

BALLARD  
motor court

by  
Mike Kiley

EXT. NIGHT - OUTSIDE THE RABBI'S LAB

A police cavalry unit: 20 black-visored riders sit atop 20 huge black horses. The unit is hiding behind a concrete wall. The horses snort white into the cold night air. The unit captain checks his watch; holds up two fingers to his riders.

Around the corner, two old homeless women struggle: one with a burlap sack thrown over her shoulder; the other with a set of golf clubs. GRACIE is gaunt; her skin is nearly as white as her hair. BETTY is black, tubby, and sports a more-salt-than-pepper afro.

BETTY

You OK, hon? You gon' make it?

GRACIE

Almost there. I can make it. You got the hard part. Them clubs.

BETTY

Alright, alright. Just askin, is all. You a trip, little Gracie!

They're walking toward a six-storey brick building. The building sits beneath a network of vaulted on- and off-ramps; traffic on the ramps is stalled: rush-hour. Honking, fumes, angry faces through car windows. Trying to get to The Tower, which rises over a mile into the sky above all these access ramps. Below, on the street, the two old ladies approach a set of massive double-doors marked HIGH VOLTAGE: the entrance to The Rabbi's factory. One of the doors creaks open, from the inside.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT - THE RABBI'S LAB - GROUND FLOOR

Inside, we see that this is an abandoned power station: oil spots on the concrete floor; a dozen huge metal transformers squat behind chain metal fencing. A rickety metal staircase crawls up a side wall to a balcony up on the sixth floor; otherwise the building is open. HERMAN, a massive tatted-up Latino in his 40s, swings the door shut behind the two ladies with a clang. LUISA, a Oaxacan woman in her 60s, takes the burlap sack from Gracie.

BETTY

Gracias, senora! Can you say gracias, Gracie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRACIE

I been bustin my ass all day long  
on the street. I don't have to  
gracias nobody.

Betty nods to Herman and Luisa, then puts her arm around  
Gracie in a mock-headlock.

BETTY

You one trippy white lady, little  
Gracie!

LUISA

(indicating the golf  
clubs on Betty's  
shoulder)

Those for The Rabbi? From the  
detective?

BETTY

Yes, ma'am. Here you go!

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT - THE RABBI'S LAB

The cavalry captain gives a signal. The riders move  
forward, around the concrete wall and into view of the  
HIGH VOLTAGE doors.

Two men on foot appear on the side of each door. They  
look at their captain. Who nods. They yank open the two  
doors and the horses race through the opening in a  
horrible flash of shiny black hair and leather.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT - THE RABBI'S LAB - 6TH FLOOR & STAIRWELL

JOE THE RABBI (60s, white-haired, crazed) is on the sixth  
floor. He hears the commotion below and races to the  
catwalk to see:

Two dozen black-visored riders stampeding through the  
tents, the cooking stations, the makeshift tables. They  
maneuver and weave between the fenced-off transformers.  
Screams of outrage; fright. The riders swing 4-foot  
batons to dismantle anything in their paths. The horses  
wheel and snort; charge and rear-up.

THE RABBI

No! Not again! Please stop! Not  
again!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But he cannot be heard above the havoc being wreaked below. He makes his way as quickly as he can down the stairwell. By the time he is halfway down the riders have vanished as quickly as they came. All that is left are the cries and whimpers of the men, women, and children who count on him for safety.

The Rabbi stops on the stairs; looks up; closes his eyes.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

His voice. His spirit. His word. I will learn. I will make this right.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT - THE RABBI'S LAB - GROUND FLOOR

Betty bleeds from a wound on her forehead; she's been shielding Gracie. Gracie dabs at her friend's head with a rag. Looks up at The Rabbi on the stairwell and shakes her head angrily.

INT. MORNING - THE NEXT DAY - A CAFETERIA

LULU (mid-20s, spiky rooster hair-do) keeps her head down as she nudges her tray along the line. Now and then, she watches Betty and Gracie, who are ahead of her. Lulu pays for her oatmeal and sourdough toast; then takes a seat at a communal table opposite the two old ladies. She listens, while munching and playing with her phone.

GRACIE

So, what do we do now?

BETTY

The Rabbi will fix it. That's what The Rabbi said.

GRACIE

I know what The Rabbi said, Betty. I'm asking you: how?

BETTY

Am I The Rabbi? What do you think we should do, Gracie?

GRACIE

Not sure. Just askin. Just scared, is all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETTY

We're all scared, hon. But The Rabbi will fix it. I believe him.

GRACIE

Hmmm ... you see Herman last night?

BETTY

That fool? Thinkin he's gonna lay a whole lotta hurt down on them cops on horses? Sheeeit!

GRACIE

I'm just sayin he likes you. You could cut a brother a break.

The two old ladies giggle; then both notice Lulu stealing a glance at them over her oatmeal.

BETTY

What, girl?

GRACIE

Take a picture. It lasts longer.

LULU

I'm sorry. I was just. I'm sorry. Just lonely, I guess. None of my business.

She gets up to leave.

BETTY

Sit down, hon. We didn't mean nothin. You all by yourself?

LULU

Yes.

BETTY

Sleepin on the street?

LULU

No. My car. I've got a car. It doesn't run so good, but I can sleep in it.

Betty looks at Gracie. Gracie sighs and turns to Lulu.

GRACIE

We have a place. A whole group. Kind of like a family, you could say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BETTY

Exactly like a family! Big and noisy and we all fight and love each other!

LULU

That sounds ... nice. Real nice.

BETTY

Then tag along with us today, girl. We'll show you how we roll!

LULU

Cool. Thanks!

EXT. - THE NEXT DAY - DAWN - AN ALLEY NEAR THE BOARDWALK

A scraggly barefoot PAINTER in torn jeans and a paint-smattered t-shirt sets up an easel at the end of the alley, underneath the concrete overhang of a derelict parking structure.

RC (early 40s, drunk) looks around: sees just the alley, a bit of lightening sky, potholes full of rainwater.

RC

Really? Here?

PAINTER

What?

RC

The beach is that way.

PAINTER

Listen, I got work to do. I don't come bug you at your job, right, whatever the fuck that might be.

RC

I'm an artist.

PAINTER

Yeah. Good for you. Now, if you don't mind ...

RC

Alright, shit, whatever. Paint in your fuckin alley.

The painter sets a canvas on his easel. RC stops; stares.

RC (CONT'D)

Holy shit. That's—that's—

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAINTER

It's crap. But it may get there.  
In this fuckin alley, with any  
fuckin luck.

RC

No, it's amazing. How did you—

PAINTER

Dude, please. Leave me alone. I'm  
not real social. I need this  
light, right here, right now. OK?

RC

OK, OK. It's just that ... OK.

RC backs up, almost runs into CLYDE (60s, Cambodian, baker), who's taking some trash from his donut shop out to a dumpster. The baker checks out the painter; shakes his head. He's got a guitar on his back.

CLYDE

Every morning. Every morning. 2  
years! He come. He paint. Right  
there. He crazy!

RC looks back at the painter; then wobbles off around the corner. Clyde sits on a overturned plastic bucket and starts picking out a blues on his battered acoustic guitar.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

(singing softly)

I seen a CPA // I seen a spiritual  
adviser // I seen a mean-eyed crow  
// with a baby's pacifier

EXT. - THAT SAME MORNING - A STREETSIDE CAFE

BALLARD (mid-30s, rangy, patchy beard) sits low in his black 1970 Barracuda, peering just barely over his dashboard through a pair of field glasses at BEN (early 30s, wearing a hipster porkpie hat) at a table at an outdoor cafe.

BALLARD

Fuck.

He gets out of his car and walks across the street to the cafe. A pack of wild dogs nearly trips him up. Ballard parks himself in front of Ben, so that the guy has to look up at him into the morning sun.

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CONTINUED:

BALLARD (CONT'D)

Ben? Ben Collier?

BEN

Uhh ... who are you?

BALLARD

Ballard. Friend of Pamela's. You know. Your ex-wife. Mind if I sit down?

Ballard pulls out a chair and sits before Ben can reply.

BEN

What do you want? Pammy and I—

BALLARD

Pammy? Really? Shit, that's rich.

A WAITRESS walks up and plops a plate of egg whites in front of Ben. She looks at Ballard.

WAITRESS

You want anything?

BALLARD

Coffee'd be great. Thanks.

He watches the waitress sashay off. Turns back to Ben.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

So, Ben. Benny. What's the story? You know, you and Pammy. You just split, right? Just woke up one day and, poof!, no more Ben. Right?

BEN

Who are you?

BALLARD

Are you deaf, Ben? I told you. Name's Ballard. I'm a friend of Pamela's. And I want to know why you left.

BEN

Fuck you.

BALLARD

Seriously, Ben? That's it? Maybe once more, with feeling?

There's sweat on Ben's upper lip; his shoulder tighten; his forearms flex.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

BALLARD (CONT'D)

Ben. Chill, dude. Nothing's going to happen here. Alright? I just want some information. It's an occupational hazard. I'm a part-time detective.

BEN

Part-time?

BALLARD

Pathetic, right?

BEN

Did Pammy hire you to—

BALLARD

No, Ben. She doesn't know I'm here. I'm just curious.

BEN

About what?

BALLARD

About what kind of scumbag walks out on a woman like that. No offense. Eat your eggs, Ben. They look delicious.

As if suddenly remembering them, Ben starts forking down his egg whites.

BEN

OK. I'll tell you.

BALLARD

Yeah? That's grand.

The waitress returns and sets a mug of steaming coffee down in front of Ballard.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

Thanks, hon.

There's a tiny explosion, then, mid-way up The Tower. About 250 storeys up into the sky, just below cloud level and barely even visible.

BEN

Poor bastard. Private plane you figure?

BALLARD

Yeah. So, Ben. You were saying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEN

Yes, well. Truth is, she started to scare the hell out of me. It got worse and worse. Tantrums, fights, bottles chucked at my head.

BALLARD

Yeah? Geez!

BEN

And the silence. And the staring. One night I woke up. It's like three a.m. She's in a chair, just staring at me. I asked her what the hell.

BALLARD

Yeah?

BEN

She said "I don't know, I just found myself here." I left the next day. I didn't need that shit.

BALLARD

No, Ben. Nobody needs that shit.

He stands. Takes a final gulp of coffee. Tosses a couple of bills on the table.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

Douchebag.

And walks back to his car.

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - PASCAL'S KITCHEN

PASCAL (late 30s, fiery copper-colored hair) squints at her reports; red manila folders are spread out in front of her. From her kitchen counter, she looks up at her backyard: a narrow slice of verdant tropicalia in the middle of the city.

Something flickers in Pascal's peripheral vision: her neighbor's black-and-white tuxedo cat slinks through her yard, throwing off sparks of dappled sunlight.

Pascal scribbles notes in red pencil on a coffee-stained legal pad. She sticks the red pencil into a manual sharpener mounted on the edge of her counter and grinds away. Her cell phone rings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASCAL

Yeah? I know it's my day off,  
Fields. I just wanted you to  
fuckin email me your notes, OK?

She listens for a second, tapping one of the red folders  
with a bitten-at fingernail.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

No, just The Tower robberies.

Another second of waiting and tapping.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

Fields. Yes. I saw the raid on TV.  
Horses and everything. That's not  
us, so just the robberies in The  
Tower. Great. Thanks.

She snaps her phone shut.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

(to herself)  
Fuckin Fields.

And then she freezes. For drifting through her backyard  
are ghostly outlines of ... people. Translucent, outlined  
like soap bubbles. They appear to have travelled many  
miles; they laugh; talk to each other; carry children.

One of them stops, a GHOST WOMAN. Looks around. Fixes  
Pascal with a gaze. Smiles.

GHOST WOMAN

There are 231 gates. And there are  
32 paths to wisdom.

The cell phone slips from Pascal's fingers. She watches  
it bounce off the tile floor. And when she looks back up  
her backyard is empty. She gasps.

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - CLYDE'S DONUT SHOP

Joe The Rabbi waits in line, wearing a greasy raincoat  
and a rasta-colored knit ski cap with ear flaps. He's  
smiling, but then winces, doubles over, and grabs his  
heart.

THE RABBI

Lulu.

He recovers a bit; straightens.

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THE RABBI (CONT'D)

The living creatures ran &  
returned. The living creatures ran  
& returned. The living creatures  
ran & returned.

The GUY ahead of him is shouting into his cell phone.

GUY

Aww, man. She's got to go back in?  
Damn. That shit's local.

The Rabbi nods his head and smiles.

THE RABBI

That shit's local.

It's his turn to order.

CLYDE

Whatchoo want today, Rabbi?

THE RABBI

That shit's local.

CLYDE

Rabbi, got no time. Busy this  
morning. Coffee and donut holes?

The Rabbi nods, hands over some ones.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THAT SAME MORNING - ALLEY BEHIND CLYDE'S DONUT  
SHOP

The Rabbi drinks his coffee while watching the patchouli-  
soaked vendors set up for the day on the boardwalk. RC's  
down the alley a bit, obviously drunk, taking a piss; he  
catches The Rabbi's eye.

RC

Fuck are you lookin at. Fuck off.

THE RABBI

Happy to.

The Rabbi smiles and sips his coffee.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

(to himself)  
The living creatures ran &  
returned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RC approaches him, zipping up.

RC  
You say somethin?

The Rabbi studies RC

THE RABBI  
What would you have me say?

RC  
What? What did you say?

THE RABBI  
Nothing. Well, I'd better—

But he stops when he sees the bewildered look in RC's eyes.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)  
Are you alright?

RC scratches his scraggly beard; shakes his head.

RC  
I'm sorry, man. I didn't mean to  
be all aggro. Just drunk and need  
some sleep, y'know.

The Rabbi nods.

RC (CONT'D)  
It's funny.

THE RABBI  
What is?

RC  
You ever lose track of time? I  
mean, get so involved in something  
you can't remember how long you've  
been at it?

THE RABBI  
Yes. When I study. When I try to  
remember my daughter's face.  
Sometimes when I pray.

RC  
Prayer. Yeah. I get that. Me, I've  
been working. I draw. I'm an  
artist. All night, every night,  
I'm on this one thing. This one  
woman. For a month, nearly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE RABBI

What's her name? This woman you draw.

RC

Huh? Oh. Athena. Can't think of anything else. Can't do anything else.

THE RABBI

Sometimes it's like that.

RC

It is?

THE RABBI

Yes. When it's good. When you are getting somewhere. Everything else falls away.

