

Final Draft 8 Demo

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The Hounds of Heaven

An Original Screenplay by

Andrew Judd

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OVER BLACK

Jess's voice is beautifully modulated, a cultured voice.

JESS
(voice-over)
I like words. Hermetic words
especially. Esoteric words... I
especially like the collective
terms for animals.

Montsge of shots. Close up of toads squirming in a pond; a
fox knocking over a trash-can; a ferret in it's hole. The
voice-over continues over these shots.

JESS (CONT'D)
A knot of toads. A skulk of foxes.
A business of ferrets. There's a
kind of magic about words like
these. A kind of pulchritude, if
you know what I mean.

INT DOCTOR'S OFFICE DAY

The psychiatrist sits across the room in his office.

DOCTOR
So Jess... How are you?

We now see that he is addressing JESS, a girl in her mid-
twenties with blond hair and piercing blue eyes. She is
dressed in a hat, coat and tie.

JESS
(brightly)
Oh you know. Anhedonis. Aboulia. A
bit of paranoid ideation. I'm
worried about the size of my
cerebral ventricles. Can't
complain, though.

FREEZE-FRAME ON JESS

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
This is me.

The action resumes. The doctor looks a little concerned.

DOCTOR
You're still taking your pills?

JESS
Oh absolutely! I learned my lesson
the last time.

DOCTOR

And you're sleeping alright? Eating alright? What did you have for breakfast this morning?

JESS

Oh! Um... an apple. And a cup of green tea. I don't always remember to eat breakfast.

DOCTOR

You should try to remember to eat, Jess.

JESS

I just forget sometimes. It doesn't seem important somehow. Is it important?

DOCTOR

It's important to eat regularly, Jess.

JESS

It just seems trial somehow. There's so many other things to worry about-

DOCTOR

Listen, Jess! You complained that you've been experiencing anhedonia. I'm simply trying to determine if there's something in your lifestyle that's contributing to it.

JESS

Well... When I said that I had anhedonia, I might have been exaggerating a little. I don't know for sure that I have anhedonia; I'm just worried that I might. I mean- how can anyone know for sure..? Still, it's a pretty word though, isn't it? Anhedonia.

The psychiatrist grimaces.

DOCTOR

So what else is new? You said last time we met that you were planning to start going a couple of the Art Space a couple of times a week-

JESS

Well, I did for a while. But I kind of let that slide. I didn't get on with the facilitator. I didn't think she liked me.

DOCTOR
Now, Jess, you shouldn't just
assume...

JESS
Quantum wave collapse!

DOCTOR
...Sorry?

JESS
It's just something else that
worries me.

DOCTOR
Jess... I think you need more
structure in your life. What we
could do is make up a weekly
timetable- we can put on it the
times you get up and go to bed, and
when to eat and the activities you
plan to do that day. Like going the
Art Space! I'll talk to Polly about
it. And if genuinely depressed, we
I can prescribe some anti-
depressants... Is there anything
else you want to talk about?

JESS
(disingenuously)
Ummm. I've been talking to a giant
invisible rabbit recently. Is that
something I should be worried
about?

Freeze-frame on the doctor.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
Now, when I said I'd been talking
to a giant invisible rabbit, I was
in fact being facetious.

SAME SCENE BUT LATER

The doctor is at his desk, writing up his notes on his
computer.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
However, what I forgot is that
mental health professionals aren't
allowed to have a sense of humour,

The doctor writes "talks to giant invisible rabbit" down.
And are professionally prohibited
from noticing jokes!
(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

The technical term for this kind of oversight is 'agnosia'. What you're seeing now is the 'fact' that I talk to giant invisible rabbits going down in my case history.

EXT STREET DAY

Liz steps out of the mental health facility and smiles in the sun.

JESS

(voice-over)

However when I said that I was worried about quantum wave collapse I was being serious. I should explain.

ANIMATED SEQUENCE

White lines on a black screen, like chalk on a blackboard. We see a sine curve passing through space.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

When a particle, like a photon or electron, is travelling through space, it's not really a particle at all. It's a wave, like this one.

The wave arrives at line representing a screen. The wave vanishes and a red dot appears.

JESS (CONT'D)

But when it arrives at a detector, like this screen here, it suddenly stops being a wave and turns into a particle proper! The physicists call this phenomenon "wave function collapse" and no one really knows why it happens. But one popular theory-

A cartoon scientist appears on the screen, in an overlarge lab-coat. Dashed lines appear emanating from his eyes and connecting with the detector.

JESS (CONT'D)

Is that the act of measurement causes the collapse. That is to say, it is the consciousness of the scientist that makes the wave turn into a particle with a definite position. Consciousness shapes reality.

CITY STREET DAY

Jess walks down the road.

JESS

(voice-over)

Physicists take this theory quite seriously. I find it all a little scary, but very interesting. What I'm interested in is if it's just whether it's just physicists who have this supernatural power or whether it's open to everyone... It would be nice to talk to someone about this. I have a friend who's very interested in quantum physics-

ANDREW

(o.s.)

Jess!

ANDREW appears. He is dressed in a T-shirt advertising the American Democratic party.

JESS

Andrew! That's weird. I was just thinking about you!

ANDREW

What are you doing?

JESS

I've just had an appointment with the shrink. You know.

ANDREW

I'm not up to anything. I'll walk with you.

JESS

(voice-over)

I should explain about Andrew.

INT CONFERENCE ROOM

A number of psychotics sit in a circle in a white room. They all seem a little odd, Andrew among them.

JESS

(voice-over)

I met Andrew in a Voice Hearers support group. That's a group for people who have a problem with persistent and irksome auditory hallucinations.

Andrew leans forward.

ANDREW

I've been weighing up all the evidence and analyzing all the data and it seems to me most likely that I've exchanged souls with President Obama's.

Jess, who we now see is part of the group, grimaces a little at this admission.

We cut back to Andrew and freeze-frame on him.

JESS

(voice-over)

Needless to say, Andrew didn't entertain this particularly grandiose delusion for very long.

EXT CAFE DAY

Andrew and Jess are sitting at a cafe table talking.

JESS

(voice-over)

We made friends soon after that. I don't see him very often but it's nice when I run into him.

EXT STREET DAY

Andrew and Jess are still walking along the street.

JESS

That's bizarre! I was just thinking that I wanted to talk to you and here you are! Do you think it's possible to make people appear just by thinking about them really hard?

ANDREW

Ummm.... I was just going to the train station.

JESS

What have you been up to?

ANDREW

I'm writing a film script.

JESS

What's it about?

ANDREW

It's about two fourteen year-old kids from a disadvantaged backgrounds who steal a car.

JESS
Sounds riveting!

ANDREW
Well... it's not really about two kids who steal a car. It's more about the alienating effects of modern capitalist, consumer culture on young people.

JESS
Sounds riveting! Who're you going to get to direct it?

ANDREW
Ummmm...

JESS
You know what you should do, you should try to make it as heterological as you possibly can!

ANDREW
I might if I knew what you meant.

Andrew smiles at her shyly.

JESS
(voice over)
Andrew's pretty smart but he doesn't always understand what I'm talking about.

INT ROCK CONCERT NIGHT

Andrew is dancing in an uncoordinated fashion on the dance floor.

JESS
(voice-over)
Andrew likes to go to rock concerts by himself. He's a Leo - like Hermann Melville and Charles Bukowski. But he'd rather be a Pisces like David Foster Wallace.

INT STREET DAY

Andrew and Jess arrive at the corner of Queen Street and Quay Street.

JESS
Well, I should really go and catch my bus.

ANDREW

Do you have to go now? We could grab a coffee or something.

JESS

No, I really need to catch my bus. I have to get home and look after my cat.

ANDREW

Well, why don't you give me a call sometime? It would be really nice to catch up.

JESS

That sounds a fine idea! I'll be in touch.

ANDREW

Do you promise?

JESS

I promise.

ANDREW

That's great. I'll hear from you soon, then.

JESS

See you later, Andrew.

Jess walks off the road.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

I'm not going to call him.

INT BUS DAY

Jess sits on the bus.

JESS

(voice-over)

This is me on the bus.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

The camera roves through Jess's house, a tiny little bedsit. It might be nice to have some music here, say "Simple Song" by the Shins (although this might be anachronistic.)

JESS

(voice-over)

This is my house.

The camera roves around picking up a large poster of Sid Barrett.

JESS (CONT'D)
This is my poster of Sid Barrett,
Pink Floyd's first singer. He had
schizophrenia as well.

Cut to on a pot of basil.

JESS (CONT'D)
This is my basil plant.

Cut to a cat, preening itself.

JESS (CONT'D)
This is my cat, Zoe.

WE NOW SEE Jess reading an textbook on neurology. The human brain is on the cover.

JESS (CONT'D)
Apparently, the brains of people
with schizophrenia get smaller.
When I first heard this I thought
this meant that my head was
shrinking. But apparently that's
not how it works.

ANIMATED SCENE We see a diagram of the human brain.

JESS (CONT'D)
Inside the brain there are these
fluid filled cavities called
ventricles.

Arrows appear pointing at the ventricles.

JESS (CONT'D)
What happens is that the ventricles
get bigger and the rest of the
brain gets smaller. Sometimes I
worry that I might be getting
stupid. I know it's stupid to think
that. I don't really think that I'm
getting stupid. At least not all
the time.

We see Jess's brother Simon, sitting across from her in her house.

JESS (CONT'D)
This is my brother Simon.

Simon is about twenty-four, a year younger than Jess.

SIMON

Listen Jess, I'm going to a party tonight. A friend of mine has booked the top floor of [the Kingslander]. I want you to come with me.

JESS

I don't know about that. I'm not very good at parties.

SIMON

I really think you should come. You need to get out of the house. It's not good for you to be cooped up here all the time.

FREEZE FRAME on Jess thinking.

JESS

(voice-over)

Now, in the ordinary, quotidian run of the mill, I wouldn't agree to go to a party in a million years. I can be a bit of a fraidy-cat. But, at the moment, I'm very well. I'm the wellest I've been since I was seventeen. In fact, I think I think I might be getting better. Let me give you an example.

CUT TO

Jess is sitting in front of her computer.

JESS (CONT'D)

I'm a big fan of the works of Friedrich Nietzsche

CUT TO

Photo of Nietzsche.

JESS (CONT'D)

This is a picture of Friedrich Nietzsche.

CUT TO

Another picture of Nietzsche, the famous one of him with Salome and Ree.

JESS (CONT'D)

This is another picture of Nietzsche. He's the one on the right.

CUT TO

Jess is trying to access a site on Nietzsche.

JESS (CONT'D)

There's an online site I like about Nietzsche. The other day I was trying to access it and I couldn't get in.

The computer flashes up, "ACCESS DENIED". Jess frowns.

JESS (CONT'D)

My first thought was that the I was being deliberately blocked, Maybe I knew something about Nietzsche that nobody else was allowed to know. Maybe I was being purposefully excluded from the community of online Nietzsche scholars to stop me from spilling the beans.

Jess frowns at the computer. Her expressions match her thoughts.

JESS (CONT'D)

But then I said to myself, "Stop it, Jess". I was very firm with myself. I said, "Jess you're being paranoid. It's probably just a technical botch-up."... Turned out that I'd just got my password wrong.

EXT CITY STREET EVENING

Jess walks with Simon along the street, heading towards a bar.

JESS

(voice-over)

The funny thing, and this is quite hard to explain, sometimes life gets a little hard to cope with, it's nice to get a bit paranoid. I don't know why this should be. Maybe it's because it makes things simpler.

Jess and Simon arrive at the bar and walk in.

JESS (CONT'D)

This is me being very brave.

INT BAR NIGHT

The party is a private function at a bar. There are a lot of people in the room. A guy approaches Jess, who is standing by herself in front of a table.

GUY

(shouting over the noise)
Hey! I was admiring your dress
sense from across the room.

JESS

Thank you very much. That's very
kind. Sartorial presentation means
a lot to me.

GUY

Its kooky! I like your jacket.

JESS

I wear it because it deflects other
people's thoughts.

GUY

What?

JESS

Ha...! I'm sorry. I was making a
joke.

GUY

Are you a student?

JESS

I was one. Neuroscience.

GUY

What's your name?

JESS

Jess...

Simon, who has been watching this conversation from a distance, approaches and puts an arm around her shoulders.

SIMON

Sorry to break up the conversation,
Liz, but there's some people I want
you to talk to.

He leads her way. Liz calls over her shoulder.

JESS

Good talking to you! You seem very
nice.

CUT TO a shot of a clock on the wall. It now quarter to ten.

Jess is talking to someone else.

JESS (CONT'D)

I don't know what to do! I'm really enjoying the party but I feel like I should go home. And the last bus goes at ten. If I miss it, I don't know what I'll do! But everyone I've met tonight has been so nice. Maybe it's the beer.... I'm not supposed to mix alcohol with the pills I'm taking but everyone does! I know, I know - I keep tergiversating!

GUY 2

You keep what?

JESS

I said I keep tergiversating!

GUY 2

What the heck does 'tergiversate' mean?

JESS

Oh! Um... Vacillate. Be indecisive. Sorry. I know I can be a bit recondite sometimes! But seriously, what do you think I should do?

GUY 2

Uhhh... I think you should go with your heart.

EXT CITY STREET NIGHT

A bus pulls up at the bus-stop Jess is waiting at. She climbs on board.

JESS

One ticket for Takapuna, please.

EXT CITY DAY

We see a 'city' scene, perhaps the Takapuna shops. A couple of seconds just showing people walking around.

Jess is walking down the road. Her clothes is more toned down.

JESS

(voice-over)

Today, I'm going to a coffee group.

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

I don't go very often, but this is
the new me - bold, daring,
audacious.

INT CAFE DAY

CHARLES is sitting at the table. He smiles at Jess.

CHARLES

Jess! I'm really glad you could
make it.

FREEZE FRAME on Charles.

JESS

This is Charles. He organizes the
group; he's very pro-active.
Charles has bipolar. I don't know
what that's like.

