

From: Jenette Cooper
Date: Monday, March 27, 2017 at 9:59 AM
To: Alexandra Creswick, Silvio Amherst
Cc: Adam Riche, Chase Calder
Subject: CLOUD 9

Hi Silvio! Hi Alex!

I'm looking forward immensely to seeing you next week.

In advance of our getting together, I wanted to send you a project that we're very excited about.

Kat Smith's CLOUD 9 is the story of Titus, a churlish, prize-winning poet whose devout atheism is upended one dawn by a transformative vision. With an easy humor that makes her big ideas go down, Kat has written a serious exploration of the validity of faith as seen through the lens of a struggling marriage.

George Blaine, a theater agent at UTA, sent Kat this email that encapsulates our commitment to the movie: "Your screenplay, Cloud 9, which I read yesterday, is astonishing. It gave to me an experience of looking at life in another way. The construction and the layering of the script and the story are so confident and so accomplished. You have brought a great vision of life to life."

Bryan Cranston was the first actor we went to and he immediately wanted to star. He later fell off the movie, but when you read the script, it's easy to see what attracted him. Titus is an actor's actor role.

Thanks so much, you two, for reading CLOUD 9. I look forward to hearing what you think.

With warmest wishes—

Jenette

Jenette Cooper
Dime A Dozen Films

CLOUD 9

by

Kat Smith

FADE IN:

EXT. COASTAL CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY - EARLY MORNING

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Fog rolls across the wintry streets of a northern California community, like tumbleweeds through a ghost town.

A street light buzzes, flickering, and goes dark.

The sun breaks through the clouds, illuminating a street sign -- "Hope Street" -- then disappears just as quickly.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

On a drop-down screen: a youtube mash-up of video clips of post-beat poet TITUS JACKSON. The first, before a live audience. A ruggedly handsome 34 year-old, a 3-day stubble, cigarette in hand.

INTERVIEWER 1

Your poetry is earthy, scatological
... some would say vulgar, even --

TITUS

Well, life is vulgar, isn't it? I
mean, we may aspire to lofty ideals,
but mostly we shit, we fuck, we fart,
we whore around, we fall down drunk.
(a smile)
Some of us more often than others.

A room full of young faces enrapt by the charismatic character on screen -- boys who wish they were half so hip, girls seduced by his good looks, confidence and wry smile.

INCLUDE MEGAN, moving down the aisle: forties, striking, the sort of woman a man falls in love with over long conversations about art and politics.

Without glancing away, Megan opens her palm to a TEXTING STUDENT. The student, baffled (does she have eyes in the back of her head?) reluctantly surrenders his phone.

SCREEN: A studio set, the SECOND INTERVIEWER, a Charlie Rose type, listens attentively to Titus, now middle-aged, a halo of smoke around him, a tumbler of bourbon at his side.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Well, how has religion been used
historically? To decimate entire
cultures, to send young men to war,
to placate the poor, to divide,
(MORE)

TITUS (CONT'D)
control, to intercept critical
thinking.

INTERVIEWER 2
Yet studies show that those who
believe in a higher power are happier.
Do you think you'd be a happier man
if you believed in God?

TITUS
Maybe. Sheep are happy creatures.

As he reaches for his bourbon, the film CUTS TO:

Another clip. An O.S. FEMALE INTERVIEWER, shaky camera.
Black-and-white, at a Harlem sidewalk cafe. Titus is a skinny
twenty-nine.

INTERVIEWER 3
Burnished Grace, The poem that won
you the Pulitzer, is about the day
you stopped believing in God. The
day you realized your mother was
never coming back. How old were you
when your mother left?

The camera ZOOMS IN on Titus, uncomfortable.

TITUS
Just a ... you know, a kid -- three
or four.

INTERVIEWER 3
What do you remember about her?

Megan watches as he tries in vain to cover his irritation at
the interviewer's line of questioning, fascinated by the
vulnerability he unwittingly reveals.

TITUS
That she wasn't there. You can't
form memories before the age of three.

INTERVIEWER 3
She left to join a religious cult,
didn't she?

TITUS
No, not cult. Cloister. A silent
order, halfway across the -- can we
talk about something else?

A BLONDE STUDENT elbows the girl next to her, nods to Megan,
absorbed in the clip with clearly more than academic interest.

The blonde whispers in her friend's ear, giggles. Sensing their eyes on her, Megan comes out of her reverie, hits PAUSE.

MEGAN

Okay, *Burnished Grace*, Titus Jackson.
Who'd like to start?

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Tangled in rumpled bed sheets, TITUS JACKSON SNORES. Middle-aged, an imposing bear of a man, with a face that wears the scars of a life hard-lived. The RADIO ALARM snaps on at MEGA-VOLUME.

NPR CORRESPONDENT (V.O.)

In Rome today, the Pope called on
world leaders to "awaken from --

TITUS

Jeezus Christ!

Titus jumps, fumbles for the switch, knocking the radio off the nightstand. It bounces across the floor and falls silent. No sooner has he closed his eyes again, than the PHONE RINGS. He GROANS, unhappy, rolls over, reaches for it.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Did you set the alarm at fucking
Manowar levels?

MEGAN (filter)

Two o'clock.

TITUS

What's that?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY - DAY

Black linoleum reflects the dull light through pre-war windows. Megan walks down the hall, cell to her ear.

MEGAN

The reading at the library.

TITUS

Oh, man. Who suckered me into that?

MEGAN

You agreed.

TITUS

I must've been drunk.

MEGAN

You think?

He reaches for a cigarette.

TITUS

Bunch of blue-haired Rod McKuen fans --
Get me out of it, will you?

The DOORBELL RINGS.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Jeezus, what now? WHO IS IT?

FEDEX MAN (O.S.)

FedEx!

MEGAN

That must be some books I ordered.

The second RING sets the neighbor's dog YAPPING.

TITUS

Goddamned screaming weenie dog.

He rolls out of bed, peeks through the curtains.

HIS POV: A Buddha-bellied Fedex man stands at the front door, clipboard in hand, whistling cheerily.

TITUS (CONT'D)

What's a grown man in purple Bermudas
got to be so goddamn chipper about...?

MEGAN

Two o'clock.

She hangs up. Titus turns, stubbing his toe.

TITUS

Shit!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Still in his boxers, Titus microwaves a carafe of stale coffee, pours a cup. It tastes like shit. He pulls a bottle of scotch from a well-stocked bar, dumps a shot in it. Better.

He glances at the FedEx package on the kitchen table, does a double take. The addressee is Megan, but the return address isn't Amazon. It's a literary agency. Curiosity gets the better of him. He breaks the seal.

There's a cover letter from an agent, Ilene Weathers. Then the title page: "*Detour: Hope Street by Megan Odell*".

It's the galleys for a book of poems. Titus flips through the pages. *Surprised* is not the word. Like a kick in the gut, it takes the breath out of him.

He reaches for the phone, starts to dial, thinks better of it. He steps away, looks at the pages again in disbelief.

INT. TITUS'S PICK-UP - DAY

CU: A CUP OF STARBUCKS in the cupholder. Titus pours a shot in it as he drives, spilling some on the gear shift.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Megan steps inside. Slipping out of her pumps, she notices the opened package on the table. She looks closer.

MEGAN

Oh shit.

She dials her cell as she slips her shoes on again.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Ilene? What were you thinking? The galleys were supposed to go to my office!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE - DAY

ILENE, still attractive at 60-something, an old-school agent who truly relishes good writing and her clients.

ILENE

Julie must've sent them by mistake.

MEGAN

Titus saw.

ILENE

You haven't -- ? Megan, you promised me you'd tell him months ago!

Megan grabs her keys and goes out.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Their neglected yard is a neighborhood eyesore. Megan heads for the car.

MEGAN

You don't know what he's been like lately.

ILENE

Well, I guess we both have some damage control to do. Let me know when you've reviewed the galleys.

INT. LIBRARY MEETING ROOM - DAY

Titus stands at a podium, rumped. A dozen attendees, mostly seniors, in folding chairs. A BLACK-CLAD GIRL is slouched in the back. 19, pink-streaked hair, multiple nose rings.

TITUS

*"Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose garden."*

POETRY CLUB PREZ

That was lovely. Is that a new piece?

TITUS

No. No, that was --

GIRL IN BLACK

T.S. Eliot.

He looks at her. She smirks.

TITUS

Right. So if there are no questions --

GIRL IN BLACK

Yeh, I have a question. Why'd you stop writing?

It's the question he feared most. Titus ruffles his uncombed hair, wishing to God he'd never come.

TITUS

Who says I stopped writing?

GIRL IN BLACK

Well, you haven't published anything in -- I dunno, how long?

TITUS

I'm working on a new volume now -- sometimes, you know, it -- uh

He surveys the audience. What is he explaining himself to these yokels for? He shuts his book and heads for the door.

POETRY CLUB PREZ

Mr. Jackson? Excuse me, where are -- ?
Don't you want to sign your -- ?

But he's gone. A MATRON in front whispers to her neighbor:

MATRON

I smelled liquor on his breath.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

As Titus turns a corner, he runs smack into Megan.

MEGAN

Oh! Titus!

Furious, his look could kill. He brushes past her.

TITUS

Screw you.

She follows him through a maze of aisles.

TITUS (CONT'D)

You went to Ilene behind my back?

MEGAN

She's my friend! I introduced you,
remember?

Patrons are looking up from their reading.

LIBRARIAN

Shhh! Keep it down!

TITUS

*My agent, my publisher! My fucking
life! They're all about me, every
last one of them!*

The librarian walks over.

LIBRARIAN

Excuse me, I'm going to have to ask
you to step outside --

MEGAN

They're about relationships -- !

TITUS

They're about A relationship -- ours!

MEGAN

So? How many poems have you written
about me?

TITUS
Maybe you just *thought* they were
about you!

That smarts. She's stopped as he heads for the door.

EXT. LIBRARY PARKING LOT - DAY

Titus strides to his truck as Megan tries to catch up.

MEGAN
I'm sorry, I was going to tell you --

TITUS
That right? When? At the publication
party -- ?

MEGAN
I was hoping you'd make that new
anthology and it would --

TITUS
Who'd they go with, anyway? Don't
tell me -- the hipster, right?

She shrugs.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Pretentious twit. "Great American
Poet", my ass.

She catches up with him as he fumbles with the lock. She
watches him, transparently vulnerable.

MEGAN
Well. At least tell me what you
thought.

TITUS
Of what?

MEGAN
My poems.

He climbs behind the wheel.

TITUS
They're perfect.

MEGAN
Really?

TITUS

Yeah, perfect for the Parade magazine crowd. They'll sell like hotcakes down at the mall.

It's a poison dart. He backs out. Megan races to her car.

INT. MEGAN'S CIVIC - DAY

Megan follows Titus as she dials her cell phone.

INT. TITUS'S PICK-UP - CONTINUOUS

Titus's phone RINGS. He sees Megan in his rear view mirror, phone to her ear. He tosses his phone out the window.

EXT. MEGAN'S CIVIC - CONTINUOUS

It nearly hits Megan's windshield. She swerves to avoid it, running on to the curb, coming to a halt as Titus drives on.

INT. BAR - AFTERNOON

The bar is empty, save for a few four o'clock drinkers. Titus sits alone, brooding. Someone sits down beside him. He glances over. It's the pink-haired girl from the reading. She opens a book of his poetry, slides it across the bar.

TITUS

You stalking me?

GIRL IN BLACK

You wish.

She passes Titus a pen to sign. He looks at her.

TIME CUT.

ABOUT AN HOUR LATER. Titus and the girl have moved to a booth. They slump in the burgundy vinyl seats, inebriated, a half-empty bottle of scotch between them.

TITUS

You were right, you know.

GIRL IN BLACK

What's that?

TITUS

At first, I'd stare at the page till the lines sneered at me. Then I stopped taking out the pad at all. Thought I could trick the words into coming. If I just went about my day
(MORE)

TITUS (CONT'D)
as if they didn't matter, maybe they'd
grow jealous. Instead, I just became
absorbed in minutia

(He sighs.)
"The days run away, like wild horses
over the hills."

GIRL IN BLACK
I thought you'd blame it on the drink.

TITUS
No, I drink to have something to
blame it on.

GIRL IN BLACK
But you were so prolific back --

TITUS
Yeh, yeh, back when.

He lights a cigarette, sucks it in, deep.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Back then, it seemed like every alley
cat or el train was oozing with irony.
Every greasy spoon waitress was a
new character that tripped the
imagination with possibilities.

She steals a cigarette from his pack; he passes the lighter.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Sometimes I blame the critics who
love to take a man down just as he's
beginning to buy their praise. But
then, hey -- there's Dickinson, Van
Gogh. No, the truth of it is, people
just don't much interest me anymore.
I don't see heartbreak in the diner
waitress now. Just someone who's
slow with my coffee.

The girl slips her hand on his thigh, seductively.

TITUS (CONT'D)
I'm afraid I've lost interest in
that as well, my dear.

He slides out of the booth, taking his bottle, and goes.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Sagging floors, cramped bookshelves. Nothing in this house
has moved for years. Photos of a young Megan and Titus, wildly

in love, give way to more pensive shots, and finally, to solo images of two middle-aged people adrift in separate worlds. Titus being feted, accepting awards, Megan in the background, if present at all.

IN THE BEDROOM, Megan chews on a pencil as she grades papers in bed. She glances at the clock. Almost midnight. She picks up the phone, dials.

MEGAN

Did I wake you?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SYDNEY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SYDNEY, fiftyish, reads in bed. Her husband, DOUG, beside her, glued to the tv, which blares HORRIFYING CRIES.

SYDNEY

Doug is watching Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

DOUG

Nightmare on Elm Street.

SYDNEY

Same dif. What's up?

MEGAN

I was hoping Titus might be over there.

SYDNEY

Again? Megan --

MEGAN

He saw the galleys today. He knows.

SYDNEY

So? Good, he knows.

MEGAN

It's hard on his ego --

SYDNEY

Megan, he should be pouring champagne on your toes! How many celebrations have you thrown for him? This book is going to put you on the map!

MEGAN

I'm just worried about him.

SYDNEY

Do you want Doug to go look for him?

Doug shoots her a '*what, are you crazy?*' look.

MEGAN

No, I'm sure he'll be home any minute.

SYDNEY

Maybe you should go see Doug tomorrow.
Maybe it's time, Megan.

MEGAN

I can't leave him now, just as I'm
having a little success.

SYDNEY

Listen to you! You tiptoe through
land mines for him, and he uses your
heart to wipe his boots.

MEGAN

Syd, he's on a slide --

SYDNEY

He's been on a slide for ten years.
(to Doug:)
What do you have at nine?

Doug shrugs.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Doug can see you at nine. You know
where it is, right? 19 Centre Street.

MEGAN

I don't know, maybe it's inevitable.
How do you keep the spark alive after
twenty-some years?

Glancing at Doug, absorbed in his movie, jaw agape.

SYDNEY

You can't get sparks without a little
wood.

INT. SMITTY'S BAR & POOL HALL - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

A poker game underway. It's down to four players, including
Titus, who has only a small stack left. A pack of Camels
and his truck keys on the table beside him.

PLAYER ONE

Nah, I'm out.

The player to his left quickly folds as well, and steps away.

PLAYER TWO

All yours, fellas.

The only thing between Titus and a very large pot is a MEXICAN in a pink Hawaiian shirt. Titus lights his last cigarette, then pushes all-in. The tension ratchets up a notch.

MEXICAN

I'll see you.

Everyone waits for the card reveal; instead, Titus pushes his truck keys to the center, nods to the Mexican.

All eyes turn to the Mexican.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - PRE-DAWN

Titus wanders unsteadily along an embankment. He downs a can of Red Bull to sober him up. He stumbles, tumbling down the embankment and on to the railroad tracks below.

He lies on the tracks, surrendering to the ache. O.S., we hear a WHISTLE moan.

It registers in Titus's eyes, but he doesn't move. Instead, a faint smile crosses his lips as the sound of the TRAIN grows louder, till the train is bearing down on him.

Just before reaching him, the train switches tracks and chugs past him on the alternate track.

Titus CHUCKLES ruefully. Can't even off himself right.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan sits in bed with her laptop, trying, but unable to work. She sets her pencil on the nightstand, into a cup full of chewed-up pencils. She sips the last of her red wine, then clicks on a movie file.

HER POV, laptop screen: amateur video of an intimate, no-fuss lakeside wedding. QUICK JUMP CUTS of a close-knit tribe of recent college grads, clowning.

She studies the images like an archeologist searching for clues to the present in the past.

Mid-ceremony, Titus recites a Merwin verse to his young bride.

TITUS

*"If we are separated I will
try to wait for you*

(MORE)

TITUS (CONT'D)
*on your side of things
 your side of the wall and the water
 and of the light moving at its own speed ..."*

A bad edit JUMPS to the reception, as Doug raises his Heinekin in a toast. Titus grabs Megan from behind, startling her. He whispers something in her ear. She laughs. The look captured between them in that moment is that thing every human longs for -- mutual lust and unguarded Love with a capital L.