RC

You're right. It does.

RC's lost in thought staring down the alley.

RC (CONT'D)

Your daughter's face?

The Rabbi winces again; holds on to the edge of an orange plastic garbage can.

THE RABBI

I miss her. There's a hole in my heart where she was.

RC

I'm ... I'm sorry.

THE RABBI

I need to go now.

The Rabbi hurries off; he's mumbling to himself.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

The living creatures ran & returned.

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE KITTY KAT BAR

PAMELA (early 30s, straight, jet-black hair, a tattoo or two) reaches under the bar for a box-cutter and starts slicing open a large cardboard box. She pulls out styrofoam peanuts and then a bubble-wrapped mass that she sets on the bar.

Ballard walks in.

BALLARD

Holy shit Is that—

PAMELA

Oh yeah!

They each grab hold of some of the bubble-wrap and start yanking it off. And then, the tableau stands before them, 18 inches tall, 30 inches wide, and three inches deep:

At its base is a beer company logo in neon. Above that a river of deep blue water. On the river paddles a bear in a canoe. The bear is unaware of the waterfall he is approaching, over which he will plummet to almost certain death; he's smiling, without a care in the world.

Pamela plugs the unit in. The logo jumps to garish life. The river flows and twinkles. The bear paddles blissfully. Ballard sings softly.

BALLARD

From the land of sky blue waters  
...

PAMELA

It's the one, right?

BALLARD

It's perfect—thank you so much!

PAMELA

OK, cool. So, where?

They look at the back wall of the bar.

BALLARD

Hmmm. Middle shelf. Clear out a  
couple of those tequilas.

Pamela does that and positions the tableau just so. She snakes the plug back behind the row of bottles and plugs it in.

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CONTINUED:

Ballard cannot take his eyes off ... her. He watches her gaze at the smiling bear about to hurtle over the waterfall. Ballard reaches across the bar and touches her elbow. She turns and smiles at him.

PAMELA

You like?

BALLARD

Me likey!

EXT. - LATER THAT DAY - CULVER CITY STREET

A pack of huge wild dogs hurtles down a city street whose curbs are heaped with trash. They are led by BLACKIE, who is slightly wounded: blood oozes from his right front paw. GOLGON, a dog even bigger than Blackie notices this, and his horrible teeth grin.

BLACKIE

Left here.

He veers and they follow. They approach two children in front of a shop.

BLACKIE (CONT'D)

No! Keep on.

They race by the kids, whose mother has pulled them into the store. The Tower looms huge in the background.

BLACKIE (CONT'D)

Faster now!

Golgon smirks every time Blackie shouts out an order; he has four or five "followers," and they look at him every time Blackie shouts out an order. Golgon bides his time ... for now.

INT. - LATER THAT DAY - THE TOWER - VARIOUS LOCATIONS

We see a series of quick shots that are meant to establish the enormity of The Tower: hundreds of silent, solar-powered trains on each of its 500 floors; dining cars and sleepers on the trains; hundreds of banks of elevators whose cars whisk both shoppers and residents several miles into the sky.

We see that The Tower is a re-creation of everything below.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

There is a "Culver City" up here, a "Palisades," a "Mar Vista." We zero in on The Kitty Kat, an exact replica of the bar owned by Pamela, even down to the gravel that crunches in the parking lot. There are even shadows through the windows of the bar ...

EXT. - TWO WEEKS LATER - NOON - A CONCRETE RIVERBANK

We see this scene through a pair of binoculars. Joe The Rabbi is down on one knee on the riverbed; his fingers play in the brown foamy sludge that gurgles downstream from pipes emerging from The Tower. Above, on the embankment, The Rabbi's congregation wait for him.

THE RABBI

(to himself)

People are counting on me.  
Alright. Ten are the numbers. Not  
nine. Not eleven. One above three.  
Three above seven. And seven above  
twelve. Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph,  
Pe, Resh, Tau.

Up above, his "flock" murmur amongst themselves.

BETTY

What's The Rabbi doing?

GRACIE

Is he talking to himself?

Behind them, The Tower looms, choking out the sky with its blackness. The Rabbi scoops a handful of river mud into a glass jar. He turns and heads up the embankment. The group shuffles off together.

We pull out of the binocular view. It's revealed that Lulu, slouching low in a beat-up Mustang across the street, has been watching everything. She sighs and shakes her head.

LULU

Dad.

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE RABBI'S LAB - SIXTH FLOOR

The Rabbi crouches over two rusty metal tanker desks pushed together to form a slab. A massive hooded figure lies on the desks. The Rabbi holds a leather book. Luisa stands a few feet away, staring through an oil-smeared window at The Tower.

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CONTINUED:

THE RABBI

The living creatures ran & returned. Three are mothers. Seven are double. Twelve are single. Ten are the numbers. Not nine. And not eleven. The living creatures ran & returned.

LUISA

You no sleep in a week. You kill yourself.

The Rabbi barely hears her. He traces the outline of letters in river mud on the forehead of the hooded figure.

THE RABBI

Spirit, air, water, fire, height and depth, east and west, north and south. Throat, palate, tongue, teeth, lips. Mute and hissing, the living creatures ran & returned.

He begins to circle the hooded figure, walking around the desks.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Heat, cold, temperate. Head, belly, chest. Aleph, mem, shin.

He circles. Luisa turns to watch him.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Pe, Resh, Tau. East, west. Height, depth. North, south. With the holy temple in the middle sustaining all things. He, Vau, Zain, Heth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samech, Oin, Tzaddi, and Quoph.

He reaches out suddenly to steady himself, then resumes circling and chanting.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Northeast, southeast, the east above, the east below. The northwest, southwest, the west above, the west below. The upper south, the lower south, the upper north, the lower north. The right and left hands. The right and left feet. Two kidneys. The liver. The gall, the spleen, the intestines, the gullet, and the stomach.

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CONTINUED: (2)

He looks at Luisa. He is beatific.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

It is done. They will not harm us  
any more. This is what I was meant  
to do. Forever.

Luisa turns away again. Lights a cigarette.

LUISA

Is ... is the hurt better?

THE RABBI

Nothing can stop that. Nothing  
except seeing her.

LUISA

Que Dios nos ayude.

THE RABBI

Indeed. The living creatures ran &  
returned.

The hooded figure stirs. Luisa hurries to The Rabbi's  
side; makes the sign of the cross. The hood moves from  
side to side. Huge brown fingers extrude from the sleeves  
of its robe and then flex. The Rabbi raises his arms.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Here is our protector.

The figure rises to a sitting position. There is a  
flicker of light from within the hood.

LUISA

What will it do? Can you ... talk  
to it?

THE RABBI

It is a golem. He is come at our  
request to ease our sorrows. I  
shall give him direction. He shall  
protect us and do our bidding.

The GOLEM swings its legs slowly off the metal desks. It  
stands, and is over eight feet tall and five feet across  
at the shoulders.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Luisa, stand watch for me. By the  
stairs. Make sure no one comes up.  
I must finish.

Luisa backs out of the room, toward the rickety  
staircase. The GOLEM turns to face its maker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

GOLEM

Father. Was this wise?

EXT. - AN HOUR LATER - BALLARD'S CAR

Ballard cups his tiny cell phone to his ear while he drives.

BALLARD

Pamela?

PAMELA (O.S.)

Yes, Ballard.

BALLARD

You're at the bar, right?

PAMELA (O.S.)

Yes, Ballard. Like I am every day.

BALLARD

Good, good. Do you still need those pretzels, you know, the ones I like. I can—

PAMELA (O.S.)

No, Ballard. I got them on the way in. I got sick of you telling me how I was out of them.

BALLARD

Good, good. So, I don't need to stop?

PAMELA (

No, Ballard. We're good with the pretzels.

BALLARD

OK, good. Holy shit!

PAMELA (O.S.)

What?

BALLARD

I think I just saw my golf clubs.

PAMELA (O.S.)

The ones that got stolen from your car? Where are you?

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CONTINUED:

BALLARD

There's this weird flea market swap meet thing under the freeway cloverleaf, you know, where all those ramps go up into The Tower. And they've got golf clubs for sale. I gotta pull over and check this shit out.

PAMELA (O.S.)

There's a swap meet UNDER the freeway.

BALLARD

Yeah. Looks like some homeless people run it. This oughta be interesting. OK, gotta go. Holy shit! I wonder if those ARE my clubs?

PAMELA (O.S.)

Later, Ballard.

EXT. - IN FRONT OF THE RABBI'S FACTORY

Ballard gets out of his car. Walks past Luisa and Herman. Past folding tables on which are arrayed some books, cassette tapes, sweaters, ash trays, etc. Stops in front of a set of golf clubs, which is leaned up against the massive double doors marked HIGH VOLTAGE.

BALLARD

Well, fuck me till Tuesday.

He turns to Herman and Luisa, who are now standing near him.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

These are MY fucking clubs.

They stare at him.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

Do you have anything to say about that?

Nothing.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

Assholes.

Ballard lifts the golf clubs onto his shoulder. One of the doors creaks open and The Rabbi steps through.

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CONTINUED:

There is mud on his fingers and caked on his face. The golem lurks behind him, mostly in shadow.

THE RABBI

You came.

BALLARD

What? The fuck are you talking about? These are my golf clubs. What are you doing with them?

He glares at The Rabbi, but then becomes aware of the monstrous hooded figure behind him and cranes his neck to try to see into the shadows of the doorway.

THE RABBI

I needed to get your attention.

BALLARD

What?

THE RABBI

I need your help. May I please have a word with you?

The Rabbi closes the heavy door with a clang, cutting off Ballard's view of the golem.

BALLARD

About what? And what's back there? I saw something.

THE RABBI

I need your help. There is a hole in my heart where my daughter was. I need you to find her for me.

Tears trickle down The Rabbi's cheek, loosening the mud caked there.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

I don't know where else to turn. I am not a man of means. I need your help. Please.

BALLARD

Listen. I don't get any of this. I was just driving by. Saw my shit that YOU STOLE FROM ME. Pulled over. Now you tell me that you needed to get my attention and that you need my help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE RABBI

Yes. I want to hire you. To find my daughter.

BALLARD

What? So, you stole my golf clubs in order to ask me to help you?

THE RABBI

Yes, yes!

BALLARD

Are you fucking kidding me? Who does that? What if— what if I hadn't noticed my clubs here?

THE RABBI

You drive by here every day.

BALLARD

How the fuck do you know that?

THE RABBI

I did my homework. I heard about you. I knew you drove past here and I wanted to make sure you were someone who pays attention.

BALLARD

So, you were, what? Testing me?

THE RABBI

I wanted ... I need to find my daughter. I needed to know you were the right man to help me. It was what occurred to me to do.

Ballard stares at The Rabbi. He smiles and shakes his head.

BALLARD

You know, man, that is so fucked up it's kind of funny.

He opens the trunk of his car and slides the clubs in.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

So, just for shits and giggles, how would this work? You have any money to hire me?

THE RABBI

I've saved up a little. As much as I could. I wish I had more.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

But you can have it all. I can't wait any longer. I'm out of time.

BALLARD

What do you mean?

THE RABBI

I mean we're ALL out of time. I just want to see my daughter. I have so wronged her and it has created a hole in my heart. Won't you please help me?

BALLARD

You know what: no. I won't. And I would appreciate you not stealing any more of my shit.

Ballard slams his door and speeds off. As he flips a U-turn, he notices a beat-up Mustang and sees a flash of light, as if reflected off a pair of binoculars.

INT. - ONE WEEK LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR - NIGHT

Pamela lays her tarot cards out in the Celtic Cross spread: the Significator, then the nine, then flips over the tenth ... she gets The Tower.

PAMELA

Really? Again?

RC's at his table, sketching, stopping, sketching. Lulu nurses a beer in a corner booth. Now and then her eyes alight on a ceiling-mounted TV on which images of a fire in The Tower flicker.

Ballard walks in; slides onto a red leather barstool.

BALLARD

Hey.

PAMELA

Yeah, hey. She's been waiting for you. Over in the booth. You know how to pick 'em, Ballard.

Ballard swivels to look at Lulu; shrugs; then heads over to the booth.

BALLARD

Hear you're looking for me?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

LULU

Please. Least I can do is buy you  
a beer.

BALLARD

Uh, OK. Why's that?

LULU

For putting up with my dad. I'm  
Lulu. The Rabbi tried to hire you  
to find me.

BALLARD

Shit, you're his daughter? Better  
make it a shot.

LULU

Roger that. A shot it is.

She raises her hand, trying to get Pamela's attention.

BALLARD

Allow me. This is my home-field.  
Pamela! Old Potrero, please.

LULU

Old what? What's that gonna set me  
back?

BALLARD

17 bucks. After all, your dad did  
swipe my golf clubs.

Pamela walks over and sets the glass of artisanal rye in  
front of Ballard.

PAMELA

You want another beer, too?

LULU

No, I'm good, thanks.

PAMELA

So, how do you know our friend  
Ballard here?

Ballard's just about to launch into it, but holds back  
when he sees Lulu's discomfort.

BALLARD

(to Pamela)  
I'll fill you in later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

On her way back to the bar, Pamela stops at RC's table; looks over his shoulder as he sketches. He doesn't notice her.

LULU

Thanks. I didn't really want to get into all that. So ... you and her?

Ballard appraises Lulu: mini-skirt, halter top, and what appear to be really tall and wobbly platform heels.

BALLARD

Try none of your beeswax.

LULU

Got it.

Lulu laughs and shakes her shaggy chestnut hair. Ballard sips his rye.

BALLARD

So, Lulu. What do you want?

LULU

To 'counter-hire' you. To do something for me.

BALLARD

I didn't take the gig. I haven't been looking for you.

LULU

But you found me, nonetheless. You are GOOD AT YOUR JOB!

The fire on the TV above them rages. Something—a bird? a body?—falls through the flames onscreen.

LULU (CONT'D)

Did you see the raid the other night on TV?

BALLARD

Yeah, with the horses and shit?

LULU

That was my father's camp. You know they call him The Rabbi. They call my father The Rabbi.

Lulu's eyes are moist.

BALLARD

Yeah? Who calls him The Rabbi?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LULU

The street people. His name is Joe. He means something to them. He's trying to—to—

BALLARD

To what?

LULU

Remind them that they are people.

RC has moved to a bar stool to talk to Pamela; pages are piled on his abandoned table.

LULU (CONT'D)

I only found him a few weeks ago.

BALLARD

What do you mean? I thought he was looking for you?

Lulu lowers her eyes.