Jess sits down at the table. Around it sit Charles, Katrina
and Zac. In the next bit of the scene, we see them talking
and laughing but cannot hear what they are saying. We see
Katrina laughing.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

This is Katrina. She's an artist.

INT ARTIST'S STUDIO

Katrina is standing in front of an easel producing a Jackson
Pollack- style splatter painting.

JESS

Katrina makes neo-expressionist
paintings.

Katrina steps back. She has a spatter of paint on her cheek.

JESS (CONT'D)

Katrina is very pretty but I try
not to notice that.

INT CAFE DAY

The four are still talking. We see Zac.

JESS

(voice-over)

This is Zac.

ZAC

I love Farrelly Brother films.

CHARLES

Have you seen "Me, Myself and Irene"? It's brilliant. "What's your problem?" "Advanced delusionary schizophrenia with involuntary narcissistic rage." Classic.

ZAC

Have you seen Donny Darko?

KATRINA

I love that film!

JESS

So do I!

KATRINA

It's a fantastic film.

JESS

It's my favorite film.
(reconsidering)
Ummm...

KATRINA

That scene where he sees glowing tubes coming out of people's chests...

ZAC

What about Shutter Island?

CHARLES

Now, that was a crap film! I reckon Scorsese should stick to crime flicks.

We can tell that everyone at the table agrees. Shots of the group talking and laughing.

JESS

(voice-over)

Today's coffee group was particularly fun. It helps that we're all pretty well at the moment. When people are really sick-

EXT TAKAPUNA STREET DAY

Jess is walking home.

JESS

-they either don't say anything or talk in incomprehensible rants.

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

The psychiatrists call this
'logorrhea' and call it a cognitive
impairment. But I have my own ideas
about it.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess opens the door to her house. As the voice-over
continues, she pats Zoe.

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JESS

Now, I don't want to give the
impression that my life is a giddy
whirlwind of parties and social
engagement. The life of your
typical Schizophrenic isn't that
exciting. In the ordinary,
quotidian run-of-the-mill, I don't
do much.

INT GYM DAY

Jess is on the stepper at the gym

JESS

(voice-over)

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I go to the gym.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess is reading a book of poetry by Emily Dickinson.

JESS

I read.

EXT TAKAPUNA STREET DAY

Jess is walking along the road.

JESS

(voice-over)

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I go for long walks.

Jess arrives at the front drive to her house. Her neighbor MR
HARRISON is gardening. He looks up at her as she arrives.

MR HARRISON

(guardedly)

How are you today, Jess?

JESS

(voice-over)

This is my neighbor, Mr Harrison.

(out-loud)

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)
I'm positively ebullient, Mr
Harrison!

MR HARRISON
Well... that's good to know.

Jess walks toward her door.

JESS
(voice-over)
I don't think Mr Harrison likes me
particularly.

INT NEIGHBOURS HOUSE

The neighbour's house. Mr Harrison is standing by the window
with a pair of binoculars.

JESS
(voice-over)
A little while ago, I got really
worried that my neighbours didn't
like me. I thought they were spying
on me,

Mr Harrison walks into the kitchen. His wife is dressed as a
witch and is stirring a cauldron.

JESS (CONT'D)
That they wanted to find out all my
secrets and publicize my dirty
laundry to the world.

The wife cackles.

EXT NEIGHBOUR'S FRONT PORCH DAY

We see the view from the door of the neighbour's houses and
the door-step.

JESS
(voice-over)
So I decided to try to try to
placate them by giving them gifts.

Jess scampers up to the door and leaves a cellophane covered
basket on the door-step before scampering off.

JESS (CONT'D)
Just perfumed soaps and hand-
lotions, stuff I bought from the
chemist, nothing extravagant. I
mean- it's not like I splashed out
or anything.

INT JESS'S HOUSE NIGHT

Jess picks up a CD. The cover says, in biro, "Compilation made for Liz". She puts it in the CD player and presses play.

"I'm not here," by Radiohead starts to play.

We hear the first part of the song start to play. As it goes on, and during the next bit of voice-over, we see Jess making her dinner.

She gets out a Vegetarian Cook book.

She makes a stir-fry.

JESS
(voice-over)
It's not that I don't want to go
out and take part in the world.
It's just that I find real people
hard to deal with. Imaginary
characters and dead writers are
easier to cope with.

Jess dolls out cat-food into a dish.

JESS (CONT'D)
Here, puss, puss, puss...
Now, we see Jess sitting at a table, eating her dinner and
reading a New Scientist.

CUT to Jess in her in the bathroom, putting toothpaste on her
toothbrush.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
Good oral hygiene is something else
that is very important to me. I
went through a phase of not
brushing my teeth. I thought
someone was putting poison in the
toothpaste.

Jess starts vigorously brushing her teeth.

JESS (CONT'D)
I didn't brush my teeth for a year.
When I saw the dentist, he was very
cross with me. He said, "Liz, you
need to look after your teeth!" And
he gave me a lot of fillings.

Jess spits into the basin. She looks at herself in the
mirror; suddenly she pulls a couple of faces, making Asian
eyes', grimacing, pulling down the corner of her mouth.

Aerial shot of Jess's bedroom. Jess, in pyjamas, gets into bed.

JESS (CONT'D)
Nine o'clock. Time for bed. Oh!

Jess gets out of bed and goes to her bedside table.

JESS (CONT'D)
Almost forgot my pill.

Jess takes the pill and gets back into bed.

JESS (CONT'D)
Nighty night, Andrew.

Jess switches off her light, and the screen goes black. The Radiohead song continues playing for a little while before fading out.

EXT TAKAPUNA DAY

It is a beautiful day. We see shots of Takapuna Beach and Rangitoto.

JESS
(voice-over)
It's a beautiful day. The sky is purest cerulean. "Cerulean" is just a fancy word for blue.

We see JESS'S FATHER sitting across from Jess in her house.

JESS (CONT'D)
Today, my father paid a visit.

JESS'S FATHER
I just wanted to tell you that I'm going to be out of town for a while. I don't really know for how long.

JESS
Where are you going?
JESS'S FATHER
I have to go to Christchurch.

Jess reacts.

JESS
(voice-over)
My father is a civil engineer.

MONTAGE OF TV FOOTAGE OF THE NOVEMBER QUAKE

JESS (CONT'D)

Christchurch is New Zealand's second largest city. In September last year it suffered a major earthquake. The quake measured 7.1 On the Richter Scale but, amazingly, no one was killed. It seems a bit of a miracle. I don't really believe in Providence but, still, it makes you wonder.

Over more footage.

JESS (CONT'D)

Still, a lot of houses were damaged and the Cantabrians suffer after-shakes almost everyday. I can't really imagine what it's like to live there but I think it must be terrible.

CUT BACK TO JESS'S HOUSE

JESS'S FATHER

If you feel you need to come over and stay at the house anytime, you still can. Anne's not coming down with me.

Jess grimaces.

JESS

That's alright. I feel pretty self-sufficient at the moment.

JESS'S FATHER

Well. Just so you know.

FREEZE-FRAME ON Jess's father.

JESS

(voice-over)

It was nice to see my father. Talking with him always puts me in a good mood.

EXT CITY STREET DAY

Jess is walking along Queen Street.

JESS

(voice-over)

Because the day is so sunny and because I'm in such a good mood, I feel motivated to embark on a new project. I want to write something. I just don't know what.

Jess arrives at the door of the central library.

JESS (CONT'D)

I could write some poetry. But I don't feel particularly inspired to write poetry at the moment. I want to write a serious piece that contributes to the furtherance [sic] of human knowledge.

Jess walks through the electric doors.

JESS (CONT'D)

I could write about international commerce.

INT BOARDROOM DAY

Jess's mother is sitting at the head of a table, in a boardroom. A number of men sit around the table. Jess's mother is talking.

JESS

My mother's a trade ambassador. It's a very high-powered job; she knows a lot about trade issues.

INT LIBRARY DAY

Jess is walking among the book cases.

JESS

But I have ambivalent feelings about my mother so I might shelve that idea.

Jess walks along the psychology section. The books are a collection of all the major thinkers on the subject.

JESS (CONT'D)

I could write a scholarly lucubration on the origins of schizophrenia.

Jess takes out "Madness Explained" by Richard Benthall.

JESS (CONT'D)

It's a hot-button issue - everyone has a their own theory about it. It's the old nature vs nurture debate.

Jess puts the book back.

JESS (CONT'D)
 Personally though I tend to side
 with the psychiatrists. As far as
 I'm concerned, I'm genetically
 predisposed to go nutty from time
 to time.... Although I should
 mention that no-one else in my
 family is mentally ill.

Jess walks on.

JESS (CONT'D)
 What else...? Quantum physics...
 Nietzsche...

Jess turns a corner, bumping into a man with an armful of
 books. He drops them.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (out-loud)
 Sorry!

Jess is now in the religion section. She find the Gnostic
 Gospels.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (voice-over)
 Gnosticism... I don't know anything
 about the Gnostics.

Jess is in the Philosophy section. She pulls out "Logical
 Investigations" by Ludwig Wittgensteing

Jess has two books now. She walks to the bench by the window.

JESS (CONT'D)
 I've narrowed it down to a book by
 Wittgenstein or the Gnostic
 Gospels. I just can't decide
 between them.

Jess lays the two books down.

JESS (CONT'D)
 What I'll do is close my eyes and
 spin around and then the book I'm
 Destined to write about will jump
 out at me.

Jess closes her eyes. She sticks her arms out and starts
 spinning. We see this in long shot: a couple of the other
 patrons look up to observe this rather odd display.

Jess stops spinning and puts her hand down. She opens her
 eyes. She has put her hand down on the Gnostic Gospels.

JESS (CONT'D)
 Right. The Gnostics it is then.

Jess arrives at the check-out desk. She dumps a load of books about the Gnostics down on the counter. The librarian runs them through the scanner.

CHECK-OUT GIRL
Fairly heavy-duty reading you've got here.

JESS
Yes, it is. Sorry.

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EXT CAFE DAY

Jess is sitting at a cafe table on the sidewalk, reading the introduction to a Gnostic textbook. RICK, a very attractive guy, approaches the table.

RICK
Do you mind if I sit here?

JESS
Go ahead.

Rick sits down. He studies Jess for a moment. Jess looks up at him and then back at her book.

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RICK
Do you mind if I smoke?

JESS
Doesn't bother me. I used to smoke myself.

Rick takes out a cigarette and lights it. He continues to look at Jess for a moment.

RICK
What are you reading?

JESS
It's a book about the Gnostics.

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RICK
Who are they when they're at home?
JESS

I don't really know yet. I think that they're an early Christian sect but I'm not sure. 'Gnosis' is the ancient greek work of knowledge - I know that! That's why we have the word 'agnostic'. It just means "Don't know".

RICK
Are you religious?

JESS

Oh no! I think religion is for idiots. I tend to side with Richard Dawkins on that issue. I just like to learn new things.. This is very funny! I don't get accosted by strangers wanting conversations on the street very often!

RICK

I'm not so strange. So. You like words then?

JESS

Oh absolutely. It really pees me off when people use words imprecisely. Pisses me off, I mean. It's like when people say they need to "diffuse the situation" when they mean "defuse the situation."

RICK

The two words sound the same.

JESS

That's probably why people get confused. Or when people say "endemic" when they mean 'rife' when really it's closer to indigenous'... Hmmm. You know, I wonder if I conjured you up so I could have someone to talk at for a bit!

RICK

Maybe I conjured you up because I needed someone to talk at me for a bit.

JESS

(laughing)

That's possible.

RICK

Listen - I have to go. I'm catching up with some pals of mine. So, are you going to give me your number?

JESS

You don't even know my name yet!

RICK

Oh yeah, that's true. What's your name?

JESS

Jess.

Jess thrusts out her hand. Rick hesitates a moment and then shakes it.

RICK

Rick. So, are you going to give me your number?

JESS

Hold on. I'll just get my cell phone.

She rummages in her bag.

EXT CITY STREET DAY

Jess is walking down the road, smiling.

JESS

(voice-over)

Life can be very funny sometimes.

INT CONVENIENCE STORE DAY

Jess is at the counter buying a newspaper.

JESS

(voice-over)

I try to read the paper most days.

INT BUS DAY

Jess is sitting on the bus reading the paper.

JESS

I don't know why - it's mostly full of horrible people doing horrible things to each other. And it's easy to take it personally. I actually went through quite a long phase when I thought everything in the paper was made up, but that wasn't much better.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess opens the door of her house.

JESS

(voice-over)

When I got home, I found that Zoe had had a little accident.

Zoe is sitting by a pile of cat-poo, looking as shame faced as a cat can look.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (out loud)
 Oh Zoe! You naughty, naughty thing!
 My fault for leaving you inside I
 suppose.

CUT TO Jess cleaning up the mess, using plastic gloves,
 detergent and newspaper.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (voice-over)
 It seems a bit absurd somehow
 having to clean up cat-poo on a day
 that has otherwise been so good,
 what with finding a new subject to
 get interested in and everything
 else. Maybe it's a metaphor for the
 human condition-

Jess dumps the newspaper covered lump in the garden bin.

JESS (CONT'D)
 A little bit of hidden treasure
 mixed in with a whole lot of shit.

EXT TAKAPUNA DAY

Shots of clouds of Rangitoto.

JESS
 (voice-over)
 It's a fairly nice day today. A
 little inclement but nothing to
 write home about.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

JESS
 (voice-over)
 Rick called today.

Jess's cellphone rings.

JESS (CONT'D)
 Hello?

RICK
 (through the phone)
 Jess?

JESS
 Yeah.

RICK
 It's Rick. I'm ringing to see if
 you're busy tonight.

JESS
No, I'm not busy.

RICK
I know this is short notice but I'm going into town tonight with a few mates. Drinking and clubbing. I wondered if you wanted to come out with us?

Jess ponders this request.

RICK (CONT'D)
Jess?

