office is visible in the dark.

Sound of KNOCKING at the door.

CORWIN

Come in.

Corwin's assistant ANWEI LI enters. Anwei is a comely Chinese woman, a little older than an undergraduate. She is carrying several books.

Anwei puts the books on the corner of Corwin's desk.

ANWEI

Here's your latest pile.

CORWIN

Thank you.

Corwin writes swiftly and copiously on one of the papers he is grading. Anwei looks on, curiously.

ANWEI

An exceptional essay,  
Professor Corwin?

CORWIN

I try to earn my humble salary by giving the good students of Gnosis College their parents' money's worth. My comments are always copious, since they pay so much for the feedback.

(pauses, writing  
some more)

And for some, especially deserving through dint of hard work and intellect, not just feedback, but a trail of breadcrumbs, should they want to follow them.

Corwin finishes writing, then closes the essay.

INSERT - THE TITLE PAGE OF THE ESSAY, WHICH READS:

"The Impossibility of Functionalist Accounts of Mind

by Nanetta Rector"

BACK TO SCENE

Anwei smiles.

EXT. GNOSIS COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

View of a red-brick and wrought-iron gate with the words GNOSIS COLLEGE written on top.

MONTAGE - GNOSIS COLLEGE IN SESSION

-- A bronze statue of a man in academic dress. On the pedestal appear the words "DOCTOR ZEALOUS CYDERS -- FOUNDER" and below that the legend "May higher knowledge never vanish from the minds of men."

-- A male and a female student walking on a path, talking with each other.

-- Students in shorts and t-shirts playing frisbee on a lawn

-- Students studying in a library

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

An old-fashioned lecture hall with wooden seats. At the front a desk and a lectern. Corwin stands behind the lectern. To Corwin's right sits Anwei behind a table.

On a blackboard behind Corwin are written the words "Consciousness," "Substrate Dependence Thesis," "Mind Uploading?" and others.

Corwin is lecturing to assembled students in the hall. Anwei watches the students.

CORWIN

So we can see that the argument associated with a functionalist theory of mind is true, so very unsettling implications would seem to follow.

CLOSE UP - THREE GNOSIS COEDS

CORWIN (O.S.)

Not only is there the possibility of extracorporeal survival in some sort of posthuman substrate, and not only might there be very exotic

possibilities for qualia  
not linked to our ordinary  
bodily experience, but a  
very unsettling  
ontological possibility is  
also raised by the Oxford  
philosopher Nick  
Bostrom...

NANETTA RECTOR, a girl with reddish-brown hair which she is currently wearing in pig-tails, dressed in a t-shirt and a skirt is looking at Corwin with a frown of concentration.

MOIRA WEIR, a girl with black wavy hair and a creamy complexion, busily takes notes and then looks up.

ASHLEY MADDER, a voluptuous strawberry blonde in a low-cut blouse, parts her lips slightly and puts a pen to them.

(Note: It is optional to add a shot of ALOYSIUS KIM, who is sitting across the hall, and gazing at Moira.)

BACK TO SCENE

CORWIN  
...which is that we are  
not here at all, but in  
fact living in some sort  
of simulation. It is this  
possibility...

Anwei glances up and makes eye contact with Corwin. She points at a watch on her wrist.

SOUND of students beginning to stir, put away books, and stand.

CORWIN  
(raising his  
voice slightly to  
be heard over the  
noise)  
Oh, I see I've run over  
again. Okay that's all for  
this week, ladies and  
gentlemen. Be sure to read  
Blackmore chapter eight  
and Dennett chapter  
thirteen for next time and  
keep in mind that your  
second papers are due at  
the end of next week.

INT. LECTURE HALL - CORWIN'S DESK - DAY

Corwin gathers his notes and says something inaudible

to Anwei, who stands at one side. Anwei nods.

Nanetta approaches, carrying her books.

NANETTA

Professor Corwin, I was wondering if I could talk to you about my last paper?

CORWIN

(putting his notes into a briefcase)

Miss Rector, I'm sure you know I don't give out any grade higher than an A.

NANETTA

This isn't about my grade, but about the comments, which I thought...a little dismissive.

CORWIN

If you wish to talk about it, we can do so. In my office. During regular office hours. Which start at two. Miss Li here will arrange to reserve the time for you if you wish. But I must really be going.

Corwin leaves. Nanetta and Anwei look at each other. Anwei smiles slightly and shrugs.

INT. OUTSIDE CORWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

A door in a hallway, with a nameplate on it, reading "PROFESSOR JOSEPH CORWIN - PSYCHOLOGY"

Sound of DISCUSSION between Nanetta and Corwin, not intelligible through the door. Nanetta's voice is raised a bit in volume over her normal conversational voice.

INT. PROFESSOR CORWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Corwin sits behind a rather large antique teak desk in a high-backed leather chair. There are expensive-looking chochkes on the desk. The only modern items are a notebook computer and a phone. The wall behind him is lined with books.

Nanetta sits opposite him in a similar chair.

SOUND of a distant tower-clock striking four.

NANETTA

In the end I just don't see how you can maintain a position that there could be extracorporal experiences. How would we know? Isn't it a something known from evolutionary psychology that most of our comprehension is hard-wired to embodiment?

CORWIN

I must say you defend your point of view with considerable vigor. But the fact is it is entirely possible to gather experimental evidence for such modes of consciousness, and you were wrong to try to dispose of the possibility of such by an a priori argument, however ingenious, in your paper.

NANETTA

(somewhat  
angrily)

But it's hardly better to appeal to experiments that are purely hypothetical!

CORWIN

(raises an  
eyebrow)

Purely hypothetical?  
(leans forward  
across the desk)  
All right then. Even though I know you're wrong, I shall tell you this, Miss Rector. Our discussion has left me very impressed by how much you know and how much you care about this, so I am going to let you in on something that I would not normally do. You know I run a laboratory.

NANETTA

Sure, here in Hume Hall.

CORWIN

I did not mean that laboratory, an off-campus facility of my own. I've been lucky enough to have a family fortune that enables me to conduct my blue sky research.

NANETTA

Blue sky?

CORWIN

That is to say, research on topics too speculative to be funded through normal academic, corporate, or government channels. If you stop by, I can show you that the sort of experimental evidence I suggest is anything but hypothetical.

NANETTA

I don't want to suggest that you're up to anything inappropriate here but...

CORWIN

No, no. Of course not. Anwei will accompany you, and be there throughout. And I believe she's a good friend of yours, yes? Interested?

NANETTA

(pauses for a moment, considering)  
Alright. I'm game.

CORWIN

(smiles)  
Excellent.

Corwin picks up the phone and dials four digits. After a pause he speaks.

CORWIN

(into phone)  
Anwei? Corwin here. Listen, although it's a little unusual I would like to arrange a demonstration of the apsinthion Protocol for

Miss Rector. Could we this up for this evening? Good. Could I have her stop by your carrel at around six and have you walk her over to the site? Excellent. Yes, see you there.

Corwin hangs up the phone.

CORWIN

So, stop by Anwei's carrel, J-30 around six, and she'll help take it from there.

NANETTA

I hope this turns out to really be something.

CORWIN

I do think you will find it so. I only ask that, since it is blue sky research, that you keep it confidential until I have a more complete set of results.

NANETTA

Agreed.

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INT. PROFESSOR CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

A large room In the middle toward one wall a desk with a computer and several wires running down from it. The desk faces a yard-wide circular platform on the other side of the room.

On one side of the room is an open pool. A catwalk, terminating in a door, crosses the pool. On the other side are a set of laboratory benches covered with chemical and electric apparatus.

A transparent pipe leads from high up on the wall across the pool and down to the base of the platform. Another such pipe leads away from the platform to the laboratory benches.

Corwin is sitting at the desk, concentrating on the computer screen.

Anwei and Nanetta enter through a door behind him. Corwin rises and bows to them slightly.

CORWIN

Ladies. I am so pleased  
that you could come by.

NANETTA

(looking around)  
So this is Professor  
Corwin's mysterious  
off-site laboratory. I'm  
surprised that you could  
have such a place.

CORWIN

Made possible by my good  
judgment in choosing  
commercially brilliant  
people for ancestors.

NANETTA

Well I'm impressed by the  
set-up at least.

CORWIN

I believe that very  
shortly you are going to  
be even more than  
impressed. Perhaps we  
should get right down to  
it. Anwei, could you  
change into appropriate  
attire for this  
demonstration?

ANWEI

Most certainly.

Anwei picks up a bag beside the desk, steps behind a  
curtain at the far end of the room, and draws it.  
Faint SOUNDS of clothing rustling, zippers being  
unzipped, etc.

NANETTA

(continues  
looking around)  
So all this stuff you have  
here, all this equipment,  
is something you can use  
for a demonstration that  
my thesis was incorrect?

CORWIN

I can't fault your  
skepticism. Some things  
must be seen to be thought  
anything other than mad,  
and must be experienced to  
be believed.

Corwin sits at the desk turns to the computer and types something.

CLOSE-UP - CORWIN'S COMPUTER SCREEN

The words "Security Code Accepted" appear on the screen, followed by "Apsinthion Protocol Loaded - Li Anwei."

BACK TO SCENE

Anwei draws back the curtain and steps out She is wearing a modest one-piece bathing suit.

Anwei steps up on the platform and faces Corwin and Nanetta.

CORWIN  
Nice quick change there,  
Anwei. Let's continue.

Corwin types on his computer.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Apsinthion Protocol  
commencing.

Sound of electric motors WHIRRING.

A transparent tube descends from the ceiling immediately over the platform. The tube descends until it meets the platform, enclosing Anwei in a cylinder.

Corwin picks up a microphone headset connected to his computer and speaks into it.

CORWIN  
Now are you sure you want  
to go through with the  
demonstration Anwei? As  
you know, once we engage  
the rest of the protocol  
there is no turning back.

Anwei smiles and gives a thumbs-up sign.

CORWIN  
Okay. Let's show Miss  
Rector here something  
really remarkable.

Corwin types some more. Sound of a brief HISS.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Environmental seal  
established. Operations

phase commencing. Warning!  
Extinction of subject can  
result from any attempt to  
interrupt the protocol at  
this point.

NANETTA

Extinction of subject?  
Wait a minute. What's  
going on here? I didn't  
ask to see anything  
dangerous.

CORWIN

Relax, my dear young lady.  
Nothing dangerous is going  
on. Look!

Anwei stands easy. She is bathed in golden light.

(Note: A low THROBBING SOUND begins at this point.)

Clear liquid appears at Anwei's feet and begins to  
rise in the tube.

NANETTA

But Professor, how can  
that be safe?

The liquid rises to Anwei's knees.

CORWIN

It does not look to me  
like Anwei thinks she is  
in any danger.

CLOSE-UP - ANWEI'S HEAD AND SHOULDERS

Anwei's tilts her head back and closes her eyes. Her  
lips part slightly. Her breathing quickens.

RETURN TO SCENE

NANETTA

Well I...  
(gasps)  
Oh my God, what has  
happened to Anwei's feet?

CLOSE-UP - ANWEI'S LOWER BODY

The clear fluid is at Anwei's mid-thigh and is  
continuing to rise. Meanwhile, Anwei's feet seem to  
have disappeared, and her legs now appear to be  
vanishing from where her feet were upward.

RETURN TO SCENE

Anwei's breathing quickens still further. That of her skin which is not submerged appears covered with a sheen of sweat. The skin on Anwei's neck is visibly flushed.

The rise of the fluid continues to the point where it has reached Anwei's abdomen. She has disappeared up to her mid thigh.

NANETTA

What is going on here?  
What is happening to  
Anwei?

CORWIN

(mildly)  
What is going on here is  
perfectly safe.

The fluid has reached up to Anwei's breasts, and Anwei has vanished up to her crotch.

Sound of a loud CRY from Anwei, muffled by the tube.

NANETTA

She is in pain!

CORWIN

Cries like that might  
indicate...something  
rather the opposite of  
pain.

NANETTA

This is insane! Stop this!  
Stop this right now?

CORWIN

But My dear Miss Rector,  
didn't you hear? To stop  
this now would risk death  
to Anwei.

Nanetta rushes up to the tube and pounds on its sides with her fists.

NANETTA

Anwei! Anwei!

What is left of Anwei pays no attention to Nanetta.

Anwei has now vanished up to her breasts.

Sound of a final MUFFLED CRY from Anwei, at first very loud, but then suddenly dying away.

As Anwei's shoulders disappear, her swimsuit sinks to

the bottom of the tube.

Anwei's head slips beneath the rising fluid and she vanishes entirely.

Nanetta looks at the column of fluid with an expression of horror.

(Note: the low THROBBING SOUND now ceases.)

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Liquifaction portion of  
protocol complete.  
Distillation phase to  
commence immediately.

NANETTA

Liquifaction? You mean  
you've really...no! Not  
possible! What do you mean  
distill...

Nanetta is drowned out by a much louder noise. The head of a giant piston descends into the tube and begins to squeeze out the fluid, which escapes through a tube that runs over to the benches with chemical apparatus.

Most of the fluid descends down the pipe, which then disappears beneath the floor. But a small fraction is pipetted off into the laboratory apparatus.

NANETTA

(beginning to  
shake slightly)  
Oh God, what have you done  
with Anwei?

There is a whirring noise, and the tube-and-piston assembly lifts off the platform and into the ceiling.

Corwin speaks as he steps up to the platform.

CORWIN

Do show some faith. Anwei  
is entirely with us.

Corwin picks up Anwei's now-empty swimsuit, which lies on the platform, and holds it up.

CORWIN

Just not here that's all.  
It might be best if she  
did not wear that --  
threatens the mechanism  
with clogging.

Corwin tosses the swimsuit away and walks over to one of the laboratory benches.

CORWIN  
Right now I cannot worry  
about inessentials, for I  
must busy myself with  
purifying...

Corwin fiddles with some laboratory apparatus.

CORWIN  
..and distilling...

He picks up a beaker of fluid and places it on a blue flame. The liquid quickly boils and disappears.

CORWIN  
...and decanting...

Corwin turns a stopcock at one end of the bench and drains a stream of liquid into a small phial.

CORWIN  
Until we have the precious  
possible liquor.

Corwin holds the phial up. Its contents are pale green and appears to glow slightly.

CORWIN  
And there we have her.

NANETTA  
(looking fearful  
and disbelieving)  
Her?

CORWIN  
Anwei!

NANETTA  
Anwei?

CORWIN  
Yes, Anwei. The beautiful  
young Anwei, as liquid  
essence. Liquid girl!  
Feel..

Corwin tries to press the phial into Nanetta's hand.

CORWIN  
...she is still warm.

Nanetta's hand falls away and her jaw drops. Then she covers her face her hands and sobs a few times

softly.

NANETTA

Oh Anwei no. No no no.  
What has he done to you,  
Anwei? I...

Nanetta takes her face out of her hands, then points angrily at Corwin.

NANETTA

Either you're a monster  
who must be locked up for  
murder, or a trickster who  
should be booted out of  
his job!

CORWIN

I assure you that I am  
neither, and I shall prove  
to you that I am at least  
not the former. Watch.

Corwin walks across the laboratory floor to the pool, carrying the phial. He steps onto the middle of the catwalk. He unstoppers the phial and pours the contents into the pool.

For a second or two nothing happens, but the waters of the pool begin to ripple, then churn and bubble and steam as if the pool were boiling. A red mass appears briefly in the center of the pool

The waters then calm. Anwei, now naked, stands up and climbs out of the pool via a ladder on its side.

CLOSE-UP - NANETTA'S ASTONISHED FACE

CLOSE-UP - ANWEI'S BODY, WET WITH STEAM RISING FROM IT

BACK TO SCENE

NANETTA

Anwei! You're...whole and  
solid.