LULU

That's a ... recent development. He kicked me out when I was a kid. Before he'd gone nuts. I was a handful. I guess that something about you made him think you could find me. I wonder what.

BALLARD

He tested me. To see if I was worth hiring. Who does that?

LULU

What do you mean?

BALLARD

They ripped off my golf clubs and were selling them in some makeshift garage sale under the overpass over by The Tower. Once I'd driven by and noticed the clubs there, I'd passed the test, and he wanted to hire me to find you.

LULU

Yeah, that's weird.

BALLARD

Tell me about it.

Lulu shifts her weight. Uncomfortable.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LULU

He'd disappeared. Walked out of his halfway house and hopped a bus, or a train, or hitched a ride. And landed here.

BALLARD

So, what are you going to do? Try to get him to go back?

LULU

He's not going back.

Lulu begins to cry.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE ROOF OF THE RABBI'S LAB - NIGHT

During Lulu's V.O. we see The Rabbi through the prism of Lulu's binoculars: pacing back and forth, raging at the moon, shaking his fists at The Tower which looms above him.

LULU (V.O.)

I've talked to a few of his people. He has visions. He gives speeches. Horrific, apocalyptic sermons. And he chants, day and night. And he—he—experiments.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR - NIGHT

BALLARD

Uh-huh. What kinds of experiments?

LULU

Well. The Rabbi can make things. Like, animate them.

BALLARD

The Rabbi's a cartoonist?

LULU

No, animate them. Inspire. Bring to life things that are not alive.

BALLARD

Interesting.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR - NIGHT

RC downs the whiskey. Bows his head while he twirls the empty shot glass in the fingers of his right hand. There is an occasional clink when his platinum skull ring brushes the twirling glass. His sketched pages ruffle on the table behind him.

He starts tossing the shot glass up and down. Pamela walks over. Snatches the glass in mid-air.

PAMELA

I've seen that look, RC Take that  
shit outside if you want to throw  
things like a little boy.

RC focuses on her; seems to chill out. Notices her tarot spread on the bar.

RC

You think the cards will bring him  
back? Show you where he is?

PAMELA

You're going to make me wish I'd  
never told you anything.

RC

What? I'm not being a dick. Just  
trying to understand.

Pamela pours some pineapple juice into a goblet; takes a sip.

PAMELA

It's not about him. That's not  
what I'm looking for. I'm ... I'm  
just worried. About what I'm  
getting. In the cards. I don't  
know if I'm even doing it right,  
but I keep getting this awful  
result. EVERY time. The fuckin  
Tower.

The ceiling-mounted TV above the register behind her shows a reporter in front of a sludgy river. Something (a pack of dogs?) moves swiftly behind her. The onscreen stream cuts to footage of the horses and visored riders storming through the homeless encampment. Horses bolting around chain-link cages housing rusted equipment while their black-visored riders swing truncheons at the heads of scurrying people.

RC

You see this shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

Go back to work, RC.

RC

Sure. Why not.

He goes back to his table. Rifles through the stack of sketches; looking for something but not finding it.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR - NIGHT

Back to Ballard and Lulu in their booth of ancient cracked red leather.

BALLARD

You can't be serious.

LULU

I am. It's the freakiest thing  
I've ever seen! And you've seen  
it, too.

BALLARD

What?

LULU

That hooded thing in the doorway  
behind my dad when you were there?

BALLARD

How do you know about that?

LULU

I was there. Across the street.

BALLARD

In the beater Mustang.

LULU

My home on wheels.

BALLARD

Shit. No fucking way. That was  
just a big homeless dude wearing a  
hood or something.

LULU

Is that what you thought it was?  
You knew. You sensed it. My dad  
made that ... thing.

Her eyes glisten.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALLARD

But ... how?

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE ROOF OF THE RABBI'S LAB - NIGHT

During Lulu's V.O. we see more of The Rabbi, again through Lulu's binoculars: he gazes down on his flock, six floors below. He studies the leather-bound book. The golem moves in shadow behind him.

LULU (V.O.)

He's been studying for years.  
Books, legends, myths,  
incantations, purifications. So  
much ... searching ... for  
something never found. It drove  
him mad. Until—

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR - NIGHT

Lulu trails off, as if dizzy; grabs Ballard's arm for support.

BALLARD

Until what?

LULU

Until here. And until now. His  
people believe he was sent to  
them, to this place, to this now.  
They need him.

Ballard looks lost in thought.

BALLARD

That's why it worked. This time.  
Here and now.

LULU

What do you mean?

BALLARD

Maybe it worked because they  
needed it to work.

Lulu looks hard at Ballard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LULU

Maybe. Maybe.

BALLARD

So ... what did you want to  
'counter-hire' me to do, exactly?

Lulu bites her thumbnail, appears unnerved.

LULU

I don't know, exactly. I need  
help. I need to make sure he's not  
in any danger. I need to see if I  
can help him.

BALLARD

Then you should just go talk to  
him.

LULU

I can't. Not after everything. I  
said some horrible things, did  
some horrible things. I just need  
to make sure he's OK.

BALLARD

Listen, Lulu.

Lulu nods her head; catches a quick glimpse of the bear  
canoeing blithely down the river in the beer company  
tableau behind the bar.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

What you're suggesting? It's not  
what I do. I find people, mainly.  
You already know where your father  
is. You need to talk to him. You  
may need a counselor or a social  
worker but you do not need me.

Lulu bites her nails again; sighs.

LULU

I know. I guess you think it's  
stupid. But he's my dad!

She stands, gulps down her beer. Gives Ballard a little  
wave; starts to wobble out on her four-inch wedges.

LULU (CONT'D)

Thanks, anyway. Bye, Ballard. OK,  
here goes nothing!



EXT. - AN HOUR LATER - OUTSIDE THE RABBI'S FACTORY

Lulu pauses. Her brows knit. She presses her cheek against the cool, rough, chipped concrete of a supporting column. She emerges from her hiding place in the shadows beneath the overpass.

She moves surely to the doors marked HIGH VOLTAGE and yanks one of them open; it gives a rusty metallic groan and yields to her. She moves inside.

INT. - THE RABBI'S FACTORY

She pulls the door shut behind her and lets her eyes adjust to the crepuscule of the crumbling factory. She starts climbing the rickety metal stairs.

She stops now and then and looks down. Sees people talking softly, or playing music, or staring off into space, huddled in blankets. She gets to the top floor, where she finds her father, The Rabbi, ministering to a hooded figure laid out on the two metal desks pushed together to form a slab.

THE RABBI

Lulu.

His back is to her; his voice a whisper.

LULU

Yes, father. It's me.

She crosses the floor and they hug. He puts his hands on the sides of her face; gazes at her.

THE RABBI

Oh, my daughter. Come, let me show you.

Lulu hangs onto his sleeve like a little girl. He pulls the hood back on the golem and she gasps.

CUT TO:

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE RABBI'S LAB

Lulu climbs into the sleeping bag she's lugged up the stairs from her Mustang. The Rabbi walks over to her. Bends down and touches her cheek with his cracked and muddied fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LULU

Daddy, what if ... will it always  
do what you say?

THE RABBI

Hush, my child. Leave all that to  
me.

Herman and Luisa warm their hands over a hibachi on the  
other side of the attic. The Rabbi leans closer to Lulu  
and lowers his voice.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Only one thing: you must never  
tell anyone about this, my  
daughter. No one outside must EVER  
know. People would not understand  
and I could not control what they  
might do. To the golem. To us.

Lulu nods at him. Bites her lower lip.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Promise me, my daughter.

LULU

I promise.

THE RABBI

Good. It's such a gift to see you,  
Lulu. I thought I might never—

Lulu puts her arms around his neck.

LULU

I know, daddy. I'm here now. And I  
love you.

The Rabbi kisses her on her forehead, smooths out her  
sleeping bag.

THE RABBI

Good night, my daughter.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE ROOF OF THE RABBI'S LAB

The Rabbi thumbs through his leather-bound book. Looks  
skyward at The Tower: fires rage and flames lick out into  
the night from several of the 500 floors. The first drops  
of rain plop onto the pages of his book.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE RABBI'S LAB

Lulu's not sleeping. She stares through a window at The Tower. She sees rain, she sees the flames; she sees her father in the rain. She sees Herman and Luisa watching The Rabbi, too. She bites her lower lip harder and still does not sleep.

INT. - TWO DAYS LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR - MORNING

Ballard and Pamela at the bar; Pamela's cards spread out in front of her.

BALLARD

He used to fucking mean something.  
He used to roar. Now he tweets.

PAMELA

Not anymore.

BALLARD

What do you mean? Wasn't he just crowing about his million followers or some bullshit?

PAMELA

He gave that up a month ago, Ballard. Now he just works. Maniacally. He's in pain—it's weird. The guy can't even sleep. Something's got him and he can't shake it.

BALLARD

Yeah? I hadn't noticed. Whatever.

PAMELA

It's almost like it's personal with you. Like he's disappointed you, personally.

BALLARD

OK, OK. Who am I to sling shit at RC Warren?

Ballard holds his palms up to her in mock surrender. She slaps his palms and they laugh.

PAMELA

It's a free country, last time I checked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He nods at her cards.

BALLARD

Anybody paying you for that yet?

PAMELA

Not so you'd notice.

They clink shot glasses, down their tequila. On the ceiling mounted TV behind the bar: a shutdown of the 405 at Hawthorne from the election riots in the South Bay, kids throwing bottles; a pack of dogs leaps a concrete berm.

EXT. - THAT SAME MORNING - PARKING LOT OF THE KITTY KAT

Bright early morning light as RC makes his way across the gravel parking lot in his huaraches. He carries a scuffed-up leather portfolio and a silver Macbook. He wears a stained terrycloth bathrobe over grubby cargo shorts and a Pendleton wool shirt.

The motor court comprises: a 30-odd room motel, the Kitty Kat bar, and a convenience store/giftshop. They're all connected via a series of open-air walkways; all share the same loose-gravel parking lot.

BRAD (big, blond, late 20s, bristly porn 'stache) and LEON (dark, weasel-like, with a full sleeve'o'tats) roll out of a Ford F-150. Brad rushes to the door and holds it open for RC with mock deference.

BRAD

Professor. Please, after you.

RC musters a grunt of appreciation and precedes the two men into the welcoming gloom of the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE KITTY KAT BAR

RC nods at Pamela; ignores Ballard. Sits in a corner booth with his back to them and stares at a ceiling-mounted TV while his laptop boots.

Brad and Leon take seats at the bar on either side of Ballard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pamela walks across the lumpy linoleum floor of the bar carrying a bottle of vodka, a vial of hot sauce, tomato juice in a can, a pepper-grinder, and a little bowl of lime wedges. She knows RC's morning routine: he likes to make his own.

PAMELA

Morning, RC.

RC

Ms. Flournoy.

PAMELA

Let me know if you want to eat.

RC nods and starts pounding keys on his laptop. He ends each burst of typing with a little flourish of his right wrist and fingers, as if he's just whipped off a thorny bit of Chopin.

At the bar, Ballard twists on his stool and stares down at Pamela's cards. She pulls draft beers for Brad and Leon. Then returns to her cards: turns over The Tower and mutters something to herself.

BALLARD

What's that?

BRAD

So, Ballard. You're a private dick we heard.

LEON

A gumshoe.

BALLARD

Gumshoe? Really, dude?

He rolls his eyes at Pamela, trying to get her attention, but she's still frowning at The Tower card.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

That's right, guys. I don't just manage the fuckin convenience store in the motor court.

LEON

So, were you a cop or something.

BALLARD

I took a correspondence course.

BRAD

No shit?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BALLARD

Hey, it's a living. Or part of one, in my case.

BRAD

You ever, like, had anything exciting happen?

BALLARD

I just find people. Boring phone and internet crap, mainly.

BRAD

Well, that's no fun.

BALLARD

It's work, you know. You do what you can.

BRAD

True that, my brother!

LEON

Not like we got any fuckin work.

Ballard heads for the convenience store—time to open up. Pamela notices that RC is holding his left hand straight up in the air, as if waiting to be called on in class. She heads over to him. He bellows as she approaches.

RC

Eggs over hard. Sausage links burnt. Room 16's tab, s'il vous plait.

PAMELA

The usual. And you haven't changed rooms. Got it.

RC

What do the cards say today?

PAMELA

Depends on who they're talking to, RC. You finally ready for a reading? Friends and family rate, since I'm still an apprentice.

RC

Meaning, free?

PAMELA

Meaning free.

RC rubs the silver stubble on his chin, lost in thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RC

What do you suppose really  
matters?

PAMELA

What do you mean? Right now?

RC

Sure. Yes. Right at this moment.

PAMELA

Getting your order in. Those eggs  
and links aren't gonna cook  
themselves.

She walks away just as Lulu teeters into the bar on her  
platform heels. The two women size each other up.

LULU

Ballard?

Pamela jerks her thumb toward the convenience store then  
disappears through the kitchen door behind the bar. Lulu  
turns a corner, heading for Ballard.

RC stops typing and pulls sheets of graphite-smudged  
drawing paper out of his leather satchel. Brad and Leon  
nurse their beers at the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE CONVENIENCE STORE

Ballard's behind the counter, restocking Hostess fruit  
pies. Sensing someone, he turns.

BALLARD

Hey! I was just thinking about  
you—

LULU

Stay there, Ballard. Just don't  
come any closer.

Lulu's eyes are glassy; her voice eerily commanding.  
Ballard stops in his tracks: she's aiming a pistol at his  
head.

BALLARD

Lulu. What are you—

LULU

Listen to me. Shut up. Please. I'm  
sorry. I shouldn't have told you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALLARD

What do you—

It's the way she cocks the gun that makes him stop. The way she sights him down the barrel. The way she holds the gun so still. She exhales slowly then.

LULU

(whispering, to  
herself)

Fuck. I'll make this right, Daddy.  
I love you, Daddy.

She pulls the trigger.

CUT TO:

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE KITTY KAT BAR

In the bar we hear the sound of the shot, and then the sounds of sheets of glass hitting the floor. RC leaps up from his booth, scattering drawings everywhere. Pamela bolts through the door to the kitchen. The two of them sprint for the convenience store. Brad and Leon follow.

CUT TO:

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE CONVENIENCE STORE

Ballard stands agape behind the counter. Lulu lies on her back, bloodied in the ruins of the ice cream display freezer.

BRAD

Jesus fucking christ.

LEON

Fuck, Ballard. You fucking took  
her out, dude.