Megan FREEZE FRAMES on that look.

EXT. RAILWAY STATION - PRE-DAWN

A COMMUTER in a Brooks Brothers suit glances off nervously, to the end of the platform, where Titus is vomiting on the tracks. He wipes his mouth, staggers away, checking the ash cans for cigarette butts. He catches the man's eye.

TITUS
 Hey, you! Yeh, you, Mr. Suit!

The commuter immerses himself in his Wall Street Journal as Titus approaches.

TITUS (CONT'D)
 You got a couple bucks I could borrow?

The businessman grabs his briefcase and scurries off.

TITUS (CONT'D)
 What're you -- ? You pussy! Got a
 thousand dollar suit but you can't
 spare a buck for a -- ? Goddamn
 yuppie

Returning to the ash can, Titus finds a treasure: a barely-smoked Marlboro. He fishes it out of the tray, delighted. He digs through his pockets for a lighter, comes up empty.

He's staring at the butt, forlorn, when an odd look comes over him: a moment of confusion, then -- sudden, focused attention, as if taking in something wildly profound. The DING-DING-DING of crossing bells.

POV from across the platform as a train whizzes past. Through the gaps between the cars, we catch flashes of Titus, frozen there, his eyes slowly lifting skyward.

A beatific smile emerges on his lips. He drops the cigarette. The anger melts from his body and a sense of tranquility washes over him. Strangely moved by something we do not see, tears of joy come to his eyes.

INT. MEGAN'S CIVIC - PRE-DAWN

Megan drives at a crawl through empty downtown streets, combing parking lots and alleys.

HER POV: as she passes an office building: 19 Centre Street.

She ponders a moment, then continues on.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAWN

Titus ambles down the walk, looking about in childlike wonder.

HIS POV: the whole world is aglow with unreal light -- colors vibrate, the focus is deep, into forever. CAWS from above.

Hundreds of crows cut curls across the sky, some peeling left, some right, then sweeping together again in a fluid air dance, black wings against wisps of clouds.

Titus watches, filled with the beauty of it.

The birds sweep past a steeple, pulling Titus's eyes to an old stone cathedral. A homeless man is asleep by the entry. Titus is drawn to him. He takes off his jacket and, without waking him, gently lays it over the man's shoulders.

As he starts away, he turns, feeling eyes on him. A PRIEST nods to him through the rectory window.

INT. MEGAN'S CIVIC - DAWN

Returning home, Megan spots Titus, wandering down the street, dazed and disoriented. She slows.

MEGAN

Titus?

EXT. STREET - DAWN

She stops the car, gets out.

MEGAN

Titus, what are you doing?

He turns, surprised but pleased to see her.

TITUS

I was, uh -- I was walking home.

MEGAN

You're going in the wrong direction.

TITUS

Yeah, I, uh ... I got lost.

MEGAN
You got lost? You're five blocks
from the house.

TITUS
It's that way, right?

It's not. She looks at him, disgusted.

MEGAN
Just get in the car.

INT. MEGAN'S CIVIC - DAWN

Megan pulls away.

MEGAN
Where's the truck? I checked
Smitty's, it's not in the lot.

But Titus is immersed in the vista, as if seeing it for the
first time.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Did you total it? Or were you too
loaded to drive? Not that it's ever
stopped you before.

TITUS
What? Oh. I don't need it anymore.

MEGAN
You what?

TITUS
Oh my God!

MEGAN
What?

Startled, she looks over. He is rolling down the window.

HIS POV: fuchsia and saffron bleed over the rooftops like
ink on wet paper.

TITUS
Look at that! It's magnificent!

MEGAN
It's a sunrise, Titus. I know you
haven't seen one since '92, but I'm
a working girl, remember? I've seen
more than my share.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Megan ushers Titus into the bedroom and goes to the closet.

MEGAN

I've got to get to work --

Titus heads for the bathroom as Megan starts to change. A moment later, she hears the shower running.

INT. SHOWER - EARLY MORNING

Titus lets the water rush over him, suddenly emotional.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - MORNING

Megan grabs her car keys.

MEGAN

Titus? I'm leaving now.

No reply. She starts for the door. She hears the WATER stop, then a door CREAKS open.

Titus steps out, naked and dripping wet, looking like a lost lamb. She watches, perplexed, as he crosses to her and drops to his knees. He throws his arms around her hips, holds her.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus! Stop, you're drenching me!

He holds on emphatically. Megan sighs, tired of the drama.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus, I have a faculty meeting in twenty minutes.

Then she hears: he is SOBBING. Megan softens, disturbed.

TITUS

Don't leave me. Don't leave me.

MEGAN

I've got to go to work, Titus.

She wriggles out of his grasp and heads out.

INT. COLLEGE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

At her faculty meeting, Megan tries to appear attentive, as she ponders her husband's baffling behavior. She catches herself chewing on her pencil, sets it down.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

TITUS'S POV: daylight, refracted through a crystal chandelier, plays across the ceiling, casting kaleidoscopic colors.

Titus lies in bed, still naked, contentedly transfixed by the dance, like a babe in a crib.

INT. HOUSE - LATE DAY

Megan enters, tosses her satchel on the sofa.

MEGAN

Titus?

She looks about. Walking past the window, she does a double-take. Titus is sitting in the back yard, buck naked.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Oh dear god.

EXT. BACK YARD - LATE DAY

Megan steps outside. Titus sits with his back to her, whispering. She's getting a little spooked now. Across the way, she can see their septuagenarian neighbor peering at Titus through her kitchen window, her overexcited dachshund yapping at her feet.

Megan approaches slowly.

MEGAN

Titus? What are you doing?

Titus continues. She waits. He looks up, calm, energized; like a scientist on the verge of a major breakthrough.

TITUS

I can't talk now.

MEGAN

Are you okay?

TITUS

Okay? I'm outstanding. I feel better than I've felt my whole life.

MEGAN

Really? Who were you talking to?

He gestures as if to say, *isn't it obvious?* Megan mimics the gesture, as if to say, *no*. She notices a small stack of books beside him -- Rilke, Blake, and on his lap, a Bible opened to the Psalms. She squats beside him.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus. Did something happen last night?

He chuckles.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

You can tell me. Whatever it is, it's okay.

His laughter grows heartier, frustrating her more, then calms to a brilliant, satiated smile.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Okay, you're pissed at me, I got it. I said I'm sorry. Get over it.

Inside, the phone RINGS. She heads for the door.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

And keep that book on your lap, Mrs. Calabrese is watching.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE DAY

Megan answers the phone.

SYDNEY (filter)

Did the bastard turn up?

MEGAN

Come over, I need you.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DOUG'S CADILLAC - LATE DAY

Doug drives. Syd applies mascara as she talks.

SYDNEY

Can't. We're on our way to this uber-fascinating rubber chicken divorce lawyer schmooze fest. (reading from brochure:) "Strategic Uses of Contempt in Divorce." All this time, I've been squandering my contempt in marriage.

MEGAN

Titus is reading the Bible.

EXT. BACK YARD - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

TITUS'S POV, CU: dandelions, genius in their geometry.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Syd, Doug and Megan stand at the window, watching Titus blow on dandelion fuzz, delighting as the blossoms float away.

DOUG
He's on something.

The PHONE RINGS.

SYDNEY
Does he have sunscreen on?
(Off Megan's look:)
I'm serious. His little pecker's
going to be red as a lobster.

Megan picks up the phone.

MEGAN
Yes, Mrs. Calabrese, I know, I know.

Outside, Titus turns, giving Sydney a frontal view.

SYDNEY
I take back the "little" part.

MEGAN
(into phone:)
No, I'm sure it's terribly offensive,
Mrs. Calabrese. I noticed you could
only take a few hours of it

DOUG
We're gonna be late for the dinner.

Doug grabs a plaid robe from the armchair, and goes outside.

MEGAN
(into phone:)
I'm trying, believe me, I -- Fine,
call the cops!

As Megan hangs up, Syd pulls some papers from her bag, passes them to Megan.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
What's this?

She looks. It's divorce papers.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
I can't look at that now.

Outside, Doug approaches Titus with the robe like a matador to a bull. Titus embraces Doug like a long-lost friend.

SYDNEY
Megan, you've been talking about it --

MEGAN
I know --

SYDNEY
Since Boy George had the number one
single

They watch as Doug drapes the robe over Titus's shoulders.
Titus shrugs it off. Doug tries again.

MEGAN
What am I going to do with him?

SYDNEY
I'll put them in this drawer, okay?
You take a look when you have time.

Doug brings Titus in, wrapped in the robe.

MEGAN
I'd give him an Ambien to sleep it
off, but I don't know what he's on --

TITUS
Smell the grass! Have you smelled
the grass lately, Doug?

DOUG
I'm guessing mushrooms.

TITUS
Syd! Look at you! You have angel
hair!

Titus throws open his arms to hug her. His robe falls to
the floor. Syd recoils.

SYDNEY
Ecstasy.

TITUS
(laughs)
You're all wrong! I'm on God!

They glance at one another. All together:

MEGAN, DOUG & SYD
Acid.

Mystery solved, Doug grabs his coat and heads for the door.

DOUG
Valium will neutralize it.

MEGAN
Valium? Really?

SYDNEY
Lots of vitamin C.

DOUG
And get him to bed. Come on, Syd,
we're late.

FOLLOW Megan as she shows them to the door.

SYDNEY
Damn it, we've missed the first boring
speech but if we hurry, we can still
catch the second, euthanising, speech.

O.S., we hear cabinets SHUTTING, pots CLANKING.

MEGAN
Thanks, guys.

They go. The COMMOTION grows louder. Megan returns to the
kitchen to find Titus emptying the cupboards.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

TITUS
I'm cleaning!

MEGAN
You're cleaning -- ? Why are you
throwing out the peanuts? Stop!

TITUS
We need a fresh start --

She finds a valium, pours a glass of orange juice.

MEGAN
Here, take this --

TITUS
No, I told you, I'm clean! Look!

He nods to the trash: it's filled with liquor bottles.
Megan turns to the bar: the shelves are emptied.

TITUS (CONT'D)
I just want *everything* ... clean.

She watches, forlorn, as he returns to his task. A beat.

MEGAN

Couldn't you just be happy for me?

TITUS

What? What are you talking about?

MEGAN

All these years, I stood in the wings,
I typed your poems --

TITUS

Megan, of course I'm --

MEGAN

I've worked at that damn college for
twenty years, because you were too
self-destructive to keep a real job!

TITUS

Why are you -- ?

MEGAN

I put everything on hold for your
fucking genius! Now that I've finally --
you can't stand it, can you? You
have to --

TITUS

What?

MEGAN

Do this!

TITUS

What am I doing?

MEGAN

This drama! Stir up a crisis!

TITUS

There's no crisis, there's no -- !
I'm happy for you, Meg, truly! Over
the moon! But this has nothing to
do with that.

(grabbing her:)

Megan, something happened to me!
Something extraordinary!

MEGAN

Okay, fine. What? Tell me!

TITUS

I don't know if I can explain it.

MEGAN

Try, Titus.

He strides to the sliding glass doors, throws open the drapes so that the late afternoon light floods in.

TITUS

There. It was like that --

He steps back, looks at it.

TITUS (CONT'D)

No, that's not quite right.

He grabs the Windex and begins cleaning the smudged glass. Megan sinks into the armchair, watching. He wipes them clean, turns to her.

TITUS (CONT'D)

There. That's it. That's what happened to my mind!

MEGAN

Oh, okay, *now* I get it --
(Not.)

TITUS

The light, Megan! I was just standing there ... and this light rushed in! This clarity!

MEGAN

No. Not literally.

TITUS

Yes. Literally!

Megan's eyes shift from the creamy light back to him.

MEGAN

Titus, are you -- are you *really* telling me -- *you saw the light?*

TITUS

(A belly laugh.)

Yes! *Hallelujah!* I saw the -- that's good! That's it! *That's* what they mean! That's incredible! Yes, I saw the light! *I saw the light!*

Megan retrieves the vodka from the garbage, brings the bottle and shot glass with her, sits. Titus is still chuckling over his little joke.

MEGAN

Okay, let's start at the beginning.
Where were you? When this light
thing happened?

TITUS

I was waiting for the train.

MEGAN

The train? To where?

TITUS

That's not important. That's just
where it happened. This sudden
brilliant --

MEGAN

What? The sun came out, or -- ?

TITUS

No, no, it was this amazing, pristine --
like the air after a rain. Like,
back before we polluted this whole
goddamn planet, it was Garden of
Eden air. And the colors -- my god!
Everything glowed with this golden --
you know when people say they see
auras? I thought they were crazy.

MEGAN

They are crazy.

TITUS

They're not! I saw it ... like the
sun was bottled inside them, making
them translucent -- every detail of
their life, every nuance of thought
was revealed to me. The light
transmitted all the knowledge of the
universe. I comprehended the cosmos --

MEGAN

The cosmos? Really?

TITUS

(over))
-- in an instant, in all its
perfection. And I knew. Of course.

MEGAN

Of course what?

TITUS

It was God.

MEGAN

What was God?

TITUS

Whatever this was, this ineffable thing ... coursing through me, claiming me -- God! I was transcended, you see? I transcended this body, this insipid reality. I felt such peace and euphoria -- I feel it now, lingering, like a brilliant hangover. I think ... I dunno ... I think I achieved enlightenment today, Megan.

He waits eagerly for some glimmer that she gets it. Silence.

MEGAN

Wow. That's ... quite an achievement.

TITUS

This is why I didn't want to tell you. I knew you wouldn't believe me.

MEGAN

Of course I don't believe you, Titus! You don't believe in God!

TITUS

I know!

He laughs, throws his arms open: *go figure*.

TITUS (CONT'D)

That's the beauty of it!

MEGAN

Well, had I only known you were off having a cosmic experience, I wouldn't have stayed up all night worrying about you.

Megan grabs the vial of Ambien, heads for the bedroom.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed. When I wake up, be normal.

Titus watches her go out, too elated to be discouraged by her indifference. His eyes fall on the family room wall. He thinks a moment, takes down a picture, picks up a pencil.

EXT. YARD - MORNING

Dressed now, Titus collects a handful of dandelions. He notices the scowling neighbor, Mrs. Calabrese, watching from her window, her curious dachshund in her arms. He waves.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

TITUS'S POV: Megan, childlike in her sleep. She stirs, opens her eyes to find:

Titus watching her sleeping, an adoring smile on his lips.

TITUS
Good morning!

Megan looks at him, wary, starts to get up.

TITUS (CONT'D)
No, no, don't get up!

He picks up a breakfast tray he's prepared -- pancakes, tea, an orange. A bud vase stuffed with dandelions. She sits up as he sets it before her, marveling at his effort. Pointing to the syrup:

TITUS (CONT'D)
That's the kind you like, the crappy
low-fat kind.

MEGAN
(a reluctant smile)
Huh, this is really --

She notes the "Quickie Mart" sticker on the orange.

TITUS
Here, make a wish!

He grabs a dandelion, holds it to her mouth.

MEGAN
You're having an affair, aren't you?

TITUS
I read your poems.

MEGAN
I know, you said. Perfect for the
banal tastes of the ignorant masses.

TITUS
No, no, I didn't read them the first
time, not really. I was blinded
with envy.

MEGAN

Right.

TITUS

You really capture the paradox of marriage -- damn good stuff.

MEGAN

Really?

TITUS

I mean, it wasn't fun reading -- I can only imagine what people will think of me, but -- they were brutally honest. Powerful.

MEGAN

It isn't that little check-out girl, is it? Down at the Quickie Mart?

TITUS

Eat up! Before it gets cold!

Megan reaches for the fork.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Oh, wait! Do you mind?

He grabs the Bible, opens it to a book-marked page.

TITUS (CONT'D)

"Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding manner. Honor them as heirs with you in the gift of life." Amen.

After a stunned silence:

MEGAN

I have to pee.

She climbs out of bed. He reaches for her as she passes, tries to pull her in for a kiss. She scuttles away.

TITUS

I was just --

MEGAN

You don't get to do that, to suddenly play the saint as if the last ten years hadn't happened!

TITUS
Okay, right -- look, I've done awful
things, right from the get-go,
starting with Amy --

MEGAN
Who's Amy?

TITUS
Back in college --

MEGAN
We weren't married then.

TITUS
I screwed her after we were married.

MEGAN
What?

TITUS
And Sharon -- Sharon what's her name?

MEGAN
Sharon with the -- ? Jeezus! You
know they're not real, don't you?

TITUS
And then, god, there was that time --

MEGAN
You know what? I don't need to know!

She goes out. He follows her.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Megan strides past the family room, not noticing the
beginnings of a sketch on the wall. She opens the cupboard.

TITUS
What are you doing?

MEGAN
I'm making coffee!

TITUS
I brought you tea! You drink tea!

MEGAN
Well, *today* I drink coffee! You've
found God, I'm drinking coffee!
Things change!

She dumps the beans into the grinder.

TITUS

And Kristin.

MEGAN

Kristin -- that's the one who kept calling and hanging up, isn't it?

TITUS

No, no, that was Lea. Lea was crazy.