JESS
I'm thinking.

RICK
Come on, Jess, It'll be fun.

Jess hesitates a moment longer.

JESS
Okay then. I'll come with you.

RICK
Cool. Can you meet us at Cassette?
About nine o'clock?

JESS
I think so.

RICK
Cool. I'll see you there.

Rick hangs up.

CUT TO

Jess is on the computer.

JESS
(voice over)
I googled Cassette just to make
sure I knew where it was.

CUT TO

Jess is standing in front of the mirror. She is holding up different shirts trying to work out what to wear. From her choices, we can see she is a definite hipster.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
I'm very excited about seeing Rick
tonight.
(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)
A little apprehensive too,
obviously. Actually Rick is not the
only thing I'm excited about.

INT BOOKSHOP DAY

Dr Mark DOE is sitting at a table signing books.

JESS
(voice-over)
In three weeks time, a very eminent
psychologist called Doctor Mark Doe
is coming to Auckland to give a
talk at the university. He's going
to give a presentation about the
origins of schizophrenia. This is
me imagining him at a book signing.

Mark Doe signs a copy of the book and closes the lid. The
book is called "Insanity Demystified."

JESS (CONT'D)
I read some of his book but I
didn't learn much from it. It
seemed to me like he was
deliberately skirting the issue,
like he wasn't saying what he
wanted to say.

Doe hands the book to a grateful patron.

INT JESS'S HOUSE NIGHT

Jess is standing in front of the mirror applying make-up.

JESS
(voice-over)
But at the moment, I'm more excited
about seeing Rick. I want to look
perfect - the male gaze and all
that. I even considered dying my
hair green again but I thought that
might be going overboard.

INT BUS NIGHT

Jess is on the bus heading into town.

EXT VULCAN LANE NIGHT

Rick is waiting in Vulcan Lane, smoking a cigarette.

RICK
Jess, you made it! Cool. My friends
are just upstairs.

INT CASSETTE NIGHT

Jess and Rick walk through the crowded bar towards a booth.
Rick is leading the way carrying a couple of drinks - a beer
for himself and vodka tonic for Jess.

They arrive at the booth where sit RUFUS, MATT and DAMON.
Matt is talking.

MATT
She keeps vetoing all my best
ideas. It's starting to piss me off-

RICK
Hey Jess, I want you to meet a
couple of my mates. This is Rufus,
Matt and Damon. Guys this is Jess.

Matt's eyes slide sideways to look at Jess.

MATT
Nice outfit. Anyway. What was I
saying?

DAMON
You were describing how much of a
stuck up bitch Jasmine is.

Rufus stands up so that Jess and Rick can slide in. Jess sits
next to the wall and Rick sits in the middle. As Matt talks
his eyes occasionally slide sideways to look at Jess.

MATT
Yeah. Like the other day I wanted
to do a piece on stand-up comic and
she told me it wasn't proper news.
It's my show - I don't see why she
thinks she has a right to
interfere. I'm sick of her fucking
superior attitude. Flouncing around
the studio in fish-nets...

RICK
You should try to look at it from
the girl's point of view. She's
done the research - she's probably
just doing what she thinks she has
to to keep the station afloat.

MATT
Yeah, you're probably right.

RICK
I've always got on well with
Jasmine.

MATT
You would. Still I've no idea how
she got that job.

DAMON
Probably through Dave.

MATT
That wouldn't surprise me. He's got
a thing for eye candy. But still,
if they were really serious about
ratings... I dunno. They should
shake things up a bit.

We see Jess.

JESS
(voice-over)
I have no idea what they're talking
about.

MATT
(to Jess)
So anyway. Where did you two meet?

JESS
We met at a cafe on High Street.

JESS (CONT'D)
She was reading a book about
ancient Christianity.

MATT
(to Jess)
Are you religious?

JESS
Oh no! I'm not religious. I'm just
interested in a lot of different
things. Truth is, I can be a bit of
a sciologist.

MATT
So- what? Does that mean you're a
Presbyterian?

RICK
She likes big words is what she's
trying to say.

JESS
I can recite Pi to a thousand
places. Three point one four one
five nine two six-

RICK
That's alright, Jess. We get the picture.

MATT
(frowning)
Wow. That almost I dunno kinda autistic.

RICK
Hey! She a bit quirky but she's real smart.

Matt gets up, still frowning.

MATT
I'm just going to get another fucking round of drinks.

Shot of Jess.

JESS
(voice-over)
I didn't say much after that.

The same scene but a little later.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
After everyone had had a few drinks, we decided to hit the clubs.

DAMON
Time to make a move.

The men scull the last of their drinks and stand up.

EXT CITY STREET NIGHT

The guys walk down Queen Street, Jess and Rick lagging behind.

JESS
Rick? This club we're going to? Does it play house music? I ask because I'm not particularly fond of house music-

RICK
(in exasperation)
Listen, Jess. You are smart aren't you?

JESS
Umm, yes? I think so.

RICK

Cool. Because I'd hate to think I'd picked up a retard. About the music- you'll like it when you get there.

Jess stops walking.

JESS

Rick, I feel I should go home.

RICK

What, why?

JESS

I don't know. I just- I have this feeling that I should go home.

RICK

Jess... I'm sorry if I was a bit harsh. We all think you're smart. Everyone thinks you're cool; everyone likes you. Why don't you come to the club? Just for a bit?

JESS

I don't know...

Jess pauses, indecisive.

RICK

You can leave anytime you want... I'll buy you a drink.

Jess starts to walk again.

JESS

Okay... Can I have a cocktail?

RICK

If you want.

JESS

I'd like a mint julep, I think.

They arrive at the door of the club.

INT CLUB NIGHT

The club (I don't know which one) is entirely black. A few disco type lights, booths, a dance floor with a couple of people on it. A DJ in his booth, playing club music.

Damon is talking to a couple of girls.

JESS
 (voice-over)
 At the club, Damon met up with a
 couple of girls he knows.

Liz and Rick are standing together.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (to Rick)
 There aren't many people here!

RICK
 It's early yet!

The girls, ALECIA and CATHERINE, approach Rick.

ALECIA
 Rick! Up to the same old tricks?

RICK
 You know me. I keep busy... This is
 Jess by the way.

ALECIA
 (to Jess)
 You're with Rick tonight?

LIZ
 Yes-

RICK
 (laying a hand on her
 back)
 I'm looking after her.

ALECIA
 Lucky for some!

They move over and take a seat at the booth.

ALECIA (CONT'D)
 (to Jess)
 So where have you been tonight?

RICK
 I'll go get those drinks. A mint
 julep, was it?

JESS
 You don't really have to buy me a
 cocktail.

RICK
 It's alright. The drinks are on me
 tonight.

Rick leaves.

ALECIA
(maybe a little wistfully)
Rick's a pretty decent guy.

JESS
Do you two come here often?

CATHERINE
Try every weekend!

ALECIA
The bartenders know us by name.

JESS
It must be nice. To have a regular haunt.

ALECIA
Yeah, well we're complete booze sluts. So where did you meet Rick?

CUT TO

Same location but later. There are more people on the dancefloor, including Rick's coterie.

JESS
(voice-over)
The club is filling up. More and more people are filing in all the time.

Jess and Rick are sitting at the booth, talking and laughing and drinking (although we cannot hear what they are saying.)

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
When Rick came back, we talked for a while about music and stuff.

We see shots of Rick from Jess's point of view.

JESS (CONT'D)
Rick knows a lot about dub music. I was worried that he might not like me or that he might not really be such a good person after all. But I feel reassured now.

JESS (CONT'D)
(out-loud)
You know you were right? I thought I wouldn't like the music but I'm really enjoying it!

RICK
Told you so. Would you like to go dance?

JESS

Alright!

Rick leads Jess onto the dance floor.

We see shots of them dancing, as part of a small circle with others of Rick's friends. The music... hard to know what to put here. Possibly not bouncy, fun stuff. It could perhaps be dark to suggest Jess's underlying anxiety (something like "George" by the Headless Chickens?)

Jess dances more or less with her eyes closed although she occasionally sneaks peeks at other dancers to imitate their moves.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

This is really fun... Something that makes me sad sometimes is that, because I first got sick when I was seventeen, I feel I've missed out on life. Lots of things other twenty-five year olds take for granted I've never experienced. For instance, this is the first time I've ever been clubbing.

We see Rick from Jess's point of view, smiling.

JESS (CONT'D)

Yet here I am tonight. Everyone's so cool! But especially Rick. [He makes me think of my father for some reason.]

CUT To

The booth. Matt is sitting by himself with a beer. Jess sits down opposite him with another cocktail.

JESS

Why aren't you dancing?

MATT

I'm taking a breather.

JESS

I've been dancing with Rick. He's a really good dancer!

MATT

Yeah, well. Everyone likes Rick.

JESS

This is my third potation!

MATT

Potation, eh? Is that another word for drink?

JESS

You could say libation as well!

MATT

Oh could you now-

JESS

But technically, that would only be if you were offering it to the gods!

MATT

You learn something new everyday.

A micro-beat.

JESS

Do you work for a radio station?

MATT

I just volunteer for the local student station. It's not like I get paid or anything.

JESS

I know that station! It's really cool! I listen to it all the time!

Rufus slides in next to Matt, Damon stands on the other side.

MATT

Yeah, well, if I thought it was a passport to unlimited free pussy I was wrong.

(to Damon)

Any luck?

Jess's sudden isolation is crushingly palpable.

DAMON

(to Matt)

I was talking to that blond chick. But the girl's got mental problems!

MATT

A nut job, eh?

DAMON

Complete headcase!

Jess flinches a little as these terms are thrown around.

Rick slides in across from Jess.

RICK
How're you bearing up, Jess?

JESS
Oh, all right-

RICK
That's great.

Rick is a little distracted by the conversation at the other end of the booth which is carrying on inaudibly.

JESS
Rick? Can I talk to you?

RICK
Sure.

JESS
There's something you need to know about me.

RICK
Oh yeah? What's that?

JESS
I... I don't have very many friends.

RICK
So? Life's not a popularity contest.

JESS
You don't understand. When I say, "I don't have many friends," what I mean is, I don't really have any friends at all. Not really.

This grabs Rick's attention.

RICK
Why are you telling me this?

JESS
I don't know. Maybe... Maybe, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for being my friend.

Rick gets uncomfortable.

RICK
Hold on a second. I just have to talk to Patrick for a moment.

Rick gets up. We see him talk to Patrick. Jess watches. Rick reaches into his wallet and hands Patrick something.

JESS
(voice-over)
He just gave Patrick something.

Shots of people dancing; Jess buying a drink at the bar; Jess outside the club with Rick and Damon.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
After that, it gets a bit blurred.
I know we danced some more and I
had more to drink and then,
sometime later, we were on the
street.

EXT OUTSIDE CLUB NIGHT

Rick and Damon are standing on the sidewalk outside the bar; Jess with them.

DAMON
So you're heading off now, man?

RICK
Yeah. I think it's time for us to
split.

Rick starts walking. He turns.

RICK (CONT'D)
Are you coming, Jess?

Jess hesitates drunkenly for a moment and then runs after Rick. They fall into step and start walking down the street.

JESS
Where are we going?

RICK
My apartment is just around the
corner.

They walk in silence for a beat.

JESS
I don't know that I should go back
to your apartment-

RICK
It'll be fine.

He puts his arm around her waist. Jess melts slightly into the embrace.

RICK (CONT'D)

We can chill out for a bit. If you want, you can stay the night and get the bus home in the morning.

JESS

I guess that's a sensible plan...
You know, I think I'm a bit drunk?

INT ELEVATOR NIGHT

Rick and Jess are ascending in the elevator. The lack of music is very apparent. Rick still has his arm around Jess's waist- a bit awkwardly now.

INT RICK'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Rick opens the door and flicks on the light. The room is illuminated - a couch and armchair arranged at right angles, a guitar resting in a corner, a nice stereo and TV.

Rick walks in followed by Jess. Actually being in Rick's home makes Jess suddenly apprehensive.

JESS

This is your apartment?

RICK

Yeah. This is home sweet home.

Rick moves in to try to kiss Jess. She evades him, stepping back.

JESS

Do you live here by yourself?

RICK

I've got a flatmate but he's on holiday in Noumea at the moment.

JESS

That must be nice for him.

RICK

Yeah.

He sizes up the situation.

RICK (CONT'D)

[I tell you what] I'll just go put some music on. You make yourself comfortable on the couch.

JESS

Okay...

Jess moves over to the couch and sits uncomfortably in the middle. Rick walks over to a stereo and puts on "Evidence" by Faith No More. We see the stereo light up and the music start to play.

A beat, long enough for the intro of the song to run. Rick starts speaking during the first line.

RICK
(from the kitchen)
I think I'm going to get myself a
drink. Do you want anything?

JESS
I'll have some water please.

RICK
You don't want anything stronger?

JESS
No, just a glass of water. I think
I need to sober up a little.
(more quietly)
I feel a bit...

Jess trails off. Rick goes into the kitchen and pours himself in a Bourbon and Coke. Jess remains where she is, listening. After a moment (of course) she goes over to the bookcase to check out the books. A complete set of George R. R. Martin's fantasy novels.

Rick comes back in with his bourbon and coke and a glass of water. He stops.

RICK
What are you doing?

JESS
I'm looking at your books. Sorry-
do you mind? Are they yours?

RICK
(embarrassed)
They're my flatmate's.

JESS
It's alright. I don't read fantasy
books myself, but I know lots of
people who do.

Jess wanders nervously around the room, touching the guitar.

JESS (CONT'D)
This is very strange. I've never
been in an inner city apartment
before - it's not how I imagined.
But still,
(earnestly to Rick)
(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)
it seems very nice. Very
salubrious.

RICK
That's what everyone says.
(realizing he's made a
misstep)
Everyone who come back here, I
mean... I keep my books in the
bedroom. So [...]

[In this bit, Rick asks Jess a question shifting the control
back to him.]

A beat.