CORWIN

Reborn like Venus rising  
from the sea at Paphos.

ANWEI

I feel fresh as a baby  
from the bath. But perhaps  
underdressed for the  
occasion. May I have my  
robe please, Professor?

CORWIN  
Most certainly.

Corwin reaches into a desk drawer and removes a white terry-cloth robe, He hands it to Anwei.

NANETTA  
So that's real, and it  
doesn't hurt?

ANWEI  
It sure is real. The part  
where you melt really  
does...  
(blushes  
slightly)  
...feel as good as it must  
look and sound...Of course  
it's the part that comes  
after you've disappeared  
that's really wild.

NANETTA  
(to herself)  
Some things must be seen  
to be thought anything  
other than mad, and must  
be experienced to be  
believed.

CORWIN  
Ah, yes. And this is  
actually what I had hoped  
to focus on from this  
demonstration.  
(looking at  
Nanetta)  
If you don't mind I'd like  
to generate some notes  
with Anwei while her  
experiences are still  
fresh in her memory.

CLOSE-UP - CORWIN AND ANWEI AT THE DESK

Corwin types as he speaks.

CORWIN  
So now, in terms of the  
phenomenological  
characteristics of your  
recent extracorporeal  
experience, could you  
provide any kind of  
linguistic description?

ANWEI  
It was positively oceanic,

like swimming naked  
through a great dark warm  
sea, but not quite so,  
because you are not just  
in the sea, but part of  
the sea.

CORWIN  
I see. And was the  
experience positively  
hedonic?

ANWEI  
Pleasure is not strong  
enough a word.

CORWIN  
Ah so you see, Miss  
Rector? Far from being  
harmed by this  
demonstration, Anwei...

Corwin stops typing, looks up from his computer at  
where Nanetta had been standing.

CORWIN  
Miss Rector?

RETURN TO SCENE

Nanetta is standing naked on the platform, in a Venus  
pudica pose -- her hands over her breasts and pubic  
area. Her clothing lies scattered on the floor  
between the desk and the platform.

NANETTA  
Make me a liquid girl!

CORWIN  
(smiling  
slightly)  
Well, now...

INT. MOIRA AND NANETTA'S DORMITORY SUITE - NIGHT

A dormitory suite with slightly spartan furnishings.  
Many books are visible, as is a poster for Gustav  
Machaty's film Ecstasy.

Moira is studying at a desk lit by a goose-neck lamp.  
A knock.

Moira gets up and answers door. It is Nanetta.  
Nanetta enters.

(Note: Nanetta has lost her pig-tails and is now  
wearing her hair loose. It stays loose for the

remainder of the script.)

NANETTA  
(giggles)  
Sorry. Seem to have lost  
my key somehow.

MOIRA  
You're back late. How did  
the meeting with Professor  
Corwin go?

NANETTA  
(smiling  
blissfully)  
Oh, just swimmingly.

Moira watches curiously as Nanetta undresses.

Nanetta climbs into her bed and pulls the covers over  
herself.

MOIRA  
So you got what you wanted  
out of that meeting?

NANETTA  
Oh yes. I feel like my  
understanding of  
consciousness advanced a  
great deal.

MOIRA  
Nanetta?

NANETTA  
Mmm?

MOIRA  
What happened to your  
pigtails?

NANETTA  
(murmuring,  
falling asleep)  
I guess it was time to  
lose them.

Nanetta falls asleep.

INT. COLLEGE DINING HALL - DAY

Sounds of MUTED CONVERSATION, dishes CLINKING  
together, etc.

Moira sits alone, eating breakfast. Ashley enters,  
carrying a tray with three cups of coffee and a

single piece of toast on it. Ashley sits next to Moira.

MOIRA  
Morning, Ashley.

ASHLEY  
Must...drink...coffee.

MOIRA  
Did Madam perhaps have a late evening?

ASHLEY  
Don't even get me started.

MOIRA  
Do you know who else had a late evening? Nanetta. Came in this morning around one.

ASHLEY  
So the library is open that late now? I hadn't noticed.

MOIRA  
Well that's the strange thing. I saw her stalk off yesterday afternoon determined to give Professor Corwin a piece of her mind about her last paper.

ASHLEY  
The one she got an A on.

MOIRA  
Yes, that one.

ASHLEY  
The one I got a C on.

MOIRA  
You know how Nanetta can be sensitive about ideas sometimes.

ASHLEY  
Your roommate might get more out of life if she were sensitive about things other than ideas So anyway, go on.

MOIRA

She floats in well after midnight, looking as happy as a girl can and bright as a new penny and tells me that her meeting with Professor Corwin went wonderfully.

ASHLEY

(takes a sip of coffee)  
Wonderfully? I wonder what the wonder of that meeting was.

MOIRA

(pauses)  
Ashley! You don't really think that...

ASHLEY

It seems to me more like you're the one saying it.

Ashley nibbles on the corner of her piece of toast.

Moira's jaw drops slightly while she looks intently at Ashley.

MONTAGE - MOIRA CHECKS UP ON CORWIN

-- Moira at a computer terminal in the college library

-- Close up of a Wikipedia page on Professor Joseph Corwin

-- Moira looking at a yellowed back issue of the college newspaper, the Gnosis Illuminator.

-- Moira looking at a bound volume of a scientific journal, Archives of Hedonic Psychology.

-- Close-up of an opening page in a journal article, entitled "Hedonic Contacts with Polydactylic Thalassoforms: Myth or Reality?" Joseph Corwin, Gnosis College is listed as the author.

-- Moira pages through the article

-- Close up of a page of the article. The words "extraordinary sympathetic response established through tactile contact" are clearly visible

-- Moira pages through some more pages

-- Close-up of another page in the article. A reference to "As shown in Katsushika Hokusai's famous illustration The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife" is seen on the page

-- Moira slams the volume shut

INT. A SECTION OF THE GNOSIS COLLEGE LIBRARY STACKS - DAY

Moira walks through the stacks. Dim light comes from a few naked bulbs on the ceiling.

The books on the shelves are all very old. Moira puts her finger on one and begins tracking along the shelf, then tracks backwards. Moira squints at the titles.

Moira pulls several book off the shelf, and reaches behind the books to pull out a small volume. She blows on the cover. A cloud of dust comes off it.

Moira opens the books, and leafs gently through the pages.

Moira closes the book and starts to put it in her purse. Then she tucks it into the top of the back of her skirt, and pulls her blouse over the book to conceal it.

INT. CORWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Moira sweeps in and looks straight at Corwin.

MOIRA

You should know I came here prepared for some sort of confrontation.

CORWIN

I admire assertiveness in young women, and lately it seems that I have had a lot to admire. What's on your mind, Miss Weir?

MOIRA

There seems to be something going on between you and Nanetta.

CORWIN

Oh?

MOIRA

At first I thought it might be the something that is the thing that

ought not to be going on between professors and students. But then I decided that was wrong.

CORWIN

I'm certainly relieved to hear that.

MOIRA

It begins with the fact that Nanetta and I have been close ever since our first year here together -- she's the closest thing I have to a sister, really -- and I'm sure she's not the kind of girl who would do that sort of thing. But there is something.

CORWIN

Something wrong? Do you think I have caused Miss Rector some sort of distress?

MOIRA

On the contrary. She seems very much un-distressed. The day she went to the meeting she came back as happy as I have ever seen her. And since then she seems like a different person. As if she had always had a spring inside that was too tightly wound and now it's unwound.

CORWIN

Well, that's good to hear certainly, but why would you think that has anything to do with me?

MOIRA

Aside from the fact that she seems a little different after her meeting with you?

Corwin nods.

MOIRA

I put in some library time on the subject of Joseph Corwin.

(pauses)

It seems that you have  
published some  
rather....unusual...theories?

CORWIN

You must know well from my  
lectures that I don't  
confine myself to  
conventional areas of  
inquiry.

MOIRA

True. But I thought  
speculating about whether  
there might be any factual  
basis to old stories from  
the Malay Archipelago  
about people swimming out  
to commune with sea  
creatures seemed to go  
beyond just unusual.

CORWIN

Yes, I suppose it does.  
But it is the duty of the  
scientist to follow his  
research wherever it might  
lead. Think how outlandish  
special relativity, or  
evolution by natural  
selection seemed advanced  
minds in their respective  
times. Only by not fearing  
to encounter the strange  
can we advance knowledge.

MOIRA

An attitude that seems to  
have a long pedigree in  
your family.

CORWIN

What do you mean by that,  
Miss Weir?

Moira removes the books she took from the Gnosis  
College library from her handbag and hands it to  
Corwin. Corwin opens it.

INSERT - THE TITLE PAGE OF THE BOOK, WHICH READS:

STRANGE PRACTICES OF SOUTH SEA NATIVES: A Fantastical  
but True Account By Cap'n Joseph Corwin Boston 1809

BACK TO SCENE

CORWIN

Where did you get this?

MOIRA

From the college library,  
where else?

CORWIN

This was supposed to be in  
locked stacks.

MOIRA

Smile prettily at the  
right person and some  
locks will open.

(smiles prettily,  
then continues)

It took a little digging  
but it seems that this  
Captain Corwin was an  
ancestor with whom you  
share not just a name but  
certain interests. It  
wasn't immediately  
obvious, because someone  
tore several pages out of  
the college's copy of that  
book, but points of  
contact between it and  
your Archives article seem  
to me unmistakable.

CORWIN

Old sailors tell all sorts  
of strange stories, Miss  
Weir.

MOIRA

And so I would have  
thought, too, except that  
old Captain Corwin's  
narratives take place in  
what he calls the East  
Indies. And by a strange  
coincidence, I found a  
number of stories in the  
Illuminator that say that  
Professor Corwin was  
spending sabbatical years  
in Indonesia. Don't you  
think Indonesia is a  
strange place for a  
laboratory psychologist to  
take a year off to go to?

CORWIN

I commend you on your  
bulldog-like approach to  
research, Miss Weir.

(pause)  
What are you driving at  
here?

Moira leans back slightly, and softens her tone.

MOIRA  
Professor Corwin, please  
try to understand. I  
haven't come here to tell  
you that I'm denouncing  
you to the campus  
grievance committee or  
that I'm publishing your  
ancestor's memoir on the  
Internet. I'm here because  
as I tried to figure out  
what was going on, as I  
added up all the facts I  
could gather, I became  
convinced that you have  
discovered something,  
maybe something that you  
shared with or showed to  
Nanetta, maybe something  
that explains what seems  
to have happened to her,  
I'm not sure. But why I'm  
here is that I can't  
quench my curiosity. And  
even if I have no right to  
ask, I really, really want  
to know.

Corwin leans back in his chair and steeple his  
hands. After a moment he speaks.

CORWIN  
Perseverance must have its  
reward. So let me begin  
with this. There is good  
evidence that what was in  
my ancestor's account was  
true.

Moira nods.

CORWIN  
And I can show you this  
evidence, bring it right  
to your senses. It might  
be a little disorienting,  
perhaps a little  
frightening, however. And  
if I do so, I want your  
word that you will hold  
what you see in strictest  
confidence. Do you agree

to that?

MOIRA

I have come this far, and  
I am not afraid.

CORWIN

Furthermore, then, for  
your own safety, you must  
be willing to follow  
instructions given to you  
by me or my assistant  
Anwei very carefully.

MOIRA

Of course I am.

CORWIN

Alright. Like I always  
said, I admire assertion.  
I'll call Anwei, and she  
will meet with you  
privately and tell you  
where to go and what to  
bring.

INT. AQUARIUM ROOM - NIGHT

Most of the room is occupied by a large aquarium-like  
tank. Half of the tank has an open surface,  
transparent walls, and is brightly lit. The other  
half is enclosed, save for a portal to the open half.  
The portal is dark.

A ladder leads up into the open part of the tank and  
down into the water in the tank's interior. At the  
base of the far end of the ladder sits a submerged  
stool.

Corwin stands before a panel of instruments on the  
side of the tank. He is wearing a white lab coat and  
is taking notes on a clipboard.

Anwei and Moira enter. Anwei is also wearing a white  
lab coat. Moira is carrying a small duffel bag.

CORWIN

Good evening, Anwei. And  
good evening especially to  
you, Miss Weir. I take it  
Anwei has briefed you  
thoroughly on our  
procedures here?

MOIRA

I find it all exceedingly  
strange to hear. You say  
you have a polydactyl

thalassoform right here?

CORWIN

An orphaned specimen  
raised from a hatchling,  
and a member of a most  
elusive species. I call  
him "Howard." This old  
brewery structure makes an  
ideal habitat, because of  
all the tankage that exits  
below ground. I take it  
that after all the trouble  
you went through you are  
eager to meet Howard?

Moira touches the glass lightly with her fingertips.

MOIRA

Yes.

CORWIN

Then it would be best if  
you were to change first.

MOIRA

Okay. Where?

Anwei pulls back the curtain to a changing area.

ANWEI

Will over here do, Moira?

Moira nods, steps into the area and pulls the curtain closed. Sounds of ZIPS, SNAPS, and so forth. Then Moira opens the curtain and steps out. Moira is dressed in a rather low-cut one-piece swimsuit.

Anwei glances at Corwin.

CORWIN

Well, shall we see if we  
can coax Howard out and  
have him make a new  
friend?

Anwei nods, steps up to the instrument panel.

CLOSE-UP - ANWEI'S HAND ON INSTRUMENT PANEL

Anwei presses a button labeled "mic."

BACK TO SCENE

Anwei leans toward the panel and begins to sing something like a lullaby, very softly, while tapping in rhythm on the glass.

A single tentacle slowly emerges from the dark area of the tank. At the end of the tentacle is an eye. The eye looks at Anwei first, then move toward Moira and gazes at her.

Moira watches, wide-eyed.

MOIRA

Well hi there, little guy.

Moira steps toward the glass. The tentacle swiftly retreats half its extended length. Moira stops in mid-step. The tentacle slowly advances again.

Moira and the eye-tentacle pause, looking at each other separated by a few inches and the glass of the tank.

CORWIN

Would you like to attempt tactile engagement, Moira?

MOIRA

I...I'm not sure.

CORWIN

It is as always entirely up to you.

MOIRA

(pauses a moment,  
then says  
decisively)

Yes.

CORWIN

Then in Anwei has briefed you correctly you know what to do.

Moira nods. She climbs up the ladder into the tank and eases herself feet-first into the water, and sits on the stool. When seated, all of Moira except her head and neck are submerged.

As Moira enters the tank, the tentacle retreats entirely back into the dark.

MOIRA

This water is so warm! And it has a kind of strange tingly feel.

CORWIN

Howard in close confines naturally generates a sort of mineral-rich, oxygen-

saturated aquatic environment. So much so, in fact, that a human being can respire through her skin and not have to emerge for a breath for quite a while.

ANWEI

I myself have been under for as much as ten minutes. So relax and enjoy.

The eye-tentacle snakes slowly through the water toward Moira, rises above the surface and looks at her, then leans toward one side, as if cocking its head.

MOIRA

Well, hello again.

Two more tentacles, very slender ones, also move through the water.

ANWEI

Try extending your hands slowly, as we discussed.

Moira does so. The slender tentacles move forward and gently brush against her fingertips.

Moira gingerly extends one hand further. A tentacle slowly wraps around the tip of one of her fingers.

MOIRA

Strange feel. Not slimy or scaly, but sort of...sleek-feeling if that means anything.

The tentacles move forward and begin entwining themselves around the fingers of both of Moira's hands.

Two more tentacles emerge from the dark and move through the water toward Moira's feet

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S FEET

A tentacle begins to brush gently against the insole of Moira's left foot.