BALLARD

I ... I ... didn't do ...  
anything.

Pamela reaches him, helps him sit down on a stool. RC dials 9-1-1.

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Two FANBOYS have cornered RC at his table. Pascal and FIELDS (early 30's, earnest, buzzcut), her partner, are at the bar questioning Pamela.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Ballard sits, for the moment by himself, a blood pressure cuff gripping his bicep.

FANBOY #1

Will you be at Comic-Con this year? Everyone's wondering!

RC

What?

FANBOY #1

San Diego. You going to the Con this year?

RC

Are you fucking kidding me? Do you know what just—

FANBOY #2

Yeah, people are wondering if you'll have an announcement, or maybe some limited edition prints, or be on a panel ... or something.

RC

No, I will not be attending any more comic book conventions. For the rest of my life, if there is a God in heaven.

FANBOY #1

Did you hate the movie? We all did; it was a bastardization of your—

FANBOY #2

Yeah, we hated it! But you never really said. You hated it, right?

RC

What?

Clearly, they are not listening to him.

RC (CONT'D)

(to himself)

There is not enough whiskey in the world ...

He sees that Pamela is gesturing to him and that the two detectives are looking his way.

RC (CONT'D)

It's been great. Gotta go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FANBOY #1

People say you've quit. That  
you'll never do anything else.

FANBOY #2

That you can just hole up with  
your movie money and say fuck-all  
to the fans.

RC gets to his feet and looks at them, closely, for the first time. They're both holding their breath, waiting on his words. RC sighs; relents. Leon, on his way back from the head, lurks in the background for a moment.

RC

I'm working. I've gone back to an  
earlier, unfinished story,  
actually. Maybe I can finish it  
this time.

The two fanboys beam and high-five each other.

FANBOY #2

I knew it!

FANBOY #1

I'll bet it's GORGON!

FANBOY #2

No, way. It's gotta be HERMES IN  
EXILE!

But RC's already at the bar, talking to the two  
detectives.

FANBOY #1

Dude! Anything that guy would  
churn out, after all these years  
... man, it'd be gold!

They head for the door. Leon strokes his soul-patch, then  
rejoins Brad at the bar.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Pascal, Fields, and RC sit down at a table.

PASCAL

Mr. Warren. You're a professor?

RC looks puzzled; then realizes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RC

No, some guys here call me that.  
I'm an artist.

FIELDS

You're the graphic novelist,  
right?

PASCAL

So, Mr. Warren. What happened?

RC

I was in here. I heard a gunshot.  
Then a crash. I ran into the  
store. She was lying in the glass.  
Ballard was behind the counter,  
stupefied.

PASCAL

You heard a gunshot ... and then a  
crash. Right?

RC

Yes. Glass shattering.

FIELDS

You make comics, right?

PASCAL

Did you see the victim come into  
the bar?

RC

Lulu? No. My back was to the door.  
And I was thinking. Working.

FIELDS

On a comic?

Pascal gives Fields a look.

PASCAL

Tell me about Lulu, Mr. Warren.

RC

Don't know her. She was in talking  
to Ballard once or twice, I think.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Two tables over, a MEDIC (20's, Asian, spiky hair) has  
returned to Ballard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pamela hands Ballard a shot and touches the side of his face with the tips of her lime green fingernails.

MEDIC

Prolly not a great idea just yet.  
Better stick with water.

He removes the blood pressure cuff and heads for the door. Ballard downs the shot in one gulp.

BALLARD

Pamela, I have no idea what happened. She pulled the trigger. The gun was three feet from my head.

PAMELA

Shhh, honey. It doesn't matter right now.

BALLARD

She's dead? Lulu?

PAMELA

Yeah, hon. She's dead.

Ballard lowers his chin to the table; rocks his forehead against the cool formica; closes his eyes; exhales.

BALLARD

What do you think happened? What could have happened?

Pamela bites her lower lip in thought; traces slow figure-8s in the condensation on the table.

PAMELA

She could have shot, missed, and been blown back into the case by the recoil. Freaky, I know. But possible.

Ballard raises his head. Looks at her: skeptical.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Or. I overheard the uniformed cops say before they left that someone in the motel had heard a car peel out of the lot right around that time. So I guess ... maybe someone could have knocked Lulu back into the case and was gettin out of Dodge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BALLARD

Someone saved my life, and then  
split. I don't know. I just don't  
know. Why would she want to kill  
me?

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

RC's alone in the bar. He pushes a plate of half-eaten  
eggs and links away and takes up his sketchbook. The  
pages that are strewn across the table and benches of his  
booth are all of one young woman; she is labelled ATHENA  
in some of the drawings.

Pamela comes in through a swinging door into the  
stockroom, carrying a jar of olives and a big tin of  
salted peanuts. She sets them down on the bar and heads  
over to RC.

PAMELA

Done?

RC

Please.

She fingers through the drawings.

PAMELA

Is this how you do it? Draw the  
same person over and over again?

RC

At first. But not usually this  
much, this late in the game. Truth  
is, I don't know what I'm doing  
with her.

RC's lost in thought for a minute, then resumes.

RC (CONT'D)

And I don't know what her story  
is. It won't come to me. She won't  
get out of my head but I can't  
make head nor tail out of ... what  
to do with her.

Pamela keeps sorting through the pages.

RC (CONT'D)

And I can't stop. Can't sleep.  
It's been weeks now. I find myself  
in skeevy alleys at dawn talking  
to strangers about her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RC's laugh is bitter, desperate. His pencil begins to move across a new page—he seems unaware of this.

RC (CONT'D)

Usually, I have an idea. I steal from here and there. Cobble things together, make some adjustments, revise until it breathes, and, presto!, you have a character.

PAMELA

(only half-listening;  
still browsing)

Ummm ...

RC

But this one. It's like she comes to me, and I can see her clearly, and I've never seen anything more clearly in my fuckin life, and then she's gone. Like. Like when you pick up some ghost radio station in the middle of the desert and you hear it strong and true for a while and then it just vanishes, as if it never even existed.

RC's pencil continues to move across the page. Pamela continues to browse. A look of pain crosses RC's face.

RC (CONT'D)

And I never know when, or if, she will return. So I draw as quickly as I can, hoping to capture her, hoping to capture the light she is bathed in ... and then I work from memory. Pulling back what bits of her that I can. And I fuckin pray she comes back. What if she doesn't come back?

RC's frantic. Pamela looks up at him. Smiles. Picks up his plate. Tries to shift the mood.

PAMELA

She's so many things. So many moods. Maybe she doesn't know what she wants to be quite yet. So, how could you know?

RC stares at her as if she's sprouted a second head. Pamela notices the huge circles under his eyes, his bitten-to-the-nub fingernails.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAMELA (CONT'D)

You know, I was talking to those fans of yours earlier. They gave me quite an education. They said that after the movie came out, you could have just churned out book after book, the continuing adventures of whatever, and laughed all the way to the bank.

RC's staring up at her; his pencil continues to move across the page.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

But you didn't do that. You fell off the grid. Holed up here. And now you're killing yourself trying to get this right.

We see the sketch that RC's pencil has been making: Athena in the foreground, a large shadowy figure hulks behind her.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Why? Why tell this story, which obviously does not yet want to be told, instead of just cash in?

At first RC says nothing. His pencil stops; it shakes in his fingers, just above the surface of the paper. There are tears rolling down his cheeks, and they plop onto the paper in one or two spots.

RC

I've tried. But I can't ... I can't do anything else.

EXT. - THE NEXT DAY - MORNING - OUTSIDE THE TOWER

Pascal and Fields ride a tram. The Tower rises 500 storeys above them - miles and miles of sheer black glass.

PASCAL

I hate this fuckin place.

FIELDS

Yes. You've said. Several times.

PASCAL

Is that Fields bringin the snark on a Tuesday morning? There's hope for you yet, son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pascal's got a toothache and she grimaces every time the tram bounces over a speed-bump in the unending parking lot. She rubs her jaw.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

So, run this for me.

Fields doesn't even have to look at his notes.

FIELDS

Nine burglaries in the past two weeks. By someone - or something - described as 8-10 feet tall and approximately 400 pounds. Wears a hooded robe. Drips muddy water. Why don't you have that looked at?

Pascal ignores him.

PASCAL

And no one hurt until this last one?

FIELDS

Yeah, the ninth one. Clerk freaked out, slipped, cracked his head.

PASCAL

And no miracles in which the hulk got shoved into a freezer case and vanquished?

FIELDS

Nice. No. And by the way, the boys are starting to call him The Hood. Not The Hulk.

PASCAL

What fuckin ever. The Hood. Goodie.

They jump off the tram and walk into the main entrance of The Tower. Stare at row upon row of express elevators. They enter one.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE TOWER - EXPRESS ELEVATOR

Pascal and Fields ride up 381 floors in a flash. The elevator shoots up the side of the building into the clouds. Pascal grips the rail, turns gray, and stares at her shoes.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PASCAL  
I hate this fuckin place.

FIELDS  
Hey, look. You can see Catalina!

PASCAL  
And I fuckin hate you even more.

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE TOWER - A MINI-MART -  
GRAINY BLACK AND WHITE FOOTAGE ON A VIDEO MONITOR

We see the Golem (gigantic, in a hooded robe) holding out a sack, trick-or-treat-style. There's a pool of dark liquid at its feet. The clerk behind the register reaches for something, slips, bangs his head on the counter and disappears from view. The golem stuffs money from the cash register into his paper sack and shuffles away. While the following exchange takes place, we cut back and forth to the footage, seeing it several times in the course of the discussion.

PASCAL (V.O.)  
You got somewhere you need to be?  
That's like the eighth time you've  
checked your watch.

FIELDS (V.O.)  
It's like the ninth time we've  
watched this. We should get going  
so we can complete our canvass.  
What are you looking for?

PASCAL (V.O.)  
I'm looking to make sure the bad  
guy didn't have his name and  
address written on his hood,  
douchebag; what are you looking  
for?

We hear a giggle.

CUT TO:

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE TOWER - A MINI-MART

The giggler is a teenaged ASSISTANT MAANGER with a mohawk. She stops laughing when Pascal gives her a look.

PASCAL  
This the only camera?

The girl nods. Pascal looks at Fields.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASCAL (CONT'D)

What do you make of this?

Back over to the girl.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

What was the kid reaching for?

ASSISTANT MANAGER

I think a baseball bat. They tell us not to do if anything if we're getting robbed, but Bobby has a bat behind the smokes. I think he was going for that.

PASCAL

OK.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Bobby's an idiot.

PASCAL

Fields. What do you think?

FIELDS

Yes, I'm sure Bobby's an idiot. And the Hood's enormous. Perhaps we could move on?

PASCAL

(to the girl)

What about this dark stuff on the ground?

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Ummm, what? Oh, yeah. That. Muddy water. I had to mop it up when I came in for my shift.

PASCAL

OK, thanks. You'll send us the footage, like we discussed?

The girl smiles and waves her smartphone.

ASSISTANT MANAGER

Already sent!

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE TOWER - OUTSIDE THE MINI-MART

Fields steers Pascal out of the mini-mart onto the 381st floor. Pascal goes grey as she wobbles along the row of shopfronts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She keeps her eyes fixed: not looking out at the sky nor down through the atria which provide views to The Tower lobby thousands of feet below.

PASCAL  
Where's the next one?

FIELDS  
Up on 433. Higher and  
higher—let's go!

Pascal groans. Across from them a pack of huge wild dogs races past, nearly silent but for their huffing. One of them trails blood from a forepaw.

PASCAL  
Seriously? Here too with those  
fuckers?

CUT TO:

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE TOWER

Blackie pushes them harder and harder. His limp is more perceptible. Gorgon's near the rear of the pack, loping effortlessly. His eyes scan everything. He zeroes in on Blackie's blood-caked paw.

BLACKIE  
Train!

The pack shifts as one dog and moves to the other side of the promenade without breaking stride.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Intercut with scenes of Pascal and Fields investigating the other robberies in The Tower (talking to witnesses, looking at footage, riding on trams to their next stop, Pascal white-knuckling in elevators or puking into planters), is a view of the 'beta' version of The Kitty Kat bar, on the 231st floor of The Tower. The camera inches closer during each shot, and each time we return to it after having seen Pascal and Fields out on their rounds, the camera is just a little bit closer to the bar.

We see the bar, the motel, the convenience store, the gravel parking lot; and everything just gets more 'real' the closer we get.

END MONTAGE

EXT. - THAT AFTERNOON - OUTSIDE THE TOWER - ON A TRAM

FIELDS

You OK?

PASCAL

I have never needed a drink more than I need one right now. Have we got anything.

Fields flips through his notebook.

FIELDS

All between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. All after cash. Same giant hooded hulking dude. Same dripping muddy water. No one saw his face. No one remembers him speaking. He just held out his bag and they filled it with money. It had seemed to all of them the prudent thing to do at that juncture.

Pascal shakes her head. Rubs her jaw where her tooth aches.

FIELDS (CONT'D)

Really? They're called dentists, Pascal. Go to one.

INT. - THAT AFTERNOON - THE TOWER - OUTSIDE THE KITTY KAT BAR

We return to the shot of the Kitty Kat bar from the montage: the camera has inched closer and it continues to do so. Suddenly, Blackie and his pack come into the shot and stop cold in front of the bar. The camera's still; holds for a beat.

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR - AN OFFICE

Pamela unlocks a cabinet. Stands back so that Fields and Pascal can see. Fields pulls out a keyboard, blows some dust off, and bangs on it to boot up the security system.

FIELDS

It's lucky for us that you scotch-taped the passwords to your video security system on the inside of this cabinet that houses your video security system.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

Not my fuckin system, Jack. Don't know who put it in; don't know if anyone's ever looked at it. Before my time.

Pamela heads back into the bar. Fields hits a few more keys and we cut to full-color footage from the convenience store from the day before.

CUT TO:

INT. - SECURITY FOOTAGE - CONVENIENCE STORE

Ballard stocking shelves. Lulu walks in. He turns and they speak. She pulls a gun. More talking. Then Lulu flies sideways, about a foot off the ground, across the store, ending up in a pool of shattered glass and iced confections. This replays once or twice.

PASCAL (V.O.)

They talk. We need to know what she said to him.

FIELDS (V.O.)

He didn't remember much yesterday.

PASCAL (V.O.)

Hold up. Stop. Rewind to just before she gets airborne.

The footage rewinds; stops.

PASCAL (V.O.)

Yeah. Now slow it down as slow as it will go.