RICK (CONT'D)
This is Faith No More.

JESS
Yeah, I recognize the singer. Mike
Patton.

RICK
I saw these guys perform at Vector
Arena last year.

JESS
What was that like?

RICK
It was pretty good, I guess. I
don't think it was their best
performance... Why don't you come
and sit over here?

Jess gets up and hovers for a moment indecisive. Rick pulls
her down next to him.

RICK (CONT'D)
Do you like Faith No More?

JESS
I have a friend who really likes
Faith No More.

RICK
(smiling)
I thought you didn't have any
friends.

Rick moves in to try and kiss her again. But before he can,

JESS
I saw you give Patrick some drugs.

RICK
What, Patrick? Oh yeah- he wanted a
tab of Ecstasy.

JESS
(apprehensively)
Are you a drug dealer?

RICK
A drug dealer? I wouldn't call
myself that. I was just helping a
friend. I have a connection at the
moment and Patrick doesn't.

JESS
What do you do?

RICK
Oh you know. This and that.

Rick leans over to the table and gets his bourbon and coke,
and takes a sip.

RICK (CONT'D)
I tell you what- I'll show you
something.

Rick gets up. Jess slumps a little in relief. Rick goes into
his bedroom and comes back with a leather album. As he comes
in and sits down,

RICK (CONT'D)
I take photos - it's my hobby. Have
a look at them and tell me what you
think.

Rick passes the album to Jess. She starts flicking through
the book. The photos are arty but a little amateurish: black
and white pictures of buildings, fountains, chandeliers (few
people). Often tending towards the abstract.

RICK (CONT'D)
My favorite's the one of the
church.

JESS
Which one's that?

RICK
You went past it.

Rick reaches across and flips the pages back to a black and
white picture: a girl (it looks like Jess) looking up towards
the steeple of a church (or perhaps a crucifix).

Jess looks at Rick in sudden alarm.

JESS

Did you just put this picture in?

RICK

What? No - of course not. How could I have done that...? What a weird thing to say.

Jess looks back at the book. The girl is not her (possibly there is no girl at all).

Rick moves over on the armchair. 8 Demo

RICK (CONT'D)

Well, anyway. That's what I do for fun. I don't show my photos to many people.

Jess runs her finger down the photograph.

JESS

Was there any reason why you took a picture of a church?

RICK

Not really. I just liked the lines. You think they're shit, don't you?

JESS 8 Demo

No... I don't really know. It's hard to tell sometimes. Maybe if I saw your pictures hanging in a gallery-

RICK

But it's hard to judge when some strange guys shoves a bunch of pictures at you and asks what you think.

JESS

Yes.

RICK

Yeah, I over-reacted. I can be a bit sensitive about my art sometimes. 8 Demo

Rick gets a cigarette from the pack on the table and taps it as he talks.

RICK (CONT'D)

I had the option of going to Elam when I finished school but I decided to go travelling instead. And then a couple of years ago, when I came back- I dunno.
(MORE)

RICK (CONT'D)

I've got a good job and a solid core of mate. The girls... they come and go. I haven't found the right one yet. But I'm fine with that. So anyway I never really felt the urge to go back to school.

Rick thinks about lighting the cigarette but chooses not to.

RICK (CONT'D)

So I'm sorry if I put you on the spot. It's alright if you think they're crap.

JESS

No, I'm sorry. I don't think your pictures are crap. I think your pictures are really beautiful! I just can't discriminate properly at the moment.

Rick puts the cigarette back in its pack.

RICK

What about you? I bet you do something creative.

JESS

I write poetry.

RICK

Oh yeah? Is it any good?

JESS

I don't know. I don't show it to anyone - I'm like you that way.

RICK

What do you write about?

JESS

Lots of different stuff.

RICK

Like what?

JESS

Just stuff I'm thinking and feeling.

RICK

I bet it's really good. Can you remember some?

Jess stretches suddenly.

JESS

You know, I'm feeling very tired. I think I'd like to go to bed.

RICK

You want to go to bed now?

JESS

I'm feeling very tired and a bit drunk, and I think I should go to bed. Do you mind?

RICK

Well... if you really want, you could crash in Gavin's room.

JESS

I don't think I'd feel comfortable sleeping in your flatmate's bed. If you have some blankets, I could doss down here on the couch and be up early to catch my bus in the morning.

Rick looks at her for a moment. She looks away. We see, from Rick's point of view, just how pretty she is.

RICK

We could go to bed now, if you want, but it's still early. Why don't you stay up a bit longer? We could talk some more.

JESS

What would we talk about?

RICK

You could tell me about some of the things you're interested in.

JESS

(nervously)

I'm not sure what to focus on - I'm interested in lots of things. I like music and books - I read lots of different things; I've been reading Jack Kerouac and Wallace Stevens and books about Evolutionary Psychology-

Rick moves over to the couch. As Jess talks in a nervous rush, he sits close to her, sweeping her hair from her forehead

RICK

Why don't you tell me some more about that German philosopher you like so much?

JESS

Who, Nietzsche? I don't know where to start. Some people think he was a nihilist - that he didn't believe in anything. He certainly didn't believe in God. He thought that the only things we find in the world are things we've put there ourselves. I find it a bit scary sometimes; it makes me feel like I've got nothing secure to hold onto. He said somewhere that Truth is a castle built on a river...

RICK

Do you know how smart you are? Where'd you find the time to learn all this stuff?

JESS

Yeah, I think I'm smart. But there's things you don't know about me, Rick! I get frightened- even tonight, at the club, I was enjoying myself but I was really scared at the same time. All the noise and people...

Rick isn't really paying attention.

RICK

Everyone feels that way sometimes.

JESS

You don't understand! I haven't always been as well as I am at the moment - I hear things and see things sometimes-

RICK

You know you're really pretty?

Rick moves in to kiss her. Jess, almost by reflex, turns her head so that he only catches her cheek. Rick moves his head back a little; Jess turns to face him. Rick tries again; again Jess swings her head away. Rick leans back.

RICK (CONT'D)

(half-laughing)

What the hell...?

He tries to kiss her again. Again Jess turns her head away.

RICK (CONT'D)

You're not a dyke are you?

Rick relents. He reaches over to the table and downs the last bit of his bourbon and coke.

Then suddenly he pounces on Jess, forcing himself on her, trying to make her kiss him. Jess struggles.

JESS
Let me go! Let me go!

Jess struggles free and stands up.

JESS (CONT'D)
I have to go.

RICK
Yeah, maybe you should.

JESS
(quickly)
I'm sorry, I cant stay.

Jess heads toward the door Rick stands up.

RICK
Why the fuck did you come back here
if you didn't want to sleep with
me?

Jess fumbles at the knob and gets the door open. She escapes, running down the corridor. Rick follows her to the door.

RICK (CONT'D)
You knew what you were doing!

EXT CITY STREET EVENING

A beat. A shot of the street. It has been raining. The street lights glisten on the pavement.

Jess hails a cab. The cab pulls over. Jess yanks open the door.

JESS
Takapuna, please.... Hold on a
second.

Jess runs to a garbage can and vomits into it.
The cab-driver leans over into the passenger seat.

CAB DRIVER
(calling out)
Are you alright there, love?

EXT TAKAPUNA BEACH DAY

The sun rises over Rangitoto.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess is lying in bed. We see this from an aerial perspective. She is curled up in a foetal position.

Her cellphone rings. She picks it up.

JESS

Hello?

POLLY

Jess? This is Polly. I'm just calling to remind you that we're organized to meet today.

JESS

I hadn't forgotten.

POLLY

Great! We can meet at the clinic at one and then go out for a coffee.

EXT PONSONBY CAFE DAY

A semi-busy Ponsonby cafe. Polly and Jess are at the counter.

JESS

A soy latte please.

CUT TO

Jess and Polly are sitting at a table, their flat-whites in front of them.

POLLY

So how are you, Jess?

Jess is unsure how to reply.

JESS

Oh, alright, I guess-

Polly is distracted, checking her cell-phone.

POLLY

Listen, Jess. I have to apologize. We're a bit snowed under at the moment. We've had a few new clients come into the service this week. I'm seeing someone who's acutely unwell in a half-hour. So we won't have as long together as we normally do. Do you mind?

JESS

I don't mind.

POLLY
You understand?

JESS
I understand.

POLLY
Good. Because I've been thinking about you recently. About things you could do. I wondered if we might think about looking for work again. I think we could be stuck in a bit of rut. How do you feel about doing a little job-seeking?

JESS
I don't have much of a CV.

POLLY
You had that job working at the garden centre.

Jess grimaces but doesn't answer. Plainly this was an experience that has bad memories for her.

POLLY (CONT'D)
Okay, if you're not keen on that idea there are some other options. The first semester is starting soon. Have you thought about going back to university? You told me once you'd like to study classics.

JESS
I don't know if I can justify that.

POLLY
If it's the student loan you're worried about... We can apply for something called a Training Incentive Allowance. You know it? Because you're on the Invalid's Benefit you're eligible to have the government subsidize some of your education costs. The idea is that it will lead you into work.

JESS
I don't see how I can say that a Classics degree is going to get me a job.

POLLY
(laughing)
We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. I'm sure we can finagle something.

She pauses, looking at Jess to judge her reaction.

POLLY (CONT'D)
What do you think?

JESS
I'll think about it.

POLLY
Well, that's a few of my ideas. The only other thing I thought I should mention is that we've got a psychologist attached to the unit now. If you want you could have some regular sessions with him. I thought that was something that would appeal to you.

Jess doesn't answer, looking away.

POLLY (CONT'D)
So what else is new?

JESS
I'm reading about Gnosticism.

POLLY
Oh yes? Any reason?

JESS
No... yes. I thought I might write something about them.

POLLY
I'm sure that would be very interesting. What is Gnosticism?

JESS
It's kind of an old version of Christianity.

Polly waits for Jess to go on but she doesn't.

POLLY
Jess, I have to ask- are you alright? You seem a bit quiet. Is there something the matter?

JESS
Polly... do you think I'm autistic?

POLLY
(laughing)
I think that's very unlikely!

JESS

Polly, I'm being serious! I was thinking about this on the bus on the way here. Do you think I could have high-functioning Aspergers? Along with everything else? I don't think I understand myself very well. I mean - I try to guess what other people think about me but I seem to get it wrong half the time. Other people don't seem to have this problem.

POLLY

(impatiently)

Other people don't think about these things as much as you do.

JESS

It's all very confusing I think. I mean - you go through life thinking that you understand people, thinking that they're basically good... But what if you're wrong? What if they're not good at all? It seems like there's a darkness behind their eyes, sometimes... I know it's silly. But isn't that a sign of autism - an inability to correctly decipher social situations? I feel like I'm on a life-raft in the middle of the ocean and I'm shouting my name but nobody can hear me. I could understand if I was autistic.

POLLY

Jess, you're not autistic! Stop being ridiculous.

JESS

Polly, you haven't been with me the last couple of days! I had an - an experience. It's all very muddling - I can't quite seem to understand what happened. The other night-

Polly's cell-phone rings.

POLLY

Hold on a second.

She reads the text.

POLLY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Jess, I'm going to have to cut this short.

(MORE)

POLLY (CONT'D)

The new client is here early and they need be back at the centre. Do you mind?

JESS

(disappointed)

No, I don't mind.

EXT PONSONBY CAFE DAY

Jess and Polly are on the street, outside the cafe.

POLLY

Jess, I apologize for asking but - you're still taking your pills, aren't you?

JESS

Yes...

POLLY

Good. I'll give you a call during the week. What are you going to do with yourself 'til then?

JESS

I don't know.

POLLY

You said you might do some writing? About - what's it called...

JESS

Gnosticism.

POLLY

Yes. Gnosticism. That seems like a good idea. Write something and then we'll see if we can't get it published in the mental health newsletter. But we'll talk about that next time. I promise I'll be able to give you my undivided attention. But now I have to run.

JESS

Okay.

POLLY

Take care, Jess.

Polly sets off.

JESS

Good bye, Polly.

Jess hovers at the door of the cafe, looking backwards and forwards, unsure where to go.

EXT SKY DAY

Shots of clouds billowing, a little like the shots in *Elephant*.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
I've decided to take Polly's advice
and write something about the
Gnostics. It's not really what I
expected.

EXT TAKAPUNA BEACH DAY

People walk along the beach, sit sunning themselves.

JESS
People don't know much about the
Gnostics nowadays but I think more
people should.

We now see Jess is walking along the beach, carrying a book.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
The first thing you need to know
about the Gnostics is who they
were. The Gnostics were
Christianity's first heretics.

Jess picks up a stone and throws it into the sea.

We see images of ancient temples, perhaps.

JESS (CONT'D)
Gnosticism arose sometime before
the second century AD. Back then,
Christianity was still struggling
to establish itself as a viable
alternative to all the other pagan
cults around at the time.

Other beach walkers, with a dog on leash, pass her by,
nodding to her, and smiling as they walk.

JESS (CONT'D)
And Christianity itself was still
pretty fluid; it seems just about
every congregation had a different
doctrine and scripture.
(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

It wasn't until the late fourth century, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, that an orthodox position was articulated and imposed on everyone from above. That was when Gnosticism was branded a heresy. It pretty much disappeared after that.

EXT CAFE DAY

Jess is sitting at a table in the cafe, reading her book.

JESS

(voice-over)

It's easy to understand why Gnosticism offended the early Church Fathers. For one thing, the Gnostics didn't believe that God created the world. They thought it was created by the Devil.

A waitress approaches Jess to ask her if she wants a coffee. We don't hear their conversation but we can see Jess smile and nod her head.

JESS (CONT'D)

Personally, I think this is a bit silly but it's no sillier than thinking the world was created by an omni-benevolent God.

Action.

JESS (CONT'D)

The Gnostics called this inferior deity the Demiurge - and they didn't believe he was alone. They believed that the world was full of spirits - angels and demons and so on. Most of them, like the Archons who are his deputies, work for the Demiurge. Because the Demiurge is the ruler of this world, it is he who controls most people's destinies. The Gnostics believed that the physical, corporeal world, is itself inherently evil. A place of darkness, confusion and misery. Like an insane asylum administered by sadistic wardens.