BACK TO SCENE

MOIRA

(giggles)  
Hey, that tickles!

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S FEET

A tentacle opens up at one end, revealing a "mouth."  
This mouth envelops one of Moira's little toes  
momentarily, then pulls away.

BACK TO SCENE

MOIRA  
(looks surprised)  
I could swear that  
something just...kissed my  
toe.

Anwei and Corwin glance at each other.

More tentacles move through the water. Moira's  
fingers and toes are thoroughly entwined by this  
point. One very slender tentacle ventures forward and  
begins to brush against the base of Moira's neck.

MOIRA  
Say ins't that a little  
fresh?

CORWIN  
Please try to remember  
that Howard is a member of  
a species that relies  
heavily on tactile  
interaction, so this is  
his way of communicating.

MOIRA  
Of course, I realize that  
the progress of science  
requires that we be open  
to new experiences, but...  
(composing her  
face in a  
mock-stern  
expression)  
No funny business, you  
hear, Howard?

The eyestalks droop slightly

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S NECK AND CHEST

The tentacle brushing against Moira's neck continues.  
Two other tentacles enter the shot, moving toward the  
shoulder straps of Moira's swimsuit.

The tentacle that is brushing against Moira's neck

begins moving down toward Moira's cleavage.

One tentacle hooks under one of Moira's shoulder straps.

BACK TO SCENE

MOIRA

Hey! What are you trying?

The tentacles retreat slightly.

ANWEI

Moira, remember that if Howard does anything that you think is inappropriate you should let us know and Professor Corwin and I will make sure he stops. Remember that he is another species and even if capable of a high degree of sympathy, he doesn't always know our rules.

MOIRA

No, sorry. I didn't mean to snap at anyone. It was just surprising, and...well that feels sort of nice.

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S NECK AND CHEST

The tentacle stroking Moira's cleavage is now well between her breasts.

The tentacles move back underneath the shoulder straps of Moira's swimsuit and pause.

RETURN TO SCENE

MOIRA

I mean, I really done mind. This is a rare opportunity for contact with a unique species, right?

The tentacles can be seen pulling slightly at the straps.

MOIRA

And fearlessness in contact with the unknown is how sciences advances,

right Professor?

CORWIN

I see your enterprise as  
an investigator does not  
stop in the library.  
Follow your best  
instincts, Miss Weir, and  
remember that we are here.

MOIRA

Instincts. Yes. I shall.  
So here little guy.

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S NECK AND CHEST

Moira shrugs her shoulders together. The tentacles  
under the straps pull Moira's swimsuit down, exposing  
her breasts.

Moira disengages one hand from the tentacles and  
pulls it through the strap and then entwines it back  
with the tentacle, then does the same with the other  
hand, so she is naked from her upper abdomen up.

RETURN TO SCENE

ANWEI

Moira...

MOIRA

You want interaction,  
right?

Two fatter tentacles move through the water.

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S NECK AND CHEST

Each tentacle in turn opens a "mouth" at its end. The  
mouths move toward Moira's nipples.

RETURN TO SCENE

Each tentacle mouth near Moira' nipples envelopes  
one, and begins to move with a sucking motion. Moira  
gasps.

MOIRA

Oh my... This is certainly  
not something that---  
oh...this can't really  
be...

ANWEI

Do you want us to stop  
this?

MOIRA  
No! I mean, really, it's  
just a form of  
contact...it's okay...oh

CLOSE-UP -- MOIRA'S LOWER HALF UNDERWATER

Moira is still sitting on the stool, her lower legs beginning to kick back and forth. The tentacles continue to pull her swimsuit down.

Tentacles begin to caress Moira's inner thighs.

BACK TO SCENE

Corwin begins to step toward the control panel. Anwei takes hold of his sleeve and shakes her head. Corwin pauses, then picks up his clipboard and begins writing furiously.

MOIRA  
I mean, it's wrong, but  
it's science so it's not  
really wrong, right...I  
mean, you have to follow  
the logic of the  
situation...

The pulling on Moira's swimsuit becomes more insistent.

MOIRA  
I mean, even so I really  
can't.  
(pauses)  
I mean, yes I can.

Helped by her buoyancy in water and one of her feet for leverage Moira lifts her buttocks briefly off the stool.

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S FEET

Moira's swimsuit is pulled off entirely and dropped on the floor of the tank.

RETURN TO SCENE

MOIRA  
Oh...ah...did I really  
need that thing to begin  
with?

A tongue-like tentacle moves forward and begins lapping between Moira's legs.

MOIRA

After all...oh...it makes sense...ah..to go...oh my...where the most nerve endings are.

ANWEI

Moira, this is leading...

MOIRA

Yes, yes, yes. I know. And it's wrong, and it can't be and I won't...

Moira opens her legs on the stool. A larger phallic tentacle moves between them.

MOIRA

And I mean I will...I mean...

(moans deeply)

...oh...inside me...

The tentacle thrusts back and forth

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S FACE

Moira's face contorts, her eyes close.

Moira pants and moans.

BACK TO SCENE

ANWEI

Moira!

MOIRA

(continuing to pant and moan)

...amazing...wrong...horribly wrong...horribly right...this is all for science, right? Oh God...inside me...

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S LOWER BACK

A phallic tentacle wraps around Moira's body a few times, then runs down the cleavage of her buttocks.

BACK TO SCENE

MOIRA

...double inside me! Oh sweet heaven!

CLOSE-UP - MOIRA'S FACE

Moira emits a piercing ecstatic CRY.</p> <p class="">At the end of the cry, Moira's head slips under water.

BACK TO SCENE

Moira is pulled off the stool and under the water. She ends up on the floor of the tank, surrounded by tentacles.

A phallic tentacle snakes up to her lips. Moira's lips part, and the sucks the tentacle in.

Amidst the tentacles Moira continues shuddering and thrashing throughout the remainder of the scene. SOUNDS of bubbles rising to the surface, muffled orgasmic noises, etc.

Anwei and Corwin watch intently for a while. Occasionally Corwin takes notes.

ANWEI

Are you sure this is safe?  
I mean, even with hyper-  
oxygenation and skin  
respiration, she's been  
under for rather a long  
time.

CORWIN

I am sure that Howard will  
know best and not allow  
her to come to harm. I've  
never seen him take to any  
human interlocutor quite  
so rapidly. Not even with  
you, Anwei.

ANWEI

(mock-sighs)  
Always a bridesmaid but  
never a bride.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PROFESSOR CORWIN'S LABORATORY - LATER - NIGHT

Anwei and Moira stand watching a monitor. Anwei is still in her white lab coat, Moira is in a white terry-cloth bathrobe. Moira's hair is wet.

CLOSE-UP - SCREEN OF COMPUTER ON LABORATORY DESK

Grainy video footage reprising Moira's encounter with Howard.

BACK TO SCENE

Anwei stops the playback of the video.

MOIRA

So it wasn't a dream after all. It was all real.

ANWEI

Yes. It was. I saw it all. I was pretty surprised at how readily you took to the encounter. We certainly have a lot of data. But I would really like to know how you feel. I mean, you went through something pretty radical back there.

MOIRA

And I'm supposed to be feeling confused, disoriented, ambivalent or worse, right? I mean, isn't that how a girl is supposed to feel about her first time?

ANWEI

First time?

MOIRA

First time with...a non-human species.

ANWEI

Ah.

MOIRA

The fact is,...there's no problem at all. I feel instead a real sense of wellness -- and also, a vague sense when I was in there touching Howard, as if I were somehow in contact with, somebody, Indeed many somebodies. I'm not sure I know how to explain it.

ANWEI

With time perhaps you will. I'm still struck at how readily you went forward. Are you really that adventurous?

MOIRA

Well, actually I'm not...usually. But there's something I need to add.

ANWEI

Which is?

MOIRA

Do you remember how I told you that I found a memoir written by one of Professor Corwin's ancestors in locked stacks in the library? The one that told of encounters between humans and sea creatures in the south seas and all the weird things they got up to?

ANWEI

Yes, of course.

MOIRA

And you recall that I told both you and Professor Corwin that it was hard to read because certain pages had been cut out by some unknown hand?

ANWEI

Some horrified Victorian-era librarian, no doubt.

MOIRA

Well, not exactly.

ANWEI

Not exactly?

MOIRA

It was actually me that found them and cut them out.

Anwei looks surprised, then a look of understanding shows on her face.

INT. COLLEGE DINING HALL - DAY

Nanetta sits at a table alone, eating a large breakfast. Moira enters and sits next to her.

NANETTA

Good morning, roommate. Seems like you were the

one having a late night  
last night.

MOIRA  
(yawns, smiles)  
I had some important  
research to do.

NANETTA  
Seems like you've been  
having a lot of important  
research to do. Looks like  
it turned out well.

MOIRA  
Oh, quite.

NANETTA  
Are you sure it isn't that  
bookish Moira hasn't  
finally met that special  
someone?

Moira's fork freezes in mid-air.

NANETTA  
Did I say something wrong?

Moira looks straight into Nanetta's eyes.

NANETTA  
There's something you  
can't talk about?

Moira makes a facial expression as if she's going to  
speak, but doesn't.

NANETTA  
(leans close to  
Moira, whispers)  
There's something I can't  
talk about either.

MOIRA  
(whispering)  
...the old Weidegold  
Brewery...

NANETTA  
(whispering)  
..the old Weidegold  
Brewery...

Ashley enters with a tray of breakfast.

ASHLEY  
Hey girlfriends! Mind if I

join you for a quick bite  
before Corwin's lecture  
today? And what's the big  
conspiracy?

NANETTA

(slightly  
startled, looking  
up)

Oh no, not at all Ashley.  
Just having a little  
girl-to-girl talk here,  
that's all.

ASHLEY

Aw, how sweet! Say you  
will not believe what went  
down at the Omega House  
party last night.

MOIRA

Oh do tell all...

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Corwin stands at the podium, lecturing.

CORWIN

...and thus we come to the  
following paradoxical  
conclusion.

CLOSE-UP - THE THREE WOMEN

Moira, sitting on the right, makes a brief note on  
her notebook and points to it. Nanetta looks at it  
and nods.

Ashley, in a low-cut blouse, strokes her collarbone.  
As Corwin speaks, her hand descends slightly toward  
her cleavage.

CORWIN (O.S.)

The research program urged  
upon us by Dr. Pearce in  
his Abolitionist Project  
may seem counterintuitive  
beyond all belief to you.  
That we might not just  
ameliorate but abolish  
human suffering, that we  
might in the future,  
through drugs and  
nanotechnology, enjoy  
raptures in some form that  
would make the most  
transcendent human  
experiences seem stale and

flat. You might ask yourselves, how can we afford to take such wild ideas seriously.

BACK TO SCENE

CORWIN

My question for you is, how can we not afford to take such ideas seriously?

Sound of student APPLAUSE, then SHUFFLING as they get up to leave.

INT. LECTURE HALL - CORWIN'S DESK - DAY

Moira and Nanetta approach Corwin's lectern as his gathering up his notes.

CORWIN

Ladies. What can I do for you?

MOIRA

Professor Corwin, Nanetta and I were wondering if the both of us could meet with you and Anwei all together sometime soon. It's important, obviously.

CORWIN

Yes, obviously. My office in forty-five minutes?

He glances at Anwei, who nods.

MOIRA

Yes, thank you, Professor.

NANETTA

Yes, thanks.

Moira and Nanetta leave. Ashley approaches the lectern.

ASHLEY

Professor Corwin, I was wondering if I could talk to you for a while about my paper.

CORWIN

You'll have to come and see me during office hours. Or you can set up

an appointment with my  
assistant Miss Li here.

Ashley bends over the desk so that her cleavage is  
clearly visible to Corwin.

ASHELY  
Gee I was really hoping  
that we could set up  
something sooner.

CORWIN  
You'll have to talk to  
Miss Li. Now if you'll  
excuse me Miss Madder, I  
have an important meeting  
to prepare for. Good day.

Corwin leaves.

ASHLEY  
(looking hurt)  
Well, I never!

Ashley looks at Anwei.

Anwei crosses her arms and stares back at Ashley.

INT. OUTSIDE CORWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ashley approaches the door. She reaches into her  
purse and pulls out a stationary envelope. Ashley  
looks both ways, then kneels down and is about to  
slide it under the door.

Sound of MUFFLED VOICES from within the office,  
Corwin's, Moira's, Nanetta's, and Anwei's. The words  
are unintelligible, but the intonations suggest Moira  
and Nanetta asking questions, and Corwin and Anwei  
answering.

Ashely puts the envelope back in her purse. She leans  
to put her ear against the door, then draws away.

CHIP walks by.

CHIP  
Hey, Ashley.

ASHLEY  
(smiles  
embarrassedly)  
Hi Chip.

Chip walks on.

Ashley pauses for a moment. Then she knocks on the

door.

After a moment, the door is answered by Anwei, who opens the door only slightly.

ANWEI

Can I help you, Miss Madder?

ASHLEY

Hi! I was walking by and I know that I'm not supposed to come by until my appointment on Thursday but I just remembered that I have to make an appearance at one of Daddy's functions on that day and I'm so sorry I forgot but I was really wondering if I could step in for a minute.

ANWEI

I'm really sorry, Miss Madder, but Professor Corwin is in a very important meeting at the minute. You can always call and reschedule tomorrow.

ASHLEY

But I'm...

ANWEI

I'm sorry but you really must excuse me.

Anwei closes the door.

Sound of muffled LAUGHTER from within the office.

Ashley looks outraged.

MONTAGE - ASHLEY STALKS MOIRA AND NANETTA

-- Moira, Nanetta, and Anwei leave an academic building, walk through a parking lot, get into a battered compact car and drive off.

-- Ashley, sitting in an expensive sports-car, watches them drive off, then starts her car and backs out to follow them.

-- View of the rear of Anwei's car as it drives into an industrial-looking area.

-- View of Anwei's car pulling up and parking on a narrow side-street. Both sides of the street are lined with red-brick factory/warehouse style buildings.

-- View of Anwei, Moira, and Ashley getting out of Anwei's car. They walk up to a nondescript door on the side of the building. A faded sign on the door reads "WEIDEGOLD" Anwei flips up a control box cover, punches in a code. The door opens showing light inside. The women enter.

-- View of Ashley's car driving crossing the side street, then backing up and turning into the side street.

-- Ashley outside her car, examining the exterior of the factory building. Eventually she sees the control box and stares at the number panel, then looks up.

INT. PROFESSOR CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

Corwin, Anwei, Nanetta, and Moira face the computer screen. All four are wearing white lab coats.

CORWIN

So now that we all understand how this modified version of the protocol is supposed to work, why don't we get started. Who goes first?

ANWEI

I defer to youth and enthusiasm.

NANETTA

(jumps up and down and claps her hands together, like a child promised a favorite treat)  
Oh goody goody. I'll be ready in a trice.

Nanetta leaves.

CORWIN

While you, Moira, get to stay and help out on the distillation side of the project. An opportunity to learn some rather intriguing xenochemistry.

MOIRA

I can only hope that it is as rewarding as my studies in xenobiology.

ANWEI

Oh, you are so shameless! Though I think the revised protocol would work even better if you were joining us, Moira.

MOIRA

I guess I'm not that reconciled to the idea of not having a body, even if only temporarily.

CORWIN

Let me say as we get underway that a scientist could not ask for assistants who combine such sterling qualities of intellect, dedication, curiosity, enthusiasm, and...

NANETTA

Yoo hoo!

NANETTA'S P.O.V. - ON THE LIQUIFACTION PLATFORM

Moira, Corwin, and Anwei look on.