Megan slams her palm on the grinder. It WHIRRRS like a construction site, drowning him out. He waits, then:

TITUS (CONT'D)

And those two Armenian women --

MEGAN

I said, I don't need to know -- !

TITUS

Okay, okay! I'm sorry, I'm sorry -- I just -- you know, if we're going to start fresh, we need to get it all out, right? How will I get absolution if I don't --

MEGAN

Talk to a priest!

TITUS

I feel awful, Megan, I've been fucking brutal to you -- like that time I told you I'd give Andrew your poems --

MEGAN

And what? You didn't? You just let me think they were rejected?

TITUS

They *would've* been -- I'm sorry, I didn't know how to tell you --

MEGAN

Do you know how devastated I was?

She charges past him for the bathroom. He follows.

TITUS

The point is --

MEGAN

I'm so glad there's a point!

She locks the door behind her. He talks through the door.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

As she starts to undress:

TITUS (O.S.)
I see now, Megan -- that's the point!

She turns on the shower to drown him out. Titus continues as she climbs inside and lets the water wash over her.

TITUS (CONT'D)
I -- Megan?

He tries the door, it swings open. Megan sighs.

MEGAN
We gotta fix that lock.

He climbs into the shower with her, fully clothed.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Stop! What're you doing -- ?

TITUS
I'm apologizing, Megan.

MEGAN
Yeh, nice to know you feel really bad about it.

TITUS
Megan, I'm so lost without you --

MEGAN
Will you listen to yourself? You're a prize-winning poet! Find God, and suddenly you're talking in fucking Air Supply lyrics! Stop!

TITUS
You were my mirror, my muse, my rock. And I paid you back with cruelty and indifference ... I don't know why -- why did you stay with me?

The words release rivers of remorse. She stares, stunned.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Forgive me, Megan. Forgive me.

Her suspicions peel away like old wallpaper in the steam. She's waited years for just a morsel of regret. Something to hang her hope on.

MEGAN

Okay. Okay.

Her arms fall around him, despite herself. He grips her, tight.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Megan and Titus make love, light streaming through the open curtains across their still-damp bodies.

TIME CUT.

HOURS LATER. Megan contemplates the man sleeping next to her -- so uncharacteristically quiet -- as one might a new lover. She strokes his cheek lightly. He awakens, gently brushes her hair from her face.

QUICK FLASHBACK/MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

CU: His mother's long brown hair glows copper in the sun.

She walks away, suitcase in hand, into a waiting cab, as a tearful three year-old Titus watches from the doorway.

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

TITUS

My mother had hair your color.

MEGAN

You said you had no memory of her.

TITUS

I remember the sun in her hair --

MEGAN

Titus, you were three years-old when she left. How could you?

TITUS

I just do. I remember all sorts of things now.

(off her look)

You don't believe me.

MEGAN

I don't know what to believe.

She reaches for her glasses. He retrieves them for her.

TITUS

Do you remember that time you lost your glasses? We were at a café near the college. And you didn't notice ...

MEGAN

What made you think of that -- ?

TITUS

... because you were so enrapt in my conversational prowess --

MEGAN

Because I was wearing my prescription sunglasses!

TITUS

... and when it got dark, you reached for the other pair and they weren't there. We retraced our steps all the way back to Sheep Meadow --

MEGAN

It got so dark, I couldn't see the hand in front of my face --

TITUS

You looked like a mole rat --

MEGAN

You had to lead me all the way home --

TITUS

In that brown sweater, beady-eyed

MEGAN

I never did find those glasses.

TITUS

I fell in love with you that night.

MEGAN

Really? You never said.

He nods. She smiles. A beat, then the smile fades.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

I wonder where they go?

TITUS

What?

MEGAN

All the things we've lost.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Syd walks past a Victoria's Secret billboard, on her cell.

SYDNEY

He brought you weed?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MEGAN'S OFFICE - UNIVERSITY - DAY

Megan: a lingering grin as she twirls a dandelion, phone to her ear.

MEGAN

Weeds. Dandelions. And pancakes.

SYDNEY

Wait, so let me get this straight:
he's stopped drinking?

MEGAN

And smoking --

SYDNEY

And he worships you ... !

MEGAN

Brings me breakfast in bed!

SYDNEY

And wants to fuck you 24/7?

MEGAN

Exhausts me!

Syd spots Doug outside a taco stand. Phone to his ear, he chomps into a taco, spilling salsa on his white shirt.

SYDNEY

I wonder if you can induce this
condition.

Megan chuckles. She slips the dandelion into a book of Merwin poems, pressing it.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Well, Titus has always been an extreme personality. What about his Hemingway phase? Running with the bulls.

MEGAN

He loves to show off that scar.

SYDNEY

Or the car racing?

MEGAN

Syd, Titus is the only man on earth who sent hate mail to Mother Teresa.

SYDNEY

It's just another phase.

MEGAN

But why God?

SYDNEY

Why not? He's tried everything else. Titus is like a teenager. The more you resist, the longer it will last. Just go along with it. In ten minutes, he'll be on to something new. I mean, at least he's stopped drinking, right?

MEGAN

He really was very sweet this morning. Maybe there's some good to be had from this God thing ...

Syd looks off to Doug, on his cell, gesticulating, irritated.

SYDNEY

As long as he doesn't think he IS God

MEGAN

No, I don't *think* he's God.

SYDNEY

Good. He can't be God. Doug is God. Everyone knows Doug is God.

MUSIC IN: "Free Your Mind (and the rest will follow)" OVER:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Titus sits on a bluff overlooking the Pacific, eyes closed in meditation.

Light falls across the cityscape with TIME LAPSE speed.

A baby's wondrous eyes morphs into an old man's weary eyes.

A barren tree sprouts leaves, then blossoms, Instant Spring.

Nestled in jars of brilliant paints, a sign in an art store window reads "Help Wanted, Inquire Within." INCLUDE TITUS, nodding.

TITUS

Yes, "inquire *within*," exactly ...!

He chuckles at the unintended profundity as the manager studies him from behind the glass, puzzled.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET CORNER - AFTERNOON

Traffic whizzing by. Shoppers pass with bags of new purchases. Businessmen check their smart phones. Titus stands on the sidewalk, a still figure in a fluid landscape, muttering.

TITUS

... not paying attention. You're not paying attention.

HIS POV: the faces of passersby, dead inside. A YOUNG MOTHER rushes past a flower cart exploding with color, preoccupied.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Stop! See? Ohmigod, the brilliance --

She skirts around him. In b.g., we see a POLICE OFFICER glancing over.

TITUS'S POV: a glass building is a giant mirror of clouds.

Titus reaches out to a BLACK GUY strolling by.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Look at the play between the sky and --

BLACK GUY

Hey, don't fuck with me, man.

He shrugs him off. A bus stops and passengers disembark, streaming past Titus.

TITUS

It's a tragedy! If you can't see --

The police officer approaches.

POLICE OFFICER

Okay, mister, move along now, huh?

TITUS

No, no! See, *that's* the problem!
Everyone's just moving along --

POLICE OFFICER

Okay, but you're gonna have to --

TITUS

Do you see the sadness? No one can
see the opportunity of this moment --

POLICE OFFICER

Yeh, it's fucking tragic. You know
what would be more tragic? If I was
to find those mushrooms on you and
have to miss my lunch hour hauling
you down to the station, so why don't
you just keep moving there ...?

The cop nudges him along like a crazy vagrant; indeed, he looks a little crazy as he shuffles away, debilitated by the insensibility of passersby.

Then something catches his eye.

Through a restaurant window, he spies a COUPLE in a heated argument, oblivious to the distress of their young SON, between them. The boy glances up, meeting Titus's gaze, tearing at his heart.

Titus reaches behind his ear and pulls out a coin, the one trick in his repertoire. It elicits a smile from the freckle-faced boy who is relieved, if only to be seen by someone.

INT. MEGAN'S CIVIC - DAY

"Do That to Me One More Time" on the oldies station. Megan sings along as she drives, a libidinous smile in her eyes. She spots Titus's pick-up cruising past her, the Mexican behind the wheel. She does a double-take, makes a quick u-turn.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

Titus wanders down a desolate street, distressed. O.S., a DRUM beats. He listens, as it grows louder. It's joined by a TAMBOURINE, then voices SINGING. Titus looks off.

Framed by tall buildings, a long parade of Hari Krishnas cross the intersection, in gold and saffron robes, all singing, dancing, twirling joyfully, a shimmering mirage in a concrete canyon.

HARI KRISHNAS
 Hari Krishna, Hari Krishna ...

Titus brightens as he draws closer. Four Krishnas carry a large, golden shrine, trailing colorful streamers.

He catches up to them as they turn a corner. Their joy is infectious. He begins to sing along. Soon he is skipping and dancing. Delighting in the ebullient music and orgy of color, Titus joins them as they move down the street, past disapproving shoppers with their Pinkberrys and Gap bags.

HARI KRISHNAS (CONT'D)
 Krishna Krishna, Hari Hair ...

A TEEN with a shaved head welcomes him. A PRETTY GIRL dances around him, clinking finger cymbals in the air. Titus revels in the sense of freedom and ecstasy, unself-conscious.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Megan enters, tosses her satchel on the table, where she finds: jars of paint ... finger cymbals ... an orange scarf draped over a chair.

LAUGHTER O.S. Curious, Megan follows VOICES into:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

... where she finds Titus sitting around the table with a small group of Krishnas.

TITUS
 So do you agree with the Sufis?
 They say that once you encounter
 God, you're neither Christian, Muslim
 or Jew, you leave those distinctions
 behind --
 (Spotting Megan:)
 Oh! Hey guys, this is my wife, Megan.
 Megan, this is Radha and Kartik and
 Walter

Megan nods, speechless.

TITUS (CONT'D)
 We're having the most fascinating
 talk! Did you know that Krishna had
 over sixteen thousand wives?

MEGAN
 How lovely for him. Unfortunately,
 you have only one wife, who'd like
 very much for everyone to go now --

TITUS
Aw, come on, join us!

Megan moves to the front door, holds it open.

MEGAN
Anyone need a lift to the airport?

TITUS
They don't do that anymore, Megan.

Megan steps out, returns with the scarf, CLINKING the finger cymbals.

MEGAN
Hari hari, chop-chop!

The Krishnas exchange uncomfortable glances, get up to go.

TITUS
You don't have to go --

MEGAN
Au contraire! But they do! Lovely meeting you all, really.

RADHA takes a green mala (prayer beads) she is wearing and drapes them over Titus's neck.

RHADA
It will speed your prayers to heaven.

He bows, moved by the gesture. She whispers in his ear:

RHADA (CONT'D)
Families never understand.

Titus nods. Megan holds the front door as they shuffle out. Shutting it, she turns to Titus.

MEGAN
You are so busted!

TITUS
What?

MEGAN
I know about the truck.

TITUS
The ... ? Oh. Right, that.

MEGAN
Yeh, *that!*

TITUS

So? I bet the truck, I lost it.
Who cares? It's just a truck.

MEGAN

How are you going to get around?

TITUS

I like walking.
(Smiling; a discovery.)
I *like* walking!

As he turns, Megan notices flecks of paint on his arms.

MEGAN

Why do you have paint on your -- ?

Megan follows Titus into the family room where she finds:

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

The beginnings of a mural, composed of tiny multi-colored dots. Titus picks up a palette, gets back to work.

MEGAN

Titus, what are you doing -- ?

TITUS

(a brilliant smile)
Painting! I'm painting!

MEGAN

Painting what?

TITUS

The moment! The moment of
transcendence -- see? Here's the
platform -- here's the trees and the --

MEGAN

No, I don't see, and --

TITUS

Well, it's pointillist ... this is
how we see the world -- close up,
it's chaos. You have to back up --

He takes her by the shoulders and pulls her back. But all that she can see is an abstraction of dots, closer to a "Magic Eye" optical than Georges Seurat.

TITUS (CONT'D)

I mean, any physicist can tell you,
we're mainly open space with huge
(MORE)

TITUS (CONT'D)
energy fields running through us ...
here's a beer bottle, see? Little
bubbles of bottle float off it.
What's 'bottle' and what's 'not
bottle'?

MEGAN
I never knew you could paint.

TITUS
I couldn't!

He laughs.

MEGAN
And *why* are you doing this?

TITUS
For *you*! I'm painting it for you!
I want you to share this with me,
Megan!

MEGANS
This *what*, Titus?

TITUS
The bliss! This bliss!

MEGAN
It's the paint fumes.

She opens a window.

TITUS
I want you to experience oneness,
Megan!

Megan circles the room, looking under cushions, behind chairs.

MEGAN
I don't want to experience oneness,
Titus. My two-ness is what keeps me
from bumping into things.

TITUS
God, Megan! I want you to get it!

Megan finds the remote control, points it at him, clicks.

MEGAN
Let me talk to Titus now.

He chuckles, then falls into a sober silence.

TITUS

This *is* Titus now, Megan.

A beat as that sinks in. He calmly turns his attention to his palette. Megan drops into a chair, hopeless. Quietly:

MEGAN

Your mind.

TITUS

What's that?

MEGAN

Every little phenomenon the universe burped out, I wanted to discuss with you first. *That's* why I stayed through the affairs, the depression -- because you were the most interesting person I knew!

She goes to him, caresses his arm.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus, we're different in so many ways -- but we agree on certain things -- poetry and politics. And God! It's a *defining agreement*, Titus. We're hanging on by such a thin tether. Don't take this away from us. I don't know if we can survive it.

TITUS

Things change, Megan. I've changed. You're going to have to make your peace with it.

He returns to his mural. Megan watches, baffled, as he paints contentedly. She goes out, muttering.

MEGAN

Those colors don't even go with our furniture.

INT. DOUG'S CADILLAC - NIGHT

Doug drives.

SYDNEY

Whatever you do, don't talk about it, okay?

DOUG

I think we should talk about it.

SYDNEY

No, Megan wants us to be normal.

DOUG

"Normal?" This, from a woman who eats #2 pencils al dente?

SYDNEY

She thinks maybe if he just finds himself in a familiar place with old friends, he might just start acting like his old self, you know --

DOUG

It doesn't happen like that.

SYDNEY

... like a Spring thaw --

DOUG

Thaw? He's not frozen, he's crazy!

SYDNEY

He's not crazy, he's religious!

DOUG

For Titus, that's crazy! The last religious experience Titus had involved a Miss October and ankle cuffs.

SYDNEY

Just don't bring up religion! Talk about the Giants or something.

DOUG

Jesus.

SYDNEY

Definitely don't bring Him up.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The foursome sit in a corner booth. Megan has wine, Syd a beer. Doug swigs his scotch, glances suspiciously at Titus's iced tea, and Titus, caressing Megan's hand. An awkward beat. The waitress arrives, saving them. Starting with Doug:

WAITRESS

Okay, I got a ribeye with baked ...
two cheeseburgers & curly fries ...
(MORE)

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

(Passes them to Syd,

Megan.)

And a Chinese chicken salad, hold
the chicken.

Doug watches as Titus takes the salad.

DOUG

What, are you vegetarian now?

TITUS

Did you know there's a chicken in
China with an 86% win rate over humans
in tic tac toe?

DOUG

Well, you should've ordered the Santa
Fe chicken salad then. I know for a
fact that chickens in New Mexico
can't even master dominoes.

TITUS

Jains, you know, won't even kill
insects. That spider could've been
your mother in a past life.

SYDNEY

That spider was his mother in *this*
life.

DOUG

Is this part of the God stuff?

SYDNEY

Doug --

DOUG

What? I know this guy 30 years, we
can't talk about this God kick?

MEGAN

A God-free conversation would be
really refreshing, actually.

SYDNEY

We can do that for Megan, can't we,
Doug?

TITUS

Well, there is no such thing, really --

MEGAN

I would pay for it, in fact ...

TITUS

Ultimately, it's all God, isn't it?

Doug stares at Titus as if he were speaking Swahili. A beat.

SYDNEY

So I read this really fascinating
article about Chlamydia ...

No one replies to the desperate attempt. As they start to dig in, Titus bows his head in silent prayer. Syd and Doug slow their chomping, not sure what to do. Megan sets down her fork with a resentful sigh. Titus finishes, catches them staring at him. They quickly return to their meals. A beat. Then Doug can no longer restrain himself.

DOUG

You're putting us on, right? We
used to laugh at those New Age rainbow
catcher quacks --

TITUS

I'm just re-thinking things, okay?
Look at what we know today about
quantum physics -- it makes outlandish
miracles quite plausible, actually --

DOUG

I know what's going on. Mid-life
crisis, that's what it is.

TITUS

Why does it threaten you?

DOUG

Who's threatened? When you start
turning water into wine, I'd like a
nice Shiraz

TITUS

You know, I didn't laugh at you when
you got the hair plugs --

DOUG

You called me an insult to Chia pets!

MEGAN

Can we just -- ?

TITUS

I thought you looked great from across
the room!

SYDNEY

Doug, you promised --

DOUG
What? Fuck it, this calls for an
intervention!

MEGAN
I'm going to scream.