EXT TAKAPUNA DAY

Shots of clouds billowing.

JESS

The weather these last few days has been a bit capricious but it's nothing I can't handle.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess's phone is on her table, ringing.

JESS

(voice-over)

Rick's phoned a couple of times over the last couple of days but I haven't been answering his calls. I've decided to put it behind me and not think about it.

EXT TAKAPUNA SHOPS NIGHT

Jess is walking along the street at night. Night strollers pass her by from left to right.

JESS

(voice-over)

But the Gnostics didn't think the situation was hopeless- at least not for them. They thought that although people's physical bodies belonged to the Demiurge, their Souls belonged to the true God, the God of light, who inhabits a whole other dimension. Everyone is a stranger in an alien world. The Gnostics believed that by embracing this truth, a person could free themselves of the tyranny of the Demiurge and hand their destiny over to the true God. I think this is silly as well. It's too simple somehow.

Jess nearly walks into someone.

JESS (CONT'D)

(out-loud)

Sorry!

Jess keeps walking.

Jess arrives at the supermarket and walks through the door.

JESS (CONT'D)

Most people pass through life in a kind of sleep, unaware that the physical world is a snare and a deception.

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

But to a few people comes a voice,
 "Awake thou who sleepest! Thy true
 home is elsewhere". Some people
 hear the call but, being torn
 between two worlds, and being
 unable to make up their minds,
 succumb to doubt and despair.

INT SUPERMARKET NIGHT

Jess is walking through the shelves. Muzak is playing tinnily over the supermarket sound-system: "Weather With You" by Crowded House. (The quality makes it terrible.)

JESS

I don't know what I think about
 this.

Jess wanders down the aisle.

JESS (CONT'D)

Interestingly, the idea of Heaven
 is a Christian invention. I'd never
 realized this before. The Jews and
 Pagans didn't believe in a happy
 afterlife. The Greeks, for
 instance, thought everyone went to
 Hades.

Jess arrives at the self-care section. She picks out some toothpaste.

JESS (CONT'D)

The Gnostics definitely believed in
 Heaven, but they thought only a few
 people would be permitted to go
 there.

Jess is in the confectionery aisle, picking out chocolate.

JESS (CONT'D)

There seems to be a contradiction
 in the teachings about this. Can a
 person choose to save himself or is
 everyone doomed from before birth?
 Either way, I don't like it - I
 don't like the idea that the world
 can be divided up into the Saved
 and the Damned. I wouldn't want to
 live in a universe organized that
 way. I think either everyone should
 go to Heaven or no-one should.

Jess is in the fruit and veggie section, filling a bag methodically with apples.

JESS (CONT'D)

Interestingly, it's hard to know if the Gnostics were basically ascetic or libertine... Perhaps I could write something about this. Or about Gnostic themes in the work of Alan Curnow or Franz Kafka...

A beat. We see a wide view of the supermarket, looking down on the aisles, late night shoppers wandering in ones and twos. Jess looks up - we can tell that she is thinking this in real time.

JESS (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. I'm not sententious or puritanical at all. I'm not a prude - I read books, I watch TV. I know that in the real world people jump into bed with each other at the drop of a hat. Just because I don't do that myself but... I mean, I don't think it's wrong.

A couple of shoppers, couple of women pass Jess by.

SHOPPER

(to her friend)

That girl Jess is such a cock-tease.

Jess does a double-take, swinging her head around to look at them.

JESS

(voice-over)

Did I just hear that?

CUT TO Jess walks over to the checkout. She starts putting her groceries on the conveyer belt. She has: the bag of apples. A tube of toothpaste. A chocolate bar. A carton of milk. And a ginger beer.

CHECKOUT GIRL

(briskly)

How are you tonight?

Jess is definitely frazzled.

JESS

What?.. Oh, um, yes I'm fine thanks.

As the checkout girl starts swiping the goods across the sensor:

CHECKOUT GIRL

(voice-over)

Crap fucking job. Thank Christ the shift's nearly over. I'm cramping up like anything.

She winces.

CHECK-OUT GIRL

Home for a Panadol and early to bed I think. I hope to God that Gavin doesn't get drunk and come over tonight.

Jess is staring at her but shows no other sign that she can hear the girl's thoughts. The checkout girl taps on the screen.

CHECKOUT GIRL

Something's wrong with the system...

(out-loud and smiling)

Look, I'm sorry - the computer's playing up tonight.

JESS

(murmuring)

That's alright. I'm not in a rush.

CHECKOUT GIRL

No, wait... It's gone through now. Do you have a one-buy card?

JESS

No.

CHECKOUT GIRL

That'll be twelve-dollars and twenty five cents.

Jess hands over her card. The checkout girl swipes it.

Jess turns to look at the middle aged man waiting behind her. He has put his groceries on the end of the conveyer belt and is away in his own world, thinking.

MIDDLE AGED GUY

(voice-over)

Milk, eggs, bread... Have I forgotten anything?

Jess types in her pin and turns to look back at the guy behind her. He has picked up a woman's magazine from the rack and flips to the back pages.

MIDDLE AGED GUY (CONT'D)

That Scarlett Johansen's a tidy package.

(MORE)

MIDDLE AGED GUY (CONT'D)

Bet she goes off like a bomb in the sack. When I get home, I'll have a shower and maybe jerk off. While the wife's cooking dinner. I can think about her then.

He looks at Jess.

MIDDLE AGED GUY (CONT'D)

Or maybe that girl there...

He meets Jess's eyes for a moment, and then looks away ashamed, stuffing the magazine back in the rack.

MIDDLE AGED GUY (CONT'D)

She knows.

CHECK-OUT GIRL

(to Jess)

Are you okay there? It's cleared...

JESS

What? No. I was- I'm a bit distracted. Something else...

The check-out girl frowns, perhaps reacting to Jess's demeanor, her disturbingly intense gaze. She looks down.

CHECK-OUT GIRL

(voice-over)

I recognize that girl from somewhere...

Jess away, hurriedly grabs the groceries and starts toward the door.

The checkout girl calls out, waving Jess's card.

CHECK-OUT GIRL (CONT'D)

Excuse me! You forgot your card!

WIDE SHOT again of the supermarket again, looking down again. This time though we hear: A susuration of dozens of people's interior monologues.

EXT TAKAPUNA STREET NIGHT

Jess is walking. Passers-by loom into her vision- we see them through her eyes, using a fish-eye lens. As they pass her by, we hear snatches of their thoughts.

PASSERBY 1

Went back to his apartment but didn't sleep with him...

PASSERBY 2

Thinks she's better than us...

PASSERBY 3

Thinks she's a real person and not
just another robot...

PASSERBY 4

A malfunctioning, bleeding robot..

We see Jess. She concentrates, broadcasting her thought.

JESS

(voice-over)

I didn't want to sleep with him!

EXT BUSSTOP NIGHT

Jess arrives at the bus stop. A guy is sitting there. Jess
dithers a moment and then:

JESS

Excuse me - has the eight fifteen
bus left?

GUY

I dunno.

JESS

I'm not sure that I want to wait
here. Maybe I should walk home. Do
you think I should walk home?

GUY

How should I know?

JESS

I think I'll walk home.

Jess departs, in the same ditzzy manner, as before, leaving
behind her groceries. The guy notices but makes no move to
give them to her.

EXT TAKAPUNA STREETS NIGHT

Jess walks arrives at a crossing. The light is red.

MALE VOICE

Go right.

Jess hesitates, then turns left.

CUT to

Jess is walking through suburban Takapuna streets. She
arrives at another intersection.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Go left.

Jess turns right. She walks along the street.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)
You're going the wrong way!

JESS
Go away! I don't believe in you!

Jess is now walking down a suburban road. ETHAN, about twenty, is pissing into the bushes out the front of his house. Seeing her, he hurriedly zips up.

ETHAN
(calling out)
How'z it going?

Jess doesn't answer. She keeps walking. Ethan peers after her; he recognizes her. After a moment, he runs out onto the street after her.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Hey! I know you don't I?

This unnerves Jess.

JESS
No - I don't think so, I don't
think I've ever-

ETHAN
Yeah, sure I do! You're Simon's
sister, aren't you? I met you at
that party in Kingsland. What's
your name again?

JESS
Jess.

ETHAN
Where are you going?

JESS
(dithering)
I'm walking home. But I think I've
got a little lost...

ETHAN
Hey, I've got a few mates here. Why
don't you come in for a beer?

JESS
Alright.

Jess follows Ethan up onto his porch into his house.

MALE VOICE
Don't go in there!

INT FLAT NIGHT

Jess follows Ethan into the flat. It is a typical flat belonging to a bunch of guys in their very early twenties. They arrive at the lounge: a bunch of guys sitting on deflated sofas around a coffee table. They are GREG, CHRIS, TAO (a pacific islander) and JOSH. They have beers and are drinking. Music is playing: perhaps "We Care a Lot" by Faith No More.

GREG

So he's driving down Lake Road and suddenly, like, this cop car comes up behind him and starts, like, indicating for him to pull over.

TOA

Where was this again?

GREG

On Lake Road, Bro! You know, near the school.

TOA

Yeah, I know.

GREG

So he pulls over and the cop walks up and taps on the window-

ETHAN

Hey guys, this is Jess.

Chris looks her up and down.

CHRIS

Where'd you find the chick, bro? That's cool. This party was definitely lacking some pussy.

ETHAN

Show a little respect, bro! This is Si's big sister.

CHRIS

Hey, I just call it like I see it.

ETHAN

Shuffle over.

Chris shuffles over to let Jess sit. Ethan sits on one of the other sofas.

CHRIS

(to Jess)

So what are you doing here?

JESS

I was walking home. I'd got a bit lost-

ETHAN

She was on the street so I thought it would be cool to ask her in.

TAO

(to Greg)

So the cop pulls him over. And he's got half an ounce of weed in the glove box.

GREG

Yeah bro! You can imagine- he's paranoid as fuck, sweating like a fucking rapist, scared they're gonna search the car and find it.

TAO

Why'd they pull him over?

GREG

I'm getting to that, bro. So the cops walks over and real polite like say, "Excuse me, sir, you didn't indicate at the last intersection."

TAO

And what'd he say?

GREG

He apologized and told them some shit about having to get home because his mum. Totally bogus crap he made up on the spot. Said it slipped his mind.

TAO

And what happened?

GREG

The cop let him off with a warning. Didn't even give him a ticket!

JOSH

Not every pig's an asshole.

CHRIS

True, bro. It's the law which is pig. I bet half those guys are partial to a quiet spliff. When they're off-duty.

TAO
From stuff they've confiscated,
though.

GREG
Yeah, but anyway, the point is with
Kevin... the whole experience
totally gave him the shits. He
hasn't touched drugs since.

TAO
Not even pot?

GREG
Well... he doesn't drive around
with it anyway.

JOSH
Hey, is he still going round with
that chick Lauren?

GREG
Totally, man! I mean, they were on
again, off again for a while but
now they're real cozy. I wouldn't
be surprised if they settled down
and started popping out babies
before to long.

The conversation lulls.

JESS
(to Ethan)
I think I should go.

ETHAN
Don't go yet. Hang around. I'll get
you that beer.

GREG
(to Jess; suspiciously)
Do you like pot?

JESS
No... I've never really tried...

GREG
Do you have a problem with people
smoking it?

JESS
No, I mean... I don't have a
problem with it... I just don't...

ETHAN
Hey Greg. She's Si's brother. She's
cool. I can vouch for her.

CHRIS

Yeah, I know Si. He's at university, isn't he? What's he studying?

JESS

(slowly; having to think things through)
Health sci. He wants to go into medicine.

CHRIS

Yeah, Si's really cool. He's smart but he's not I'm-beter-than-you kind of smart.

ETHAN

He doesn't smoke pot though. You noticed that?

CHRIS

Yeah, I noticed that. It's real funny.

ETHAN

If you offer him a toké at a party, he just waves it off. Says that his brain's psychedelic enough without chemical augmentation.

CHRIS

(laughing)
Yeah, that's what he said!

ETHAN

(to Jess)
I'll go get you a cold beer from the fridge.
(to the group)
Does anyone else want anything?

CHRIS

No, I'm sweet, bro.

A beat. Ethan leaves.

JOSH

It's funny. Something I've noticed. People either really like pot or they hate it. It's like that girl Sophie.

GREG

Sophie's a complete fucking alcoholic.

JOSH

Yeah, she drinks like it's going out of fashion. But she doesn't touch pot. It's like there's two kinds of people in the world. Maybe it's genetic. Maybe there's a stoner gene and some people have it and some people don't.

GREG

At least cannabis is natural. It's not just some chemical they cooked up in lab.

CHRIS

(to Josh)

Actually I've got a theory about that. About genetics. Listen: humans and Neanderthals coexisted for, like, millions of years. What I was thinking is, what if humans and Neanderthals interbred? Maybe we've all got a little bit of Neanderthal in us.

TAO

Hey, watch who you're calling a Neanderthal, bro!

CHRIS

(awkwardly)

Hey, bro, you know I wasn't talking about you.

TAO

(laughing)

Just taking the piss, man.

INT FLAT KITCHEN NIGHT

Quick scene: Ethan getting a bottle of beer from the fridge.

INT FLAT NIGHT

JOSH

(to Chris)

But if Neanderthals are still around, wouldn't we see them on the street?

CHRIS

All I'm saying... Imagine you're a Neanderthal and you're coming out of your cave, with your club, and you see, you know, a pretty girl, are you going to let it stop you just 'cause she's, like, a different species?

JOSH

True. Good point.

Ethan comes back in and gives the bottle to Jess.

GREG

Yeah, but you know, I'm not totally sure about the Theory of Evolution. It's got some serious fucking holes in it. I was talking to Graham - you know, the dude I drive the lorry with? And the shit he was telling me... I can't remember exactly. Stuff about eyeballs-

JESS

(murmuring)

Intelligent design.