CORWIN

Nanetta, ready so quickly?

NANETTA (O.S.)

(in a mock-Southern accent)

I'm ready for my screen test, Mr. DeMille.

CORWIN

No jokes, please. This is science in action. Anwei, initiate the protocol.

Anwei types on the computer.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Apsinthion Protocol commencing.

Sound of electric motors WHIRRING.

The transparent tube descends over Nanetta, distorting her field of vision somewhat.

ANWEI  
(slightly  
distorted, as if  
over a speaker)  
We're at the commit point.  
Sure you want to go?

Nanetta's right hand, making a thumbs-up sign, is seen.

Sound of a brief HISS.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
(muffled)  
Environmental seal  
established. Operations  
phase commencing. Warning!  
Extinction of subject can  
result from any attempt to  
interrupt the protocol at  
this point.

Golden light dances in Nanetta's field of vision.

SOUND of running water. Nanetta looks down at her breasts, belly, and feet. Fluid is rising above her ankles. Her feet are beginning to vanish.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
Oh. I'm starting to go.

Nanetta watches as the fluid rises toward her crotch and her legs begin to disappear.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
Should be so scary, just  
vanishing away.

Nanetta puts her hands on her belly as the fluid begins to rise.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
And now I vanish up to my  
cunt...where...where...

Nanetta's point of view goes dark for a moment. She gives a clearly audible CRY.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
I come for the first time.

Nanetta's point of view looks out at Corwin, Anwei, and Moira, who are clearly looking back intently.

Nanetta's point of view looks down again. The SOUND of Nanetta's heavy breathing and gasps is audible. She looks down and sees the fluid up to her neck, and that she has vanished up to her breasts.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
Up to my breasts. Bye bye  
boobs. And up to my  
nipples, and...oh God,  
here I come again.

The P.O.V. Goes dark.

Beginnings of a CRY that dies out from Nanetta.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
No more lungs to shout the  
joy I feel. Feel it on  
theback of my head. This  
is it. My brain  
comes..Ooo...  
(pause)  
...and then I'm gone.

Swirl of hallucinatory colors, erotic images, swimming underwater, traveling through a spiral, water boiling.

NANETTA (V.O.)  
So hot. And yet I do not  
burn. I only get warmer  
and warmer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PROFESSOR CORWIN'S LABORATORY - WORKBENCH

Corwin and Moira work among the laboratory apparatus, adjusting bunsen flames, stopcocks, and so forth. They speak as they work.

MOIRA  
So what you mean to tell  
me is that the functioning  
of the liquifaction  
process isn't pure  
synthetic technology, that  
glandular secretions from  
members of Howard's  
species make it possible?

CORWIN  
Quite correct. It's a most  
remarkable chemical  
matrix, designed to read  
in living matter and  
encode it as information,  
while ignoring other

matter. While doing the read it forms a temporary chrystaline matrix around the matter it is "reading," which is why we didn't see our friends collapse in the tube while they were turning to liquid. The exact mechanism is uncertain, but I think some sort of self-replicating nanotechnology may be involved. The matrix also contains various opioid-like chemicals which make the disintegration process intensely pleasurable, rather than painful. Careful with that burner flame there Moira. We wish to distill Anwei, not vaporize her.

MOIRA

Sorry. And so this distillation process, it relies on the fact that information about the subject is stored holographically.

CORWIN

Correct. Just a visual hologram stores an entire image, even when broken into fragments, there appears to be some sort of holographic information storage in this chemical matrix, so if we lose a small part of it in the distillation process, there is no harm to the subject. Look. We might be ready to bottle Anwei now.

CLOSE-UP OF THE WORKBENCH

Two phials on the workbench. One is filled with pale-green liquid and labeled "Essence of Nanetta." The other, empty, is labeled "Essence of Anwei."

BACK TO SCENE

Corwin picks up the empty phial and places it under a stopcock, which he opens.

MOIRA

A very precious liquor indeed. But what about the other distillates?

CORWIN

Well, thanks to the miracle of holographic information storage, removing them won't harm either Nanetta or Anwei. And they have remarkable chemical properties of their own. Take this phial and draw off the distillates of that stopcock.

Moira looks at the label first. She reads it aloud.

MOIRA

"Ousia epithumias."  
Essence of desire? Why use Greek? And what is this anyway?

CORWIN

Yes. Part of the distillate which can interact with the consciousness of an individual consuming it, either orally or topically.

MOIRA

If it's an unguent-like substance, meant to be applied topically, wouldn't "muron" be a better descriptive term than "ousia?"

CORWIN

Well if you wish to be pedantic, yes. But since we are playing with the essence of personal identity, why not use a metaphysical term like "ousia?"

MOIRA

Point taken, but what's the point of the distillate?

CORWIN

To produce spontaneous somatic change, based on the libido of the consumer.

MOIRA

A magical philtre of beauty, Professor Corwin?

CORWIN

Well, if what you want to be is beautiful, perhaps. But hitherto it hasn't been stable. My hope is that with distillates from multiple subjects, I might be able to produce a more stable compound with more desirable results.

Corwin carefully fills one phial with the essence, then a few other like it, then places them on a nearby shelf.

CORWIN

Of course, I imagine also it would be important, if you're to use something like this essence, that your desires not be corrupt.

MOIRA

Do you suppose that the experiences that subjects report when they're liquified are contemporaneous with the physical process or are they just backward projections in the memory of reconstituted individuals.

CORWIN

Both are possibilities. If consciousness is simply a mater of computation, then I would suspect the latter, but if certain more exotic possibilities obtain -- such as consciousness being in some way linked to quantum gravity as Sir Roger Penrose has argued, then anything might be the case. There is some

independent evidence of  
some kind of continuity of  
consciousness even  
contemporaneous with the  
liquid state, because  
magnetic resonance  
imaging of the  
distillates has shown  
complex patterns of  
electrical activity  
therein appear clearly  
non-random -- a necessary  
condition of persisting  
mind, so think on that.  
Look, Anwei's distillation  
is now almost complete.  
Close the stopcock and  
stopper the bottle.

MOIRA

Bet a lot of guys have  
wanted a girl in a bottle.  
Say, I have a thought.

CORWIN

Which is?

MOIRA

If information is actually  
stored holographically,  
wouldn't it be possible to  
do multiple  
reconstitutions of a  
single individual, say,  
put a few drops of Anwei  
into a dozen different  
reconstitution pools and  
end up with a dozen  
Anweis?

CORWIN

Please, Miss Weir. I try  
to practice only ethical  
science.

MOIRA

On the other hand, it  
might be highly useful to  
have more assistants  
around here. Have you  
perhaps considered mixing  
essences and seeing who  
comes out? That would  
certainly be an  
interesting approach to  
studying things like what  
Derek Parfit calls "the  
bundle theory of the

self."

CORWIN

Ever imaginative, you are.  
Well, are we ready to  
bring our lovely liquid  
Venuses back to the realm  
of the solid?

INT. ASHLEY'S DORMITORY ROOM - NIGHT

A single college dormitory room with expensive-looking furnishings. A framed portrait of a younger Ashley in a gymnast's outfit accepting some sort of trophy, and a poster of the "Irma Vep" theatre placard from episode three of Les Vampires can be seen.

Ashely enters and turns on the light. She throws her keys on the desk. She plays the messages on her answering machine. There is a message from EDMUND IRONS.

EDMUND (O.S.)

(voice on  
answering  
machine)

Hey Ashely it's Edmund  
Irons. Listen I managed to  
get some studio time next  
Tuesday at four so you're  
still interested, give me  
a call okay? Thanks, bye.

An envelope addressed to "Professor Corwin" sits on the desk. Ashley sits down, picks up the envelope and is about to tear it up, but pauses.

Ashley looks at the poster of Irma Vep, and then smiles.

Ashley picks up the phone and begins to dial.

INT. A FRATERNITY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Chip, BIFF, Edmund and a other guys including GUY #1, are sitting around drinking beer from cans. A television is playing, showing SENATOR MADDER delivering a speech to an enthusiastic crowd.

MADDER

(on television)

So I say to you, my  
friends, that we will  
never fix this country's  
problems with any new law  
or government program, but  
only if we as God-fearing

people return to faith of those who founded this country and made it great. And only then will we have the strength to stand up to the pornographers and their filth, to the homosexuals and their agenda, to godless hedonists of every sort in their perversions, and restore those values in faith, and flag, and country, and make this country the great one nation under God that it was meant to be...

BIFF

(interrupting)

Turn that cocksucker off!

Biff throws an empty can of beer at the screen. Chip picks up a remote and switches to a football game.

CHIP

That's Ashley's father, you know.

BIFF

He's a cocksucker all the same, even if he a really hot daughter.

CHIP

Hot as any ice queen can be hot. Do you know any guy on this campus who's gotten anywhere?

BIFF

Nah, it's like she's too good for everyone.

CHIP

I've heard she's got a thing for professors, though. Just the other day I saw her hanging around outside Professor Corwin's door. She looked like a lost kitten.

EDMUND

So not the ice queen, exactly?

BIFF

Dude, no professor here is dumb enough to try to get his wick wet with any student, all that stuff about sexual harassment being what it is these days. And no professor without a death wish is going to try anything with Senator God-Almighty-Worships-Me Madder's precious little girl.

CHIP

A real career-ender that, if he's lucky.

BIFF

Not of course that there haven't been some incidents...

CHIP

Ooh, is Uncle Biff going to tell us our favorite Gnosis College story again?

GUY #1

Story?

BIFF

Gather ye round, while old Uncle Biff tells you young'uns a fantastic story of Miss Ashley Madder's freshman year. See they way I heard it...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Sounds of female CONVERSATION, LOCKERS CLOSING, SHOWRES, etc.

Ashley and various girls and in various states of undress. JANE and LAURA have just put on a swimsuits. Moira and Nanetta are wrapped in towels. Ashley has just come from the shower and is wrapped in a towel.

Ashely opens her locker and unwraps the towel. She hangs up the towel, pulls a bikini top and bottom from her locker, holds them for a minute, then tosses the bikini back into the locker.

Ashley then unwraps her towel, hangs it in the locker, and closes it.

Ashely, naked, strides toward a double door marked "To Pool."

Jane runs after Ashley and grabs hold of her arm.

JANE  
Ashley! What are you  
doing?

ASHELY  
Isn't it obvious? I'm  
going swimming.

JANE  
But...but...

ASHLEY  
But what?

JANE  
You're...you're...

ASHLEY  
I believe the word you're  
looking for is "naked."  
"Nude" would also work,  
although personally I like  
"naked" because it sounds  
naughtier.

JANE  
You can't go out there  
like that! There are boys  
who will see you.

By now a group including Moira and Nanetta and about five coeds have gathered around and are watching the conversation curiously.

(Note: to the extent that production permits this group should include BRIDGET, CLEO, JILL and IRIS from Tales of Gnosis College: Study Abroad.)

ASHLEY  
Maybe I want them to see  
me. Did that thought occur  
to you?

JANE  
Want them to?

ASHLEY  
Want them to. Why  
shouldn't I want them to.  
I want them to look at me  
and see how beautiful I  
am. I want them to look at

me, to stare, to desire me  
but know that they cannot  
touch me. I want to float,  
to be free, to walk out  
there and be unashamed.

JANE

That's crazy! How can you  
talk like that? A good  
Christian girl like you?

EXTREME CLOSE-UP - JANE'S CHEST

A small gold cross hangs on a chain on the outside of  
Jane's swimsuit.

RETURN TO SCENE

ASHLEY

A good Christian girl?  
Meaning I believe in God  
the creator of heaven and  
earth? The creator of men  
and women? Well didn't God  
create this?

Ashley runs her hands down from her belly to her  
upper thighs and back to her buttocks.

ASHLEY

Or this?

Ashley strokes her mons veneris.

ASHLEY

Or these?

Ashley cups her hands under her breasts and lifts  
them up.

ASHLEY

Dare we mock the efforts  
of our Lord and Creator by  
failing to admire His  
handiwork?

JANE

Ashley!

LAURA

I want them to look, too.

Laura removes her swimsuit and stands naked next to  
Ashley.

ASHLEY

There's the spirit! So who

else is with us?

The coeds look at each other. Nanetta and Moira drop their towels. The rest of the coeds then begin removing their bathing suits, until all are naked except Jane.

ASHLEY  
Your choice, Jane.

Ashley and the other turn and begin to leave.

JANE (O.S.)  
Ashley, wait.

Ashley and the others turn. Jane is standing naked, except for the cross between her breasts.

ASHLEY  
Atta girl! Come on ladies,  
let's get out there and  
have a blast.'

They open the double doors and start walking out through them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A FRATERNITY LIVING ROOM - DAY

BIFF  
The ancient scriptures say  
that a lot of girls got  
taken to the dean's office  
for a spanking, but  
Senator Madder, together  
with a crack squad of  
lawyers and goons,  
together with some  
judicious spreading of  
money in the alumni fund,  
managed to get the whole  
thing hushed up, as an  
official matter. And so  
you see boys, underneath  
Daddy's little ice queen  
is a weird chick who likes  
to get naked.

EDMUND  
And that, gentlemen, is  
where I get in and work my  
sensitive-artist mojo?

CHIP  
Say what?

EDMUND

Well, I won last year's  
Clarke Prize for student  
art, right?

CHIP

True.

EDMUND

And I publish a weekly  
cartoon in the  
Illuminator, do I not?

CHIP

Do you do.

SNICKERS from some of the guys.

EDMUND

And if I should just  
happen to be asked all  
innocent-like by one  
Ashley Madder during  
mid-session break where do  
you artist types find your  
models and we should just  
happen to fall into  
conversation on the  
subject and...

BIFF

Dude! No fucking way!

EDMUND

Dude yes fucking way. I am  
pleased to report that I  
have obtained the use of a  
college art studio,  
wherein I shall be  
spending the best part of  
two hours flattering her  
madly on every curve and  
angle of her lovely  
body...

CHIP

...her lovely  
ex-cheerleading champion  
body...

EDMUND

And thus working my magic.

BIFF

Whoa! Our sensitive-artist  
brother is going to Jedi  
mind-trick Daddy's little  
ice princess and go where

no Gnosis man has gone  
before. Dude!

The guys holler and high-five each other.

EXT. OUTSIDE CORWIN'S LABORATORY - STREET - NIGHT

(Note: The following is shot as a silent movie, with only musical scoring and in black and white. Following Feuillade's practice in Les Vampires, scenes in the dark are blue-tinted.)

Ashley's sports car pulls up to the side of the street and parks.

Ashley emerges. She is wearing a tight black leather catsuit resembling the maillot de soie worn by Irma Vep in Les Vampires and carrying a small backpack.

Using a gutter pipe for help, Ashley climbs the side of the building, until she reaches the roof.

Ashley walks across the roof toward a small mechanical penthouse. Ashley tries the door, which is locked. Then she notices a small transom window above the door. She lifts herself up and wriggles through it.

INT. MECHANICAL PENTHOUSE ABOVE CORWIN'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

Ashley enters large room. In the center of the room there is a large machine, and beneath it a hole.

Ashley looks through the hole with a flashlight. Below she sees the circular liquifaction platform.

INT. CORWIN'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

Ashley wriggles through the hole, she drops to the platform below. She surveys the room with her flashlight.

Ashley spends some time looking over the lab benches. She sees a row of bottles of Essence of Desire.

Ashley unstoppers one and smells it.

INSERT INTERTITLE

ASHLEY: Perfume? Amazing...like nothing I have ever smelled. Drawing me in...can't resist!

BACK TO SCENE

(Note: The silent movie abruptly ends, returning to conventional shooting here.)

Sound of FOOTSTEPS approaching.