The footage moves forward in super slo-mo.

PASCAL (V.O.)

Stop. There. Right fuckin there. See it.

We hear her tapping the glass of the monitor while we see Ballard and Lulu frozen on-screen.

FIELDS (V.O.)

That flicker?

PASCAL (V.O.)

Yeah. What is that?

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR - AN OFFICE

Pascal holds a glass of ice up to her jaw.

PASCAL

I gotta get something to put in  
this besides fuckin ice.

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Ballard sits alone at a table, swirling cubes in a  
highball glass. Leon's one table over, watching one of  
the ceiling-mounted TV's. RC walks up to Ballard.

RC

You alright?

BALLARD

Yeah. Thanks.

There's an awkward silence between them. RC gets ready to  
move off.

RC

Well, that's—

BALLARD

I hear you're working on  
something.

RC turns back, then sits down at the table.

RC

Yeah. Trying to.

He pulls an old-school reporter's notebook from his hip  
pocket.

RC (CONT'D)

Just words today. Left the art in  
my room.

RC leans forward.

RC (CONT'D)

What the hell do you think  
happened yesterday?

Ballard thinks. Stares at a ceiling-mounted TV. We go  
into the TV stream.

CUT TO:

EXT. - PUGET SOUND - DAY

A huge, building-sized creature emerges from the black water. Stands on its hind legs, seawater pouring off its scaly flanks. It is encircled by a flotilla of small boats. A helicopter buzzes overhead.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Ballard shakes his head sadly.

BALLARD

I wish I could tell you, man.

Pascal walks up.

PASCAL

She ever mention having a gun?

Pascal jerks her head at RC, who moves over to a neighboring table and pulls out his notebook. Leon downs his drink and heads for the door.

BALLARD

No, she didn't.

Pascal's chewing on a red plastic swizzle stick, presumably to ease the pain in her tooth.

PASCAL

What was her story, Lulu? Junkie?  
Nut-job?

BALLARD

Look. I only met her the one time.  
A couple of weeks ago. Right here.

PASCAL

Yes? And?

BALLARD

Her father was a street preacher  
called The Rabbi. The Rabbi had  
tried to hire me to find  
her—that's another story. Lulu  
found out about that and came to  
see me.

PASCAL

She live on the street, too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALLARD

She said not, but I'm not sure.  
She might've been sleeping in her  
car.

PASCAL

She ever mention guns, or seem  
like the violent type?

BALLARD

No. Not till yesterday.

PASCAL

Any idea where she got the gun?

BALLARD

Uhh ... anywhere?

Ballard looks over to the bar; sees RC and Pamela in an  
intense conversation.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

She never asked me for money.  
Before she tried to shoot me. Is  
that weird?

PASCAL

Not if she wasn't trying to rob  
you. You said she said 'I'm  
sorry.' What else did she say? We  
watched the tape. It looked like  
she might've said something more.

BALLARD

There's a tape? Does it show what  
happened?

PASCAL

No. So what else did she say?

BALLARD

Shit. She said that she  
shouldn't've told me. That she had  
to make something right.

PASCAL

She shouldn't've have told you  
what?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

BALLARD

I've been thinking about it a lot. I think it may have something to do with her father and that place under the overpass, that abandoned factory place where the homeless people live that was raided. You know, the cops on horses.

PASCAL

What does her father have to do with that?

BALLARD

That's his place. Where he lives with his ... his congregation, his flock. That's where I first saw him, when he tried to hire me.

PASCAL

Wait. What? Hire you to do what?

BALLARD

Find his daughter. I'm a P.I.

PASCAL

Ah, so you're an investigator, Mr. Ballard. That's why this 'Rabbi' tried to hire you.

Ballard holds his hands up; self-deprecates.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

And Lulu tracked you down here a couple of weeks ago to talk about ... what?

BALLARD

She wanted help. She wanted someone to ... intercede for her with her father. She'd been watching him from afar. I gather they'd had some issues.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Fields pulls up a chair opposite RC Just looks at him for a few seconds.

RC

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIELDS

I'm sorry, Mr. Warren. It's just that. Well. We're having some issues with the case. We don't see this very often. It's not ... coherent.

RC

The facts don't fit.

FIELDS

Yes, exactly. The facts don't fit. So, I was wondering. Because of what you do, and all. What do you think could have happened?

RC

You guys that desperate already?

FIELDS

No, no. We'll be continuing to do what we do. I just thought. In addition. You are here, after all, and I just wondered if you had thought about—

RC

What I do is pre- or maybe post-rational, Detective. It's not so much about thought.

FIELDS

Good, that's good. Then let me rephrase: what do you imagine might have happened?

RC

Fair enough. One thing did occur to me. Though I can't imagine it would be of any earthly use to anyone.

FIELDS

Yes?

RC

Parallel worlds. Other universes, or timelines. A brief union between two planes of existence, an intersection of sorts which produced either a visitor or some sort of event which saved Ballard from the bullet in that gun. That's what occurred to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FIELDS

That's exactly the kind of thing I  
was looking for!

RC

Uh, OK. Glad to be of help.

Fields leaps up out of his chair, barely able to contain  
himself.

FIELDS

Thank you, Mr. Warren! Thank you  
very much!

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Pamela's behind the bar, working with her tarot cards.  
Ballard sits on a stool at the bar, transfixed by the  
beer company logo'ed tableau featuring the oblivious  
canoeing bear and the icy blue waterfall.

PAMELA

How about some food?

Ballard snaps out of his reverie.

BALLARD

God, I love that thing. You know I  
never eat here.

PAMELA

C'mon, it's not that bad. There's  
killer chili today.

BALLARD

Yeah? Is the can it came out of  
particularly noteworthy?

PAMELA

No, asshole. I made it.

BALLARD

Oh yeah? OK, maybe later. I'd like  
that.

He watches her as she goes back to her cards.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

I think I need to confess  
something. To you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She pauses. Holds a card in mid-air. Then drops it into position 10: The Tower.

PAMELA

Fuck! Again? Sorry, what did you say?

BALLARD

I know you were married.

PAMELA

Yeah? Well, you're the detective.

BALLARD

And. I met him. Ben.

PAMELA

What the hell, Ballard!

BALLARD

I'm sorry. I should have told you. I had to know what kind of an asshole would do that.

PAMELA

Do what?

BALLARD

Leave you.

PAMELA

Uh-huh. How do you know he was the asshole?

BALLARD

Believe me: he's the asshole.

PAMELA

So, what did you learn?

BALLARD

Not much ... Pammie.

Pamela groans.

PAMELA

Great. Wonderful. What else?

BALLARD

Nothing, really. He spooks pretty easy.

PAMELA

Christ, did you lean on him, Ballard?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BALLARD

No, no, just a friendly conversation.

PAMELA

Right. OK. As this is not my favorite topic, perhaps we could drop it now?

BALLARD

Sure. Pamela, I'm sorry. For what you had to go through. With him. I don't know what else to say.

Pamela gives him an arched eyebrow, then softens and chuckles. She gathers her cards, wraps them in a piece of black silk, and stows them in the front pocket of the black linen apron she wears around her waist.

PAMELA

Well, that's more than he said.

INT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - THE COZY INN (ATTACHED TO THE KITTY KAT BAR) - A CORRIDOR

Leon walks down a hallway, ducks around a corner. Stands in front of Room 16. RC's room.

He inserts a thin strip of metal into the door clasp and jiggles the handle until it gives. He enters Room 16 and closes the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE COZY INN - ROOM 16

Leon lets his eyes adjust to the gloom, then looks around.

LEON

Fuckin pig sty.

He moves to a small desk and scoops up a stack of sketches. Finds and opens the beat-up leather portfolio: there are lots of other drawings inside. He stuffs the pages in his hand into the portfolio, casts a quick eye around the room, then exits, closing the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE COZY INN - CORRIDOR

Leon has just turned on his heel to take his first step away from the door when he is suddenly airborne. He is thrown 50 feet down the hall in the blink of an eye.

A MAID (50's, Hispanic, wearing earbuds) pushing her cleaning cart exits a room just in time to see Leon carom off a vending machine. He lies broken and bloodied in a pool of caramel-colored syrup.

MAID

Dios mio!

CUT TO:

EXT. - 15 MINUTES LATER - PARKING LOT OF THE KITTY KAT

Pascal and Fields crunch gravel furiously as they burst out of the bar and head for the motel.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE COZY INN - CORRIDOR

Two uniformed cops talk to the maid. Pascal and Fields race out of the stairwell.

EMTs tend to Leon, who still clutches RC's portfolio in a death-grip across his chest. Fields heads for the maid; Pascal checks out the shattered vending machine, whistles to herself, and then squats to talk to Leon.

PASCAL

Leon, right?

He's got shards of glass in his hair and looks pretty out of it.

LEON

Yeah, that's right.

PASCAL

What happened here, Leon?

LEON

Fuck if I know, lady. I was just. I was just walkin. And then I was flyin. Crashed into this fuckin thing.

The EMTs raise him and ease him onto a gurney. Leon groans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASCAL

Here, let me take that. What are you doing with it, anyway? Doesn't this belong to that artist, RC, in the bar?

Leon looks at the satchel as if seeing it for the first time.

LEON

Shit, what am I doing with this?

He looks up at her, then at the medics.

LEON (CONT'D)

Is this yours, guys?

He releases his grip and lets Pascal take RC's satchel from him. Fields strolls over as Leon is wheeled away.

FIELDS

Maid just saw this guy crashing into the vending machine. Nothing else. She was inside cleaning a room and had just poked her head out.

Pascal checks the corners and walls of the corridors.

PASCAL

Shit. No cameras.

She smacks RC's portfolio.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

Our friend Leon had this. Belongs to that artist. But Leon had no idea how it got into his hands or how he ended up face-first into a Coke machine.

INT. - THE NEXT DAY - EARLY MORNING - THE RABBI'S LAB

The golem sits on the 2 pushed-together tanker desks.

GOLEM

Father.

THE RABBI

Yes, my son.

GOLEM

You have a daughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Rabbi jerks his head up from his leather-bound book. Inspects the smooth clay features of the golem. He shakes his head slowly.

GOLEM (CONT'D)

No, father. I heard people talking about her. Your daughter. What is her name?

THE RABBI

Her name is ... Lulu.

GOLEM

Lulu. Then, Lulu is my sister.

THE RABBI

No, it's not like that. It's—

A smile spreads over the golem's face.

GOLEM

My sister!

THE RABBI

Please. You must rest. Lie back.

As the golem lies back, The Rabbi covers him with a grimy Navajo-style blanket.

GOLEM

(whispering to  
himself)

My sister.

The golem closes its eyes and sleeps. The Rabbi wanders over to a skylight and through its broken panes sees the fires raging on some of the upper levels of The Tower. Luisa appears at his side. She takes the old man's hand. He looks at her.

THE RABBI

Lulu?

LUISA

No one seen her. You rest ahora.

She tries to steer him away but is unable to budge him. He clutches at his heart.



INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Pamela's alone, flipping cards. She wears earbuds. On the ceiling-mounted TV behind her, firemen from helicopters attempt to direct their hoses to a fire raging in The Tower.

RC stumbles in, looking like hell. Pamela pulls one of her earbuds out as RC collapses onto a stool.

PAMELA

Sleep?

He shakes his head. Rubs his chin's stubble. Stares at the fire on TV through red-rimmed eyes.

RC

Whiskey.

PAMELA

Cops have any idea what happened?

She pours his shot. RC shakes his head again; taps his satchel.

RC

Why would he have this? He was stealing it?

PAMELA

I guess. Unless you buy his story that he had no idea where it came from. Which I don't.

RC grunts. Downs his whiskey. Points to the glass.

RC

Again.

PAMELA

So. It was a robbery. He got caught in the act by someone. Who threw him down the hall. And left him with the evidence. Wanted him to get caught.

RC

Pretty much what I figure. But why?

PAMELA

Well, the sketches would be worth something, right? Maybe a lot?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RC

Maybe. If they could be  
authenticated. But who stopped it?

RC hits the second shot of whiskey. Pamela turns to look at the TV, which has now switched to more election riots footage from the South Bay: kids throw bottles, a body in the street; barricades; trash fires.

RC (CONT'D)

I told that cop yesterday that  
maybe Ballard's savior was from an  
alternate universe. Someone who  
had passed through ours,  
overlapped somehow at exactly the  
right time.

PAMELA

And now we have another of those  
outside your room.

She wraps her cards into their black silk and puts them away in her apron.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

I overheard Pascal and  
Fields—those  
detectives—yesterday. They were  
talking about some robberies in  
The Tower. Really weird shit, it  
sounded like. I'm just saying.  
These are strange days.

RC drums the bar with his fingers. Massages his temples.

RC

He tried to steal her. Athena. How  
dare he? How fuckin dare he?

He clinches his fists and slams them down on the bar.

RC (CONT'D)

I want to fuckin wring his neck!

He's shaking. Pamela puts her hand on his arm. The TV is back to the fire. Two people jump through black plate glass; it looks like they might be holding hands.

EXT. - THAT SAME MORNING - OUTSIDE THE TOWER

Fields walks back over from a squad car.

FIELDS

We can go up in a minute or so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASCAL

Are you sure? There's still fuckin  
fires up there, for fuck's sake.  
And someone just jumped a few  
minutes ago.

Fields shrugs. Gulps down the last of his iced coffee  
from a stainless steel thermos.

FIELDS

All the fires are  
compartmentalized. It's the way  
the place was built. They're not  
going to spread. It's almost no  
big deal. Weird, right?

PASCAL

What if someone sets a new one  
somewhere else?

FIELDS

Well, there's always that.

Pascal grumbles, tosses her cigarette aside, and grinds  
it hard enough to pull a hamstring.

FIELDS (CONT'D)

Shall we?

PASCAL

Sure. Let's absolutely ride up  
miles into the sky and quiz people  
about a giant who's now killed  
someone while flames lick at our  
heels. Seriously, why the fuck  
not?

They hop on a tram for the ride to the entrance to The  
Tower. Three more tiny figures hurtle through the cloud  
cover; one of them has flames licking at its head.

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - THE TOWER - OFFICE OF A LIQUOR  
STORE

Pascal and Fields in front of a video monitor with the  
MANAGER (40s, skinny, nervous, wearing a wife-beater tee)  
of the store.

Fields nods at the manager, who starts up the video feed.