GREG

Yeah, well, I can't remember exactly what he called it. He was really persuasive. But the point is, Evolution's just a theory. Nobody's proved it.

CHRIS

I don't know about that, bro! I like Evolution. I reckon we're still evolving. I reckon in the future humanity is gonna, I dunno, attain a whole higher plane of consciousness. We're all gonna be part of some kind of collective, compassionate intelligence.

TAO

So you think things are getting better?

CHRIS

Well, I dunno... I guess so-

ETHAN

How can you say that man? Have you been outside? People driving big fuck-off CVs, spewing CO2, chopping down the rainforests, killing off the coral reefs-

CHRIS

Hey, when I say things are getting better, I mean in the long term. Maybe.

JOSH

(standing up)

Well, on that... does anyone feel like another spot?

GREG

I'm sweet at the moment, bro.

ETHAN

I'll come with you.

INT FLAT KITCHEN NIGHT

Josh and Ethan are standing around the kitchen stove. Two knives are heating up on the element. Josh is rolling some spots on the board.

JOSH

Hey Ethan? You know that girl, Angeline?

ETHAN

Yeah, you drove down to Whitianga together.

JOSH

Yeah; we had a long talk on the trip. She asked me to go to a movie with her on Wednesday.

ETHAN

Are you going to go?

JOSH

Yeah. I'm really looking forward to it. She's... I really liked talking to her.

ETHAN

What movie are you going to see?

JOSH

I dunno. Whatever's on, I guess.

ETHAN

Hold on a sec... You ready?

Ethan uses the knife to press down on the spot. Josh holds the bong (or whatever it's called), a sawn-off plastic milk bottle, to his lips. Ethan squeezes the knives together vaporizing the pot so that Josh can inhaled. He draws a deep breath.

INT FLAT NIGHT

Chris and Tau are arm-wrestling on the table. As they squirm, Tau's feet come close to Jess's so she lifts hers clear.

Greg is rolling a spliff.

Tau wins the arm-wrestling contest. They return to their seats. Ethan and Josh return and take up their places.

CHRIS
Hey, did I tell you my idea? The doorbell that rings your cellphone?

ETHAN
Man, I remember that idea! That was a cool idea. You should patent it before it gets into the collective unconscious and someone steals it.

JOSH
(to Chris)
Do you believe in that? In the collective unconscious?

CHRIS
Bro, I believe in all that spooky shit. ESP, clairvoyance, past lives. Crop circles. It's all like the Matrix. We're just passengers on this planet-

ETHAN
Man, the planet wants to get rid of us! Hurricanes in the US, earthquakes down south...

TAO
Global warming, bro! Global warming.

ETHAN
The planet's sending us a message.

CHRIS
Yeah, but it's like I said before, we're all part of a bigger thing. It's like, when the boxing day tsunami happened, all the elephants and other animals moved to higher ground. They knew something big was going to go down and didn't want to be sucked into it.

A beat.

GREG

The thing is... the people in charge- they don't want us to know this shit.

JOSH

Yeah, man! It's the Illuminati.

GREG

The people in charge, they know what's going on. But they're only interested in money and looking after each other. They don't want us to know the truth. They control what we see, what we read-

TOA

(to Ethan)

It's like when JZ comes on stage and he does that thing, you know, that thing-

Tao arranges his hands into a triangle.

JOSH

When he does that is he just warning us that the Illuminati is real or is he saying that he's in the Illuminati himself?

TOA

(laughing)

Bro, I've got no idea.

GREG

(to Chris)

I mean it's simple. Either the people in charge are evil or they're incompetent. And they can't have got to the top if they're incompetent, so, well, you get what I'm saying-

JOSH

I heard that there's an American agency responsible for controlling the weather-

Jess starts a little in shock when she hears this; the conversation continues around her.

CHRIS

(to Greg)

It's like when they invaded Iraq.

GREG

Yeah, bro!

CHRIS

It sure as shit wasn't about
Weapons of Mass Destruction. That
was definitely a smoke-screen

ETHAN

(to Chris)

Hey, Chris. Here's the biggie. What
about September 11?

Chris takes the spliff from Greg and takes a deliberate drag
before answering.

CHRIS

I think they did it to themselves.

JOSH

That's what I think, too, Bro!

ETHAN

Why do you think they attacked New
York themselves?

CHRIS

I've got a theory about that. Back
in the nineties, there was a real
strong anti-globalisation movement-

JOSH

Nineties music was the bomb, man!
Cypress Hill, Tupac, NWA-

TAO

You and me bro!

Tao and Josh lean across and do a gangsta hand-shake.

JOSH

Man, I am so buzzing now.

CHRIS

And it was threatening big
business. So all the bankers and
the politicians got together and
said, "We need to redirect people's
anger at someone else. We need to
give them a new enemy." They
couldn't use the Russians anymore,
so they picked on the Muslims.

JOSH

Whoa...

ETHAN

I'm gonna go get another beer.

Ethan leaves.

GREG
 (to Chris)
 Bro, you've got it all backwards.
 They did it for the oil.

CHRIS
 Well, anyway, even if they didn't
 plan it, they knew it was gonna
 happen beforehand.

GREG
 (to Jess)
 What do you think of this shit?

A beat.

JESS
 (struggling to express
 herself)
 I think... I think there's always
 been an antinomian strand running
 through civilization. I think some
 people think that they're
 autochthonic - that they sprang
 from the earth. They think they can
 escape history by a conscious
 decision. But they're wrong-
 everyone grew up somewhere. Barack
 Obama...

Jess trails off. The others stare at her dumbfounded.

CHRIS
 Yeah, but bro... What do you think
 about global warming?

INT FLAT KITCHEN NIGHT

Ethan is getting a beer when he hears Jess start yelling in
 the living room.

JESS
 How can you talk about these
 things...!

Ethan runs back toward the living room. The camera follows
 him into

INT FLAT LIVING ROOM

The living room. Jess is standing as are all the guys.

JESS
 Don't you realize that the
 government employs specialist mind-
 readers to monitor people?
 (MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

Aren't you aware they document everything you think and say? Everything you've been talking about - where's God in all this?

ETHAN

(to Josh)

What's going on?

JOSH

The chick just went mental all of a sudden!

JESS

But it's so asinine! The Illuminati, mind-readers, Intelligent design - it's all so stupid...! How the fuck can global warming cause earthquakes?

JOSH

(to Jess)

Hey, girl, chillax! We were just talking shit!

JESS

(wailing)

Everyone thinks I slept with him but I didn't sleep with him!

The beer bottle in Josh's hand explodes.

JOSH

Holy shit!

ETHAN

What just happened?

JOSH

The beer bottle just fucking exploded!

Greg and Toa runs to Jess and press her back on the couch.

TAO

Hey. Chick. Calm down-

JESS

I don't know why I'm here. What am I doing here? I don't belong here!

INT FLAT KITCHEN NIGHT

Josh runs to the sink and runs water over his bleeding hand; Ethan is with him. Chris runs into the kitchen.

CHRIS
Man, the girl just - fucking -
wiggled out! What do we do?

JOSH
Should we call the police?

CHRIS
We can't call the police bro!
There's drugs all over the house!

ETHAN
Someone needs to drive here home.

They exchange glances.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Who's the soberest one here?

EXT TAKAPUNA STREET NIGHT

The exterior of the flat. Ethan, Josh and Toa lead, half-drag Jess, toward out the door. Jess is in a blind panic and the boys are not much calmer.

JESS
Where are you taking me? I don't
want to go! I don't want to go!

ETHAN
It's alright Jess. We're just
taking you home. Where do you live?

INT CAR INTERIOR NIGHT

The boys have somehow got Jess into the car and have taken off. Ethan is driving; Josh is sitting in the passenger seat, a bloody tea-towel around his hand.

JOSH
Do you know where we're going? I
could check the map-

ETHAN
It's alright. I've got a fair idea
where she lives.

JESS
We're not going to the hospital? I
don't want to go to the hospital!

ETHAN
It's alright, Jess. We're just
taking you back to your house.

A beat.

JESS

(to herself; reciting)

The conception is interesting: to see as though reflected/ in steaming windowpanes, the look of others through/ their own eyes. A digest of their correct impressions of their /self-analytic attitudes overlaid by your/ ghostly transparent face.

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JOSH

Is that poetry?!

JESS

Of some distant but not too distant era, the cosmetics, the shoes/ neatly pointed, drifting (how long you /have been drifting; how long I have too for that matter)/ are an epistemological snapshot of the processes /that first mentioned your name at some crowded cocktail/ party long ago, and someone (not the person addressed)/ overheard it and carried that name around in his wallet/ for years as the wallet crumbled and bills slid in/ and out of it. I want that information very much today,/ can't have it. And this makes me angry.

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A beat.

JESS (CONT'D)

You're going the wrong way!

JOSH

Bro! Should we have turned right back there?

ETHAN

I'm onto it.

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EXT TAKAPUNA STREET NIGHT

The car performs a u-turn, tyres squealing.

INT CAR INTERIOR NIGHT

JOSH

(moaning)

Man, this whole situation is seriously fucked up!

A beat while Jess remembers another poem

JESS

(to herself)

Sky's clear/ night's sea/ green of
the mountain pool/ shone from the
unmasked eyes in half-masked
space./ What thou lov'st well
remains,/ the rest is dross/ What
thou lov'st well shall not be wrest
from thee/What thou lov'st well is
thy true heritage./ First came the
seen, then thus the palpable/
Elysium, though it were in the
halls of hell/ What thou lovest
well is thy true heritage/ What
thou lov'st well shall not be wrest
from thee... The ant's a centaur in
his dragon world./ Pull down the
vanity, it is not man/Made courage,
or made order, or made grace,/Pull
down thy vanity, I say pull down./
Learn of the green world what can
be thy place/ In scaled invention
or true artistry, Pull down thy
vanity/ Paquin pull down!

EXT JESS'S HOUSE NIGHT/ CAR INTERIOR

The car pulls into the driveway. Jess gets out and runs
towards her house. The boys watch her go.

ETHAN

What should we do now? Should we
call her brother?

EXT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

We see Jess's house from the outside. [This scene is a
draft].

JESS(VOICE-OVER)

I haven't been going outside. I'm
worried about [something that shows
she is psychotic]. I think it's
safer if I stay indoors.

Jess's phone, on her table, rings.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

My brother called this morning.

Jess is on the phone.

SIMON
 (over the phone)
 Jess, are you alright? I heard that
 something happened at Ethan's place-

JESS
 No, I'm fine. I just found what
 they were talking about a bit
 urticating.

SIMON
 Uhhh... Are you sure that you're
 alright?

JESS
 Yes. I got a little upset but I'm
 alright now.

CUT to

Jess is in bed, maybe?

JESS (CONT'D)
 (voice-over)
 But I've been kept busy. I've been
 talking with John Key and Barrack
 Obama and Lady Gaga. Lady Gaga is
 alright but President Obama is very
 intimidating. He keeps asking me
 questions about how to reform the
 American mental health system. I
 keep telling him, "I'm just a poor
 little crazy girl living in New
 Zealand! I don't have all the
 answers!"

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess is perched on a chair removing the light-bulb from the
 ceiling fixture.

JESS
 (voice-over)
 I'm pretty sure I'm under
 surveillance.

INT SIS HEADQUATERS

A dim room full of spies wearing headphones, computers,
 recording equipment.

JESS
 (voice-over)
 It seems fairly obvious that
 someone with God-like knowledge and
 powers should be a threat to the
 existing social order.

INT JESS'S HOUSE DAY

Jess is methodically removing all the light bulbs in her house.

JESS
 So I'm taking precautions.

JESS'S HOUSE NIGHT

Jess is lying in head on her back. We see her from an aerial perspective. During this scene, the camera gradually pulls back so that we see that the bed is suspended in empty blackness.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (voice-over)
 Sometimes I think the world has
 ended - I'm the only one left.
 Everyone else is either a phantom
 or an apparition. I keep trying to
 pin-point the moment when the world
 ended but I can't quite seem to do
 it. I can only assume it happened
 when I wasn't watching.

EXT NORTH HEAD DAY

Jess is walking around North Head. We see the harbour, boats, the city across the water. The wind is ruffling her hair.

JESS
 (voice-over)
 Other times I think the world is
 still there. But it feels like some
 terrible catastrophe is impending.
 It feels like the visible world is
 just a veil or an arras which is
 going to fall away and reveal a
 whole other reality.

INT JESS'S HOUSE

Jess is sitting on the couch when the phone rings. She moves over to the table and grabs the phone.

JESS
 Hello?

JESS'S MOTHER

Jess. It's your mother.

JESS

Why are you calling?

JESS'S MOTHER

Turn on the TV.

Jess pauses and then moves over to the TV. She turns it on. We zoom in on the screen - which shows scenes in the immediate aftermath of the February earthquake.

What we have now is a montage of a clips from that day's news, showing the aftermath of the earthquake and journalists's reaction to it. The montage concludes with John Campbell saying, "This is a dark day for New Zealand" or whatever he actually said.

INT JESS'S HOUSE NIGHT

Jess is sitting in front of the television. The house is dark because, of course, she has removed all the light-bulbs. Her face is illuminated by the glow of the TV.

The TV shows the intro from "The Daily Show."

TV ANNOUNCER

And now, for February 11 2011, this
is the Daily Show with Jon Stewart.
And now your host Jon Stewart.

The intro sting plays. The audience cheers wildly. Pan to Jon Stewart.

Jess sits motionless.

JON STEWART

Good evening, America. Top news
tonight: at twelve fifteen local
time, an earthquake devastated New
Zealand's second largest city.
That's right, New Zealand, the
country those pesky hobbits come
from.

A beat.

JON STEWART (CONT'D)

Now you might ask why I'm talking
about this. There's nothing
particularly humorous about a
national catastrophe. What makes it
funny though, is that it was
brought about by one girl.