Ashley ducks behind a lab bench and hides

Anwei enters, turning on the lights. She picks up a notebook from the desk and walks to the other room.

Ashley tucks the phial of Essence of Desire into her little pack and moves as quickly and quietly as she can, slipping out the door Anwei entered by without Anwei seeing her.

INT. AQUARIUM ROOM - DAY

Moira, naked, dives into the tank and swims underwater along its bottom until she reaches the portal to the dark space.

Moira sits cross-legged in front of the portal for a moment.

A pair of tentacles emerge. Moira grasps them as the intertwine with her fingers.

Moira smiles and allows herself to be pulled into the dark space.

INT. CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

Corwin patters around the laboratory benches. Anwei and Nanetta are dressed in white lab coats, Moira in a white bathrobe. The women are working on notes.

CORWIN

Remind this hapless middle-aged academic. Did we draw five or six phials of "Essence of Desire" off the last distillation?

MOIRA

I may have been distracted by the philosophical discussion, but I think five.

CORWIN

We should try to take closer notes in the future. In any event, I must be off. Meeting at Euphoric State with an old colleague. Will you ladies be so good as to lock up?

MOIRA

Good as done, professor.

CORWIN

All right, then. I'll  
leave it in your good  
hands. Good afternoon  
ladies.

Corwin leaves. After he has departed, Anwei walks  
over to a cabinet on the laboratory benches and pulls  
out a bottle of Champagne and three flutes. Anwei  
pops the cork and fills the flutes.

Anwei passes around the flutes.

ANWEI

Here's to us, ladies.

MOIRA AND NANETTA

(in unison)

Here's to us.

The women toast, then drink.

ANWEI

Breakthroughs on both the  
Howard and apsinthion  
fronts, and victory in  
sight.

NANETTA

It's amazing. After just a  
few cycles it's as if my  
imagination can roam free.

ANWEI

Just how free?

NANETTA

I used to have dreams. I  
used to have fantasies.  
But now I can have waking  
lucid dreams almost at  
will...

Nanetta closes her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NANETTA FANTASY SEQUENCE - DAY

Nanetta is dressed in a fairy-tale princess outfit  
and is tied, standing-up, to a stake in the ground.

A DRAGON enters and glowers menacingly at Nanetta.

Sound of HOOFBEATS. A mounted KNIGHT in shining armor  
enters. The dragon draws back.

KNIGHT  
Back, ye vile abomination!

The knight rides in front of Nanetta and raises his shield. The shield is divided between a left field of white and right of yellow.

KNIGHT  
I shall protect thee, fair maiden!

The knight draws his sword.

KNIGHT  
Begone evil worm, lest ye taste my righteous steel!

The dragon stares at the knight for a moment while the knight brandishes his sword.

The dragon then blows a single blast of flame at the knight who, together with his horse, promptly crumples into a pile of ashes and metallic slag.

The dragon advances back to Nanetta. Extending one talon, he snips away the ropes holding Nanetta to the stake. With two claws he seizes her by her arms and lifts off into the air with her.

The dragon and Nanetta fly through the air. With a back talon, the dragon hooks into Nanetta's princess gown.

Sound of fabric being RIPPED.

Nanetta's shredded gown flutters to the ground far below.

Nanetta is naked except for a chastity belt. The dragon crushes this between two of his talons.

Nanetta is held by the dragon. Her hair streams in the wind.

The dragon settles to an a cleft in a high mountaintop and gently puts Nanetta down and looks at her.

Nanetta trembles and spreads her legs slightly

The dragon extends his long serpentine tongue and performs cunnilingus on Nanetta.

The dragon stands and displays an erect -- but clearly non-human -- cock between his rear legs.

Nanetta smiles, lies back and spreads her legs wider.

MOIRA (V.O.)

Hey there!

Sound of a KISS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

NANETTA

(eyes fluttering  
open)

What was that?

MOIRA

They say that Sleeping  
Beauty was woken with a  
kiss.

NANETTA

That's one I would have  
had go on a little longer.

ANWEI

I'm sure there will be  
plenty of time to dream  
later. Moira, why not tell  
Nanetta what you told  
Professor Corwin?

MOIRA

About contact with Howard?

ANWEI

Yes.

MOIRA

It seems that Howard is  
more than just a single  
entity. The more time I  
spend in contact with him,  
the more I get all sorts  
of images that feel like  
memories, someone else's  
memories. Some of them  
seem to be other people --  
for the longest time I had  
the acute feeling of being  
a Malay princess. All so  
vivid -- the land, the  
sky, the sea, and speaking  
in a language.

ANWEI

Which when you spoke it  
back to us we were able to  
record, and which is  
clearly a dialect of

Malay. Ever studied Malay,  
Maira?

Anwei refills the women's glasses as Maira speaks.

MOIRA

No. That's the strange thing. And there are much stranger things. I've had the sense of being in very different bodies -- crablike things with many limbs, for example. And concurrent with that, a sense of doing...mathematics. It's as if Howard or his kind have been in contact with many other people, perhaps many other species, making contact, absorbing memories, perhaps absorbing perhaps even consciousnesses. As if what some of those science fiction speculators have to say about uploading minds into other media is true, except that instead of minds being read and uploaded into a computer, they're being uploaded into Howard's species. That's why they're so eager for contact with...uh...all those sensitive nerve endings that I've got.

NANETTA

And here we are thinking that he's just a naughty boy. But if Howard has been in that tank since he was a hatchling, as Professor Corwin said, how can he have contact with other minds?

ANWEI

Our working hypothesis is that the organism we see in the tank isn't all of Howard, any more than a single terminal or computer is all of the Internet. We think he has some means of

communication with other members of his species, and that these form a kind of network, distributing and backing up what they know. Howard may not be the whole thing, any more than your little toe is all of you.

NANETTA

Jeepers.

ANWEI

There is so much left to learn.

NANETTA

And I'm sure that here is all eager for more study.

ANWEI

But you can see why it's all very radical, because if true it really subverts everything we think we know about consciousness and life and its purpose, which is why its all so hush-hush.

MOIRA

We could be on the brink of a revolution.

NANETTA

We could be at the gates to paradise.

ANWEI

And we shall forge the keys. Here's to our posthuman future

The women toast again.

INT. AN ART STUDIO - DAY

Ashley is stylishly dressed and carrying a small handbag.

Edmund sits at an easel.

EDMUND

Well, er, shall we start?

ASHLEY

I'm eager to.

EDMUND  
We can start like that or  
you can...  
(indicating a  
screen)  
...change behind that if  
you like.

ASHLEY  
I'd like to change.

Ashley steps behind the screen and undresses. Edmund fiddles with his pencils.

CLOSE-UP - ASHLEY BEHIND THE SCREEN

Ashley is undressed. She reaches into her handbag and pulls out the phial of Essence of Desire. She unstoppers it, smells it, then dabs a little of it on herself as if it were perfume, then puts the phial away.

BACK TO SCENE

Ashley steps out naked. Edmund breathes in sharply.

EDMUND  
Wow. You really don't fool  
around.

ASHLEY  
Thanks.

EDMUND  
You seem so comfortable  
with yourself and not  
worried about my looking  
at you.

ASHLEY  
It's easy to feel  
comfortable. And I like  
being looked at.

EDMUND  
Because you're so  
beautiful, no doubt.

ASHLEY  
Yes. Do you know,  
sometimes I wish that  
everyone could look at me.  
I wish I could stand up on  
a great stage as naked as  
I am now and have everyone

look at me.

EDMUND

And perhaps hear them talk about...

ASHLEY

How perfect I was, how much they wanted to reach out and feel my skin, my flesh, my hair. I want to feel their eyes on me.

EDMUND

Wow! You really are suited for this.

ASHLEY

Feel their eyes upon me. I can feel their eyes upon me. I feel all the eyes on me that have ever been on me. The eyes are caressing me. They are moving all over me.

EDMUND

Uh, Ashley...

ASHLEY

I feel the eyes on me and I'm beginning to...

Ashley begins to tremble. A fine sheen of sweat appears. She begins to pant.

EDMUND

Ashely, are you feeling alright?

ASHLEY

No, no, stay back. Draw. I want to see you draw, and I want to feel the moment.

Edmund tries to draw. Ashley's breathing quickens.

(Note: Through the following speech Ashley's excitement continues to mount toward orgasm.)

ASHLEY

I want you to draw because I want you to put down how beautiful I am so that that can last forever, so that there can be more eyes, eyes throughout history. Eyes looking with

longing and saying what  
 pretty boobs, what  
 wonderful nipples, what a  
 lovely belly, what  
 gorgeous legs, what a  
 sweet cunt. Me. I want  
 them to say that about me,  
 not be a good girl. So  
 many people, deprived of  
 beauty to look at...I wasn  
 to give it to them...I  
 want them to have it... I  
 want their eyes on me...I  
 want my beauty to last  
 forever...

EDMUND

Ashley!

ASHLEY

...forever...

EDMUND

(standing up,  
 alarmed)

Ashley!

ASHLEY

...forever...beautiful  
 forever...and...

(crying out  
 orgasmicly)

...my...wish...is...coming...true!

SFX: Ashley's flesh and hair turn to pinkish stone. Her hands freeze with her palms turned outward, her face is turned upwards, eyes close, lips parted, an expression of ecstasy.

Ashley's last cry dies away as her transformation is complete.

Edmund walks up to the statue Ashley has transformed into. He runs his hands over it, lingering especially on her lips, breasts and buttocks.

EDMUND

(to self)

Warm...still warm...just  
 like her...so beautiful.  
 What am I doing? What am I  
 saying. Oh God!

Edmund runs out of the studio looking horrified.

INT. CAMPUS SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

OFFICER JACK CLEARYY sits at a metal desk, reading a

report. OFFICER MAY EULA sits across from him. The phone on Cleary's desk rings.

Cleary answers it. DICK JOHNSON is on the other end of the line.

CLEARY  
Gnosis College Security,  
Cleary speaking.

JOHNSON (O.S.)  
Officer Cleary, this is  
Dick Johnson, chief of  
staff in Senator Madder's  
office.

CLEARY  
(sitting up  
straighter)  
Yes, good afternoon Mr.  
Johnson. What can I do for  
you?

JOHNSON (O.S.)  
Officer, as you know the  
Senator's daughter Ashley  
is a senior there at  
Gnosis. She supposed to  
appear at a prayer  
breakfast with her father  
this morning but didn't  
show, and she's not  
answering her landline or  
her cell. We'd like you to  
check in and make sure  
she's okay.

CLEARY  
Well, I'm not sure that  
someone's being overdue by  
a few hours really counts  
as a police matter, Mr.  
Johnson.

JOHNSON (O.S.)  
Frankly, pal, we're not  
interested in what you do  
or don't think. This is  
the senator's daughter  
we're talking about here  
so I suggest you get your  
ass in gear and look  
around, I'm sure you don't  
want any unpleasantness  
like there was the last  
time.

CLEARY

No, sir. Of course not.  
We'll get right on it.

Sound of phone being SLAMMED DOWN on the other end of the line.

Cleary hangs up, picks his hat up off the desk, and prepares to leave.

MAY

What on earth was that all about?

CLEARY

Aw, that senator's ditsy daughter failed to show up for something and now I have to wear out shoe leather looking her up. Probably she's just sleeping one off. You hold down the fort, May, while I go prove that I earn my paycheck.

MAY

Law enforcement never sleeps at Gnosis, does it, Jim?

Cleary leaves.

INT. OUTSIDE/INSIDE ASHLEY'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cleary and a JANITOR approach the door to Ashley's room. Cleary knocks gently on the door.

CLEARY

Miss Madder? Are you in there?

Cleary pauses, then knocks again, a little more insistently.

CLEARY

Miss Madder? Campus security.

Cleary nods at the Janitor, who shrugs and unlocks the door.

Cleary enters the room and looks around. He looks down at the desk and his eyes pause for a moment on the letter addressed to Professor Corwin.

Cleary looks at Ashley's answering machine.

CLEARY  
Normally I wouldn't, but  
it's my ass if I don't.

Plays messages.

JOHNSON (O.S.)  
(on answering  
machine)  
Miss Madder this is Jack  
Johnson. We didn't see you  
this morning so...

CLEARY  
Yeah, whatever,  
cocksucker.

Cleary rewinds the messages, and plays another:

EDMUND (O.S.)  
(on answering  
machine)  
Hey Ashely it's Edmund  
Irons. Listen I managed to  
get some studio time next  
Tuesday at four so you're  
still interested, give me  
a call okay? Thanks, bye.

Cleary stops and ponders.

INT. PROFESSOR CORWIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Corwin and Cleary sit across from each other at the desk. They are in the middle of an interview. Cleary takes notes on a tablet.

CORWIN  
So the last time I saw her  
in person would have been  
after the last lecture in  
my consciousness course.  
And then curiously she  
came by my office right  
after, interrupting a  
rather important meeting,  
I might add. I had my  
assistant Miss Li send her  
away.

CLEARY  
Do you have any idea why  
Miss Madder might have  
thought it was urgent to  
see you?

CORWIN  
I'm afraid I have no idea,

Officer Cleary. Though if you'll forgive my saying so, I always did think that Miss Madder was a bit on the, shall we say, entitled side?

Cleary smirks, then closes his notebook.

CLEARY

Okay, Professor Corwin. Thanks for your help.

CORWIN

You don't think Miss Madder might be in some kind of trouble, do you?

CLEARY

Probably just a routine misunderstanding and a parent who is also a bit on the entitled side. But please call us if you should happen to see Miss Madder.

CORWIN

Of course.

Cleary stands up and puts on his hat. The two men shake hands across the desk. Cleary leaves.

INT. AN ART STUDIO - DAY

Cleary enters, and sees the Ashely statue.

CLEARY

What the...?

Cleary walks around the statue, inspecting it. Then he steps behind the screen.

Cleary takes a pen out of his pocket, and lifts up Ashley's clothes, which are sitting on the chair. Under the clothes he finds a small holster with an automatic pistol.

CLEARY

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Cleary opens her bag, looks inside, finding a pocketbook.

The pocketbook contains many credit cards, Ashley's driver's license, and so forth.

Cleary carefully puts everything back, then pulls out a walkie-talkie.

CLEARY  
(into walkie-talkie)  
May, this is James. Come back, over.

MAY (O.S.)  
(on walkie-talkie)  
May here. What's up Jim?  
Over

CLEARY  
(into walkie-talkie)  
May, I need you to call the Senator's office and tell them that we might have a situation here and we need any help they can send. In the meantime, get Buildings and Grounds to lock the student art studios up tight.

INT. AN ART STUDIO - NIGHT

CAMERA FLASHES as photographs are taken of the studio by crime technicians. Other criminalists dust for prints. SPECIAL-AGENT-IN-CHARGE MACNEIL and SPECIAL AGENT SMITH supervise. SPECIAL AGENT JONES is inspecting the Ashley sculpture.

CLOSE-UP - ASHLEY'S BAG

A gloved hand removes the phial of "Essence of Desire" from Ashley's bag and places it in a clear bag labeled "EVIDENCE," which is then sealed.

BACK TO SCENE

MacNeil's cellphone rings. He answers it.

MACNEIL  
(into phone)  
MacNeil here. Yes, Deputy Director. We're going over the scene now. We'll have stuff for the lab in a few hours. Yes. Yes we have the warrant on the Irons kid, we're going to try to move in as soon as tactical is assembled. What? When? Sir I don't

think...  
(an ANGRY VOICE  
is heard over the  
phone)  
Yes, sir. I'll set it up.

MacNeil hangs up his phone and addresses Smith.

MACNEIL  
(to himself)  
Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck  
fuck fuck.