DOUG
Batten down the doors! Nobody leaves
till he's deprogrammed!

Titus darts for the door. Megan goes out after Titus. Syd
shoots Doug a dirty look.

DOUG (CONT'D)
What?

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

By the time Megan gets outside, Titus is halfway down the
street. She jogs to catch up, calling:

MEGAN
Titus! Titus! For chrissakes, Doug
was just joking!

TITUS
Ridiculing, there's a difference!

MEGAN
What do you expect? You went from
the poster boy for Paganism to the
Dalai Lama of Hope Street overnight!

TITUS
I'm *happy*, Megan. Do you understand
that? I haven't been this happy
since -- ever. I've never, actually,
been *truly happy* before.

MEGAN
(Stung.)
That's not true, there were plenty
of times, back when we --

TITUS
Yes, of course -- wonderful times,
but they were just flickers, little
fireflies, compared to this --
enduring glow! Do you know what
it's like to wake up in the middle
of your life and find yourself in a
world completely refreshed? I wish
I could talk with you about this the
(MORE)

TITUS (CONT'D)
 way we would talk about Neruda. I'm
 not loony, Megan, just *lonely*. It's
 the most profound thing that's ever
 happened to me and I'm alone in it.
 I'm *starving* for someone who
 understands.

She lets this sink in, but has no reply.

TITUS (CONT'D)
 Go back to your friends.

Megan watches as Titus walks away, pauses at a busy
 intersection.

CLOSER ON TITUS as an odd smile crosses his lips.

HIS POV: The traffic lights become coronas of color bleeding
 into the night. The red tail lights, white headlights, and
 blinking yellow signals all form an elegant ballet as cars
 shift against a neon cityscape, transforming the ordinary
 street into a magical scene.

We slowly RISE UP and FLOAT, over the traffic, weightless.

Down the block, Megan watches, horrified, as Titus, smiling,
 drifts into oncoming traffic. A car is bearing down on him.

MEGAN
Titus!

A frantic HORN. Wheels SCREECH.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A young intern bandages Titus's sprained wrist. Titus looks
 about, strangely content, showing no signs of pain, despite
 the scrapes and bruises on his arms and cheek.

INTERN
 Mr. Jackson, your wife says you walked
 into oncoming traffic. Is that right?

TITUS
 No.

INTERN
 No? Then why don't you tell me what --

TITUS
 I floated.

INTERN
 I'm sorry?

TITUS
I was floating. Over the cars.

INTERN
Will you excuse me a moment?

Titus watches with a lingering grin as the intern steps away and reaches for the phone.

INT. TEST LAB - NIGHT

Titus, wrist bandaged, lies on an exam table in a dark room, electrodes on his scalp, strobe lights flashing before him.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Megan sits in the waiting room, preoccupied. DR. MANN, mid-fifties, a calm demeanor, approaches, glancing at the intake form on his clipboard.

DR. MANN
Ms. ... Odell? Dr. Mann. Why don't
you wait with me in my office?

Megan follows him as he walks, flipping through Titus's file.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
Tell me, have you noticed any changes
in your husband's behavior lately?

MEGAN
How much time have you got?

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

As he leaves the lab, a NURSE points Titus down the hall. He starts in that direction, but hears a terrible GROANING. He follows it to the open door of a patient's room, where a thin ELDERLY WOMAN lies in obvious pain. He approaches wordlessly, glances at her chart. She's unaware of him till he takes her hand. She looks up, startled.

TITUS
Hello, Hilda.

HILDA
Are you a doctor?

TITUS
Just a friend.

HILDA
All my friends are dead.

TITUS

All but one.

She has no idea who he is, but his touch is reassuring. The nurse passes by, stops, surprised.

NURSE

Mr. Jackson? They're waiting for you. This way.

INT. DR. MANN'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The office is atypically warm -- saffron walls, bookshelves. A model of the human brain sits on the desktop. TITUS and MEGAN wait while the doctor looks over the EEG results.

DR. MANN

Mr. Jackson, what you've experienced is caused by a kind of electrical storm in the brain. Epilepsy is --

MEGAN

Epilepsy -- ?

TITUS

Doctor, I think you're confused. I never had a fit or --

DR. MANN

Focal seizures like yours don't cause the convulsions typical of other types of epilepsy. An observer may not even notice a change in your behavior. You might simply experience unusual sensations -- inexplicable anger, elation, sadness. Sometimes, religiosity.

Megan is dumbfounded. Titus sits up.

TITUS

Wait a sec -- are you suggesting that everything I've been feeling -- the inner peace, the presence of God -- was just some ... brain fart?

DR. MANN

(a grin)

Well, "brain fart" would not be the medical terminology for it. Some report the sensation of another, God-like presence. If the seizure involves the centers of bodily perception, you might have a feeling

(MORE)

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
of being thrown down or ... being
lifted up. Not surprisingly, these
are frequently interpreted as
spiritual experiences.

TITUS
Na-uh, *no!* I felt the presence of a
sacred being! As real as this fucking
desk!

He SLAMS his palm against the desk.

DR. MANN
Yes, the brain will be sending your
body all the same signals as if they
were real, so they'll feel absolutely
authentic to you.

Megan looks at Titus, slumped now in his chair. He shakes
his head, chuckling.

TITUS
Freakin' doctors! You have a
diagnosis for everything these days,
don't you?

MEGAN
Honey --

TITUS
People aren't just blue anymore,
they have Dysthymia! They aren't
just bored or restless, they have
A.D.D.! They're not just a shrinking
violet, they have Avoidant Personality
Disorder! Now you've turned
spirituality into a psychosis?!

DR. MANN
No, not a --

TITUS
Where were you when I couldn't get
out of bed in the morning because my
brain felt like rusty lead? When I
was pissing away my wife's money on
booze and ponies? Why don't you go
study the brains of blaspheming bad
husbands?

He heads for the door.

DR. MANN

Mr. Jackson, epilepsy is a serious condition --

TITUS

I don't have epilepsy! I have a *calling!*

He goes out, SLAMMING the door behind him. Megan and the doctor exchange a look. She glances at the door.

MEGAN

I guess I should --

DR. MANN

Yes, he's not to drive.

He grabs his pad.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

I'm ordering more tests, and I'm writing a prescription for an anti-convulsant to inhibit the seizures.

He passes her the scrip.

MEGAN

So ... this religious -- fixation -- and everything ... it can be cured?

DR. MANN

Sometimes the personality changes will last a few days, a week.

MEGAN

Oh thank god!

DR. MANN

It can also be permanent.

MEGAN

No, don't tell me that. I'm pretty sure pointillism is grounds for divorce.

DR. MANN

(a smile)

You won't leave him.

MEGAN

What makes you so sure?

DR. MANN

Love shuts down the reasoning brain.

MEGAN

Now you tell me.

DR. MANN

This condition involves a variety of compulsive behaviors. The painting is part of it. Van Gogh was epileptic. He disrobed in public, among other things --

MEGAN

Been there, done that.

DR. MANN

You'll need to exercise a little patience. Surgery has a better record in that regard, but let's give the medication a chance.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

Titus stands to one side, looking sickly in the florescent green light. The pharmacist passes Megan a vial.

PHARMACIST

Side effects may include somnolence, anxiety, emotional lability, psychosis, depersonalization

Megan glances at Titus; he shakes his head, scowling.

INT. TITUS'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Titus slumps in his worn leather chair. Megan steps into the doorway, a glass of water in one hand, a pill in the other. He is still, not looking at her.

TITUS

I don't want to.

MEGAN

If you don't, it will get worse.

She approaches, offers him the pill. He looks at it.

TITUS

It's like killing God.

MEGAN

Please, Titus.

(She holds it out.)

You could've killed yourself tonight.

He takes the pill from her, stares at it in his hand.

TITUS

You're Eve.

She takes that in with a quiet sigh. She leaves the water on his desk and goes out.

INT. HALLWAY/OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Light from the cracked office door slices across the hall. Megan, in her robe, presses the door open. The room is empty. The pill sits on his desk, untouched. She hears something outside, goes to the window:

HER POV: Titus sits in the garden, between starlight and shadow, turning the mala in his hands and praying urgently.
MUSIC IN: Ave Maria.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Light pours through a stained glass depiction of Christ in Gethemene. As we TRACK from a soloist rehearsing the moving hymn in the otherwise empty church, we hear Titus's whisper:

TITUS (O.S.)

Why? Why did you give this to me?

CONTINUE TO: the vial of pills, propped on the back of a pew. Titus studies them, pensive.

FOOTSTEPS approach. Titus looks up to find a PRIEST standing over him -- bushy brows, wild white hair, like a mad scientist.

EXT. CATHEDRAL -- DAY

Titus and the priest stroll through the church yard.

PRIEST

Ah, yes, the Sacred Disease!

TITUS

What's that?

PRIEST

What the ancient Greeks called it.
Epilepsy -- the Sacred Disease.

The priest sits on a bench, overlooking weathered tombstones. Titus sits beside him.

TITUS

Father, surely you know this is real!
Not a disease to be treated!

PRIEST
Of course. All I'm suggesting is --

TITUS
What?

The priest runs his fingers through his wiry hair, sighs.

PRIEST
Who knows what happens to the mind
when God seizes us?

TITUS
You don't think this is nonsense?
Sacrilege, even?

PRIEST
Look, if God gave us eyes to see,
ears to hear, why wouldn't he give
us something -- an antenna, if you
will -- to receive Him? If your
"signal" was enhanced by this seizure,
then maybe you should be thankful
for your affliction.

TITUS
So you agree I shouldn't treat it?

PRIEST
Oh, goodness, no! I have a pacemaker,
damn grateful for it. You have a
disease, it needs to be treated.

TITUS
What if it makes it go away?

PRIEST
If a pill can make it go away, then
perhaps "it" was never God?

Titus: not sure he wants to find out.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Will you come to mass on Sunday?

TITUS
I don't know if I can, Father.

PRIEST
Oh?

TITUS
My mother abandoned me for the church.
I've never forgiven either.

PREIST

I see. Well, that's a tough one.
But -- now you know why, eh?

As Titus ponders that ... SOUND IN: a DOORBELL.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A modest cottage in need of a new paint job. Overcast day.
On the porch, Titus rings the BELL again. His FATHER, late
70's, appears around the side of the house, an ax in his
hand.

FATHER

Titus. What are you doing here?

TITUS

You chopping wood again? You should
let me do that.

FATHER

I can manage.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

His father watches as Titus chops firewood.

FATHER

I don't know, Titus. I certainly
don't remember anything like that.
It was a long time ago now.

TITUS

What about her family?

FATHER

You mean, seizures? Not that I know
of.

TITUS

Do you remember anything unusual?
Anything at all?

FATHER

She was the most normal person I
knew, right up to the day she left.

Titus puts the ax away, stacks the wood.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It's probably the drink, you know.
Don't blame your genes.

Titus nods, holds his tongue.

TITUS

That should hold you for a while.
I'll, uh ... try to come around more
often, Dad.

FATHER

I get along fine.

TITUS

I know you do. But we should try,
you know? We should try.

He grabs his jacket, starts to go.

FATHER

You're on the wagon now?

Titus nods.

FATHER (CONT'D)

You'll go back. You always do.

The insult pierces him, but he doesn't react.

TITUS

Dad, you know, I was so young when
she left, I couldn't appreciate how
hard it must've been for you, stuck
with a child to raise alone. I blamed
you, but I realize now, you must've
been in so much pain yourself.

Both moved and discomfited by the honesty, his father shrugs.

FATHER

You were a kid.

TITUS

But the anger lingered. Too long.
I'm sorry.

He turns and starts to leave.

FATHER

You know, there was something, now
that I think of it. I came in one
day and she was at the sink. Water
flowing over the basin on to the
floor. She was just staring out the
window, you know, like she was off
somewhere. When I spoke to her, she
seemed confused for a minute. It
was strange. But, you know, it wasn't
a seizure.

TITUS

When was this?

FATHER

Oh, I think ... well, it must've been just a few months before -- you know -- before she left.

TITUS

Huh.

His considers this a beat, then goes to his father, gives him a hug.

TITUS (CONT'D)

I love you, Dad.

His father watches, surprised and awkward, as Titus walks away.

INT. FAMILY ROOM/KITCHEN -- DAY

The mural all but completely covers one wall now. Titus sits on the kitchen table, staring at his work-in-progress, distracted. He grabs a can of paint, searches for a screwdriver to open it. He comes across:

INSERT: The divorce papers, in the drawer where Sydney left them.

He picks them up. Although the document is blank, its mere presence floods him with anxiety. He finds himself gravitating toward the bar, now filled with paint cans. He looks at the door, struggling with the impulse to run out for a fifth.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

Megan and Syd peruse a bin of apples.

MEGAN

I was relieved. That's awful, isn't it? I mean, at least it's treatable. Maybe the medication will help his anger, who knows? Maybe I'll find myself married to the man I fell in love with all those years ago.

SYDNEY

On the other hand, if the drugs don't work, you could find yourself living with a religious nut the rest of your life.

Megan looks at her like the bubble-burster that she is.

SYDNEY (CONT'D)

Just sayin'.

Syd waves to Doug, chowing down at the hot dog stand, as they head to the car.

MEGAN

I went online last night. Do you know how many religious figures had epileptic symptoms? Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Swedenbourg, Kierkegaard --

SYDNEY

Paul, on the road to Damascus -- !

MEGAN

Mohammed, for Christ's sake! Visions, voices, speaking in tongues ... What if whole movements were born from healthy people aping the characteristics of a misunderstood illness? What if God was nothing more than a symptom?

Sydney pushes Megan away.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

What'd you do that for?

SYDNEY

That lightning bolt's meant for you, babe, not me!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON: a photo of Titus and Megan as newlyweds, laughing.
RACK TO: Megan, as she steps through the front door, lugging a stack of homework. The house is still. She nearly walks past when she notices Titus, sitting in the dark, moonlight across his cheek. She looks at him, curious. A beat.

TITUS

I wanted to get away from you.

MEGAN

What?

TITUS

I've been hiding from my own failure for years ... in this little cocoon, where I could evade them all --

MEGAN

Who?

TITUS

All of them, the literati -- anyone more successful than me. Suddenly you were one of them. That's why I went to the station. I wanted to get as far away from you as I could. But something intervened. I call it God, call it what you will, something brought me back to you.

He glances down. She follows his eyes to the table, where the divorce papers lie. Now she gets it.

MEGAN

Titus

Titus opens the vial, balances a pill on his fingertip.

TITUS

Do I take the pill to please you, even though it could destroy the very thing that makes me want to please you?

She had never thought of it that way. We see in his eyes the tension between his fear of losing God and his fear of losing his wife.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Are you on my side, Megan?

She silently surveys her own intentions before replying. She goes to him, kneels by his chair.

MEGAN

Yes. I'm on your side.

Titus studies her, then pops the pill. She drops her head in his lap. He caresses her hair. And they wait.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A cloud creeps across the moon, painting the house black.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Titus lies awake, like Dr. Jekyll awaiting transformation.

CROSSFADE TO:

MORNING. The roar of a LAWN MOWER outside the window awakens Megan. She turns to find Titus's side of the bed empty.

EXT. YARD - MORNING

Megan steps outside to find Titus behind the lawn mower. Stupified, she watches, as he pushes the blades through the unruly grass. Spotting her as he turns, he smiles.

MEGAN
How do you feel?

TITUS
What?

MEGAN
(shouting over:)
I said, how do you feel?

TITUS
Great! Fantastic!

He shuts off the mower, wipes his brow with a handkerchief.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Hey, did you know there's a Sufi
mosque not ten miles from here?

The anticipation drains from Megan's face as he empties the grass bin.

TITUS (CONT'D)
I've always wanted to see a dervish.
They believe the dance creates a
channel from their heart to God.

He dances over to her, grabs her playfully.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Come with me, it'll be an adventure!

MEGAN
Titus, what are you?

TITUS
What do you mean?

MEGAN
Are you Sufi now? Catholic, Krishna?
Every day, it's something new

TITUS
Yes.
(he smiles)
There are so many names for that
sweet mystery.

He heads into the garage.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Gorgeous day!

EXT. SUFI MOSQUE -- DAY

An ornately tiled courtyard. Titus watches, fascinated, as dervishers whirl about the floor to ceremonial music.

OVERHEAD POV: a sea of white skirts twirl ecstatically.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

CU: a spoon stirs the white foam of a cappuccino.

Megan and Ilene, having coffee and scones.

MEGAN
I don't know, Ilene. For so long,
I've hoped that life would tenderize
him a little. And now he is much
more ... but he's so unpredictable.
I'm on pins and needles with him --

ILENE
Could be worse, you know.

MEGAN
Yeh, how?

ILENE
He could've awoken as a gigantic
cockroach.

They share a smile.

ILENE (CONT'D)
Megan, you've always worried about
him.

MEGAN
Not always.

ILENE
Through the drink, through the drugs.

MEGAN
You think I'm co-dependent? Syd
thinks I'm co-dependent.

ILENE
You love him. That simple.

Megan smiles, appreciating Ilene's maternal kindness.