(MORE)

JON STEWART (CONT'D)

One Jess Frame, living in anonymity on the outskirts of Gondor, used the power of her thoughts to bring down death and destruction on her friends and family. That's the funny side.

Jon Stewart leans forward.

JON STEWART (CONT'D)

I'm talking to you now, Jess Frame. I want to know what you think about it. This is your country's worst ever peacetime disaster. Apparently. One hundred and sixty four people died! What I want to know is, don't you feel a little remorse? Don't you feel a smidgen guilty?

Jess does not react at all.

EXT PRINCESS STREET EVENING

Princess Street in the gloom of early evening. Deserted. Everything is grey. A newspaper blows down the street.

JESS

(voice-over)

Today is the day Dr Mark Doe is coming to deliver his lecture on the origins of schizophrenia. I don't feel a hundred per cent well at the moment. But I wanted to go and I'm determined to see it through.

INT BUS NIGHT

Jess is sitting on the bus with her brother.

JESS

(voice-over)

I asked my brother to come with me as support.

JESS (CONT'D)

(out loud to her brother)

Do you think they'll go ahead with the lecture? What with Christchurch.

SIMON

I don't see why they wouldn't. The world doesn't stop just because something terrible has happened.

INT AUDITORIUM NIGHT

The lecture theatre is full of people and dark. Jess sits amidst many other people with her brother - she is most likely the only genuine schizophrenic there.

Dr Mark Doe steps up to the microphone and lectern. The lighting is almost like a spotlight on him. He taps the microphone.

MARK DOE
Is this thing on?

Doe takes the microphone.

MARK DOE (CONT'D)
Let's get straight into it. I'm here to talk to you about schizophrenia. I assume everyone here has at least a passing familiarity with the subject- maybe you're a student wanting to get into the field or someone who works with them everyday. Certainly, there are some things that we all agree on. We know that about nought point five percent of the world's population suffer from it; we know that typical onset is in late adolescence or early adulthood and we know that sufferers don't tend to live as long as

(using quote marks)
"healthy" people, partly because they're more likely to suicide. We know what the condition looks like. Poor verbal skills, a lack of emotional responsiveness, hallucinations, delusions and paranoia, etc. We know all this. But what we don't know- or what we can't agree on- is its aetiology. Its cause.

Doe coughs.

MARK DOE (CONT'D)
Excuse me.

Doe reaches for a glass of water and takes a sip.

MARK DOE (CONT'D)
The psychiatrists would have you believe that schizophrenia is a disease of the brain - a chemical imbalance.

(MORE)

MARK DOE (CONT'D)

The so called dopamine hypothesis that everyone pays lip service to but which no one really believes. They say that the only way that the condition can be "managed" is through the drugs that they prescribe, that other forms of therapy are simply cosmetic. When the reality is drugs are simply the cheap and easy option. Well, I'm here to tell you that the somatic model is wrong. I'm here to tell you that schizophrenia does have a simple origin. But it's certainly not the genetic time-bomb that the psychiatric community says it is.

A beat.

MARK DOE (CONT'D)

Let me say first that what I'm going to tell you is not just some idle notion or pet obsession. I have worked with mad people for fifteen years and certain themes have recurred over and over again. The cause of schizophrenia is indeed simple. But it's not something that society is prepared to accept: we avert our eyes...

(laughing)

I hope that there are none of those false memory people in the audience!

A beat.

MARK DOE (CONT'D)

Childhood. Sexual. Abuse. This is the truth that we cannot accept: that sexual abuse is rife in our society. Affecting both men and women. If you scratch the surface, you'll find that ninety-nine per cent of schizophrenics were abused as children. What I'd like to do now is show you some statistics that make this fact obvious.

(to someone off-stage)

Could you put up the first slide please?

INT BUS NIGHT

Jess and Simon are sitting on the bus going home. Jess is being assailed by voices, jerking her head from side to side. Simon is trying to reassure her.

SIMON

I wouldn't listen to that guy. It's just, like, his opinion. He doesn't really know what he's talking. None of these guys really know what they're talking about.

Unable to restrain herself, Jess jumps to her feet and starts running up and down the aisle. We freeze-frame on her, her face contorted.

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JESS

(voice-over)

This is me flipping out.

FADE TO BLACK

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

The other night I had a dream.

We fade back in on the following scene.

EXT DREAMSCAPE

A plain, red-ochre clay, the sky is sulphur coloured with clouds. On the plain hundreds of people are milling around, Mark Doe prominent among them. Jess is on a rise looking down on them, her hair flailing in the wind.

JESS

I dreamt I was on a plain, looking down on hundred of people. And a terrible wind was blowing. And I was screaming. I was screaming, "I'm here! Can't you hear me? Can't you see me?"

FADE TO BLACK

Over the black we start to hear "Happiness" by Grant Lee Buffalo. We hear the opening and then-

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

Since they closed down all the mental institutions in the nineties, when people get really sick they get admitted to the general hospital.

FADE UP

On the front door to the psychiatric wing.

JESS (CONT'D)
 (voice-over)
 This is Ward 10.

Shots of the interior of the ward.

JESS (CONT'D)
 I've been here six weeks now. When
 I first arrived I wasn't exactly
 compliant.

Final Draft 8 Demo
 INT OFFICE DAY

Jess is being man-handled into a side-room.

JESS
 (out-loud)
 No! I don't want to! Let me go, let
 me go!

A female nurse holds a hypodermic syringe. She flicks the
 end.

INT WARD DAY

We cut to more shots of the ward and the people in it,
 patients in beds and sitting on couches, nurses walking
 about.

JESS
 (voice-over)
 But you can get used to anything
 after a while. It isn't all bad.
 I've met lots of interesting
 people.

We see Jess talking to HARRY. Harry - I don't know what he
 looks like. He is in bed.

JESS (CONT'D (CONT'D)
 (voice-over)
 This is Harry. Harry thinks he was
 abducted by aliens and given an
 anal probe. Harry thinks everyone
 who works in the hospital is in
 league with the aliens. He told me
 this because he thinks I was
 abducted as well.

A beat. We see Jess talking back.

JESS
 Harry doesn't know he's sick.
 (MORE)

JESS (CONT'D (CONT'D)

He lacks insight into his condition, The technical term for this is 'anogsonosia' and many psychiatrists think this is a result of brain damage. I think this just goes to show that lots of psychiatrists are complete idiots.

EXT SIDEPARK DAY

In the grounds of the hospital, a number of patients are standing around smoking.

JESS

(voice-over)

Lots of the patients here use drugs. That's partly why they've ended up here. Now, it would be easy to say to these people "It's your fault you got sick. You smoked too much of the old wacky-back and that's why you went round the loop". But I don't like this. It's like people who say, "It's your fault you're poor" or "It's your fault you can't get a job"; it's a way of withholding empathy. I think the relationship between drug-use and psychosis is more complicated than that.

INT WARD DAY

Shots of the wards again.

JESS

(voice-over)

Generally though, the thing about being in hospital is that it's . There's nothing much to do except wait for meals and visiting hour.

We see a shot of Jess's mother, sitting awkwardly by the the bed.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

My mother has come to see me a couple of times but I don't think she particularly enjoys it. My mother's never seemed particularly comfortable visiting me in hospital.

Shots of drugs in boxes?

JESS (CONT'D)

I'm on a new drug regimen. They've got me taking Aripiprazole now. This means that, at various times, I've been on Chlozopine, Risperidone, Olanzapine, Quetiapine, and Haloperidol, and that's just the antipsychotic. It doesn't seem that any of them really work. But then, I don't know what I'd be like if I didn't take them.

Jess's doctor comes in to see her. She is lying in bed.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

This is my doctor, Dr Harrison. I like him, I think. He's not all smarmy and evasive like most of the others.

DR HARRISON

How are you today Jess?

JESS

I'm feeling a bit glum, to be frank.

DR HARRISON

That's no good. What's got you feeling glum?

JESS

It's just... I thought I was getting better! I really did. And then - then stuff happened and I got ill again. What I want to know is, what's my prognosis? I mean, do you think I have any hope of recovering properly?

Dr Harrison pulls up a chair.

DR HARRISON

Listen, Jess. You're a smart girl. Can I be candid?

JESS

Oh yes. I'd like that-

DR HARRISON

What exactly do you think is wrong with you?

JESS

Schizophrenia-

DR HARRISON

Has anyone ever told you that's what's wrong with you?

JESS

Well, no. Not out loud. But I can tell that's what they're thinking.

MR HARRISON

Well, there's your problem right there. According to the prevailing medical model, Schizophrenia is a chronic condition. No one recovers. By definition. The best a sufferer can do is manage their symptoms through appropriate medication and secondary therapy. A recovered schizophrenic is a contradiction in terms: either he never recovered or he didn't have schizophrenia in the first place.

JESS

Do you mean that I should pretend that I don't have schizophrenia?

MR HARRISON

All I'm doing is repeating what I was taught at Med School... But, just between you and me, I'd love it if someone could prove the bastards wrong.

CUT TO

Jess's father is sitting opposite her.

JESS

Today I'm being discharged from hospital. My father came to pick me up.

JESS'S FATHER

Jess, I have to go back to Christchurch. I wondered if you would like to come with me.

INT AIRPLANE DAY

The camera moves down the aisle of an airplane, picking out Jess and her father sitting by the window. An air-hostess moves down the aisle. She approaches a couple of seats occupied by Jess and her father.

AIR HOSTESS

(smiling)

Are you alright, there?

JESS'S FATHER
We're fine thanks.

Jess's father opens a newspaper and starts reading. Either behind them or across the aisle a couple of businessmen are talking.

BUSINESS MAN 1.
How are going with that insurance
assessment Gloria asked for?

BUSINESS MAN 2.
Slowly. I wouldn't say this to
anyone else but Gloria's not the
easiest person to report back to.

BUSINESS MAN 1.
I know what you mean. She can be a
bit temperamental.

Although Jess's father is not (he turns the sheet of the paper), we can tell Jess is listening keenly.

BUSINESS MAN 2.
Temperamental's not the word. She's
practically schizophrenic! Some
days she's all smiles and sunshine
and other days... it's like she's
got two personalities.

BUSINESS MAN 1.
Personally, I don't think women
should take management positions.
They're not cut out for it. So,
anyway, are you planning to go out
for drinks tonight?

Jess settles back into chair, reacting a little but subtly.

INT AIRPORT TERMINAL

Jess and her father walk through the Christchurch terminal towards the exit.

INT CARPARK

Jess and her father are walking through the court yard toward where the hire cars are parked.

JESS
(voice-over)
We don't have to be at the motel
until this afternoon, so Dad
thought we should he would take me
on a tour of Christchurch.

Jess's father stops by a car.

JESS (CONT'D)
(out-loud)
Is this our car?

JESS'S FATHER
It's a Prius. I asked for it
especially because I thought you
might like it.

JESS
What's a Prius?

INT/EXT CAR INTERIOR/CHRISTCHURCH STREETS

In this next scene, we see Christchurch as it was six weeks after the big quake. Naturally, this will involve some special effects but this is unavoidable.

We see buildings, houses from the perspective of the passengers, as they sit in the car.

JESS
(voice-over)
After Dad explained what a Prius
is, we went driving around
Christchurch. Some part we can't
go: the whole central city is still
cordoned off. They call this part
the Red Zone. But the whole city is
pretty much munted. You actually
have to come here, to realize how
widespread the damage is.

Jess's father is driving. He points to a building.

JESS'S FATHER
That building's where I went to
school.

A beat.

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)
You're very quiet, love. What are
you thinking about?

JESS
I'm worried about the size of my
brain.

JESS'S FATHER
What do you mean?

JESS
I'm worried that it might not be as
big as the brains of other people.

JESS'S FATHER

Where on earth did you get that idea?

JESS

Something I read.

JESS'S FATHER

Well, I'm no expert but... I'm sure you don't have a smaller brain than other people. You just have a different brain.

(getting more passionate)

If people have different personalities and different life-experiences, why in the world should they have the same brains? Why should Andy Warhol have the same brain as, I dunno, Gary Kasparov? Why should Shakespeare have the same brain as Einstein?

JESS

... I guess I didn't think of it that way.

JESS'S FATHER

Well, it just stands to reason. There's a lot of stupid notions out there.

EXT CHURCH DAY

Jess is standing in front of a church, I don't know which one. It is damaged and a crane stands next to it, with a demolition ball, perhaps actually in the process of demolishing it. Otherwise the image is composed exactly like the picture Jess saw in Rick's album.

JESS

(voice-over)

A little later, we visited a church. I thought for a bit about Cartesian dualism and stuff.

INT/EXT CAR INTERIOR/CHRISTCHURCH STREETS

Jess and her father are back in the car driving.

We see a team of students shovelling liquifaction.

JESS

(voice-over)

One of the nice things about the Earthquake is that the Cantabrians have really rallied to support each other. For example, this young guy Sam Johnson saw that there was a need of volunteer labour so he asked his Facebook friends and they asked theirs and soon there were hundreds of students on the streets helping out, shovelling silt and delivering food. They call them the Student Army. I think that's fantastic.

They cruise by a particularly badly wrecked building. Both crane their heads to look at it.

JESS'S FATHER

The quake really puts Climate Change in perspective, don't you think?

A beat.

JESS

You're not going to start banging on about Climate Change, are you?

JESS'S FATHER

It just really irritates me! All these people whipping themselves up into a frenzy. About nothing! It's a kind of religious hysteria. "The End is Nigh." It reminds me of mediaeval doomsday cults or Apocalyptic Christians-

JESS

Dad, you can be really obtuse sometimes. Global warming's a fact. Do you think the Arctic ice-cap is melting because of magic?

JESS'S FATHER

Look, I'm not saying that nothing's happening. But there's any number of reasons why the ice cap is melting - sun-spots, natural climatic variability. Something to do with Chaos Theory. What I dispute is the idea that it's anthropogenic

JESS

Hey Dad!