SMITH  
Problem, chief?

MACNEIL  
The Senator's here.

SMITH  
Excuse me?

MACNEIL  
The Senator's here. At  
Gnosis College. And he  
wants to be there when  
tactical goes in after the  
Irons kid.

SMITH  
That's crazy! He'll  
jeopardize the integrity  
of the operation and the  
scene. What can't that  
cocksucker leave things to  
the professionals.

MACNEIL  
(commandingly)  
Special Agent Smith!

SMITH  
Sir?

MACNEIL  
Allow me to remind you of  
who that cocksucker is.  
That cocksucker is the  
senior United States  
Senator from this great  
state. Now allow me  
further to remind you of  
who you are. You are a  
Federal civil servant. So  
what that cocksucker wants  
from us, that cocksucker  
gets from us. Did I make  
that clear enough for you,

Special Agent Smith.

SMITH  
Perfectly clear, chief.

MACNEIL  
(more gently)  
Smith, look. I know this is your first politically-sensitive case, and sometimes they run tough. My guess is this is just some prank. We caught a break with that campus beadle, Chauncey, whatever his name was figured out so quickly that the Irons kid reserved this studio. Probably it's just some runaway prank put on by Daddy's spoiled little girl. We put on an impressive show for the Senator, by nabbing the Irons kid with an excessively noisy gun-waving raid, which is the sort of thing the Senator really likes and which will also use as a useful distraction from this...

(MacNeill gestures, indicating the scene in the studio)  
...and then we get to go home and swagger around. Not bad for a day's work.

SMITH  
Got it, Chief.

Jones, who has been inspecting the statue, calls to MacNeil and Smith.

JONES  
Special Agent MacNeil,  
Special Agent Smith, you might want to have a look at this.

MacNeil and Smith come over.

JONES  
This sculpture, what do you think it's made of?

MACNEIL

Looks like some sort of polished stone I would say. Something like marble.

JONES

Yes, but she's not heavy.

Jones grunts, lifts the Ashley statue off its feet.

JONES

Can't be more than about one hundred and twenty pounds. She does sound sort-of hollow.

Jones raps his knuckles a few times against Ashley's belly to demonstrate.

NACNEIL

Better bump it in priority at the lab. Special Agent Jones, call Harraway when you get to Quantico, wake her up and get her into the lab to look at this.

JONES

Yes, chief.

NACNEIL

Smith and I gotta see about tactical.

NacNeil and Jones walk away.

MACNEIL

(to himself)

Still think it's a dumb college prank, though.

INT. A FRATERNITY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The same fraternity living room we saw before, except that its windows have been covered with blackout shades.

The center of the room now contains an empty (but large) children's plastic wading pool (hereafter the "ring"). Most of the edge of the ring is surrounded with chairs. Two adjacent chairs are occupied by Chip and Biff. The other chairs are occupied by various fraternity brothers.

CHIP

Dude, I cannot believe

that you managed to talk your own girlfriend into doing this. I mean, we've always had to hire a professional from River City in the past.

BIFF

Oh the Biffman can be very persuasive. Where do you think said girlfriend gets all that sweet, sweet love.

CHIP

Sweet, sweet love, eh. I don't think anyone is that good.

BIFF

Possibly true, my good brother, possibly true. But there's also the issue of a special little need that Laura has picked up during her years here at Gnosis...

(makes a gesture as if snorting something)

...which the Biffman, with his vast connections and considerable family wealth is in a unique position to meet.

CHIP

(shaking head)

Unreal. But don't you like worry that, well, you know, something might happen?

BIFF

Not to worry, my brother. She's a greased pig who happened to take lots of self-defense classes. The only way anything happens is if she lets it happen.

CHIP

Well, I sure wouldn't miss it. Speaking of not missing it, where's Edmund?

BIFF

I think Edmund is out  
getting even luckier than  
we are.

Sound of muffled DRUMS. The FRATERNITY PRESIDENT,  
dressed in a black, hooded robe enters the room,  
leading a figure shrouded from head to toe in a white  
winding sheet.

The shrouded figure steps into the middle of the ring  
and stands. The Fraternity President raises his arms  
like a priest doing an invocation.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Brothers! For thousands of  
years, this sacred  
brotherhood has held  
together against all who  
would prevail against us.

ALL TOGETHER  
(chanting)  
Prevail! Prevail! Prevail!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
For we stand together in  
strength!

ALL TOGETHER  
(chanting)  
Strength! Strength!  
Strength!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
And courage!

ALL TOGETHER  
(chanting)  
Courage! Courage! Courage!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
And manliness!

ALL TOGETHER  
(chanting)  
Man-li-ness! Man-li-ness!  
Man-li-ness!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
We live by the supreme  
rule!

ALL TOGETHER  
(chanting)  
No pooftahs! No pooftahs!  
No pooftahs!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT

And now, my brothers,  
other young men would come  
and join us in the sacred  
bonds of brotherhood. But  
they must prove themselves  
worthy!

ALL TOGETHER

(chanting)

Worthy! Worthy! Worthy!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT

Let the candidates enter!

SOUND of muffled drums. A line of young men enter,  
PLEDGE #1, PLEDGE #2, PLEDGE #3, PLEDGE #4, PLEDGE  
#5, and PEDRO. They are wearing only towels around the  
waists.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT

Younglings! If you are to  
join with us in the sacred  
bonds of brotherhood, you  
must show that you are  
able to confront both that  
which you desire and that  
which you fear. And so you  
are challenged to combat.

The Fraternity President grabs hold of one end of the  
winding sheet and pulls. The shrouded figure turns on  
her feet, allowing the sheet to play out.

The sheet unwinds, revealing a naked Laura  
underneath.

The fraternity brothers yell and whistle and applaud.  
Laura smiles and does a pirouette, then bows.

The pledges look at each other nervously, except  
Pedro, who stares straight at Laura.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT

Sergeant-at-arms, kindly  
explain our rules of  
engagement.

CHIP

Our fair maiden combatant  
shall be thoroughly oiled.  
The candidate shall enter  
the ring and attempt to  
pin the oil maiden.  
Candidates are limited to  
only legal wrestling  
holds, but the oil maiden  
may fight to retain her

virtue with any means at  
her disposal. Combat shall  
continue until one  
participant shall speak  
the sacred safeword.

ALL TOGETHER  
(chanting)  
Uncle! Uncle! Uncle!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Oil maiden, kindly raise  
you right hand.

Laura raises her right hand

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Do you solemnly swear that  
you are about to enter  
combat of your own free  
will so help you God?

LAURA  
I do.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Then let us bring forth  
the sacred oil.

Biff steps into the ring with a bottle of baby oil,  
which he pours on Laura. He then grins and spansks  
Ashley on the behind.

Laura oils herself sensually, occasioning more  
whistles and cheers from the fraternity brothers.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
First combatant.

(Note: all of the pledges, except Pedro when his turn  
comes shall be detumescent.)

Pledge #1 drops his towel, and steps into the ring.  
He attempts to grab her around the chest, but she  
squirts away, she pokes him in the eye.

PLEDGE #1  
Ow! Uncle!

Cheers from the fraternity boys. Laura smiles and  
bows.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Next combatant!

Pledge #2 drops his towel and steps into the ring. He  
lunges forward and grabs Laura's breasts, which

promptly squirt out of his hands. Laura kicks him swiftly in the crotch.

Sound of sympathetic GROANS from the fraternity brothers.

                  PLEDGE #2  
                  (squeaking)  
Uncle!

                  FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Next combatant!

Pledge #3 drops his towel and steps confidently into the ring and promptly slips on an oily patch, ending up on his back. Laura jumps into the air and lands on his stomach, winding him.

                  PLEDGE #3  
                  (winded)  
Uncle!

                  FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Next combatant!

Pledge #4 drops his towel steps into the ring. He and Laura circle for a moment, then he grabs her arm and attempts to pull her into a hammerlock.

Laura slips out of the hold easily and spins around to bring the heel of her hand sharply to Pledge #4's upper lip.

                  PLEDGE #4  
                  (bleeding)  
Ow! Uncle!

                  FRATERNITY PRESIDENT  
Next combatant!

Pledge #5 drops his towel steps into the ring. Laura gives him a steely stare. Pledge #5 hastily jumps back out of the ring reaching for his towel.

                  PLEDGE #5  
Uncle! Uncle!

LAUGHTER from the fraternity brothers.

                  BIFF  
                  (to Chip)  
Told you there was nothing  
for me to worry about, my  
brother.

                  CHIP  
I don't know, Dude. That

Pedro looks like a full figure of a man. They say his grandmother was a full-blooded Apache.

LAURA

More oil!

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT

Let us honor the oil maiden's request.  
Sergeant-at-arms!

Chip hands her another bottle. Laura oils herself, this time without showing off.

Pedro drops his towel. He is fully erect. WHISTLES and MUTTERED REMARKS from the fraternity brothers. Then the crowd quiets.

Pedro steps into the ring. Laura looks down briefly at Pedro's erection, then Laura and Pedro lock eyes.

Laura and Pedro circle each other for a few moments. Laura HISSES like a cat at Pedro, and makes claw-like gestures with her hands.

Pedro lunges at Laura. Pedro and Laura lock like wrestlers. They go to ground. They begin to wrestle furiously for some time, Pedro being unable to complete a hold on the oiled Laura, Laura unable to escape from Pedro.

EXCITED MURMURING from the fraternity brothers.

CHIP

(aside, to Biff)

Dude, very exciting.

BIFF

Shut the fuck up.

Pedro finally pins Laura face-down with a full-Nelson hold.

PEDRO

Now you say the word!

LAURA

I refuse to say the word!

Pedro twines the fingers of one hand in Laura's hair, while releasing his other hand.

Pedro slides his free hand under Laura's abdomen and makes a fist, forcing her buttocks up and her legs apart.

Loud GASP from Laura as Pedro penetrates her from behind.

The fraternity brothers fall into shocked silence.

PEDRO  
Now will you say the word?

LAURA  
I refuse to say the word!

BIFF  
(rising from his  
seat)  
Jesus fuck! I'm going  
to...

Chip and others restrain him.

CHIP  
She has to say the word.  
She has to say the word,  
those are the rules, dude.  
When she says the word,  
we'll go in there with you  
and kick his ass. Wait for  
the word.

Pedro ignores them. He makes a few penetrating strokes.

PEDRO  
The word?

LAURA  
I refuse!

Pedro and Laura begin to copulate. After a few more strokes Laura begins moving with Pedro.

The rate of Pedro and Laura's copulation picks up, swiftly reaching a furious pace. As they copulate

-- Biff struggles with other fraternity brothers, occasionally screaming obscenities and

-- The other fraternity brothers begin to mutter approvingly, then whistle, cheer, applaud, etc.

Pedro and Laura climax together. Pedro withdraws from Laura, stands up, and punches the air with his fist.

PEDRO  
Uncle!

The fraternity brothers cheer wildly. Pedro steps out of the ring and picks up his towel.

FRATERNITY PRESIDENT

Here is a day that will  
ring down through the  
history of our sacred  
brotherhood, that of the  
greatest initiation ever!

Laura lies languidly for a moment, then rises and  
faces Biff, who is still struggling.

BIFF

What! Nothing was supposed  
to happen!

LAURA

(smiles)  
Just like you said,  
nothing could happen  
(pauses for  
effect)  
...that I didn't let  
happen.

BIFF

Why you little...

Loud POUNDING from various directions..

Several AGENTS in tactical gear storm into the room,  
followed by MacNeil and Smith, wearing tactical vests  
and carrying handguns at low-ready positions.

AGENTS

(screaming)  
F-B-I! Everyone down.  
Hands on your heads!

Everyone complies.

Sound of agents RUNNING through the house, KICKING IN  
doors, YELLING etc.

A TACTICAL OFFICER approaches MacNeil and reports.

TACTICAL OFFICER

We've searched the whole  
premises, sir. No sign of  
the target.

MACNEIL

Shit. Search the premises  
thoroughly, see if there's  
anything that we can  
somehow bootstrap into  
making this raid into a  
non-fiasco. In the  
meanwhile, take all these  
kids into custody and see

if any of them have  
anything to say.

TACTICAL OFFICER

Yes, sir.  
(to fraternity  
brothers and  
Laura)

Alright you people! Up  
against the wall. Hands up  
on the wall far apart.  
Legs apart.

Everyone complies.

MACNEIL

Conduct a search  
incidental to arrest, see  
what falls out.

MacNeil pulls out a walkie-talkie, speaks into it.

MACNEIL

MacNeil here. Tell the  
V-I-P that the scene is  
now clear for his entry.

CHIP

What the fuck man? We're  
just having a harmless  
initiation.

MACNEIL

(to Chip)  
Son, if you know what's  
good for you, you're start  
being real quiet right  
about now.

Agents begin to frisk the fraternity brothers. The  
Pledges and Pedro have their towels pulled away.  
Smith approaches Laura, and moves as if about to  
frisk her.

LAURA

(disdainfully)  
Looking for something  
concealed?

Smith shrugs and moves on.

Senator Madder enters, wearing a three-piece suit  
with an American flag pin prominent on one lapel, a  
cross on the other He is followed by GOON #1 and GOON  
#2. He looks around.

MADDER

What den of filth is this

place? What place of  
depravity?

(at the brothers)

How can any of you be  
there and not die of  
shame?

(fixing his gaze  
on Laura)

If you were the sorts who  
had any shame.

(tearing his gaze  
away from Laura,  
to MacNeil)

Did you the find the boy?

MACNEIL

No, Senator. Apparently  
he's not here.

MADDER

Well did you find  
anything?

TACTICAL OFFICER

Some substances that might  
be narcotics, a couple of  
porn stashes nothing all  
that unusual.

MACNEIL

We're making every effort,  
Senator.

MADDER

See that you do. I'm  
holding you responsible  
for this, Special Agent  
MacNeil.

MACNEIL

(giving an order)

Alright, start clearing  
out the suspects.

Agents begin handcuffing the fraternity bothers and  
pledges, then leading them away.

BIFF

(while being led  
away)

Best initiation ever, huh?

MADDER

Not the young lady.

MACNEIL

Excuse me, senator?

MADDER

Not the young lady.

NACNEIL

Senator, with all due respect this is our...

MADDER

Good God, Special Agent MacNeil, have you no decency at all? Leading a young lady in a state of undress out of here? Especially after she has no doubt been...vilely exploited by these perverted young hooligans. At the very least find something for her to wear.

MACNEIL

Yes, Senator. I'll see to it personally.

Madder approaches Laura. Goon #1 and Goon #2 take up positions between Laura and Madder and everyone else, blocking everyone else's view.

LAURA

(beginning to move away from the wall)

Gee thank you, Mr., er Senator...

MADDER

(interrupting sharply)

No one said you were to go anywhere.

Laura resumes her previous position.

MADDER

(closing in, in a low voice)

I recognize you. You're one of those little tarts who led my daughter astray in that...incident all those years back.

LAURA

Senator, I...

MADDER

Shut up! It now seems that you've managed to find

yourself in even worse  
trouble. Drugs.  
Perversion. Orgiastic  
rites. Oh yes, things  
could go very badly for  
you from now on.

CLOSE-UP - LAURA'S LOWER BACK

Madder places a hand on Laura's lower back, then  
moves his hand down her buttocks, the middle finger  
in the cleavage.

RETURN TO SHOT

MADDER

But forgiveness is always  
available, my dear, and  
soon someone from my  
operations will be in  
touch to explain what you  
need to do to get it. It  
isn't something that  
should be hard for anyone  
to do.

Madder thrusts a finger into Laura's vagina. Laura  
GASPS and grimaces in shock. Madder then withdraws.