CUT TO:

INT. - BLACK-AND-WHITE FOOTAGE FROM THE LIQUOR STORE THE NIGHT BEFORE

The golem lumbers into view. Holds out his sack for money. The CLERK (20s, full-beard and Afro, with a Che Guevara tee) pulls a sawed-off shotgun from under the counter and points it at the golem.

MANAGER (V.O.)

I swear I did not know that gun was there.

Carlos yells at the golem, who just stands there, holding out his sack for money. The golem makes a move toward Carlos. Carlos pulls the trigger. The recoil knocks Carlos back into the cigarettes behind him. The golem just stands there; then reaches one cloaked arm out toward Carlos. Who collapses.

PASCAL (V.O.)

Christ. What next?

The golem, as if on cue, slowly inches his head toward the camera. Blackness under its hood.

MANAGER (V.O.)

What is that thing?

CUT TO:

INT. - THE TOWER - OFFICE OF A LIQUOR STORE

The manager's still shaking. Pascal rubs her temples. Then gets up and wanders out of the store on the 231st floor.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE TOWER - THE PROMENADE OUTSIDE THE LIQUOR STORE

Pascal makes it to a railing. Then looks down nearly a mile to the foyer on the ground level and passes out.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE TOWER - THE PROMENADE OUTSIDE THE LIQUOR STORE

Fields has propped her up against a bench. She looks across the promenade. They're directly in front of The Tower's version of the Kitty Kat bar. She tries to clear her head. Points. Fields looks at the bar; nods enthusiastically.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIELDS

Freaky, right? I read somewhere that the guys who built all this had a vision: they were reconstructing reality. They wanted The Tower's version of things to become more real than the real things outside. Trippy, huh?

Pascal gets to her feet and wobbles off toward a bank of express elevators.

PASCAL

Just so you know, Fields. As a species, we are well and truly fucked in the ass.

INT. - AN HOUR LATER - INSIDE FIELDS'S CAR

Pascal's directing him.

PASCAL

Right around here. On the right. There's supposed to be some doors marked high-voltage; that's what we want.

FIELDS

There.

He pulls over.

CUT TO:

EXT. - OUTSIDE THE RABBI'S FACTORY

The yard sale seems to have grown even larger than before—they're even selling surfboards! Luisa tends to the cigar box; Herman sorts through videocassettes.

Fields flashes his badge to Luisa.

FIELDS

We're looking for someone called The Rabbi. Is he here?

Luisa shoots a glance at Herman. He moves to her side; touches her elbow.

PASCAL

We need to talk to The Rabbi. Right now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nothing.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

Is he here? Hello? Fuck it.

She strides over to the mighty doors and puts her weight into pulling one of them open.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE RABBI'S FACTORY

Pascal and Fields survey the encampment: sleeping bags, piles of stuff, clothes hanging on lines strung between the chain-link fences which hem in the ancient rusted machinery. But no people. They find the bank of metal stairs bolted to the side of the building and start to climb. As they reach the top:

PASCAL

Sixth floor. Women's lingerie!

Fields looks puzzled; he follows her onto the floor, nevertheless.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE RABBI'S LAB

The Rabbi is alone, and lost in thought. He gazes out through an oil-smeared window at the flames flickering up and down the face of The Tower.

FIELDS

Are you The Rabbi?

Pascal has circled around so that she can see The Rabbi's face in profile. His face is caked in dried mud; dried rivulets of past tears snake down his cheeks. The Rabbi turns and addresses Pascal, not Fields.

THE RABBI

Has something happened to Lulu?

PASCAL

Why would you ask that, sir?

The Rabbi sighs and sits in a chair in front of the two metal tanker desks that had been pushed together for the golem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE RABBI

I haven't seen her in nearly two days.

FIELDS

We have some bad news. Your daughter was involved in—in an accident. I'm afraid she's dead.

The Rabbi gives no reaction.

PASCAL

You knew. How did you know?

THE RABBI

Please. Just tell me where she is. Where her body is.

The Rabbi put his fist to his chest and kneads the cloth there. Fields flips open his notebook.

FIELDS

Sir, we are very sorry for your loss. I'm Detective Fields; this is Inspector Pascal. What is your full name, please?

THE RABBI

Joseph Bratman.

FIELDS

And your daughter's full name?

THE RABBI

Leah ...

The Rabbi's voice trails off as he's mesmerized anew by the flames in The Tower.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

They say a fire can burn on a floor for weeks and never threaten the rest of the building. How is it that fire can not destroy?

FIELDS

Mr. Bratman. Your daughter. Her last name Bratman?

The Rabbi looks from The Tower to Pascal who is studying his every move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE RABBI

No, it's Silas. She changed it back to her mother's maiden name many years ago.

FIELDS

Did your daughter live here, in this building?

Still, The Rabbi is locked on to Pascal.

THE RABBI

No. She had just arrived. For a visit. Inspector.

PASCAL

Yes?

THE RABBI

You're an Inspector. You inspect; he detects.

PASCAL

Yes.

THE RABBI

Fascinating.

Pascal and Fields share a quick look.

FIELDS

Mr. Bratman, when was the last time you saw your daughter?

THE RABBI

I'm not good with dates. I think two days ago. She said she had to meet someone.

FIELDS

Did she say whom, or where?

THE RABBI

No. I was ... distracted.

FIELDS

Mr. Bratman, did your daughter have a gun?

THE RABBI

A gun?

FIELDS

Yes. Did she ever carry a gun, or have access to a gun?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

As he has been, The Rabbi answers Fields while continuing to look at Pascal.

THE RABBI

Hmmm. Not that I know of. I don't know that Lulu had ever even seen a gun.

FIELDS

I take it that other people live here, too. Could she have gotten a gun from any of them?

THE RABBI

I've never seen a gun here, or heard talk of one. Inspector.

PASCAL

Yes?

THE RABBI

You have no idea what killed my daughter, do you?

PASCAL

No.

THE RABBI

These are truly days of marvel. Neither inspection nor detection is up to the task - it must be a deeper mystery.

People begin to filter into the building on the ground level. Intermittent openings of the huge jangly doors, muted conversations, Spanish-language talk radio. Meanwhile, the grimy daylight in the attic sixth floor dims.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

Yes. I did know that something had happened to Lulu. I didn't know what, but I knew that she was gone. I have been grieving her for many hours.

PASCAL

But how did you know?

Pascal moves toward The Rabbi. Fields, fascinated, has put down his notebook.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

THE RABBI

I sense that you are a woman of the spirit, Inspector, in spite of your profession.

PASCAL

Go on.

THE RABBI

I see things, Inspector. I sense them. I saw my daughter hurtling through the air, and I knew that she was dead. And I do not think you will find what threw her through the air.

PASCAL

Why? What was it?

The longing in Pascal's voice is palpable. The Rabbi smiles sadly. He approaches her and then touches a lock of her red hair.

THE RABBI

Your need to understand is so great, isn't it. And your fear of what you will find, of what is coming ... that is great, also.

Pascal pulls back from his touch; they continue to stare at each other.

FIELDS

Mr. Bratman?

THE RABBI

You will not find it because it is not here.

With a gesture of his arms, he indicates the room, the city, the world.

FIELDS

You tried to hire a man to find your daughter. Ballard.

THE RABBI

Yes. Ballard.

FIELDS

Your daughter found him in a bar a week ago. They spoke. And then she went back to that bar two days ago, with a gun, apparently intending to kill him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

The Rabbi stops, dead in his tracks; a look of terror spreads over his face. He falls to his knees, his hands clutching at his heart. Pascal moves toward him, but he waves her off, even though his eyes are far away.

THE RABBI  
(whispering to  
himself)  
Lulu. You did that for me.

FIELDS  
What? What did you say, Mr.  
Bratman?

THE RABBI  
Nothing. I must go now. My people  
are returning and I must see to  
their needs. Are there any other  
questions, Inspector?

Pascal's gaze flickers around the room. Lands on the surface created by the two pushed-together metal desks. She frowns.

PASCAL  
What happened here ... on these  
desks?

THE RABBI  
What?

PASCAL  
Never mind. Let's go, Fields.  
Nothing more at the moment, Mr.  
Bratman. We'll be back tomorrow  
and let you know about your  
daughter's remains. Again, we are  
sorry for your loss.

EXT. - THE NEXT DAY - DAWN - THE RIVER

The golem moves slowly upstream in the murky light, muddy brown water up to its mid-section. It walks out of the river, and up the concrete embankment, toward the double-doors marked HIGH VOLTAGE.

EXT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - THE GRAVEL PARKING LOT  
OUTSIDE THE KITTY KAT

Ballard leans back against the exterior stucco of the bar. Sees the headlights of Pamela's Ford Explorer as she turns into the lot. He stands up. She clomps over the gravel toward him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

Jeez, Ballard. You sleep here?

BALLARD

Huh? No. Just wanted to—to talk to you.

PAMELA

OK. That sounds ... important. Is everything OK?

She inserts an ancient iron 'skeleton'-style key into the lock on the Kitty Kat's front door and jiggles hard. The lock gives and they go in.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Pamela disarms the security system while Ballard heads for a stool at the bar.

PAMELA

I've been meaning to talk to you about something, too.

She walks around behind the bar, ties her black apron on, takes the silk bundle out, and begins to spread her cards out on the bar.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Got something to ask you.

Ballard looks wiped out; dazed.

BALLARD

Yeah? You go first. And, yes, I want a drink this early, please.

Pamela looks at him sideways through her black bangs as she pours him a shot of bourbon.

PAMELA

I want to know more about when you saw Ben.

BALLARD

Yeah?

PAMELA

Could you just tell me some more? Like what you thought of him. Like what ... what he said about me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ballard hits his shot.

BALLARD

Uh-huh. Well, like I told you,  
he's an asshole.

PAMELA

Yes. You said that.

Ballard sighs; not wanting to get into this, but having to.

BALLARD

He said ... he said that you  
scared him. That he woke up once  
in the middle of the night and you  
were staring at him. That he  
didn't need that shit.

Pamela looks down. Blood has rushed into her cheeks. Her eyes are moist. She speaks so softly that Ballard has to lean across the bar to catch her words:

PAMELA

I see. Yes. I think that's about  
right.

She gathers herself. Dabs at her eyes with a cocktail napkin.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

So, that's it? Do you, ummm—

BALLARD

Pamela. It's OK. He's a dick. I  
can tell. It's one of my major  
skills. Being able to tell when  
someone's a dick. Relationships,  
certain combinations ... they're  
hard and they don't always work  
out. I know you. I know who you  
are.

She nods and a smile plays at the corner of her mouth.

PAMELA

Thanks, Ballard. Thank you. Oh.  
What did you want to talk to me  
about?

BALLARD

Nothing. No big deal. I'm gonna go  
crash—been up all night. Talk to  
you later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAMELA

Ballard!

She comes out from behind the bar and grabs his arm.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

What is it? You spent the night  
outside my bar waiting to talk to  
me.

Ballard looks down at her fingers on the sleeve of his  
bomber jacket of mahogany cracked leather. Her fingers  
have chipped green polish on them. He takes those fingers  
in his.

BALLARD

I was going to tell you. That I  
love you. And that I think we  
should be together. Silly, right?

Pamela beams at him.

PAMELA

Finally, you fucker!

EXT. - THAT SAME MORNING - AN ALLEY NEAR THE BOARDWALK

Just after dawn. RC holds his portfolio to his chest. You  
can hear the sea pounding a few hundred yards away. He  
walks aimlessly.

RC

She. She. She. She. She.

Clyde, the old Cambodian baker sits on an overturned milk  
crate in the alley behind his donut shop. He strums an  
old five-string acoustic guitar. He's dusted in flour and  
smoke rises from the cigarette stuck in the corner of his  
mouth. He sings an old blues.

CLYDE

Well, I'm a lunatic wino shufflin  
on across the floor  
Well I'm a lunatic wino goin out  
to get me some mo'  
And if you don't believe me baby  
Then I ain't comin round here no  
mo'

He stops when he sees RC, who's more stumbling than  
walking. Then: a great thundering of paws on asphalt at  
the end of the alley. Clyde whips around; even RC  
notices. The pack of dogs races by, a bullet of blinding  
fur and fangs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Clyde shakes off a shiver. RC sinks to his knees.

CLYDE (CONT'D)  
I hate them dogs.

RC  
Don't you people just eat 'em.

CLYDE  
You ever see what they do? They like those fish. Those fish down there that eat away all the meat in a second.

RC  
Piranhas?

CLYDE  
Yeah. Those. That's what them dogs do. Strip a family down to bones in a minute. I seen 'em.

RC  
Shit. Yeah?

CLYDE  
Yeah damn straight fuckin a. Man, woman, two, three kids. Nothin but fuckin a bones. You watch your ass round them dogs.

RC  
Fuckin a bones. OK. Got it.

The baker flicks his butt into an oily alley puddle.

RC (CONT'D)  
Hey. You open. I could use some coffee.

Clyde takes a hard look at RC; snorts.

CLYDE  
Yeah? Sure. You look like you need. C'mon.

CUT TO:

INT. - CLYDE'S DONUT SHOP

Clyde and RC go in through the back door and walk down a skinny hallway which opens on to the donut shop's main area: three white plastic tables, each with two white plastic chairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RC takes a chair while Clyde heads for the kitchen. RC checks out some surfers heading for the beach, wetsuits peeled down to their waists.

Clyde comes out carrying a tray on which sit a styrofoam cup of coffee and some glazed donut holes in a waxed-paper-lined red basket. RC slurps up coffee.

RC

Thanks. This is truly awful.

Clyde grins.

CLYDE

Yeah, I know. Don't know shit about coffee. But you try a donut. Try.

RC

Naw, that's alright. Thanks. Really.

CLYDE

No. You try!

RC

OK, OK. Christ! I try.

RC pops a donut hole in his mouth and his look changes.

RC (CONT'D)

Holy shit that's good!

CLYDE

See? Fuckin a told you.

He grins and heads back into the kitchen. RC gobbles down the rest of the donut holes and watches the sun rise in a reflection off a video advertisement screen across the boardwalk.

INT. - THAT SAME MORNING - A COFFEE SHOP

Pascal starts to argue with a barista about foam, then just grabs her venti and storms off. Finds a seat on a leather sofa in a corner of the buzzing coffeehouse, next to CARLA (30s, athletic), who is studying her tablet.

CARLA

Don't you hate that?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

PASCAL

What? Oh, you heard that? Yes.  
Yes, I do hate that.

The woman swipes her screen and shoves her tablet into a woven bag containing a black yoga mat.

CARLA

Screw him. Life's too short.