MEGAN

I just fell so hard, you know? From that first day in class. I could see the paper shaking in his hands as he walked to the front. I felt sorry for him. I was accustomed to being the best. I prepared my "oh, that was so *interesting*" smile.

INSERT SHOTS (FLASHBACKS): a scribbled poem in unsteady hands, a girl's smile, the nervous boy's eyes.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

The first line sliced right through me. It was raw and immediate. And I knew I wasn't the best anymore. If it had been a girl, I would've spent the whole year trying to top her. But it was a boy, barely a young man, with sun-browned skin and devastating blue eyes. And so I fell in love instead.

ILENE

It all happened so fast for him, didn't it? It must've been like being married to Jim Morrison.

MEGAN

Mmm, without the money.

ILENE

Your parties, my god. I still brag that I met Joan Didion, coming out of your bathroom and -- was it Bob Dylan or Paul Simon? One of them, playing harmonica on your fire escape. You had quite a grand life!

MEGAN

We did. And he was so kind after the miscarriage.

ILENE

He told me once that you were his Molly Bloom.

MEGAN

If I really loved him, I'd be happy for him, right?

Ilene pulls out a copy of Megan's freshly printed book.

ILENE

The publication party is the 23rd.
And the spotlight will be on you for
a change.

Megan runs her fingers across the crisp cover.

ILENE (CONT'D)

You know, Megan, some of our greatest
works have come from epileptic minds --
Tennyson, Flaubert. Dostoyevsky
said he'd give his whole life for
that one ecstatic moment before a
seizure.

Ilene reaches out, stills her hand.

ILENE (CONT'D)

Compassion isn't for sissies, you
know. Compassion is hard. Stop
asking yourself if it's bad or good
or fair. Something is happening to
your husband. Try to get inside his
experience.

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

Doug is weeding through his inbox when the phone RINGS.

TITUS (FILTER)

You've got some view up here.

DOUG

What're you talking about? Where
are you?

EXT. ROOFTOP OF DOUG'S BUILDING - DAY

Doug steps through the fire door, finds Titus at the edge of
the roof, peering through a pair of binoculars.

DOUG

What're you doing up here?

TITUS

How many times have you walked those
streets? You know them like the
back of your hand, right? But you
can't see the patterns, the context.
You have to go higher.

DOUG

Sure, but you can't get a Philly
cheese steak up here. Hey! Are
those my binoculars?

TITUS
Oh, yeh. I took them.

DOUG
When?

TITUS
Few years back. During a party.

DOUG
You're a fucking thief! What'd you
take my binoculars for?

TITUS
To spy on the lady next door.

DOUG
What, that French chick? With
the ...?
(a smirk)
Why didn't you get your own
binoculars?

TITUS
Cause I'm a louse.

DOUG
Did you see anything?

Titus smiles. Doug chuckles A beat. Titus pulls the divorce
papers from his pocket.

TITUS
Did Megan come to see you?

DOUG
No. Syd must've given her those.

TITUS
I thought Syd liked me.

DOUG
Syd does like you.

TITUS
She thinks I'm a fuck.

DOUG
A likeable fuck. You still on the
God kick?

TITUS
Yeh. You still on the prick kick?

DOUG

Yeh, I figure there's no turning back now.

Doug slips off his jacket, loosens his tie.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry, if I'd known it was a disease --

TITUS

Listen, Doug -- if Megan does come to you --

DOUG

Hey, I'm on your side, okay? I don't want you two to split up. What would we do for excitement if it weren't for Megan and Titus?

TITUS

You've been a good friend, Doug.

DOUG

Too good. If Syd knew how many times I'd lied for you, our marriage would be *kaput*.

(A beat.)

You wanna go for a -- Shirley Temple -- or something?

Titus shoots him a *fuck you* smile.

DOUG (CONT'D)

You'll be okay, you know? You just gotta stop acting like a nut case.

Titus gives him back his binoculars, heads for the door.
Doug raises them to his eyes, takes a gander at the view.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I've never been up here. I can see the ocean. Holy cow, that's a shit-kickin' blue!

INT. DR. MANN'S OFFICE - DAY

TRACKING: from the green and blue PET scan of TITUS'S brain, to his spiky EEGs, both pinned to the wall, to Mann at his desk, dictating into a voice recognition system.

DR. MANN

Titus Jackson, 54. Reduced right hippocampal volume, Presenting
(MORE)

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
 symptoms: jamais vu; "stickiness",
 severe neediness. Disorientation,
 heightened sexuality, auditory
 hallucinations --

A KNOCK at the door, DR. PATEL pokes his head in. Mann's supervisor, Patel, is a stout, well-fed, no-nonsense Indian.

DR. PATEL
 You got the memo about the meeting?

DR. MANN
 Yes. Dr. Patel, what do you know
 about Geschwind Syndrome?

DR. PATEL
 It's not a syndrome, it's a theory
 and the jury is still out. Are you
 thinking about the Jackson case?

DR. MANN
 A man who has no interest in religion
 his entire life, has a right
 hemispheric seizure and suddenly is
 obsessed with spiritual matters --

DR. PATEL
 You're headed down a blind alley,
 Doctor. Keep walking.

He abruptly turns and goes. Mann shrugs off the rebuff.
 Hearing a familiar VOICE outside, Dr. Mann goes to the window.

HIS POV: on the lawn below, Titus plays checkers with an
 OLD MAN in a wheelchair. A group of patients are gathered
 around, entertained by the animated game. Titus ROARS with
 laughter when the old man makes a clever move, wags his
 finger, teasing him.

Mann ponders the scan again.

DR. MANN
 What is going on in your mind, Titus
 Jackson?

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Titus is looking at a photograph on Hilda's nightstand: she
 and her husband on a Hawaiian vacation, years ago.

HILDA
 He got a hole in one on that course,
 and let me tell you, that night was
 the best sex of my life!

Titus chuckles, offers her a candy.

HILDA (CONT'D)

That was our happiest time. Funny
how you can't know a thing like that
till it's long over.

Titus looks at another photograph, a fifty-something woman.

TITUS

Your daughter?

HILDA

Emma. She's up in Seattle. She
would be here, but it's her job, you
know. She has a very demanding job.
Is your mother still alive, Titus?

TITUS

I don't know.

Hilda grabs her chest as if to keep her heart from jumping out.

HILDA

You don't know -- ?

TITUS

She left us for a higher calling. I
didn't understand it then, but I do
now. And I forgive her. But I won't
leave the people I love. You should
call your daughter, Hilda.

HILDA

Pffft. I'll be fine, I'll be fine.

TITUS

Call Emma.

INT. COLLEGE LIBRARY - DAY

CU: A stack of books -- "The God Shaped Brain," "The God
Part of the Brain," "Principles of Neurotheology".

Megan underscores the passage with the gnawed pencil.

The TEXT superimposed over her image:

*"Some neuropsychologists believe that we all have suffered
some undetectable level of brain damage, and that our various
quirks are defined by the location and extent of the damage."*

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Mann sits opposite Titus, notepad on his lap. The sun falling through the blinds slices them with light and shadow.

DR. MANN
You've been taking the medication?

TITUS
Religiously.

Titus smirks. The doctor gives up a reluctant grin.

DR. MANN
Any side effects? Nausea,
headaches...?

TITUS
You didn't do it, Doc.

DR. MANN
What's that?

TITUS
You didn't take the God out of me.

DR. MANN
And how spiritual would you say you're
feeling lately -- on a scale of one
to ten?

TITUS
Tell me, Doc, when did religion become
a pathology? Did I miss that course
in college?

DR. MANN
Titus, I've read your poems. Admired
them.

TITUS
Well, thanks, but they're probably
overrated. At least that's what the
critics were saying, last I checked.

DR. MANN
Burnished Grace is the most eloquent
paean to atheism I've ever read.

TITUS
That one in particular. Overrated.

DR. MANN
You've been an atheist all your --

TITUS

Plenty of wayward souls find God,
doctor. Happens every day.

DR. MANN

They don't all float, Titus.

TITUS

Maybe they do and just don't tell
you.

A shared grin.

DR. MANN

Taken alone, of course, your sudden
conversion wouldn't be of interest
to a physician. But as it coincides
with the seizures --

TITUS

So what? Maybe this is how God
grabbed me! I'm a whisky-swilling,
stubborn-assed bear of a man. I'd
just as soon piss on a Bible as read
it. Maybe God knew He had to shock
my system just to open my mind!

DR. MANN

I'm just saying that --

TITUS

You're saying God is all in my head --

DR. MANN

I'm saying you're having seizures.
Did God give you the seizure or did
the seizure give you God? Science
can't answer that question.

TITUS

But you *think* you know.

DR. MANN

The tests show you're still seizing.
I'm going to switch your medication.

TITUS

I'd like a second opinion.

DR. MANN

That's your prerogative.

He puts down his pad. A beat.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

You don't trust me.

TITUS

I don't want to be "cured", don't you get it? Fuck it, how could you possibly understand? You're steeped in bias and preconception! This whole institution is Bias incarnate!

DR. MANN

And what about you?

TITUS

What do you mean?

DR. MANN

You bring your bias with you when you walk in the room, your preconceptions about doctors, about me. We're not all the same, you know.

TITUS

What? You golf on Wednesdays instead of Sundays?

DR. MANN

I'm a miserable golfer, actually. I decapitated a lawn gnome once.

Titus: a reluctant smile. Mann crosses to his bookshelf, opens a drop panel to reveal a Buddhist shrine inside. This grabs Titus's attention. He picks up a scepter-like vajra from the shelf.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

I dropped out of college at nineteen and moved to Japan to join a Zen monastery.

TITUS

I bet your dad was over the moon about that, eh?

DR. MANN

I spent three years in zazen, trying to awaken. But mostly, I became engrossed with the way the mind works. I wanted to know everything about it. I wanted nothing less than to understand human consciousness.

TITUS

And how's that going for you?

DR. MANN

It's "the golden age of neurology."
A new advancement every day. And
like an exquisite riddle, each answer
only reveals a new puzzle. Where
does our sense of identity come from?
It's the enigma that's haunted
scientists and philosophers for a
thousand years.

He moves closer to Titus, an intimate entreaty:

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

It's the anomalies, Titus, that unlock
the mysteries of the brain: the
amputee with an itch in his phantom
limb, the woman who laughs herself
to death. And you, Titus, with your
spontaneous enlightenment. Might
God be best comprehended not by this —
(nodding to the vajra)
But by this?

He sets the vajra down and picks up the model brain.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

You can play musical chairs till you
get the diagnosis you want to hear.
Or you can join me in man's ultimate
quest.

ON TITUS, as he considers the doctor's seductive invitation.

INT. IMAGING ROOM - DAY

An MRI MACHINE, large and imposing as it revs up.

TITUS'S POV: as the bed slides inside the tube, and the
deafening sounds begin to BLAST.

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

An assistant has left Titus with a puzzle of Lego-like blocks.
He works away intently at the neuropsychological test.

MEGAN (O.S.)

Who are we? If a little over-
stimulation in a tiny part of the
brain can elicit a whole new
personality

INCLUDE Megan and Mann, watching from behind a one-way glass.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
... is free will just a lie we tell
ourselves to make us feel in control?

DR. MANN
What do you think, Megan?

The assistant returns to the testing room to find that Titus has arranged the blocks into an elaborate figure of the resurrected Christ.

MEGAN
I think I'm not sure who I'm sleeping
with anymore.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan and Titus in bed. She chews on a pencil as she grades papers. He watches The Simpsons, laughs. She studies him a moment affectionately. He catches her watching him.

TITUS
Would you like more tea?

She shakes her head. He takes the pencil from her mouth.

TITUS (CONT'D)
That'll kill ya, ya know.

He gives her a quick kiss, returns to the show. Relishing this moment of normalcy, she smiles, and snuggles closer.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

POV: Clouds sail across an oceanic sky.

Ilene steps through the gate, looking around.

ILENE
Titus?

She notices a ladder leaning against a wall. She climbs up, finds Titus lying on the roof, absorbed in the clouds.

ILENE (CONT'D)
I've been ringing the bell.

TITUS
Isn't it amazing how just a slight
shift in perspective can change
everything?

He pats the roof beside him, an invitation. She joins him.

ILENE

I'm sorry. We shouldn't have kept it from you.

TITUS

She thought she had to hide her success from me. Jeezus. And the worst of it is, she was right.

ILENE

The early reviews are the best I've seen in years.

TITUS

Oh, that's great, Ilene. She deserves it.

ILENE

I want you to come to the party. Everyone would love to see you.

TITUS

Like hell they would.

ILENE

No one's support means more to Megan than yours.

TITUS

I know, I know. And I want to, I do. Will the hipster be there?

ILENE

I can't believe they went with that vapid jerk.

TITUS

Does he sleep with that pork pie hat?

ILENE

I'm sorry, I know you could've used the money --

TITUS

(Waving it off.)

Pennies, dimes, dollars. What do dollars buy you in heaven?

ILENE

Well, presumably very little, but in the meantime, they do come in handy at Starbucks.

TITUS

I'm there, Ilene. I'm in heaven.

He looks out over the rooftops, falls into silence. Ilene studies him with a rueful smile.

ILENE

Charlie always told me never to befriend my clients. But I can't help it. They're the most interesting people I know.

TITUS

I guess you've heard I'm crazy.

ILENE

In the Jewish tradition, you know, it's considered improper to talk about one's mystical experience.

TITUS

Improper, I don't know. Impossible, yes. Words aren't pure enough

ILENE

I had an experience. Back in my Berkeley days. Don't laugh -- mushrooms were involved --

He laughs.

ILENE (CONT'D)

I left my body. I floated through the corridors of the city, places I'd never been, glimpsing desolate lives through golden windows like an Edward Hopper painting. I felt their sorrow as if it were my own ... and yet removed -- a god-like view ...

(She shrugs, chuckles.)

Well, *phffft* -- the sixties, right? But ... years later, I was walking through a new neighborhood and suddenly I realized it was the street. I'd never been there before, but I knew every building. I've never doubted the existence of a soul since.

Her cell VIBRATES. She checks the number.

ILENE (CONT'D)

Everyone yearns for a mystical experience, Titus. The problem is, no one wants to believe in them when they happen to other people.

(MORE)

ILENE (CONT'D)
 (She gets up to go.)
 Keep it to yourself. I did.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A FEMALE STUDENT is writing on the chalkboard as Megan strolls to the back, surveying the class.

MEGAN
 Favorite quote by a favorite author.
 Did everyone bring one?

She turns back as the student finishes, and reads.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
 "Your assumptions are your windows
 on the world. Scrub them off every
 once in a while ...
 (she pauses)
 or the light won't come in."

The student has attributed it to Isaac Asimov. Megan just stares at the quote a minute, thunderstruck.

SNARKY BOY
 (referring to his iPhone)
 Says here Asimov never said that.
 It was Alan Alda.

MEGAN
 Who cares? It's friggin' brilliant.
 "A" for quote, "D" for
 scholarship` ...

As she collects the SNARKY BOY's iPhone:

MEGAN (CONT'D)
 "F" for cell use in the classroom.
 Okay, let's talk about this.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Megan enters, sets her book bag down, notices a dandelion on the kitchen table, a note beside it:

INSERT NOTE: *"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing
 there is a field. I will meet you there."*

As she ponders the message, Megan glances over at the windows, still streaked from Titus's demonstration cleaning, the day's quote reverberating in her mind.

INT. HOUSE - TITUS'S OFFICE - DAY

Megan steps inside, astonished to find:

It has been transformed from a dark, cluttered office into a beautiful sanctuary. Stacks of religious books -- the Bible, the Koran, Gnostic Gospels, Tao -- line the floor. Some lie open, paragraphs highlighted, pages dog-eared.

One wall is filled with colorful post-it notes, scribbled with quotes -- "*the lamp of the body is the mind*", "*the Kingdom is inside you*". Another wall is a gallery of images of spiritual leaders. A small altar, with candles decorated with a variety of religious objects.

Megan picks up a figurine of the Hindu goddess, Maya. Inscribed beneath it: "Illusion=Reality".

On the desk: his open laptop, a bunch of dandelions in a vase etched with the word "ephemera", a photograph of Megan, the frame etched with the word "beauty", and beside it, her book. She opens it to find that he has highlighted passages with notes scribbled on the side -- "love juxtaposition," "perfect irony" or just "YES!" She smiles, pleased.

Her arm brushes his laptop, "waking" it. An email is on screen -- a young fan, thanking him for his advice. She sees Titus's reply just beneath his message:

TITUS (V.O.)

As for poetry ... look around you,
see who needs help, and help them.
See who is suffering and ease their
pain. Find the sacred in the banal.
If you want to write great poetry,
for god's sake, don't follow my
miserable example. Choose a
meaningful path, and meaningful words
will come.

She sinks into his chair, moved by the transformation evidenced here. Her eyes fall on one of his religious books. She picks it up and begins to read.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

CU: an functional MRI (fMRI) brain scan, moderately colorful.

DR. MANN

This is a normative brain at rest.
And this is your scan, Titus ...