MADDER

Especially for a little  
whore like you

Madder walks away. His goons follow him.

MADDER

(to Laura, over  
his shoulder)  
Be sure to be in touch  
with my people. I'm sure  
something can be worked  
out.

MacNeil enters with a large men's shirt and covers  
Laura.

Agents lead Laura away.

Madder removes a handkerchief from an inner pocket  
and casually cleans his hand as he speaks to MacNeil

MADDER

I expect you to find that  
boy, MacNeil, and figure  
out where my daughter is.

MACNEIL

Any further suggestions,  
Senator?

MADDER

I would think that most  
likely he is some sort of  
homosexual. Or other kind  
of sex pervert. He is an  
artist, after all, yes?  
Why don't you try hitting  
the bars?

INT. A BAR - NIGHT

MacNeil sits at a bar, his tie loosened. A  
half-finished drink sits in front of him. A neon  
sign, spelling out "Weidegold" can be seen in the  
background behind him.

Smith enters and sits next to MacNeil.

MACNEIL

Please tell me there's  
some good news here.

SMITH

(signals for the  
bartender,  
orders)  
Black coffee.  
(to MacNeil)  
Looks like the Irons lead  
is going nowhere.

MACNEIL

Why do you say that?

SMITH

State Police found him and  
his car about two hours  
ago. At the bottom of a  
ravine, dead at the scene.  
Forensics is still going  
over the wreck but so far  
no signs of the Madder  
girl or anything that  
clearly leads to her.

MACNEIL

Shit. Tough break for the  
kid, who might not have  
had anything to do with it  
anyway.

(takes a gulp  
from his drink)

So what's left? Forensics  
from the studio, right?

(finishes his

drink)  
You good to drive?

The bartender brings a cup of coffee and puts it in front of Smith.

SMITH  
Yeah, I'm good.

MACNEIL  
(putting money on  
the bar)  
Then drive. I sleep it off  
in the back seat and get  
ready to face Harraway  
bright and early.

MacNeil leaves.

SMITH  
Thank god we have the  
mighty F-B-I to protect  
society from its worst  
threat -- the wayward  
college girl.

Smith takes a large swig of coffee, and burns himself because it's too hot.

SMITH  
Ow! Fuck!  
(to bartender)  
Oh. Sorry. Gotta run.

Smith takes a bill out of his wallet, slaps on the bar, and leaves quickly.

INT. A FBI CRIME LABORATORY - DAY

HARRAWAY, a haggard-looking, dumpy, middle-aged woman in a white laboratory coat, sits at a laboratory bench, reading through a report.

Ashley's identification, clothing, the letter, etc. are in evidence bags arranged on a table. The Ashley statue is under bright lights in the background.

MacNeil enters.

MACNEIL  
Agent Harraway.

HARRAWAY  
Special Agent-in-Charge  
MacNeil. How nice to see  
you here so bright and  
early.

MACNEIL

Agent Harraway...

HARRAWAY

And how thoughtful of you  
to provide me with an  
early wake-up call too.

Harraway reaches into a pocket of her lab coat, and  
pulls out a cigarette and a book of matches.

MACNEIL

Agent Harraway, you are  
aware of course that  
Bureau policy strictly  
forbids smoking in any  
Bureau facility?

Harraway shrugs and lights her cigarette.

(Note: Harraway continues smoking through all of the  
following scene.)

MACNEIL

Please tell me you have  
something for me.

HARRAWAY

The routine stuff doesn't  
show much. Clothing is  
expensive and in good  
condition -- no damage  
indicating any kind of a  
struggle, no stains or  
secretions indicating any  
kind of sexual activity.  
Furthermore, we recovered  
this...

(indicating the  
handgun)

which is registered to  
Ashely, and for which she  
had a concealed carry  
permit. Show what having  
the right dad will get  
you, I guess. It all just  
looks taken off and put  
there. The ID is all  
genuine. The contents of  
Miss Madder's handbag were  
pretty usual for a young  
woman of her age and  
social class, with one  
exception which I'll get  
to in a minute. Miss  
Madder was fingerprinted  
as a child as part of a  
school program, so we were

able to identify most of the prints we were able to lift. They're mostly hers, plus a few from a campus security officer who left them when he first picked up some of the materials at the scene. Now this letter...

Harraway holds up the letter that was on Ashley's desk.

HARRAWAY

Is a schoolgirl mash-note addressed to one Professor Joseph Corwin. Contents unremarkable, I think, but we'll send over a facsimile copy to your office.

MACNEIL

I'd like to have more to go on.

HARRAWAY

Good things to those who wait, Special-Agent-in-Charge. There is this.

Harraway holds up the phial of "Essence of Desire," now in a plastic evidence bag and hands it to MacNeil, who inspects it.

HARRAWAY

The label is probably handwritten, and the words, according to Linguistics Section, are ancient Greek. They mean "Essence of Desire." The contents are a mostly a puzzle. The parts of it we can analyze seem to be a mix of endorphin- and serotonin-like molecules.

MACNEIL

Meaning?

HARRAWAY

A regular psychopharmacological witches' brew. Probably gets you higher than a kite if you're not careful. There a lot more

stuff in there, though, including some really bizarre-looking macromolecules that we can't type. We're talking really big, in some cases as big as small biological cells. But the icing on this particular weird cake turned out not to be so weird. We went over this little bottle pretty carefully for prints, and we found two partials that didn't match Miss Madder. And we got lucky.

NACNEIL

Fortune's Wheel turns, I see.

HARRAWAY

You see a couple of years back it turns out that one Professor Joseph Corwin got into a little bit of trouble with U.S. Customs on his return from a trip from various places in Southeast Asia. Something about transporting a biological sample without proper clearance. The guy must have had pretty good legal representation because he managed to get himself clear fast. But not before he was obliged to leave a set of fingerprints with United States law enforcement.

MACNEIL

And now he's left prints at what we think was the scene of the Madder girl's disappearance.

HARRAWAY

I'm glad the Bureau continues its tradition of hiring the best and brightest. Now, as for this statue.

Harraway and MacNeil walk over to the statue.

HARRAWAY

Only prints we found belong to the Irons boy -- we know this because we got postmortem prints from the Gnosis County M.E.'s office. But the statue itself presents some real puzzles. For one thing the material it's made of isn't like anything we know. Quite light, amazingly hard. The exterior appears to be some sort of diamondoid carbon, which is the sort of thing that's easy to find -- if you live in a science fiction story. But the most striking thing is the fineness of detail with which this sculpture is made.

NACNEIL

It looks as if whoever made this went to incredible trouble. As if they sculpted individual hairs, and little bumps and blemishes.

HARRAWAY

That is far from the most peculiar thing about it. Look at this. It is a photomicrograph of the surface of the sculpture. We took it in an attempt to identify the material.

Harraway hands a picture to MacNeil.

INSERT - PICTURE

A picture of what looks like a pattern of irregular tiles.

BACK TO SCENE

HARRAWAY

Please tell me, Special Agent-in-Charge MacNeil, what kind of sculptor is so obsessed with his model that he bothers to sculpt every one of her individual cells?

INT. MACNEIL'S OFFICE - DAY

MacNeil and Smith sit across MacNeil's desk.

MACNEIL

This Corwin character is creepy, and he's at the center of this somehow, but I can't seem to figure out how we're going to squeeze him. It won't be that easy. As far as can tell he lives modestly enough, but there's lot of Corwin money and he could afford to make things difficult for us if we step wrong. Even we in the mighty F-B-I cannot just go and grab anyone.

SMITH

Why not come up with a narcotics rap, see if he rolls?

MACNEIL

The stuff they found among the Madder girl's possessions wasn't narcotics. It was chemicals that everyone has in their brains plus some junk that no one understands.

SMITH

Anything wrong with his money?

MACNEIL

Used a Patriot Act request to peek at his financials. A lot of money comes out of accounts that he controls and goes to various companies but that could be legit and anyway we don't have time to track it. We need to get this guy and put the squeeze on him now, otherwise it we're going to be seeing "Senator's Daughter Kidnapped" headlines and no one needs that shitstorm.

SMITH

Pretty white girl in  
trouble. Pure headline  
gold.

MACNEIL

Right you are, and double  
for a senator's daughter.  
So I'm going to try  
something a little bolder.

SMITH

Which is?

MACNEIL

The last refuge of  
scoundrels, of course.

MacNeil picks up the phone and dials a number.

MACNEIL

(into phone)

Officer Cleary? Yes good  
afternoon Special Agent-  
in-Charge MacNeil here.  
Yes I read from your  
report that you had  
interviewed a Professor  
Corwin about the Ashley  
Madder matter, which is  
excellent work by the  
way...yeah, we hate  
dealing with that asshole  
too...No officer we  
haven't yet...listen you  
must have seen the inside  
of Professor Corwin's  
office...did you happen to  
see anything unusual  
there...uh huh...uh  
huh...what about  
books...uh huh...uh  
huh...large old one with  
brass fitting did you  
say...didn't get the name  
but there was an author's  
name on the spine...which  
was...

(hastily  
scribbles  
something on a  
notepad)

Very good. Thank you  
officer...not at all.

MacNeil hangs up the phone.

MACNEIL

Special Agent Smith, what does the name Abdul Al-Hazred sound like to you?

SMITH

I'm not sure. Arab, perhaps?

MACNEIL

Um hm. And this, and a pattern of withdrawal of money that's hard to trace and trips to Southeast Asia that result in obscure problems with customs means...

(types into his computer as he speaks)

...possible al-Qaeda connection.

MacNeil hits the return key on his computer as he speaks.

MACNEIL

And now, Special Agent Smith, we can just grab anyone we please. I hope you're still good to drive.

INT. DORMITORY LIVING ROOM - DAY

A handful of students are watching a television news program being read by anchorwoman MELISSA HARTREY. Nanetta and Moira enter.

INT. A TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAM - DAY

HARTREY

...and in still more shocking news out of Gnosis College today, Federal authorities announced they had taken into custody Professor Joseph Corwin and his assistant Andrea Lee late last night.

Still photographs of Corwin and Anwei appear on the screen.

HARTREY

Authorities have declined at this time to indicate

why they have taken Professor Corwin and his assistant into custody or what possible charges they might be facing.

The television switches to footage of MacNeil being interviewed.

MACNEIL

All I can say at the moment is that Professor Corwin and Miss Li are classified as persons of interest in an ongoing investigation. No further questions.

Sound of SHOUTED REPORTERS' QUESTIONS, abruptly cut off. The television program then switches back to the camera.

HARTREY

(on television)

Professor Corwin, a longtime member of the faculty at Gnosis, is reported to be a popular figure on campus, but not an uncontroversial one. Although Federal law enforcement authorities had no comment, we were able to reach Presidential Morality Advisor Lev Kasselbaum, who is known as a prominent critic of the work of Professor Corwin. Dr. Kasselbaum, thank you for being on the program with us this morning.

Switch to DR. LEV KESSLEBAUM

KESSLBAUM

Thank you for having me on, Miss Hartrey.

HARTREY

Dr. Kesselbaum, does this possible arrest of a prominent academic surprise you at all?

KESSELBAUM

Well, frankly no, Miss Hartrey. As I have been

observing for years, Professor Corwin has arrogantly been pouring intellectual poison in the form of ethical hedonism and Promethean aspirations for technology into the students of Gnosis, and it wouldn't surprise me in the slightest if he were to have gone and committed some act of hubris that has brought the attention of the lawful authorities down on his head, and long overdue that attention is. You see Miss Hartrey, the wisdom that young people need to be taught is that the pursuit of fine and honorable ends is itself what we are here for. What human life is not about is having a good time, but about leading a virtuous life. To think otherwise leads to appalling excesses, like that horrible fraternity incident you've just reported on -- something that in my opinion is the direct product of the doctrines that seducers like Professor Corwin teach. He has sown the wind, and is perhaps now reaping the whirlwind.

HARTREY

(unctuously)

That's so interesting, Dr. Kesselbaum.

(perkily)

And now over to Lennie with sports!

INT. DORMITORY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nanetta and Moira look at each other, then both run out of the room.

INT. AN INTERROGATION CELL - DAY

MacNeil and Smith face Corwin. Before them is a large case file. Corwin is in an orange jumpsuit and has one hand handcuffed to a table.

CORWIN

I insist on speaking to legal counsel.

SMITH

I regret to inform you, Professor, that your legal counsel may be very slow in arriving. Possibly months slow.

MACNEIL

Yes, thanks to certain improvements in the law made to deal with the current terrorist emergency, we might be able to detain you incommunicado for rather a long time, given the politically sensitive nature of what you've managed to mix yourself up in.

(places a document in front of Corwin)

A national security warrant. Habeas corpus is a long way from where you're sitting.

CORWIN

Politically sensitive? National security? What on earth do you mean?

SMITH

Ashley Madder is the daughter of a United States Senator. And she has been missing for the past three days. Tell us what you know now and you may have some sort of life after this.

CORWIN

The last time I saw Miss Madder was when she interrupted a meeting at my office.

SMITH

And how would you characterize the rest of your relationship with Miss Madder?

CORWIN  
Purely professional. That  
between a professor and a  
student. And not that good  
a student, either.

SMITH  
You lying motherfucker.

CORWIN  
How dare you imply  
otherwise?

MacNeil produces the phial of "Essence of Desire" and  
places it on the table.

MACNEIL  
We found this among Miss  
Madder's possessions.

CORWIN  
I did not give that to  
her.

MACNEIL  
Your fingerprints are on  
it.

CORWIN  
I don't know why she would  
have had it.

MACNEIL  
A mystery, yes? There are  
so many mysteries.  
(turns a page in  
the file)  
Among other mysteries is  
that while we can't find  
Miss Madder, but we  
certainly found a very  
finely made statue of her  
So finely detailed that we  
could map individual cells  
on its surface. Does that  
sound like something a  
sculptor could do,  
Professor Corwin?

Corwin sits silently. MacNeil turns another page in  
the file.

MACNEIL  
Or take this for example.  
It appears that you  
control a large amount of  
space in the former  
Weidegold Brewery five

miles from Gnosis. And further that a large amount of interior and electrical work was done on that space. Oh, not by you directly, of course. It was all done through offshore limited liability companies held by nominees. But, a little trace work we were able to figure out that the ultimate behind those companies was inevitably one Joseph Corwin.

(sets more papers  
before Corwin)

Now why does a humble academic like yourself need all that industrial space and power, Professor Corwin?

CORWIN

I have nothing more to say to you.

MacNeil looks at Smith. Smith pulls out a section of the file.

SMITH

You have an assistant, it would seem, a Miss Anwei Li. It might interest you to know that we have her in custody as well.

Corwin continues to sit silently.

SMITH

Miss Li is a Chinese national. And it would appear that during her student days, before her coming to the United States, she was involved in some...political activities not at all pleasing to the Chinese government. Tell me, Joe, what do you think would happen to little Anwei if she were to be deported back to her home country? A welcome with open arms?

CORWIN

Miss Li is a U.S.

permanent resident. You can't just kick her out.

SMITH

Unless, of course, there were some sort of technical problem in her original application for asylum. And given the tortuous complexity of our immigration laws, it is very easy to make a mistake for the diligent searcher to find later.

MACNEIL

And in a pinch, that which cannot be found might be made.

CORWIN

You...and the government you represent...are monsters.

MACNEIL

You cooperate with us, she stays. Of course, if we find that either she or you had anything to do with harming Miss Madder, well...let's just say you'd be beyond anyone's help then.

CORWIN

What do you want?

MACNEIL

You're going to take us to that space of yours, and you're going to show us what's going on in there.

INT. A POLICE STATION - DAY

MacNeil and Smith speak to the Tactical Officer.