PASCAL

OK, sister!

They clink their paper coffee cups.

CARLA

I'm Carla.

PASCAL

Pascal. Pleased to meet you,  
Carla.

CARLA

Pascal. What a lovely name.

PASCAL

Oh, I sometimes forget. That's my last name. It's just that everyone I work with—everyone just calls me Pascal. Don't think I know anyone who calls me by my first name.

CARLA

Which is ...

PASCAL

Huh? Oh, right - sorry. It's Beryl.

CARLA

Well, there you go. I don't think I've ever met a Beryl. Nice to meet you, Beryl Pascal.

Their sofa faces a picture window looking out onto the morning traffic on Barrington. To their left a small fireplace hosts an actual fire with real logs and flames.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I was sort of hoping it was Blaise.

PASCAL

Huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARLA

Blaise Pascal. Like the philosopher?

PASCAL

Ahh, right. So. You're into yoga?

CARLA

Yes, just finished. Do you practice?

PASCAL

No. Once or twice. Don't have the patience, or the time. It seems ... nice, though.

Carla smiles at her and nods; sips her coffee.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

Yes, it seems like something I'd like to do if I could just make time for it.

CUT TO:

EXT. - THE RIVER EMBANKMENT

The golem trudges up the steep concrete embankment. Steps over the guardrail and then heads down an alley, paralleling Barrington and within sight of his home in the 6th floor attic of The Rabbi's factory beneath the overpasses.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE COFFEE SHOP

PASCAL

So what do you do, Carla?

CARLA

I run the Mar Vista farmer's market.

PASCAL

Seriously?

CARLA

Yeah, it's an actual job. During the week I schlep around to farms out in Ojai and Temecula and Ventura, and then on Sunday I pray for all the growers to show up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASCAL

Huh.

CARLA

Yes, there's permits and inspections and certifications and all kinds of crap to stay on top of. Sometimes I even get to do the fun stuff.

PASCAL

What's the fun stuff?

CARLA

Tasting awesome fresh fruits and veggies, of course!

PASCAL

I'm ashamed to say I live right here and I've never been.

CARLA

No biggie. But now since you know me you have a personal invitation!

They laugh and Carla's smile has spread to Pascal. And then Pascal notices a shadow. Nothing, really. But Pascal tenses because she just knows something's about to go down ...

A forest green Oldsmobile hurtles through the plate glass window in front of them. It swerves and stops with its grille in the mouth of the fireplace. The roar of shattering glass is deafening; as it settles, little embers from the fire drift through the coffee house.

The DRIVER (40s, suit) staggers out of the Oldsmobile and leans against the barista's counter.

DRIVER

What the fuck was that?

Pascal takes a quick inventory of the other customers and then leaps over the sofa to get to the driver.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

What the fuck was that?

Pascal grabs him by the shoulders.

PASCAL

Sir, are you OK?

The driver fixes a glassy-eyed stare on Pascal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DRIVER

What. The Fuck. Was That.

PASCAL

You've just crashed into a Starbucks. Are you OK?

DRIVER

NO! IN THE STREET! What the fuck was that? It must have been 10 feet tall!

INT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - THE RABBI'S LAB

The Rabbi hears the metal doors six floors below being thrown open, wrenched off their rusted hinges. The golem tromps up the creaky stairs. The Rabbi's view of The Tower's flames flickers as the attic's windows vibrate with the golem's ascent.

The golem reaches the sixth floor and advances toward the desks.

GOLEM

Father.

It drops a burlap bag at The Rabbi's feet and then stands in front of its creator.

GOLEM (CONT'D)

Where is my sister?

The Rabbi guides the golem onto the slab formed by the two tanker desks.

THE RABBI

Lulu is gone, my son. She will not be returning.

The golem begins pulling something out of its cloak.

GOLEM

But. I have this for her.

It holds out a crumpled, muddy dress - white with red polka dots.

GOLEM (CONT'D)

For Lulu.

The Rabbi takes the dress. Smooths it out, lays it over a chair. He smiles sadly at the golem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE RABBI

It's lovely, my son. Lulu would have treasured it.

The Rabbi moves around the slab and stops at the golem's hood. The Rabbi begins to chant. He takes a Mason jar filled with river mud from a drawer in one of the desks. Pulls a dollop of mud out with his forefinger and thumb. Sings. Chants.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

The living creatures ran & returned. Spirit, air, water, fire. Height and depth. East and west. North and south. Three are mothers. Seven are double. Twelve are single. Ten are the numbers. Not nine, and not eleven. The living creatures ran & returned.

GOLEM

Father. Why will Lulu not return?

The Rabbi pauses in his ministrations. His eyes glisten. His fingertips shine with river mud.

THE RABBI

They have killed her, my son. And now, we will have our vengeance upon them.

The golem lurches forward, swinging its arms, but The Rabbi perseveres, his voice a wave of calm.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

You are released, my son. You have but one final mission. And then you will do what you will. And God will decide our ultimate fates.

The Rabbi, using his thumb and forefinger, amends the mark on the golem's forehead.

INT. - LATER THAT DAY - THE CONVENIENCE STORE

Muted coverage of the election riots crawls by in the news feed of Ballard's laptop. He's on a stool. Arrayed on the counter before him are packing lists, invoices, and shipping documents. A similarly muted ceiling-mounted TV displays footage from The Tower fires. From an ancient boombox on a shelf comes tinkling mournful piano music. And then a narrator's voice begins to speak over the solo piano:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Martinu was born and spent his early years in a bell tower in a small Moravian village. The composer's father, a leather-worker by trade, also served as the village fire sentry, and so he and his family occupied a small apartment in the steeple of the village church's bell tower, some 200 feet above the village square. The—

Ballard goes through the documents, circling quantities, noting pricing, entering receiving dates, initialing his approvals.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

—apartment was reached by a treacherous and extremely narrow spiral staircase. Buckets were pulleyed up from the ground floor so that the family might have water. There was a balcony around the apartment at the very top of the tower. This balcony was ringed with slatted wood, through the planks of which the young Bohislav would peer down on the townspeople below.

Ballard pauses. Cocks his head. Then resumes his paperwork.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The young Martinu grew up a lonesome boy. Very few of his schoolmates were allowed to make the winding trek up the dank stone steps to the tower. He recalled vividly standing on the balcony while his father surveyed the town and its surroundings for any traces of fire. And he often in later life spoke of the perspective on life that the apartment in the bell tower gave him, and how it allowed him from an early age a sense of the majesty and grandeur of space.

Ballard gasps. Shakes his head, as if trying to clear out cobwebs. He glances at his watch. Closes his laptop, scoops up all his papers. Switches off the TV, the boombox, the lights in the store.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As he kneels to operate the controls of the metal screen which rolls down to secure the store, he sees the tip of something metallic, poking out from beneath one of the legs of the postcard spinner rack. He pulls at it. It's an earring. Lulu's earring.

BEGIN ULTRA SLOW MOTION FLASHBACK

We are just behind Lulu's right ear. We see her earring. Lulu's finger depresses the trigger. Ballard is out of focus in the background. And then there is a blur and Lulu is knocked sideways into the air.

END ULTRA SLOW MOTION FLASHBACK

Ballard sits on the linoleum floor, a bit dazed, trying to work things out.

BALLARD

OK. OK. It's time for me to find  
you.

He lowers and locks the metal screen. He heads for the bar.

EXT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - THE KITTY KAT PARKING LOT

RC lurches toward the door of the bar in his terrycloth robe and a pair of desert boots. He freezes when he hears them before he sees them: paws crunching gravel hard.

The pack of dogs rushes into view. 30 or 40 of them in a whirl of snarl, teeth, and saliva. RC covers his face with his leather portfolio, flattens himself against the cool stucco of the bar, and hopes.

They seem almost like two packs now. Gorgon's is growing, while Blackie's is shrinking, as if all the dogs are choosing sides, with most moving away from the dog with the bloodied paw. They still run in the direction Blackie calls out, but more and more of them hang back with Gorgon, biding their time.

Gorgon and his crew lope behind Blackie. They smirk and snarl with the inevitability of their overthrow. Blackie looks over his shoulder. Sees it all. Grits his teeth.

BLACKIE

Faster!

The dogs pass, headed for The Tower. RC exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

The cards are spread out before Pamela. There are tears in her eyes. Ballard's fingertips touch hers.

BALLARD

This is making you upset. Why do it?

PAMELA

Because it means something, dammit! But I don't know what.

Ballard's about to respond. Stops, and shakes his head.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

What?

BALLARD

I was just thinking. It's hard to explain.

PAMELA

Try.

Ballard takes a deep breath.

BALLARD

I have a memory. From when I was a kid. It came when I was on the verge of sleep. Not every night, but many nights. I would drift off and I would feel ... so small in a very large starry space. There would be a buzzing. And it was scary but also so ... comforting.

Pamela, rapt, nods for him to continue.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

You ever have anything like that?

PAMELA

No, I don't think so.

BALLARD

It happened less and less as I got older. I would just fall asleep. And now it never happens at all. I miss it.

Ballard looks at her as if he is surprised at his own longing. Pamela takes his hands in hers.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BALLARD (CONT'D)

I feel ... I feel now like ...  
like what happened with Lulu. It's  
connected to. It's connected to  
that place I used to go when I was  
a kid. You know?

Before Pamlea can answer, RC bursts into the bar.

RC

Holy shit, those fucking dogs!

She tries to focus on RC.

PAMELA

You O.K.?

RC

Yeah. But fuck.

Ballard's gaze wanders to the bear in the canoe in the  
neon beer company tableau on the shelf behind the bar.  
Pamela returns to her cards.

RC (CONT'D)

What. I interrupt something.

PAMELA

Ballard here was just wondering  
about my obsession with these  
cards.

RC

Oh. Bourbon, then, ma'am.

BALLARD

RC, actually I came in here for  
you. Can I look at your drawings,  
please?

He indicates the weather-beaten spiderweb-cracked-leather  
portfolio.

RC

What? Why?

BALLARD

I'm. I'm looking. For something.

RC

For something?

BALLARD

For something to do with ... Lulu.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Pamela's eyes pop up from the tumbler she's pouring bourbon into for RC.

PAMELA

What do you mean, Ballard?

RC

Yeah, Ballard. What do you mean?

BALLARD

It's hard to. I just want a closer look at that woman you've been drawing. I think I've. It's stupid. I just want to study her a bit. OK?

RC stares at him. Then shrugs and shoves the satchel toward Ballard.

RC

Knock yourself out.

He downs the bourbon in one throw. Ballard takes the portfolio and heads for a booth in the corner, noticing as he goes that the bear in the canoe is still just about to go over the falls, notices also that the bear is a picture of oblivious innocence, with no awareness of his own impending plummet.

EXT. - THAT SAME EVENING - OUTSIDE THE RABBI'S FACTORY

Two dozen black-visored riders on two dozen huge black horses. The riders keep their steeds still. Waiting. Hidden.

The captain checks his watch. Holds up two fingers.

The captain lowers his arm and the riders, instantly arrayed, move forward with awesome precision.

A man ahead of them on foot is surprised: the two huge HIGH VOLTAGE metal doors are already open, torn off their hinges. The horses race through the open gate in a flash of shiny black hair and leather.

And, this time, something huge is waiting for them. The golem jerks the first rider off his horse and flings him across the room into the metal staircase which climbs the side of the building to The Rabbi's lab.

EXT. - AN HOUR LATER - OUTSIDE THE RABBI'S FACTORY

Pascal flips her phone shut, exits her car, and walks toward the ruined HIGH VOLTAGE doors. Smoke wafts from the inside of the building. Whinnies. She draws her gun and heads in.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE RABBI'S FACTORY

Cops are strewn across the floor. Horses wander aimlessly, nosing the chain-link fences that surround the ancient power machinery. Gracie reaches up to pet one of the horses; Betty feeds a carrot to another one.

PASCAL

Jesus. Fuck.

She pulls out her phone, hits a speed dial.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

Yeah, this is Pascal. Multiple officers down at the abandoned factory off Barrington. I don't know what the hell went down here but we need help!

Since none of the cops is alive, she starts trudging up the rickety rusted-out stairs toward The Rabbi's attic. As she arrives at each landing, she turns and looks down, shaking her head at the carnage below. She keeps moving, using the moonlight that comes in through cracked windowpanes to help her avoid the every third or fourth step that's rusted out.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE RABBI'S LAB

Pascal steps out onto the sixth floor. Occasional embers float down from The Tower fires and find their way into the building through gouged-out gaps in the building's roof.

Pascal moves toward a keening sound in the corner of the attic. She finds Luisa, weeping over the body of Herman. His neck is bent in an impossible way.

LUISA

The golem. The golem.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASCAL

Luisa. Your nombre is Luisa,  
right?

Luisa focuses on Pascal, noticing her for the first time.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

Luisa, where is The Rabbi?

Luisa's gaze strays over Pascal's shoulder. She points to a rope ladder which climbs into a piece of cylindrical conduit roughly four feet in diameter. Pascal notices that the rope ladder still sways slightly from recent use.

INT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

RC's at the bar, huddled over a drink. Pamela stands next to Ballard as he studies stacks of drawings of Athena. Her hand rests lightly on Ballard's shoulder.

PAMELA

What is it?

BALLARD

I don't want to sound crazy.

PAMELA

You've seen her?

Ballard looks up at Pamela, wild-eyed.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

Because I have. She's in my cards.  
All the time for the past few  
days. I can't get any normal  
readings.

BALLARD

I thought you kept getting The  
Tower.

PAMELA

Yes. She's one of the two people  
falling. Here.

She pulls the cards from her apron. Removes them from their black silk. Fans the cards out on the table. Finds The Tower card.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

See?

Ballard takes the card. It trembles in his fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BALLARD

I think she's here. I mean, with us. I think she saved me from Lulu.

He's barely hanging on. He grabs Pamela by the shoulders.

BALLARD (CONT'D)

I keep seeing things. Out of the corner of my eye. Like, kind of there, kind of not there. You know? And I'm starting to think that. That. They're all her.

PAMELA

How is that poss—

BALLARD

I have no idea. But I think it is. What about your cards? You keep getting the same thing, over and over, right?

PAMELA

The Tower. Flames, falling bodies, a woman and a man. It's one of the major arcana. A truly wicked card. But I cannot get past it, it keeps coming up, constantly. It's freaking me the fuck out!

Pamela sifts through the Athena sketches.

PAMELA (CONT'D)

And I think she is the falling woman.