INCLUDE his scan: neon colors jump out against black -- magenta, canary, lime.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

As you can see, the prefrontal cortex is lit up -- that's our area of focus, attention. This area that's dark is the parietal lobe that orients us in space, and distinguishes what's "self" from "not self"

Titus takes the scan, fascinated.

TITUS

Of course

DR. MANN

The lingual, rational hemisphere is notably darker. Impairment on the right side of the brain, such as yours, decreases the focus on one's self --

TITUS

Of course! My god, look at it!

DR. MANN

What's that, Titus?

TITUS

It's perfect, isn't it?

He jumps up, delighted. A KNOCK. A NURSE steps inside.

NURSE

Excuse me, Dr. Patel would like a word with you.

DR. MANN

Can it wait?

NURSE

You're seriously asking me if Prickly Patel can wait?

DR. MANN

Be nice -- we have a patient here.

NURSE

I know. That's why I used the l-y.

DR. MANN

(a smile; to Titus:)

Can you excuse me a moment?

He goes, leaving Titus admiring his scan like a sacred object.

TITUS'S POV: the hues of the MRI fill our vision. From the flood of color, an image emerges ...

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - MORNING (FANTASY)

POV of the street corner where Titus stood not long ago. Only this time, the pedestrians are calm, cheerful, energized. Their faces glow so translucent in the rising sun that, as they grow nearer, we can see their brains glowing from within -- the colors of the MRI -- magenta, lime, canary.

INT. DR. PATEL'S OFFICE - DAY

PATEL stands over his desk, Titus's files before him, looking down on Dr. Mann with great irritation.

DR. PATEL

Yes, it's a fascinating case, but there's no proof that there is such a thing as "an epileptic personality".

DR. MANN

Geschwind's Syndrome is well documented, and Mr. Jackson has some classic symptoms -- neediness, jamais vu, profound mood changes --

DR. PATEL

My wife has profound mood changes! Every 28 days she turns into a hell cat --

DR. MANN

Libidinal changes --

DR. PATEL

Those too! One vodka tonic and --

DR. MANN

Hyper-religiosity --

DR. PATEL

There we have it! I realize this is your balliwick, doctor. It must be very exciting to "discover" a connection between religiosity and the brain, and my god! In a famous poet -- an atheist, at that!

DR. MANN

Only temporal lobe epileptics demonstrate this symptom -- doesn't that fascinate you? There's so much to learn from him --

DR. PATEL
Is that why are you taking such a
conservative approach with this
patient?

DR. MANN
I'd hardly call it --

DR. PATEL
Have you discussed the surgical
option? He's a perfect candidate --

DR. MANN
We need to give the medication a
chance --

DR. PATEL
His seizure rate is increasing.

DR. MANN
His presenting symptoms are euphoria
and a sense of connection to God.
It doesn't warrant surgery at this
juncture.

Patel closes the file, looks at Mann knowingly.

DR. PATEL
This is a hospital, Dr. Mann, not a
research lab. *We make people better.*

DR. MANN
Look, he's downstairs now. Come!
See for yourself!

INT. HOSPITAL HALL - MINUTES LATER

Dr. Mann steps back inside, Patel close behind.

DR. MANN
Titus, this is --

He stops, looks around. Titus is gone. So is his scan.
Dr. Patel gives Mann the eye.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - DAY

Titus is hightailing it for the exit, the scan in hand.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS as TITUS excitedly searches shelves, flips
through books, types in search words, clicks on a link.

INSERT: COMPUTER SCREEN, an animated brain, with bright dots lighting up certain spots. An anagram rolls over the image: "T.E.S." MINIMALIST MUSIC PLAYS UNDER.

Titus clicks on a video: a research subject wears a device on his head dotted with electrodes. Underscored words are superimposed, floating across the screen as they are spoken.

SCIENTIST (V.O.)
By stimulating the parietal and temporal lobes, we've recreated in the laboratory all the elements of the "God experience" -- feelings of ecstasy, rising sensations, the presence of another ...

Titus leans in, captivated.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dr. Mann is walking to his car when he notices Titus nearby, leaning against a lamp post, waiting for him.

DR. MANN
Titus?

He steps closer. Titus is deep in thought.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
What are you doing here?

TITUS
I thought you were the problem, you know? But now, I see.

DR. MANN
See what?

TITUS
You're not the obstacle God put in my path. You're the answer God led me to.

DR. MANN
I'm a physician, Titus, that's all. A very tired one, at that.

TITUS
No, no. You're the key.

DR. MANN
Key to what, Titus?

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Titus and the doctor sit at a booth. The doctor dresses his patty melt as Titus speaks, feverishly.

TITUS
Jesus tried to tell us, "Where the
mind is, *there is the treasure.*"

He slips the fMRI across the table.

TITUS (CONT'D)
This is it. The imprint of God.

He leans in closer.

TITUS (CONT'D)
People are stumbling in the dark.
They think God is out there, something
you can pray or chant your way to.
Prophets have been telling us for
millennia but no one could understand,
not till this very moment in time!
We've only now reached the point
technologically that we can do
something about it!

DR. MANN
Do what?

TITUS
We can induce enlightenment.

DR. MANN
Excuse me?

TITUS
Transcranial electromagnetic
stimulation. We can give them the
experience. The same experience
that opened my mind --

DR. MANN
What? Recreate your seizure -- ?

Titus shows Mann the video he found on his phone.

TITUS
Someone's already doing it, a
researcher in Canada -- "the God
helmet," he calls it -- you can order
it online!

DR. MANN

It's junk science, Titus! That hasn't stood up to independent verifications --

TITUS

But we can perfect it!

(Tapping his scan:)

We have the map! We know the exact areas to quiet and stimulate! We can build a device as portable as an iPod, connect it wirelessly to electrodes --

DR. MANN

Medicine is in the business of eradicating seizures, not inducing them --

TITUS

It's exactly what you do! You take unhealthy minds and give them Prozac for depression, Ritalin for concentration, Xanax to calm them down --

(Pointing to the others)

Their brains are wired for self-interest, aggression, greed! Stimulate different areas and their minds are filled with generosity and awe --

DR. MANN

Titus, you're oversimplifying -- the brain is more complex than that --

TITUS

Of course! That's why I need you! Can you imagine what the world might look like if anyone who wanted to, could know God in a millisecond? Imagine a world without me-me-mine, only compassion, only goodwill!

DR. MANN

Titus, faith is about a lot more than a blissful feeling. It's about a daily practice, a path

As Mann finishes off his patty melt and signals for the check:

TITUS

And you? Do you still practice?

Mann hesitates.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Nah, you gave it up years ago, right?
After the accident, was it?

Mann: puzzled.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Told yourself you'd lost the
discipline, but it was really the
faith you'd lost. Isn't that right?

DR. MANN

Have you been cyber-snooping again?

Titus shrugs. The waitress slaps the check on the table.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

It's late, Titus --

He starts to get up. Titus grabs his arm, stopping him.

TITUS

We can do this, it's within our grasp!
You know it is! Don't answer now,
just think about it!

DR. MANN

I'll see you Thursday, Titus.

Mann takes the scan and goes. At the door, he looks back at Titus -- chatting cheerfully with the waitress as she clears the plates -- perplexed and unsettled.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan lies in bed, asleep. The clock shows 12:14 a.m. Titus lumbers in, tired, climbs into bed. Megan wakes, rolls over, props herself on her elbow and looks at him.

TITUS

What?

She gently brushes his hair from his eyes, then leans over and kisses him lovingly.

MEGAN

I love you.

He studies her, perplexed but pleased, then pulls her back for a deeper kiss.

INT. MANN'S HOUSE - HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

The walls are lined with medical books, separated by eastern art objects. We hear Mann enter through the front door. He

passes the open door to his office, but doubles back, drawn to his sleeping computer. He sinks into his desk chair, kicks off his shoes and clicks on a file. As the file comes up, he glances at a photograph on his desktop -- his wife and son, years ago.

CU: SCREEN. It is Titus's video EEG. On one side of the screen, the electrograph, the other side, a video of Titus in a hospital bed, reading, a gauze cap holding electrodes in place. Mann steps INTO VIEW, checks his pulse.

MANN

What's that you're reading, Titus?

TITUS

"The Transcendent Brain". Interesting stuff.

MANN

My thesis? Where'd you find that?

TITUS

You can find anything online, doctor.

MANN

Okay, we're just going to add some strobe lights today, to see if we can't induce a seizure.

TITUS

Tell me, Doc, how bad is it?

Moving behind him to adjust the wires:

MANN

That's what I hope to learn with this test, Titus.

TITUS

No, not me. You.

MANN

Me?

TITUS

Yes. It's impossible to look at a thing and be inside it at the same time. How much has studying the spiritual mind cut you off from experiencing it?

Titus cannot see the ache in Mann's eyes as this question ripples through him. Mann clears his throat, steps OUT OF FRAME.

MANN

We'll need to be quiet for bit.

We hear an O.S. CLICK. The room goes dark and lights begin to flash on Titus's face. The electrograph reading starts to waver and gyrate.

Mann leans in closer, to watch the next moments:

A slight smile curls on Titus's lips as he experiences an aura. His eyes lock on something only he can see. Aglow fills his cheeks as he moves into the quiet, rapturous seizure.

BACK TO MANN: as he sits back and sighs, light years from that feeling.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A PARCEL with Canadian postage, addressed to Titus, sits on the doorstep, beside a rejuvenated garden. Megan collects it as she comes up the walk.

A loud CRASH from inside.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Megan rushes into the family room where she finds:

Titus, tearing down the wall between the family room and dining room with an ax. Dust and debris are flying.

MEGAN

What in god's name -- ?

He continues, not hearing. She sets the package down, steps closer. He seems absent, in a daze. He almost swipes her with the ax.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus!

She ducks, barely avoiding it. She hears a CREAK and looks up to see a beam dangling precariously above him. One more hit and it will come down on his head.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus!!!

She moves in, grabbing the ax and pulling him away as the beam careens to the floor.

Titus catches his breath, surveys the drywall and cement lying in heaps at his feet, almost as if surprised. A beat.

TITUS
What do you think? Feels more open,
doesn't it?

MEGAN
Titus, were you seizing just now?

TITUS
What? No.

MEGAN
You didn't respond to me.

TITUS
Didn't hear you.
(Nodding to his mural.)
You can't get perspective on it.
That's why you can't see it. You
have to get farther back.

She sighs, shakes her head.

TITUS (CONT'D)
What, you don't like it?

MEGAN
Like it? I don't even like murals!
I like taupe! I liked our taupe
walls!

She sinks into a chair, dejected. Titus is dejected, too.

TITUS
You don't like the mural? I'm sorry,
I thought -- Do you want me to paint
over it?

MEGAN
Yes! No -- I don't know ... Titus --

TITUS
(interrupting)
Don't worry, I'll clean this up --
I'll make an archway, you'll see --
it'll look great --

His eyes fall on the package. He picks it up, excited.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Oh, look, it came! Wait till you
see this, Megan! This is a game-
changer --

Megan watches, concerned, as he takes the package and hurries
to his office, leaving the mess behind.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Megan races to catch up with Dr. Mann, walking down the hall.

MEGAN

You've got to cure him. It's getting worse.

DR. MANN

There is no surefire "cure", Megan. We can only hope to control it.

MEGAN

You said something about surgery.

He stops, looks at her.

DR. MANN

Do you like bread pudding?

INT. TITUS'S OFFICE - DAY

TRACK from the opened parcel to a diagram of the brain on the computer screen ... to Titus, using tweezers to delicately adjust electrodes on a clear plastic band, as he refers back to his colorful fMRI.

EXT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA COURTYARD - DAY

CU: two spoons dip into a large bowl of bread pudding.

Megan and Mann sit in a small courtyard, sharing the sweet.

DR. MANN

What you're describing is an automatism -- kind of like sleepwalking. They seldom have any memory of it.

MEGAN

It's getting worse. The meds aren't working. What's the success rate with surgery?

DR. MANN

Quite good.

He buys a moment by taking a sip of coffee, avoiding her eyes.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

You know, the ecstatic auras that Titus experiences are unusual. In Dostoevsky's case, a "cure" would've been a great loss for us all.

MEGAN

Except, perhaps, Mrs. Dostoevsky.

(serious now)

Doctor, he had a seizure with an ax in his hand. I've seen him walk into traffic with a smile on his lips. What if he seizes on an escalator or a bridge?

DR. MANN

You're right. There are sound medical reasons why surgery might be optimal. I can discuss those with Titus. But you should think about it first. Our faith helps us make sense of the capriciousness of life.

MEGAN

What are you saying, Doctor? I thought you'd be in favor of surgery.

DR. MANN

Titus was running on fumes. This experience has given him meaning. Take away the beliefs a man lives by, and he may not know how to live.

He offers her the rest of the pudding and goes, leaving Megan to ponder that thought.

INT. SYDNEY & DOUG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wearing a sexy camisole, Syd climbs into bed. Doug, immersed in a ball game, is oblivious to her seductive pose.

SYDNEY

How come you never bring me breakfast in bed?

DOUG

What?

On TV, the crowd ROARS, grabbing his attention.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Holy moly! Did you see that?

Syd sighs, rolls over, turns off the light.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Megan and Titus, entwined in moonlight, almost tantric in their slow sensuality, their ancient connection.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

TITUS: trying his best to remain calm as he listens. Megan, at his side, studies his reaction.

DR. MANN

With today's technology, we're able to pinpoint the seizure focus quite precisely. We use local anaesthesia -- you'd be awake through most of it --

TITUS

You want to take out a slice of my brain?

DR. MANN

An area about the size of a fingertip.

MEGAN

Hun, it's just that the meds aren't working.

DR. MANN

With this surgery, you could stop the medication, you could drive again. You could lead a seizure-free life --

TITUS

It's up to me, isn't it?

DR. MANN

Titus, delaying surgery carries a lot of risks. The seizures are likely to get worse. Eventually, they can impair language function, memory --

TITUS

But it's up to me. It's my choice.

DR. MANN

Yes, but this impacts everyone who loves you --

TITUS

You asked me to drink your poison and I did. Now you want to saw my head open and scoop the spirit right out of me?

MEGAN

Titus, don't be so dramatic --

TITUS

Excuse me, brain surgery is pretty fucking dramatic!

DR. MANN

With this procedure, you can live a long and healthy life. But left untreated, Titus, you're at risk for at least two potentially fatal --

TITUS

Okay, I got it. Thank you. Is that all?

MEGAN

Titus, he is telling you that without surgery, you could die!

TITUS

You were in on this, weren't you? You two have been conspiring behind my back --

MEGAN

We're trying to help you --

TITUS

You're trying to deprive me of my right to have a religious experience! Fucking Orwellian, is what it is!

MEGAN

You haven't *had* a religious experience, Titus! You've had a seizure!

He looks at them, the tumblers quietly falling into place.

TITUS

You're jealous.

MEGAN

What?

TITUS

You're all jealous because I've experienced something you know nothing about! Some part of my brain was supercharged that day. Unusual? Yes. Rare, even? Yes. Freakish, you might say? Fine, I'm a freak. Joan and her voices, Moses and his burning bush -- freaks. But that doesn't mean they're not real. Maybe what I've glimpsed is a deeper truth, have you thought of that?

He stands, grabs his coat.

TITUS (CONT'D)

You're all racing through your days
like they're merely another task on
the to-do list! You're jealous
because I've tasted the stuff of
saints, and I won't go back to your
dismal, petty lives!

He goes out. A beat. Megan and Mann exchange a look.

MEGAN

Maybe he's right.

DR. MANN

About what?

MEGAN

Maybe I am jealous.

The doctor nods, understanding. Perhaps he is too.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Titus paces, cell phone to his ear, whispering furiously.

TITUS

To hell with your "big case," I'm
telling you, your mother is dying!
You need to be hailing a cab right
now! No, I'm not a doctor --

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Megan looks around for Titus. Not finding him, she is heading
out when she hears his VOICE drift in. She follows it to:

Through a cracked door, she spies Titus at Hilda's bedside.
Hilda has an oxygen tube now; her voice is aspirate.

HILDA

He had to have the same menu every
week. Mondays meatloaf, Tuesdays,
chicken, Wednesdays, pizza. Sixty-
three years. The Monday after he
passed, I made myself a grilled cheese
sandwich for dinner! I felt so
ornery! But I couldn't eat a bite.

Titus takes her hand. Her smile fades.

HILDA (CONT'D)

I'm afraid to die. I'm old. It's
time. I know it's time. But I'm
still afraid.

TITUS

I know. I know.

(leans closer, whispers)

There's a place, Hilda, radiant as a sun-drenched ocean, with music unimaginably divine. It's Home. I've been there. And now, you are going there too. You're going home.

Very gingerly, Titus slips into bed beside her, puts his arms around her. She's startled at first, but is soon overcome with gratitude for the unspoken permission.

TITUS (CONT'D)

I'll be here with you to see you over. I'll be right here.

