

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 hadbeen 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
Moirira, this is leading...

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

Moirira 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

Moirira's face contorts, her eyes close.

Moirira pants and moans.

BACK TO SCENE

ANWEI
Moirira!

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 Moirira'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
restitutions of a
single individual, say,
put a few drops of Anwei
into a dozen different
restitution 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 Ashley 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 members 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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