BALLARD

Shit. So who is the man?

PAMELA

I can't tell. His face is averted.

But Ballard is now staring at The Tower card. At a hooded figure lying prone at the base of The Tower.

BALLARD

The golem?

PAMELA

Huh?

BALLARD

Nothing. I gotta go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ballard kisses her on the cheek. Holds her chin in his hand for a moment. Looks into her eyes. And then books it out of the bar for all he's worth.

INT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - THE RABBI'S LAB

Pascal shimmies up the rope ladder through the conduit and emerges onto a wooden platform.

INT. - THE TUBE BETWEEN THE RABBI'S LAB AND THE TOWER

A transparent plexiglass tube, about ten feet in diameter, stretches gradually upward before her. Because of the mild angle of ascent—about 5 degrees—she can see about 100 meters ahead.

The tube is dimly lit. There is nothing below it; it hangs in the night sky between The Rabbi's abandoned factory and the lower levels of The Tower. Pascal flips her phone open.

PASCAL

Fields! Meet me at The Tower. I'm following The Rabbi. I think we found The Hood. He killed a bunch of cops but I already called that in so you get your ass to The Tower.

She snaps her phone shut. Takes her first step into the tube. It's like taking a step into the night air. She watches her foot meet the clear plastic floor; sees the distant twinkle of traffic gridlock below.

She can't see anyone ahead of her, but a thin stream of muddy water trickles back toward her from somewhere up ahead.

INT. - A FEW MINUTES LATER - BALLARD'S CAR

Ballard slams the palm of his hand against the steering wheel.

BALLARD

Dammit!

All vehicles are stopped, in every direction. Horns blare and people lean out of their cars, screaming. There are three video billboards at this intersection. They show: the creature rising out of Puget Sound; the fires and falling bodies at The Tower; the election riots on the barricaded South Bay streets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ballard switches off his ignition, pockets his keys, and flings open the door of his car.

EXT. - THE STREETS OF CULVER CITY

Ballard runs toward The Tower. He makes good progress at first: dodging in and out of the street, side alleys, gutters. But then: a mighty crash and the patrons of a Mexican restaurant swarm out into the street and block his way. A massive aquarium has given way and shattered; broken glass, pink and green coral, kids try to scoop up flopping fish in their bare hands.

Ballard hurdles a pile of trash, ducks into an alley, and keeps sprinting.

INT. - THE TUBE BETWEEN THE RABBI'S LAB AND THE TOWER

The Rabbi grips the golem's gown for support as they trudge along the gradually inclining transparent pipe. They begin to hear the roar and crackle of fire and flames; they arrive at the end of the pipe and emerge onto the 20th floor of The Tower.

INT. - THE TOWER - LOBBY OF THE 20TH FLOOR

They hustle toward the bank of express elevators.

INT. - THE TOWER - EXPRESS ELEVATOR

The Rabbi punches in 231. The doors close and they whoosh upwards. The Rabbi studies the muddy water at the feet of the hooded golem and frowns.

THE RABBI

My son. You did not need to hurt  
Herman. He was our friend. He  
wasn't trying to stop you.

The golem ignores his master; there is fear in The Rabbi's face.

GOLEM

This place killed my sister?

THE RABBI

Yes. And we will make it right.

INT. - THE TOWER - LOBBY OF THE 20TH FLOOR

Pascal comes racing around a corner. Loses her footing in the trail of muddy water and slides across the marble floor. She catches sight of the display on the elevator whose doors have just closed: 231.

PASCAL

Christ. The Kitty Kat?

She pumps the call button for another elevator and flips open her phone.

EXT. - OUTSIDE THE TOWER, GROUND FLOOR

Ballard leaps a barricade and ignores a shouted warning from a uniformed policeman. Heads for the bank of elevators.

INT. - THE TOWER - 231ST FLOOR

Ballard exits the elevator car. There is a whirring here, a hum that flickers in and out. It's mostly sound, but it also occasionally creates tiny ripples in the air.

He runs toward the motor court in the sky. He catches glimpses—via glass catwalks extending to floors above and below—of flames, and now and then hears faint cries.

Standing in front of the Kitty Kat, he pauses, confused. It is exactly like the real bar in Culver City ... except for the whirr. There are people inside. He can see shadows through windows, and hear voices.

Ballard walks toward the bar. He reaches out with his fingers to try to touch one of the ripples in the air before him. Worry knits a pattern in his brows.

BALLARD

Pamela?

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

In the real Kitty Kat, down below in Culver City, RC is drunk. He holds his shaved skull in his hands and rolls his forehead against the surface of the bar.

The oblivious canoeing bear about to plunge over the waterfall in the beer company tableau smiles blissfully.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Pamela's nearly asleep on her feet. She totters a bit, then rights herself. She wraps her cards in their black silk and shakes RC.

PAMELA

RC! RC! Dammit, wake up!  
Something's happening. Wake up!  
Something's going on.

RC looks up; looks at the bear in the canoe; looks at the ceiling-mounted TV where a reporter squats over the tracks of something in some mud. Finally, he looks at Pamela.

RC

Huh?

PAMELA

Did you just feel that? Fuck. I  
felt like—like—

And she falls to the ground behind the bar, landing on the booze-soaked rubber mat that lays there, her cheek settles into the mat's waffle pattern.

RC's eyes close and his head droops, hits the bar.

On the TV, we've switched to footage of a reporter surrounded by the wandering riderless black horses at The Rabbi's factory.

INT. - THE TOWER - THE PARKING LOT OF THE KITTY KAT BAR

The crunch of gravel beneath Ballard's shoes mixes with the whirr on the 231st floor. He pushes open the door to the bar.

INT. - THE TOWER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Ballard's eyes adjust to the gloom. He gasps. RC and Pamela play a game of cards at the bar.

BALLARD

How the fuck—

But he looks closer. Sees the whirr in them. They flicker a bit and are flat. The Rabbi's voice startles him.

THE RABBI

Mr. Ballard. What do you make of  
them, your friends?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ballard whirls around; sees The Rabbi; sees the golem behind him.

BALLARD

They're not really ... here, are they?

THE RABBI

Excellent, my boy!

The Rabbi claps his hands. Then, spreads them, as if to encompass the entirety of the bar, and The Tower in which it sits.

THE RABBI (CONT'D)

And this. What do you make of all this?

Ballard takes in the whole room. Notices that the lines that form things have begun to squiggle, ever so slightly. And then he feels her, remembers her from the day with Lulu and the gun, knows that she is there, with him.

BALLARD

You're here. Athena.

The Rabbi wears a quizzical look. Pascal bursts into the bar with her gun drawn.

CUT TO:

INT. - THE TOWER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

PASCAL

OK, everyone just cool the fuck out and tell me what the fuck is going on!

As she approaches them, she pays particularly close attention to the golem.

PASCAL (CONT'D)

This ... thing ... is with you?

THE RABBI

Yes.

PASCAL

Alright. I need him to get on the ground. Very slowly. Sir! Lay down on the ground with your hands behind your head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE RABBI

He will not do that.

PASCAL

I'm a cop and I've got a gun. Can he understand? Tell him to get the fuck down.

THE RABBI

He will not obey you. I daresay he will no longer obey anyone.

She's inched closer; her gun is levelled at the golem's chest.

PASCAL

What does that mean?

THE RABBI

He used to do what I tell him. But now he's looking for whoever hurt his sister. I don't think—

PASCAL

He needs to get down now! Can you make him do that or not?

In yelling at The Rabbi, Pascal has transferred the aim of her gun from the golem to The Rabbi. The golem raises his left arm; there is a twitch in the sleeve of his robe. And Pascal collapses in a rag-doll heap on the floor.

GOLEM

Father. Is she the one?

There are sparks in the middle of the room, then the grind of metal gears. And then Athena is there before them, slowed-down enough and enough in-phase to finally be seen. The Rabbi points to her.

THE RABBI

No. She is.

There is a calm glow around her that is different from the twitchy whirr and squiggly ripples that are becoming more insistent. Her voice has a soft echo to it.

ATHENA

Ballard. This place must not stand. I will attend to it, and then we must go. But first.

In the corner, on the floor, Pascal's gun finger twitches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BALLARD

How—

But Athena has moved away and stands before The Rabbi. She nods at him, then proceeds to the golem.

The golem raises its arm toward Athena. With her last breath, Pascal fires. The bullet passes through the mud of the golem and the spirit of Athena, lodging in The Rabbi's chest. He makes a gurgling sound and falls to his knees. Ballard rushes to his side.

THE RABBI

Lulu.

The Rabbi smiles. And dies.

At the bar, RC and Pamela shimmer, twitch, whirr, throw down cards, and do not even look up.

Athena moves quickly; she is again barely visible. We do see her amend the mark on the golem's forehead.

GOLEM

My sister. Lulu.

The golem collapses. Athena moves to the bar scanning the rows of whirring bottles on whirring shelves. Her eyes alight on the canoeing bear in the beer company waterfall tableau ... which does not whirr.

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

In the ground-level Culver City Kitty Kat, RC and Pamela have not moved: his shaven head still rests on the bar; her cheek is still pressed into the waffle-patterned webbing of the rubber mat.

INT. - THE TOWER - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Athena pulls the canoeing bear tableau off the shelf. Opens a panel in its back. When she uses her fingers to interrupt the wireless flow between two receptors, there is a complete and silent pause, in which time and all motion are stilled.

And then all hell breaks loose in The Tower.

A seismic tremor runs up the spine of the miles-tall-by-miles-wide structure. The whirring hum is deafening now. The squiggly twitch of lines that define objects in space is overwhelming. And, since floors and ceilings are beginning to vanish, things in The Tower start to fall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Athena grabs Ballard and runs so fast that he loses consciousness. While holding him, she bursts through the crumbling walls of the Kitty Kat, and then, while hurtling down through flames, she pushes off a free-falling elevator car with just enough momentum to send her through what plate-glass remains and out into the night sky, several thousand feet in the air, holding Ballard, suspended above a city that looks upward in awe.

INT. - THE KITTY KAT BAR

Pamela jerks awake and picks herself up off the rubber matting, just as RC is coming to. The ceiling-mounted TV screams that The Tower is falling in flames; one camera's feed is lost as it's swallowed up in a fiery shadow wing of steel and glass.

Pamela shakes RC hard.

PAMELA

RC, RC! You OK?

RC

What? Jesus, get off me. Yeah, I'm fine. Shit. What the hell—

PAMELA

I have no idea. But I've gotta go find Ballard. You're OK?

RC

Yes, fine. Go. Leave the bottle.

Pamela sprints from the bar. He hears her crunching hard on gravel before the door shuts behind her. Pours himself a shot, raises his glass to the oblivious canoe-paddling bear, and drinks.

A breeze from the door shutting behind Pamela ripples the drawing paper on the table that RC had been working at. He turns around to see the sheets fluttering. The effect is like animation: Athena stepping through the sky, clasping a man to her chest, while everything collapses around them.

RC (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Huh. I don't remember that sequence.

He shakes his head. Pours another shot. Which this time he raises to Athena.

EXT. - DAWN - THE RIVERBANK

A large star hangs low in the sky. It burns brightly, and seven smaller stars shine 'round it.

Ballard lies in the mud. Were he conscious, he could see this astral pattern, hovering just above the horizon of the concrete embankment, and beaming through the branches of a leafless tree. Ballard's in the river, half in muddy water, half on mossy concrete.

EXT. - DAWN - THE TOWER RUINS

Pamela stumbles, snags her clothing on a slag of smoking wreckage. Her face is sooty with ash; there are bloody scrapes on her arms. She's been weeping and calling Ballard's name all night, but has neither voice nor tears left.

Fields, sitting in a squad car, sees her and runs to her side.

FIELDS

Pamela?

She can barely croak out a response.

PAMELA

Have you seen Ballard?

FIELDS

Ballard? No. Why? Was he in The Tower?

Pamela turns away, to continue her search. Fields touches her elbow, stops her.

FIELDS (CONT'D)

Wait. Sit down. Take this.

He hands her a plastic bottle of water. She stares at him blankly. He hands her another bottle, which she also takes. But she does not sit down; she keeps moving.

Fields starts to go after her, but then shakes his head and returns to the squad car. Tries to raise Pascal on the radio, tries to see if anyone has seen his partner. With the world in ruin at his feet, he tries to find his partner.

EXT. - DAWN - THE RIVERBANK

Pamela trips and half-stumbles down the slope of the concrete embankment, toward the muddy water of the river. She scrapes her hands on the ridges cut into the mossy concrete. She whimpers.

PAMELA

Ballard.

Then sees a crumpled shape near the water's edge, and freezes. It's him.

With an animal gurgle in her throat, she runs to him.

EXT. - DAWN - THE RIVERBANK

The dogpack approaches Pamela as she stumbles down the embankment. She has not seen them yet; she will be an easy take-down.

Gorgon increases his speed. It is time. He gains on the wounded Blackie. Gorgon's followers lean in. They know. Blackie races on, leading the pack. Gorgon bares his mighty fangs and leaps.

But the smaller dog has seen this before. Blackie comes to a skidding halt; Gorgon overshoots his target. Blackie moves quickly then, darting in and tearing out his rival's throat before the larger dog knows what is happening. Gorgon dies; surprise in his eyes.

Blackie looks at his pack. Licks Gorgon's blood from his teeth. The dogs look at the woman running down the embankment and the man in the mud she runs to.

BLACKIE

No.

He looks at each dog in turn.

BLACKIE (CONT'D)

Not for us. This way. Faster!

The pack rockets off through the wreckage of The Tower.

EXT. - DAWN - THE RIVERBANK

Pamela reaches Ballard and tries to pull him from the water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAMELA

Ballard! Baby, baby, can you, are  
you, can you hear me?

She rips off the remaining shreds of her t-shirt and soaks them in water from one of the plastic bottles. She wipes Ballard's face free of mud and he stirs.

She drops that bottle and it gurgles out into the river. Takes the second bottle and tries to get him to drink. He gets some of that down before choking; the remains of that bottle glug out onto the ribbed concrete embankment.

BALLARD

Pamela?

PAMELA

Yeah, baby. I'm right here. I'm  
right here, Ballard. Oh, baby, I  
can't believe I found you. I  
FUCKING FOUND YOU!

She weeps tears of joy; cradles his head against her bare breasts. She laughs; presses her cheek to his. And they both look up sideways to see: through the tears and mud that smear their faces, up the embankment, through the leafless branches of the tree there, that the eight stars are just now being touched by the first roseate hints of dawn.