Titus holds Hilda as she falls into the sleep from which she will not wake. MEGAN watches this intimate moment, moved. MUSIC IN: *See These Bones*, Nada Surf, and plays over --

SERIES OF SHOTS:

INT. HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Megan passes through the new archway; it doesn't look half bad. She pauses to study the mural, earnestly searching for the imbedded images. Still, it eludes her.

INT. DR. MANN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Mann collects the vajra from his desk, opens the panel and returns it to its proper place. He contemplates his neglected shrine a moment, then shuts the door.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Dressed for her party, Megan sits on the edge of the bed, staring at the invitation, ambivalent. She pops a Xanax, washes it down with red wine.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Titus releases Hilda, who has just passed in his arms. He climbs out of the bed, drained.

INT. DOWNTOWN LOFT - EVENING

A cacophony of CHATTER. Warhols and de Koonings on the walls. City lights glitter beyond the expansive windows. A mix of writers, artists and the people who manage them, write about them and sign their checks.

Ilene is leading Megan through the room, making introductions. The DOORBELL rings. Megan glances over, but it's only a stranger stepping inside.

ILENE

Is he coming?

MEGAN

I'm not sure.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Titus leaves Hilda's room, he hears a woman's hurried heels CLICK on the tile floors. As the woman passes, Titus recognizes her from the photo. It's EMMA, Hilda's daughter, arrived minutes too late. He continues on as we see her, in b.g., step inside her mother's room. We hear a GASP of shock at what she finds. Her SOBS ring through the halls. Titus reacts, but continues on.

INT. GERIATRIC WARD - NIGHT

Titus passes through the common area where the elderly watch tv with vacant eyes, an OLD MAN slumped in his chair, reaches for Titus. Titus clasps his hand; it seems to alleviate his pain for a moment. Titus steps away, and another patient reaches out to him. Titus caresses her shoulder.

INCLUDE DR. MANN, watching from the corridor, as Titus proceed through the room, offering silent comforts. He turns to find Patel nearby, watching him watching Titus.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

An ambulance pulls in as Titus leaves, drawing his eyes to his reflection in the tinted glass of a revolving door. As it turns, his image flips past like an old moviola.

INT. LOFT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Titus listens outside the door to the sounds of REVELRY inside. Not up for this, he almost turns away.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Titus moves like a ghost through the crowded room. The RATTLE of a martini shaker, peels of LAUGHTER, bits of CONVERSATION assault his senses.

ILENE (O.S.)

Titus! I'm glad you came.

Titus turns. Ilene greets him with a hug.

TITUS

Where's Megan?

ILENE

She's over -- oops, I lost her. You remember Charlie?

Ilene's husband, CHARLIE, gives a nod. He's a graying mensch.

TITUS

I can't stay, I just -- I have to find Megan --

ILENE

You stay put, I'll find her for you.

Charlie leans into Titus, whispers.

CHARLIE

Careful, the place is crawling with crocodiles.

He smiles mischievously, raises his glass, and goes. Titus looks off to see that someone has intercepted Ilene. He scans the room, uncomfortable, claustrophobic. He spies Megan out on the balcony, a small crowd around her. He watches her, commanding the respect so long denied her. He's filled with the kind of pride only the battle-scarred can offer.

HIPSTER (O.S.)

Well, it's all just tabloid curiosity. I mean, who gets a party like this these days? For *poetry*? Come on.

Titus turns to see who's speaking. It's the HIPSTER -- suspenders, Buddy Holly glasses, pork pie hat.

HIPSTER (CONT'D)

Like Hughes writing about Plath. Everyone just wants to know what it's like being married to a brute genius like Titus Jackson ...

Looking for a quick escape, Titus turns abruptly, inadvertently brushing the Hipster's arm and tipping his pinot noir onto his crisp white shirt.

HIPSTER (CONT'D)

Jesus -- !

TITUS

Oh! I'm -- sorry --

HIPSTER

Titus! Christ! You did that on purpose, didn't you?

TITUS

No, of course not --

Titus offers his handkerchief.

HIPSTER

Sorry, no offense, old man.

TITUS

None taken. And, uh -- congrats on the anthology. It's good ... we need fresh voices.

HIPSTER

The -- ? Oh, right, I'd forgotten about that. I have a novel coming out. Hollywood is circling, it's all a bit crazy right now. Hey, speaking of crazy, I heard a rumor that you'd found God or started chanting or something --

TITUS

Uh, yeh -- look, I need to --

HIPSTER

No shit? Are you -- what? Going to church, the whole nine yards?

Uncomfortable, Titus is glancing around for a way out. The hipster's British WIFE intervenes.

WIFE

Stop now, you're being tedious. I have a faith --

HIPSTER

Please, you're Unitarian --

WIFE

That's a faith --

HIPSTER

No, it's not, it's a discussion group.

TITUS

(Reluctant:)

Well, everyone has some kind of faith.

HIPSTER

Not me, old man.

TITUS

Sure you do, we all do. We put our faith in the market, in a dry martini, in our next book. We're devoted to an image of ourselves -- *that's* the God that consumes us. But it disappoints, doesn't it?

On the balcony, Megan spots Titus, a small group around him now. She excuses herself, steps inside.

TITUS (CONT'D)

We finally get the honor and it's forgotten in a week. We build the portfolio and the market tanks. We make our fortune and no one loves us any the more for it.

Megan works her way through the room, eavesdropping, riveted and moved by his words.

TITUS (CONT'D)

We chase petty gods, thinking *I'll be happy when*

QUICK FLASHBACK TO EARLIER THAT NIGHT:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

TITUS'S POV as he moves down the geriatric hall, old people visible through open doorways, white robes, white sheets, white faces, drained of meaning.

TITUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One day we'll all be old men in a corridor of old men sandwiched in starchy sheets, looking back on our misspent lives ...

BACK TO:

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

A beat. The Hipster nods, a sardonic grin.

TITUS

...like a path of gems pulverized under our reckless feet.

HIPSTER

Well. That's all very interesting...

Suddenly his words distort, as if he's talking underwater.

HIPSTER (CONT'D)

... coming from the fellow who gave
me my first hit of cocaine.

Titus looks around; everyone is behaving normally but their
speech is distorted. Crosses of light zigzag before him.

TITUS

I'm sorry, I -- excuse me --

This experience, unsettling and scary, is entirely different
than anything Titus has experienced before. Trying to quell
his surging anxiety, he darts away.

TITUS'S POV: He hears the TING of finger cymbals, and sees
the flash of a golden streamer out of the corner of his eye.
Somewhere off, we hear:

VOICES (V.O.)

Hari Rama, Hair Rama ...

Megan sees Titus lurching toward the staircase, panic in his
eyes. She tries to press her way through the crowd.

MEGAN

Titus? Are you okay?

Determined to get to the safety of a bed, Titus scrambles
for the staircase, accidentally overturning a passing hors'
d'oeuvre tray and toppling a stack of Megan's books by the
stairs. The crowd reacts. As she passes, someone mutters --

SNOOTY PARTIER

You'd think he could stay sober one
night --

MEGAN

Can't you see the man is sick?

Halfway up the stairs, Titus looks back to find --

HIS POV: the room, filled with apparition-like figures,
vaguely menacing, drifting in his vision like a kaleidoscope.

He spots Megan across the room. Before his eyes, she
transforms into the goddess, Maya, in her red sari and gold
crown and slowly rises above the crowd, a knowing smile on
her lips. Titus turns and jogs up the stairs.

Suddenly, the stairs recede, growing smaller beneath his
feet, like Alice through the looking glass. The walls begin
to waffle.

Panicked, Titus misses a step and comes tumbling down. The
MUSIC stops; the party stills.

Megan rushes to his side, Ilene follows.

TITUS'S POV: Megan -- now returned to herself again -- and Ilene hover over him, frightened and concerned, their words only noise in a cacophony of sound and wild light.

INT. HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Titus lies on the sofa, fatigued. In the kitchen, Megan runs cool water over a cloth, rings it dry.

As she returns to him, passing through the new archway, something catches her eye.

HER POV: the MURAL and its blur of multitudinous dots comes into focus. Images previously hidden emerge.

She lets out an astonished breath. Titus looks up.

MEGAN

I see it.

TITUS

What?

MEGAN

The platform ... the bottle ... the
little bits of bottle floating off
it ...

She glances back with a smile. He's nodding, pleased.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

You ... the light. I was just
standing here and suddenly It's --
extraordinary. Really.

But Titus's pleasure soon melts away.

TITUS

Oh god, Megan. What if he's right?
What if it's all neurons and synapses
that they can snip out like a polyp?
Then is it real? Was it ever real?

She kneels in front of him, presses the cloth to his forehead.

MEGAN

Titus, let me in. Let me in to your
experience. I want to know what
it's like for you.

He shakes his head.

TITUS
Words fail. They -- clunk around in
my head but they can't --

MEGAN
Titus, we've been drifting apart for
so long. I'll come to you, if you
show me the way.

He thinks for a moment.

TITUS
You'll have to have faith.

She nods. He looks at her car keys on the table, holds out
his hand. She reaches for the keys, hesitates.

MEGAN
You're not supposed to --

TITUS
Faith, Megan. Faith.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Titus, driving. Pitch dark. We can't see beyond the
headlights. The winding roads are making Megan queasy.

MEGAN
Where are we going?

No reply. Megan reaches into her pocket for a Xanax.

TIME CUT.

AN HOUR LATER.

Megan has fallen asleep against the window pane. The thick
silence awakens her. She sits up quickly, alarmed. They
are engulfed in a fog so dense she can't see six feet ahead.

MEGAN
Titus, pull over!

TITUS
Faith, Megan.

MEGAN
Titus, you can't even see the road!

TITUS
Amazing, isn't it? Just a mass of
droplets ... nothing but vapor,
lighter than air.

MEGAN

Titus, please --

TITUS

Yet they bring rain, fertility, life.
They obscure our view, "cloud our
thoughts." Ruin the best laid plans.
Bring mass destruction.

Megan glances at Titus, suddenly afraid he's gone over the edge; may be leading her to a double suicide, for all she knows.

TITUS (CONT'D)

And yet completely insubstantial,
tossed by the wind. They're death,
eternity...

A patch of pristine light breaks through, and the car slowly ascends through the fog.

TITUS (CONT'D)

... Bliss.

Titus stops the car. Megan looks out.

TITUS (CONT'D)

They're our mind.

HER POV: for as far as the eye can see, rolling blue-white clouds, several feet tall, envelop the landscape.

MEGAN

Ohmigod.

Titus steps out, opens the door for her.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - PRE-DAWN

As she climbs out, Megan's legs sink into the white mist. She moves slowly through the ethereal landscape, lost in its beauty.

Titus slips his clear plastic band around her head, a king crowning his queen. The electrodes glisten like jewels in the early morning sun.

MEGAN

What are you -- ?

TITUS

Shhh.

Titus turns on the iPod-sized device, then slips it into her pocket. He caresses her shoulders as she waits.

MEGAN

I don't feel any --

TITUS

Shhh. Just open. Open your mind
like a window on the first day of
Spring.

MEGAN'S POV: The dawn is presaged by a watery rose slowly
bleeding into the sky from beneath the violet clouds. The
colors intensify and glow. Surreal as the cloud-enshrouded
mountaintop is, in her Xanax-soaked, electronically-enhanced
brain, it is even more so.

MEGAN

Oh. Ohmigod. It's heaven.

She is overcome by the feeling of awe.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

This? This is what you experience?

TITUS

No. No, a thousand times more. But
this is how it begins.

She melts into a stupefied smile, laughs. She reaches down
to touch the clouds, tries to "scoop up" a handful. She
kicks them, as if to scatter them like waves. Growing more
emboldened as she traverses the cloudscape, she starts to
twirl. Titus enjoys watching her pleasure.

MEGAN

Oh Titus, this is

He laughs and joins her, twirling through the meadow of
clouds, first separately, then with joined hands, like a
punch-drunk Fred and Ginger. There is a feeling of
boundlessness, absolute freedom. The first rays of sun bathe
them in golden light.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

I'm glowing!

They share a look that is more than a smile: it is a
recognition, a hard-won mutual understanding. All past
injuries fall away and they are new again, like the vibrant
bride and groom in the video, only deeper, richer.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Hello.

TITUS

Hi.

She takes a step in his direction and suddenly:

Whoosh! She disappears right through the clouds, as if raptured in the wrong direction.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Megan!

Titus runs after her and --

... vanishes too -- *poof!* -- in an instant, through the vaporous white gold.

The CAMERA sinks through the clouds to:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A dark forest, where the brilliant colors of the mountaintop are vacuumed into the grey-green pall of a cloudy morn.

In SLOW MOTION, we find Megan and Titus, tumbling down the mountainside, over rocks, over brush, through dense woods, limbs flailing, grasping for something to hold on to, but falling, falling still.

HER POV: rolling down the hill toward a cliff.

DISSOLVE TO:

Megan lies in a patch of thimbleberries on the hillside, scratched, bruised. The band lies nearby, out of reach. As the CAMERA MOVES AROUND HER, REVEAL: just inches away, the cliff drops into a deep ravine.

Titus lies on the other side of the hill, blood trickling from his ear, eyes frantic with fear. He struggles to get up, but can't.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Megan! Megan!

But the only sound is the chatter of BIRDS.

Some distance away, Megan lies in pain, anxious and cold.

HER POV: From the other side of heaven, the clouds are opaque, a cold grey. Then, for just a moment, the sun breaks through --

... spotlighting her apprehensive eyes in its golden glow.

A curious calm washes over her.

FADE TO WHITE.

Sound of SIRENS, then:

DR. MANN (O.S.)
Titus? Titus, can you hear me?

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

TITUS's POV: A WHITE LIGHT.

Titus wakes to finds himself lying on a gurney. Another gurney passes, carrying a body covered by a white sheet. Alarmed, he starts to sit up, but can't. Dr. Mann steps INTO FRAME, eases Titus back down. He checks Titus's pupils.

DR. MANN
Lift your arm.

TITUS
(Panicked)
Where's Megan? Where is she?

DR. MANN
What were you doing up there, Titus?

TITUS
Is she okay?

DR. MANN
She has a dislocated shoulder. She was lucky. If she'd fallen six inches to her right, she'd be dead.

Titus grimaces.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
Titus, you've suffered a serious head injury. There's an epidural hematoma in the temporal lobe. We're preparing the operating room now. Do you understand?

TITUS
Are you going to do it, doctor?

DR. MANN
Do what, Titus?

TITUS
You know.

DR. MANN
I'd strongly advise it.

TITUS
That's what the doctor says. What
would the Zen master say?

DR. MANN
(a beat)
That all suffering is a product of
craving -- even if that craving is
for a state of mind.

TITUS'S POV, MANN: Creamy light suspends his face in a
delicate nothingness, transforming him into a Buddha-like
embodiment of serenity.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
I don't have to, Titus. It's up to
you.

TITUS
What's your first name, Doc?

DR. MANN
Nathan. Why?

TITUS
Huh. "Gift of God."

Dr. Mann steps away. STAY ON TITUS as he agonizes over his
choice.

TITUS (CONT'D)
(whispers)
God give me strength.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Dr. Mann at Megan's bedside. Her arm is in a sling.

MEGAN
Will he be the same after?

DR. MANN
You mean, will he retain the
personality changes? Can't be
certain. The surgery will control
the seizures. But the other -- could
go either way.

MEGAN
I don't want you to do it.

DR. MANN
Megan, just last week, you --

MEGAN

I love this man. I don't know who he is. He's not my husband but ... he's related. He's peculiar and a little crazy, but he's loving and kind and remarkable and I don't want him to go away. That would be too cruel a joke.

DR. MANN

Megan, Titus had the keys. Did you let him drive? On dangerous roads with precipitous drops? What if he'd seized? You could've both been killed up there. These are decisions that need to be made rationally, not emotionally.

MEGAN

Doctor, six months ago, I found him in the garage. Car running, door down. He claimed he passed out at the wheel. We never talked about it. But I knew. How can I let you take away the very thing that's brought him to life again?

DR. MANN

He's convinced it's the right thing to do. For you. For both of you. He's become the kind of man who wants to do the right thing. Do you want to take *that* away from him?

A beat.

MEGAN

Can I be there?

INT. OPERATING ROOM - DAY

Titus lies on his side on the operating table, a tent masking half his body, head braced. SLOW PUSH IN, as preparations get underway around him, until we are TIGHT on his anxious eyes.

Megan steps inside, scrubbed and prepped. She sits on a stool beside him.

TITUS

Ah, my bonnie Meg

She tries to control the urgent feelings inside her, but cannot. She leans closer, whispers.

MEGAN

Titus, you don't have to -- it's not too late. They can stop the clotting and leave the seizure focus --

TITUS

Strange, isn't it? The mind causes so much pain but the brain feels no pain ...

MEGAN

Just say the word, Titus, I'll tell them right now --

TITUS

They can slice up my brain, but they can't touch my *mind*. It'll be okay, Megan.

MEGAN

What if it's not?

TITUS

Then ... *"I will try to wait for you on your side of things / Your side of the wall ..."*

MEGAN

Titus --

TITUS

"And the water / and of the light moving at its own speed / even on the leaves that we have seen ... I will wait on one side while a side is there."