MACNEIL

Prepare a prisoner transport for Corwin and his assistant. We broke the guy and he's going to cooperate. Get tactical together and prepare to raid the laboratory site.

TACTICAL OFFICER

Yes, sir.

MACNEIL  
(to Smith)  
And let's hope that this  
time we can finally clean  
up this mess.

MacNeil's cellphone rings. He answers it.

MACNEIL  
(into phone)  
MacNeil here. Yes? Again?  
But how did he hear? No  
sir, I...yes.

SMITH  
What was that?

MACNEIL  
That fucking Senator heard  
about us again and wants  
along. And as before, we  
have no choice.

SMITH  
Doesn't that macho asshole  
have anything better to do  
with himself?

MACNEIL  
Sibling rivalry. The  
Senator's brother was a  
real war hero. He's just a  
politician. Which might  
explain his desire to play  
around with guns and  
tactical units.

INT. CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

Moira and Nanetta pace nervously while they talk.

NANETTA  
They took them away. How  
could they take them away?

MOIRA  
Okay, let's try to be calm  
and think this through.

NANETTA  
But don't you see? This is  
about what's going on  
right here in this lab!  
Didn't you hear what the  
Morality Nazi had to say  
on television? They're

going to come for here,  
tear everything apart, and  
then shut it down.

MOIRA

Or try to figure out some  
way to turn it into a  
weapon.

NANETTA

And they're going to come  
for us, Moira. They'll get  
the laboratory records and  
figure out what we know  
and then they will try to  
silence us. Moira, what  
have we gotten ourselves  
into?

Nanetta begins to cry softly.

MOIRA

Just the most wonderful  
experiences of our lives.

NANETTA

And what do you think  
they'll do to Howard?

MOIRA

Haul him off to some  
secret lab of their  
own...torture him. His  
species might turn against  
us. The hopes that we had  
for all humanity might  
just be gone.

NANETTA

We need to get through to  
him, explain the danger.  
But how?

MOIRA

Howard is a a member of  
some kind of networked  
species...remember how we  
discussed that what lives  
in the aquarium is like a  
single terminal or node,  
not the whole network?  
Howard survives even if  
that physical form in  
there fails.

NANETTA

Which leaves only us, and  
what we know.

MOIRA

If one of us could somehow  
get on that network,  
preserve what we know,  
send the message to  
Howard's species that  
humanity isn't all evil. I  
could try making contact.

NANETTA

There might not be time,  
and if they catch you in  
there with him...

MOIRA

Tactile communication is  
so slow...if only there  
were a faster way.

Nanetta and Moira pause for a moment in thought.

NANETTA

The Apsinthion Protocol.

MOIRA

How would that help?

NANETTA

It's about chemistry  
designed to preserve  
information and  
communicate it, yes?

MOIRA

And based on Howard's  
internal chemistry. But  
how could we...in theory  
we could...

Moira types something into the computer on the desk.

MOIRA

...automate the protocol  
and reverse the valve flow  
like this.

Moira and Nanetta stare at the computer screen for a  
few moments.

NANETTA

It seems crazy.

MOIRA

It would be a one-way trip  
for whoever did it.

NANETTA

It would mean giving up  
everything in this world.

MOIRA  
And possibly entering a  
far more wonderful one.

NANETTA  
Or it might mean a few  
moments of ecstasy, and  
then annihilation.

MOIRA  
And there is likely very  
little time to decide.

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET OUTSIDE OF CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

A caravan of government vehicles with screaming  
sirens and flashing lights approaches Corwin's  
laboratory.

INT. CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

Sound of DISTANT SIRENS, getting closer.

NANETTA  
Yes, very little time.

Nanetta and Moira look at each other very briefly.  
Then Moira starts typing furiously. Nanetta watches  
her.

MOIRA  
(directing  
Nanetta'  
attention to the  
screen)  
I've programmed a reversal  
of the valves. This number  
here indicates a number of  
seconds to delay before  
auto-engage. Then you just  
click here and the  
protocol will start.

NANETTA  
You really want to go  
through with this?

MOIRA  
I have to try to reach  
Howard and the rest of his  
species. It might be the  
end, but I am willing to

take the risk.

Nanetta nods.

Moira undresses completely. She folds her clothes and puts them on the desk. She and Nanetta embrace. Then Moira walks to the platform of the Apsinthion device, stands on it and faces Nanetta.

NANETTA  
Are you frightened?

CLOSE-UP: MOIRA ON THE PLATFORM

Moira is visibly trembling.

RETURN TO SCENE

MOIRA  
Yes. But please do not stop.

Nanetta looks down at the screen and bites her lower lip. She types something, then stabs a key on the keyboard with her index finger.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Apsinthion Protocol timer commenced. Protocol to engage in 15...14...13...

(Note: The countdown by the Female Voice continues through the proceeding action and dialog.)

Nanetta dashes out from behind the desk, practically tearing off her clothes. She joins Moira on the platform of the Apsinthion device, by which time she, too, is naked.

MOIRA  
Nanetta, why?

NANETTA  
Wherever you're going, I can't let you go there alone.

Nanetta and Moira put their arms around each other.

The protocol proceeds as before. The tube descends and fills with liquid. Both Nanetta and Moira begin to vanish from the feet up, disappearing. They tremble and moan together.

When only heads are upper torsos of both Nanetta and Moira are left, they fall into a deep kiss, then vanish completely.

The plunger descends. The fluid flows backwards through the tube toward the aquarium room.

Sound of DOOR BEING BATTERED in. Agents in tactical gear storm in and secure the scene.

TACTICAL OFFICER  
(into walkie-talkie)  
Scene secured. Tell our guests they can come in.

Corwin and Anwei are led in by tactical officers. They are restrained with handcuffs and leg irons.

Madder and his two security goons enter. The goons are in full tactical gear, including respirators that cover their faces.

MACNEIL  
Alright Corwin. Time to start explaining.

Corwin looks down at the computer screen, then up at the Apsinthos apparatus, the plunger of which is stuck in the down position. Corwin looks at clothing -- Nanetta's scattered on the floor, Moira's neatly piled on a chair.

CORWIN  
Great Cthulhu.

MACNEIL  
What's that Corwin?

Madder picks up Nanetta's discarded underpants from the floor. He strokes them for a minute, sniffs them, then stuffs them into a pocket.

MADDER  
What disgusting perversion is going on in here?

CORWIN  
Perversion? What went on here is more audacious than I would ever have attempted.

MADDER  
Don't give me your double talk! You loathsome piece of...where is my daughter?

CORWIN  
Not here, I am sure.

Madder spits in Corwin's face. The shackled Corwin is powerless to clean himself off, but maintains his composure.

MACNEIL

Explain what went on here, Corwin.

CORWIN

What went on here is beyond the power of any of you to understand.

MADDER

You shitbag!

Madder draws a handgun and points it directly at Anwei's head. The armed agents move arms to ready position against the Senator. The goons step between the Senator and the agents.

MADDER

You tell me what I want to know right now or I will finish your little chink whore right here and now.

Madder cocks his weapon.

A huge tentacle erupts through the far wall of the laboratory. It darts across the room, and wraps its tip around Madder's neck. With a swift tug the tentacle decapitates Madder.

Anwei is drenched in blood. She SCREAMS.

The agents stand stunned for a moment.

The goons begin leveling their weapons at Corwin and Anwei.

More tentacles erupt from the wall. Corwin, Anwei and the two goons are each entwined with tentacles. The goons arms are pinned, forcing them to drop their weapons.

The tentacles lift Corwin, Anwei, and the two goons are lifted up and swept across the room, then put down behind the two lab benches.

MACNEIL

Jesus Fuck! Fire on that thing! Fire! Bravo Team, secure those suspects! Move! Move! Move!

Some agents open fire on the tentacles erupting

through the wall. Some puncture and spew multi-colored fluids on the floor.

Other agents try to comply but tentacles block their path to Corwin and Anwei.

The tentacles pinning the two goons secrete a visible fluid. The goons scream as their bodies dissolve, but their tactical suits remain intact.

Other tentacles snap the wrist and leg restraints on Corwin and Anwei.

MacNeil and Smith cower behind the desk as gunfire roars around them. MacNeil screams into his walkie-talkie.

MACNEIL

Get everyone down here!  
State, federal local! P-D  
and fire! We've got a real  
situation here!

A tentacle reaches up and cuts through the ceiling, then pulls it down, creating a partially collapsed space within the laboratory

INT. PARTIALLY COLLAPSED LABORATORY SPACE - DAY

Sounds of GUNFIRE, GLASS SHATTERING, SCREAMS of men outside the collapsed space.

Anwei huddles with her knees to her chest. Corwin looks at the empty tactical of the disintegrated goons. Then he picks up one helmet and tries it on.

Corwin points emphatically at the tactical suits. Anwei nods.

INT. CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

The laboratory is a mess. Agent are firing on tentacles, which are punctured and bleed. The floor is flooded.

The mechanical penthouse collapses, raining equipment on an agent, who is crushed.

An EXPLOSION from behind the wall. Rubble flies everywhere. Then flames start to spread through the ruins of the laboratory.

MACNEIL

Fire! All personnel  
evacuate, now!

The agents begin withdrawing.

Sounds of secondary EXPLOSIONS.

EXT. OUTSIDE CORWIN'S LABORATORY - DAY

The street is choked with emergency vehicles of various kinds. Sounds of many different kinds of SIRENS. Smoke rises from the laboratory.

A FIREMAN, carrying an axe, approaches two figures in sodden, ill-fitting tactical suits. Their faces are covered with goggles and respirators.

FIREMAN

You seen the Senator?

The larger of the two figures shakes his head and points back to the burning building.

The Fireman rushes off.

The two figures walk away.

INT. MACNEIL'S OFFICE - DAY

MacNeil and Smith sit across from each other on a desk. All sorts of documents cover the desk.

MACNEIL

What a clusterfuck, eh  
Special Agent Smith?

SMITH

Indeed, Chief.

MACNEIL

One United States Senator,  
dead. And we never found  
his head, which senior  
management here finds very  
embarrassing. Two members  
of the Senator's security  
staff, missing and  
presumed dead. One member  
of the tactical team,  
dead. Five others wounded.  
One Senator's daughter,  
still missing. Two  
suspects in the kidnapping  
of the late Senator's  
daughter, missing and  
probably at large. There's  
a mysterious automobile  
accident somehow connected  
to the larger clusterfuck  
that has left a college  
student dead too. Various  
brutality complaints and  
threatened civil rights

lawsuits out of a botched  
and frankly unnecessary  
raid. Did I miss anything?

SMITH

What about  
that...thing...inside the  
laboratory?

MACNEIL

Teams have crawled all  
over those ruins and not  
found any trace of it,  
just lots of weird  
chemicals. The official  
view is that the thing was  
some sort of trick or  
hallucination worked out  
by Corwin.

SMITH

There are reports that two  
other female Gnosis  
College students have gone  
missing.

MACNEIL

Well, let's hope that's  
not connected.

SMITH

Did take a look at a  
prelim report on those,  
chief. Neither of these  
last two have living  
parents or siblings, so we  
might be able to paper  
that one over if we have  
to.

MACNEIL

If we have to. Moving  
right along Special Agent  
Smith, do you know where  
my career would ordinarily  
expect to be right now?

SMITH

Where would that be,  
Chief?

MACNEIL

Hanging by a length of  
piano wire on a lamppost  
outside the J. Edgar  
Hoover building.  
Mysteriously this has not  
yet happened. Do you know

why?

SMITH

I had been wondering.

MACNEIL

Because officially that god-awful mess up there at Gnosis was not an encounter with some alien horror out of H.P. Lovecraft. Officially what happened up there was a terrorist incident. It suits official purposes to have it be that way. Senator Madder gets to die a hero, instead of the meddling asshole fuckup he was in real life. Authorities higher than me get to have a terrorist incident, something they like to have from time to time because fearful people are easier to govern. The various civil rights complaints get deep-sixed because it's a national security matter. And the various authorities get cover while the case gets moved over X Division, whose merry task it will be to try to pick up all the ghastly pieces and figure out what really happened up there.

SMITH

X Division. The Weirdo Squad.

MACNEIL

Better their problem than mine. In the meanwhile international warrants go out on Corwin and his assistant, and they become Interpol's problem. They might not be that easy to find. Corwin had a lot of resources which we might not have tracked down. And a lot of friends in obscure places, too. But as I said, he's not my

problem.

The two agents fall into silence for a moment.

SMITH

There might be one thing that's your problem, I mean, morally if not bureaucratically. If that statue we found up at Gnosis is really what you think it might be, what happens when it gets turned over to X Division? Won't they tear it...her?... apart trying to figure out how it was made, or came to be, or whatever.

MACNEIL

They would indeed, which is why it's not going over to X Division.

SMITH

How can you arrange that?

MACNEIL

Harraway and I have made a little agreement on the side. Each of us is going to overlook the other's...nonstandard disposition of certain evidence in a case of interest. Certain details deemed to be irrelevant will be left out of Harraway's report before it goes over to X Division. Harraway keeps a sample of something special for...shall we say...her own files, and we are going to arrange to hide that statue.

SMITH

Hide it? How are you going to hide anything from X Division?

MACNEIL

Have you ever read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter?"

SMITH

I might have back when I was in high school. What's the point?

MACNEIL

I'll explain on the way. Let's take a trip down to the laboratory.

MacNeil and Smith get up to leave.

MACNEIL

By the way, you might be a little surprised when you next see Harraway.

SMITH

Why's that?

MACNEIL

(as both are leaving the office)

You'll swear she's twenty pounds lighter and twenty years younger than when you saw her last.

INT. A SCULPTURE COURTYARD IN A MAJOR MUSEUM - DAY

MacNeil and Smith look up at the Ashley statue. It has been mounted on a pedestal. Various museum patrons mill about. On the pedestal appear the words "The Ecstasy of Faith."

MACNEIL

Good title you picked out there, Special Agent Smith.

SMITH

I can't help but thinking Senator Madder would have been so proud, had he only lived to see this moment.

MACNEIL

Poor girl always was just something of a prop to him, anyway. Now, of course, being some good spooks we need to plant a few choice rumors about Miss Madder's putative whereabouts.

SMITH

Something like, continuing her education at a Swiss finishing school, Chief?

MacNeil smirks, pats Smith on the shoulder, and leaves.

EXT. A BEACH SOMEWHERE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA - DAY

Corwin and Anwei stand on the beach, which is otherwise deserted.

CORWIN

This is very risky of you to attempt, Anwei.

ANWEI

However risky, if there's even a small chance that Nanetta and Moira succeeded in doing what you think it was they were trying to do, then this has to be done.

CORWIN

Try to re-establish contact with Howard's species. Get their trust back. See what of Nanetta and Moira might have made through. But do you really think you can succeed?

ANWEI

I have been through many iterations of the Apsinthion Protocol since we first improvised it for that...emergency. My body has absorbed a lot of apsinthion chemistry in that time, and I feel I am beginning to undergo certain...changes that might make it possible for me to survive out there.

Anwei holds up her right hand.

EXTREME CLOSE UP: ANWEI'S RIGHT HAND

Larger-than-normal webbing has is to be seen between her fingers.

BACK TO SCENE

CORWIN

It still seems somehow  
very uncertain.

ANWEI  
I can't not do this,  
Joseph.

CORWIN  
I agree.

Anwei disrobes completely, folds her clothing, and  
hands it to Corwin.

ANWEI  
I am ready.

CORWIN  
Go then.

Corwin kisses Anwei gently on the forehead.

Anwei wades out into the surf, then dives in and  
disappears.

FADE OUT.



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