Megan takes Titus's hand. A resigned smile.

DR. MANN

Okay, Titus. We're ready to begin.

TIME CUT.

INSERT: a sign on the OR door: "Quiet, please. Patient awake."

The operation is underway. Titus's skull has been cut away to expose the temporal lobe while he was under. Now he's lucid.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)

I'm going to apply a stimulator so we can isolate the seizure focus. Tell me if you experience anything.

TITUS
Tingling. In my right arm.

DR. MANN
Okay. How about here?

Titus begins blinking. Megan watches, fascinated.

MEGAN
He's blinking.

DR. MANN
I need to hear him. Keep talking,
Titus.

The doctor moves the probe.

TITUS
Ah!

DR. MANN
What's that?

TITUS
(he sniffs, smiles)
Elmer's glue paste.

INSERT CU, MEMORY: a young hand slathers white paste on a construction paper sun.

TITUS (CONT'D)
Mrs. Wulliger, 4th grade.
(a beat, then:)
Lavender.

INSERT CU, MEMORY: a woman dabs her silky elbow with a glass bottle stop.

DR. MANN
What's that?

TITUS
My mother's perfume. I'd forgotten
that. She wore lavender.

Megan studies him, astonished by what she's witnessing.

DR. MANN
Okay, I --

TITUS
Wait, go back. I heard something.

DR. MANN
Here?

MEGAN (V.O.)
Come back to bed, Titus.

TITUS
It's you.
(looks at Megan)
I'm out on the fire escape, smoking
a cigarette.

EXT. NEW YORK APARTMENT FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The FLASHBACK is experienced as the present in his mind.
The image is SUPERIMPOSED over HIS POV, both the memory and
the operating room, equally real.

Titus sits, perched on the fire escape, the street lights
glowing amber beneath him.

TITUS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Those damn bells woke me up.

MEGAN (V.O.)
Ohmigod ... he's in New York. My
college apartment

Inside, Megan stirs in the bed, barely visible in the shadows.

TITUS (V.O.)
You're in that brown tank top with
the blue stitching

MEGAN
Come back to bed, Titus.

BACK TO:

INT. OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

Megan listens, dumbfounded, to the memory of this
inconsequential moment, long ago shuffled to the recesses of
her mind. One of a zillion pleasures forgotten soon after
they have passed. A whisper:

MEGAN
That's where they go.

TITUS
What's that?

MEGAN
All the things we've lost.

He and Megan share a sad smile.

DR. MANN
Okay, Titus, I'm going into the
seizure area now ...

We can see the tension in his eyes as Titus braces himself.
He grips Megan's hand tighter.

CU: the seizure focus, as the doctor probes.

CU: TITUS. His anxiety slowly melts and a smile emerges as
the feeling washes over him again.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. RAILWAY STATION - EARLY DAWN (FLASHBACK)

TITUS'S POV of the cigarette in his hand. Suddenly, ALL
SOUND drops away as his field of vision is flooded with creamy
light. The planks beneath his feet are ruddier, the green
beer bottle on the tracks refracts the morning light. The
trees are lush, paradise colors. The whole world seems to
slow for a time to bask in this ethereal glow. A soft DING-
DING-DING and the low RUMBLE of a train.

Megan studies Titus, awash in tranquility.

TITUS's MEMORY: the silver train, reflecting the sky's
delicate rose, rolls through the station in SLOW MOTION.

The passengers are perfectly poised, flawlessly lit in a
buttery light, each window, a telling tableau: the HOUSEWIFE
heading to town to shop her blues away; the BUSINESSMAN,
silently rehearsing an important pitch; the doe-eyed CHILD,
moving to a destination not of his choosing, a captive in
his own life.

We hear their INNER THOUGHTS in WHISPERS that blend and
surround us, joined by bird SONGS, crossing BELLS, WIND in
the trees, as if we are soaking up the inner life of the
universe.

Then we are lifted, like a weightless, amorphous thing.
Unfettered, we rise into the air, into a bird's eye view of
the sleepy town as it stirs to life -- a newspaper boy throws
papers down a drive, a woman walks her dog -- and continue
rising through wispy clouds, until we are adrift in a cerulean
sky, floating between earthly concerns and the stars, privy
to their celestial MUSIC.

Then suddenly, we are sucked --

BACK TO:

TITUS's POV: of the operating room. Megan, absorbed in his face, as if trying to read his mind. Backlit by a beautiful light, she seems nearly angelic.

DR. MANN

Okay, Titus, we're going to administer
a general now so you should start
getting sleepy

MEGAN

Hang on, Titus. Just ... hang on.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The plastic band sits on a table beside a pitcher of water, a bit battered but in tact. Titus lies in bed, still unconscious. Megan reads from the Bible, as she nervously pulls the green mala through her fingers, like a rosary.

Titus stirs, mumbles. She slips the Bible back in the bedside drawer and moves to his side. She places the mala in his hands, studies him as his eyes flutter open.

MEGAN

Hey.

He groans. As he shifts, the mala falls to the floor. Megan picks it up. She searches his eyes for a clue -- should she put it back in his hand, or put it away?

Titus looks at the prayer beads, the faint echoes of bliss slipping away into the nether-reaches of memory. The agony of the absence registers in his eyes. Megan recognizes it instantly. She hesitates, then pockets the mala.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

I'll get you some ... water.

She goes to the table, grabs the plastic band and quickly slips it inside the pocket of his jacket, near the door. Then she takes the half-full pitcher of water and hurries out.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

She pauses down the hall to catch her breath. A nurse passes.

MEGAN

He's awake, I think he needs

She doesn't finish. She has no idea what he needs. She just knows what she needs: time.

She hears a WHEEZING, looks over. A frail man has been left unattended on a gurney, eyes filled with apprehension. She reaches over, squeezes his hand, not sure who is comforted more by the touch.

She can hear Titus's voice rumbling down the hall.

TITUS (O.S.)
And don't give me that sissy-ass
synthetic shit, alright? I need
morphine!

Glancing back, Megan sees Dr. Mann leaving Titus's room. She follows the doctor around the corner, where she spots him slipping through a door marked "Laboratory".

INT. LAB - NIGHT

Megan cracks the door open. The lab is dark. Moonlight shines through beakers of multi-colored liquids by the window, casting colors, like stained glass, across the room.

DR. MANN
Megan. Come in.

Mann sits in shadow, Titus's file on the desk beside him.

DR. MANN (CONT'D)
The surgery was successful. I was
able to stop the clotting and resect
the seizure focus without impairing
other functions.

Megan is staring at a shelf packed with jars of organs preserved in formaldehyde. She picks up a brain jar.

MEGAN
Where is it, doctor?

DR. MANN
What's that?

MEGAN
The thing we call "I"?

He gathers his things and moves to the door.

DR. MANN
I'm sorry, Megan.

MEGAN
What for ... ?

DR. MANN
What he lost. What you both lost.

He takes the jar from her hands and puts it back on the shelf. Closer now, he notices she is on the verge of tears.

MEGAN

What am I going to do now? What
does the brain doctor prescribe?

DR. MANN

It's your heart that's breaking,
Megan. Tend to your heart.

He offers her a sad smile, and slips out the door.

MUSIC over SEQUENCE: Madeleine Peyroux, *I Must Be Saved*.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - DAY

Doug drives through heavy rain. Syd glances back at Megan, her arm still in a sling, attempts a smile. Titus sits beside her, head bandaged. The wiper blades measure the silence.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Megan shows Doug and Syd out.

SYDNEY (O.S.)

There's a kugel in the fridge.

MEGAN (O.S.)

Thanks, Syd.

Megan turns to find Titus staring at the mural like an archeological relic. He doesn't know what to make of it now.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - DAY

Doug and Syd drive through the rain, each absorbed in their own ruminations. Then, as if their thoughts crossed, they both reach out at the same time to take the other's hand.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Titus retreats to his office. He steps inside to find the metamorphosed space he left behind -- the books, the philosophical post-its. He is flooded with cognitive dissonance, an alien in his own space.

MEGAN

You okay?

She follows his eyes to the shrine; the blessed Virgin opens her palms to them. Disturbed, Titus starts out.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

Titus?

He stops in the doorway.

MEGAN (CONT'D)

What do you think happened up there?
On the mountain? Who do you think
saved us?

TITUS

What do you mean? The rescue workers,
the paramedics --

Megan moves closer, holds her hands inches apart.

MEGAN

I was this close from the edge of
the ravine. I should've gone over.
But I stopped.

TITUS

You don't think ... ?

MEGAN

I don't know. Yes, maybe. I don't
know what to call it -- a force, a
higher power -- something. I mean,
how else would you explain it?

TITUS

You hit something --

She shakes her head.

TITUS (CONT'D)

You lost velocity ... you grabbed at
something --

MEGAN

No.

TITUS

Chance. Luck.

MEGAN

One moment, we were in Paradise.
Then, suddenly -- we were cast out.
I felt cheated and terrified -- and
then ... the sky opened. And I felt
warm and safe, as if the hand of
grace had cloaked me ... and I knew
I'd be all right.

He glances at the box from Canada in the corner.

TITUS
Was it ... the band? It worked?

MEGAN
(Shakes her head.)
It had fallen off. Whatever it was,
it was authentic.

TITUS
Did you -- did you find God up there,
Megan?

His wry laughter fades to a sad chuckle as Titus realizes she's tasted his treasured bliss, and that they're ships passing. Megan sinks into the chair.

MEGAN
Oh, Titus, where'd he go?

TITUS
Who?

MEGAN
The man I fell in love with. I've
lost him twice now.

TITUS
I wish I knew.

MEGAN
Do you remember? Do you remember
the way you were?

TITUS
Like a dream. Foggier by the minute.

MEGAN
Can't you find him again? Some
piece of him, some middle ground...?

TITUS
I wouldn't know where to begin.

It's no less painful for him, perhaps more so. He goes.

PAN TO: the ALTAR. With TIME LAPSE speed, light drains from the sacred objects as day folds into night.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

HIGH ANGLE: Megan and Titus lie in bed, miles apart, both staring at the ceiling. Megan glances over, reaches out, touches his hand. He doesn't respond. She withdraws.

MEGAN

It was a warm night, do you remember?

TITUS

What's that?

INSERT, MEMORY: church bells, CLANGING in a dark tower.

MEGAN

I slept through the church bells but
they woke you.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

In her brown tank top, Megan lies tangled in the sheets.

MEGAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I heard them in my dream. I was
drawn by them, across the street.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)(DREAM)

A velvety black night. Megan approaches the large, open
doors of the cathedral as if pulled there by an unseen force.

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)(DREAM)

Incense drifts across the room. Megan moves slowly down the
red carpeted aisle, eyes fixed on the dais. A large mirror
stands in the center, blocking the altar.

She draws closer, but does not find herself reflected in the
glass. Titus moves behind her. He is reflected in the
mirror, but not Megan.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Megan stirs and wakens. Cigarette smoke curling across the
room leads her eyes to:

Titus, perched on the fire escape, framed by the water tower
skyline. The blue neon of a bakery sign across the street
casts a halo around him.

MEGAN (V.O.)

You were so skinny back then. Your
hair was streaked from that summer
job down at the docks.

ANGLE ON: dark, rolling clouds scrape the church towers.

MEGAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A coming storm had emptied the
streets, and there was a rarefied
silence.

ON: Megan, admiring her new lover from a distance.

MEGAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And I lay in bed, just feasting on
the sight of you. You were so unaware
of what your words, what your body
could do to me. You said --

TITUS
The city's almost holy at this hour.

CU: A glowing red butt somersaults to the street.

MEGAN (V.O.)
And then you tossed your cigarette
and crawled back into bed beside me.

Two bodies entwine and curl, painted with rain shadows.

MEGAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And we made love into the storm.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

OVERHEAD: Titus and Megan, still and silent, the memory as
vivid as it is distant and out of grasp.

TIME LAPSE MONTAGE:

Titus and Megan, at various intervals in the night -- Titus
turned away, Megan, awake; Megan turned away, Titus awake;
both awake, staring at the ceiling, both turned from one
another, at the edges of the bed, the gulf widening. In the
last shot, Megan is not in the bed.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. HOUSE - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

CU: The book of Merwin poems.

Megan sits at the breakfast table, dressed, a cup of tea and
the Merwin book before her. She opens it up, finding the
dandelion she pressed there. She touches it delicately.
Titus steps inside, throwing a jacket on.

TITUS
I'm going out for a pack of
cigarettes.

MEGAN
Titus? Thank you.

He stops.

TITUS
For what?

MEGAN
For your choice. I know why you did
it. It was a selfless thing to do.

TITUS
It was self-preservation.

MEGAN
I *know* it was selfless, and I know
it was right.

She steps closer, touches his cheek.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Titus, I'm so sorry.

TITUS
For what?

MEGAN
I'm sorry I didn't get it sooner,
I'm sorry that we keep missing each
other --

TITUS
It's not your fault --

MEGAN
I'm sorry that I can't go back.

He freezes, taking in her meaning. A beat. He sighs, taking
her hair in his fist and pulls her closer. Pressing his
forehead against hers, he whispers:

TITUS
I know. I know.

MUSIC IN: Ink Spots, *If I Didn't Care*, and plays through --

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Megan takes the trash out. Lifting the lid, she finds a box
filled with Titus's altar objects. She reaches in and rescues
the goddess Maya. As she shuts the lid --

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DR. MANN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Mann opens the panel to his bookshelf shrine, begins to gently dust off the neglected altar objects.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

CU: Megan's shoulder sling comes off.

CU: SUITCASE locks SNAP open.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The priest stands at the front door, greeting his congregants as they flock inside. He notices Titus watching from across the street. The priest smiles, welcoming him, then sees the aching disconnection in Titus's eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Megan reaches in her closet for a dress, accidentally pulling down one of Titus's shirts. She picks it up, pauses to smell the sleeve. The scent fills her with a sense of loss.

INT. DR. MANN'S OFFICE - DAY

CU: golden OFFERING BOWLS, as Mann fills them with water.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Megan places the Maya in her "fire box" and sets the box inside a suitcase packed with clothes. She takes her book, a book of Titus's poems, and a copy of the Merwin poem, binds them together with ribbon, and places them inside the suitcase.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Titus watches storm clouds collect on the horizon, flooded with a sense of emptiness.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF DOUG'S BUILDING - DAY

Syd steps through the fire door to find Doug, a blanket spread before him, a banquet of take-out awaiting her. He gestures, "Ta da!" She smiles and shuts the door behind her.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

CU: as Megan shuts the suitcase and locks it.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Titus stands on the platform, as if by returning, he could step back into his experience. Or at least understand it. But it's just a dusty train station in the bland noon light.

EXT. ILENE'S BACK YARD - DAY

Ilene lies on a lounge chair, watching clouds shifting above. Charlie's HAND into frame as he pats her shoulder.

ILENE
Let's move to Italy, Charlie.

CHARLIE
What does Italy have that we don't
have right here?

ILENE
A new perspective.

He nods, considers. She returns to her book, smiling.

INT. DR. MANN'S OFFICE - DAY

Mann pulls out a cushion and settles into meditation posture.

INT. ENTRY - DAY

Suitcase in hand, Megan moves hesitantly toward the front door, puzzled by something O.S.

HER POV: seeping beneath the crack of the front door is a luminous pink light.

CU: DOORKNOB, as Megan quietly turns the knob and opens it.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SMITTY'S - DAY

Titus opens the door to the back room to find a poker game underway. The usual players. Titus lingers by the door, watching, as if in a dream. He is about to slip out again when a player spies him.

PLAYER ONE
Hey, my man! Where've you been?
Thought you'd died, man.

PLAYER TWO
I heard you had a religious experience
or somethin'.

PLAYER ONE

Titus?! Get outta here.

Titus tries to smile. He approaches the table as if hoping to find his old self there, a skin he can slip into to feel at ease in the world again.

TITUS

Yep, I was a Chosen One for a while there.

Titus pulls up a chair. Someone pours him a shot of scotch. He contemplates it like Frost, paused at a snowy fork.

TITUS (CONT'D)

I figure, what good's a streak like that if you can't turn it into some cold hard cash, right?

Titus grabs a lighter as the dealer shuffles.

TITUS (CONT'D)

Deal me a good one, Mick, God's watching.

Someone upsets the overhead lamp as he stretches.

SLOW PUSH IN ON TITUS: the scotch, the chips -- all his old vices at his fingertips. We see him stuck in the weight of that enormous decision, as the lamplight swings to and fro, washing him in light and shadow, the precarious illumination echoing the disquiet in his eyes.

INT. ENTRY - DAY

As Megan steps through the threshold, she finds not their front yard, but:

EXT. CLOUDSCAPE - DAY

... a bed of clouds, drenched in the hues of dawn, filling the landscape as far as the eye can see.

MEGAN: awed, speechless.

PULLING BACK, we find the house itself has fallen away, leaving a Magritte-like image of an open white doorframe nestled in the stratus-scape.

Megan drinks in the beauty, filled with a sense of wonder.

She steps through the threshold, into the rose-colored garden of clouds.

FADE TO BLACK