JESS'S FATHER

What?

JESS

(pointing)

There's someone on your side!

Jess's father turns to look. On the street corner, a dishevelled guy is standing with a placard that reads, "The End Is Nigh."

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JESS'S FATHER

(sarcastically)

Ha ha. Very funny.

He thinks about it for a minute.

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)

(ruminatively)

Funny coincidence though.

INT CHRISTCHURCH CAFE

Jess and her father have joined the back of queue in a coffee shop.

JESS

(voice-over)

We stopped to get some coffees before going to the motel.

Final Draft 8 Demo

JESS'S FATHER

A flat white, Jess?

Jess is hanging back, scared of the other patrons.

JESS

Yes, that'd be nice.

We see the counter girl serving a customer.

JESS (CONT'D)

(voice-over)

One thing that's very interesting. In other parts of the country, when people have nothing to talk about, they talk about the weather. Here they talk about aftershocks.

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COUNTER GIRL

(to the patron, smiling)

Did you feel the shake this morning? What do you think: 5.2?

CUSTOMER

5.4, I reckon.

INT MOTEL RECEPTION DAY

Jess walks into the reception of a cheap motel.

JESS
(voice-over)
Because Dad splashed out on the Prius, he decided to economize by going to a cheap motel.

Jess's father, followed by Jess, approaches the counter. He rings the bell. THE SAD MOTEL OWNER emerges from the office at the back. I'd like him to be played by Mikey Havoc, reprising his character from the TV series.

JESS'S FATHER
We've a reservation for two. Under Frame.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
You'll be in luck. We're fully booked.

JESS'S FATHER
Are you sure-

SAD MOTEL OWNER
Absolutely. Since the quake, we haven't had a spare bed in the place. I imagine there isn't a motel in the city that isn't full.

JESS'S FATHER
That can't be right - I called from Auckland the day before yesterday. Spoke to a woman called Lydia?

SAD MOTEL OWNER
Uh, Lydia you say? Hang on second...
(calling out)
Lydia!

Lydia emerges from the office.

LYDIA
What is it, Arthur?

SAD MOTEL OWNER
This mans says he booked a room through you.

JESS'S FATHER
Name of Frame.

LYDIA
That's right, I remember. You called from Auckland.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
How could they get a room? We're fully booked!

LYDIA
There was a cancellation.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
First I heard about it. Typical. Left out of the loop, as always. I tell you-

LYDIA
They're in the book, Arthur! If you bothered to check.

Arthur reacts. He leafs through the reservation book.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
Well, so it is... []

LYDIA
(to Jess's father)
You're in Unit 6. I'll get you a key.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
(with a glare at Lydia)
That's alright, I'll show them to their room.

INT MOTEL COURTYARD DAY

Arthur leads Jess's father and Jess (Jess trailing) through the inner courtyard of the motel towards their room.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
It's so hard to get decent staff these days. I tell ya, the situation of the small business owner these days-

JESS'S FATHER
So you've been quite busy then?

SAD MOTEL OWNER
Haven't had a moment's peace for weeks now. Since the quake, people from the Eastern suburbs have been queuing up to get rooms. It's a epidemic.

JESS'S FATHER
Yes, well, you probably heard, we're down from Auckland.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
 Rubberneckers, I suppose?

JESS'S FATHER
 (embarrassed)
 Well, no. I'm helping coordinate
 the civil response. I brought my
 daughter with me because... I
 think it's better she be with me
 than by herself at the moment.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
 Well she won't find much to do down
 here. It's not like the city has
 much of a night-life at the moment.

A beat.

JESS'S FATHER
 So did this place get any
 structural damage?

SAD MOTEL OWNER
 Not so much.

JESS'S FATHER
 And the sewerage system? How did
 that cope?

SAD MOTEL OWNER
 The sewers have been pretty much
 fine around here.

JESS'S FATHER
 So you got off pretty lightly then.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
 I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't say
 that we got off lightly. I had a
 complete collection of Leonard
 Cohen albums on vinyl in a box in
 my garage. Got crushed by a lawn-
 mower. Completely ruined.

INT MOTEL ROOM DAY

The Morose Motel Owner leads the into their unit; a living
 room with an adjoining bedroom. Jess sits down on the couch.

SAD MOTEL OWNER
 Right. The bedroom's through there;
 there's just one but the couch
 folds down. We provide shampoo and
 soap. The reception is open between
 9 and 5. We don't have a restaurant
 on site but there's a Thai place
 still open around the corner.
 (MORE)

SAD MOTEL OWNER (CONT'D)
Try to enjoy your stay. I know
we're not exactly the Ritz!

The motel owner bowls out, closing the door behind him.

JESS'S FATHER
(to Jess)
So what do you think?
(mischievously)
It's not exactly the Ritz, you
know.

CUT TO

INT MOTEL ROOM NIGHT

Jess and her father are eating dinner in front of the TV.

JESS
(voice-over)
We decided not to go out for
dinner. It was easier just to have
takeaways in our room.

EXT CHRISTCHURCH DAY

Perhaps just shots of early morning in Christchurch.

JESS
(voice-over)
The next day, Dad had to go to a
meeting.

We see Jess and her father eating breakfast and talking. This
cuts part-way through to shots of the motel courtyard and the
hotel manager pottering about.

JESS (CONT'D)
Dad suggested that I go for a walk
but I don't really feel like going
out into the city. I'm scared that
people will point at me and say,
"There goes the girl who caused the
earthquake!" Although now I'm
actually here, it seems harder to
believe that I'm personally
responsible for the whole quake. At
least, I'm maybe not completely
responsible.

The motel owner is fiddling with the garden hose. He can't
get it to work; soundingly he gets a spurt of water in the
face.

Jess is sitting on a bench, smoking a sly cigarette and reading, "Thus Spake Saurashtra." She is listening to "Mother of Peal" by Roxy music on an ipod.

JESS (CONT'D)
(voice-over)
I'm re-reading "Thus Spake
Zarathustra"... Some people say
that Nietzsche was a kind of proto-
Nazi-

Final Draft 8 Demo

TURIN STREET DAY

Nietzsche, recognizable by his moustache emerges, from a building in 1889 Turin. (Note: the Roxy Music scene continues to play during this scene.)

JESS
-but the story I like about
Nietzsche is the one with the
horse.

Nietzsche walks down the crowded street into the the Piazza Carlo Alberto.

At the other end of the plaza, a man is flogging a horse. The horse rears, foaming at the mouth.

Final Draft 8 Demo

NIETZSCHE
(in German; subtitled)
What are you doing with that
animal? Stop it.

Nietzsche runs toward the horse.

We see reaction shots of various passers-by.

Nietzsche clasps the horse around the neck.

The man with the crop raises it.

A crowd has gathered round, including two policeman.
Nietzsche lies prostrate on the ground.

Final Draft 8 Demo

JESS
(voice-over)
After the incident with the horse,
Nietzsche dispatched a couple of
mad letters and then basically
stopped talking.

INT NAUMBERG HOUSE DAY

Nietzsche is ensconced in his mother's house in Naumberg. We start in close up on his motionless face and gradually pull back to show him in his environment.

JESS

"General paralysis of the insane" they call it. Nietzsche didn't say a word until his death ten years later. I like to think that, in the end, Nietzsche looked a little too far into the abyss and couldn't find his way back. I don't know what he saw there but maybe it was terrible...

(quickly)

Of course, there are some people who say that he had syphilis but there are always people who want to spoil a good story.

INT MOTEL ROOM DAY

Jess lies on the bed of the lounge. She is listening to her iPod, "Mother of Pearl" still, and doodling in a note pad. The TV is on, showing "Ellen."

JESS

(voice-over)

It's not uncommon for people who are coming down from a psychotic episode to get depressed. I get a bit glum sometimes but I don't think I ever get properly depressed. Sometimes I think it might be helpful to get depressed. All those alcoholic American writers-

The TV starts to smoke.

JESS (CONT'D)

Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Malcolm Lowry. Although Lowry was Canadian, I think... Do I smell something?

Jess looks up.

JESS (CONT'D)

Is the television on fire?

Jess looks at the TV; the TV looks back at her.

JESS (CONT'D)

Is this really happening or am I just hallucinating?

Jess runs to the socket and unplugs the TV.

INT MOTEL RECEPTION DAY

Jess walks into the reception.

JESS

Excuse me - the TV in my room - I think it just blew up!

INT MOTEL ROOM DAY

The gloomy motel owner is removing the TV from its wall mounting. Jess is sitting on the fold-down out couch.

SAD MOTEL OWNER

It's just typical! I only replaced these televisions a year ago. When I got them from the dealer, he said they were in good condition but I guess he was wrong. Personally, I blame the Japanese.

The motel owner hoists the TV with a grunt and starts toward the door.

SAD MOTEL OWNER (CONT'D)

This is the second TV to go this month. I tell you - you can't trust anyone... It all mounts up. Dry rot, earthquakes, exploding TVs - I have all the luck! The gods have really got it in for me.

The motel owner gets the TV out the door. After a moment, we hear a crash.

SAD MOTEL OWNER (CONT'D)

Ow!

A beat.

SAD MOTEL OWNER (CONT'D)

Bugg'rit!

Jess looks toward the door.

JESS

(voice-over)

I think I'll go for that walk after-all.

EXT CHRISTCHURCH STREETS DAY

Jess is walking through the streets. She is still listening to Roxy Music on her iPod but now the song is "More than This".

Jess walks through the park, by the Avon. There are images of damaged buildings but the mood is generally cheerful.

This sequence should go on as long as possible.

INT SCHOOL GYM DAY

Jess has seemingly wandered all the way to the Eastern Suburbs because we now have a scene set in a school gym which has been set up as an emergency depot. It is full of people, milling about, queueing up to get provisions from the trestle tables.

At one of the trestle tables, a woman smiles at a grateful punter. She is pouring a cup of tea.

WOMAN

Would you like some milk in that dear?

In another part of the room, a couple of Cantabrians are talking.

CANTABRIAN 1.

I don't know what I'd do if this place wasn't here. It's a real god-send.

CANTABRIAN 2.

Yes - I know what you're saying. People can be very kind.

At another trestle a man is heaping tinned goods into a shopping basket. The woman behind the table, lays a hand on his arm.

WOMAN 2.

Haven't you already got rather a lot?

MAN

I'm getting provisions for my neighbours. One of them is elderly and housebound - she couldn't come here herself so she asked me to help out.

Jess is wandering through the room. Her attitude is apologetic: she feels she doesn't belong.

JESS

(nearly bumping into someone)

Excuse me... Sorry.

Another couple of Cantabrians are talking.

CANTABRIAN 2.

What are you doing for sanitation?

CANTABRIAN 4.

We've built a long-drop in the garden. It's not pleasant but what else can you do?

CANTABRIAN 2.

We've been going next door!

In another part of the room another couple are talking. Jess is near them, and overhears.

CANTABRIAN 5.

The thing which makes me anxious is feeling like I don't have any control over what's happening in my life.

CANTABRIAN 6.

It makes you feel a bit helpless, doesn't it?

CANTABRIAN 5.

I had a little cry this morning but it didn't seem to help much.

Jess reacts, guiltily. She hurriedly starts making her way toward the door, pushing through the people.

JESS

Sorry... Sorry... Sorry

By the door, standing in a little gap, a lone vagabond psychotic is standing. He has the aggressive mien of the hardened paranoiac. Everyone else is giving him a wide berth.

PARANOIC

Don't you see what's going on? The Chinese are testing out a new weapon on Canterbury! The Government doesn't want to let anyone know the truth because they're scared! It's the Chinese! The Chinese and the Jews working together! Don't say nobody didn't warn you...

Jess pushes her way toward the door, glancing at the paranoiac and hurrying.

PARANOIC (CONT'D)

Don't say you weren't told. If you're next, it'll be your own fault. Because you didn't listen... I'm writing a book!

(pointing)

(MORE)

PARANOIC (CONT'D)

And I'm going to put you in it! And you, and you! When you read it, it'll be like looking in a fucking mirror! You'll see yourself and you'll see how ugly you truly are! You'll recognize yourself and be horrified. Horrified!

INT THAI RESTAURANT NIGHT

Jess and her father are sitting at a table in a cheap Thai restaurant, opposite each other.

A Thai waitress approaches the table.

WAITRESS

Would you like anything to drink?

JESS'S FATHER

A glass of the House Shiraz, thanks. And you Jess?

JESS

(to the waitress)

A glass of ginger ale, please....

By the way, do you have a Vegetarian option?

WAITRESS

It's over here.

She opens the menu and directs Jess's attention to the vegearian dishes.

JESS

Oh... Thanks.

The waitress moves off.

JESS'S FATHER

(resuming a conversation)

To be honest, I've got to say the situation's pretty bad. Going out to Avonside today was a real eye-opener for me. Street after street of houses too structurally compromised to be habitable. Whole suburbs are going to need to be abandoned- the ground's too unstable to rebuild on. They're going to have to knock everything down and rebuild the city further West.

JESS
 (thinking)
 You have to feel for the people who
 live here.

JESS'S FATHER
 Yes... You know I met a woman today
 who had put a down-payment on her
 property the day before the big
 one. She asked me, "Why should this
 happen to me? What did I do to
 deserve it?" I mean - how do you
 answer a question like that?

A beat. Jess thinks about it.

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)
 Of course, you need to try to look
 on the bright side. Perhaps this is
 an opportunity to bring in some
 innovative new ideas in city
 design. Like they did in San
 Francisco...

JESS
 Still, it's not altogether a silly
 question to ask, is it? I mean -
 it's not silly to think that things
 have reasons.

Jess's father is unconvinced. He looks down at his hands.

JESS'S FATHER
 Yes, well, it would be nice to
 think that... Speaking of cause and
 effect... There's something I've
 been meaning to talk to you about,
 Jess.

He is uncomfortable.

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)
 I'm not sure how to say this, so
 I'll just say it...

(looking directly at Jess)
 You know when your mother and I
 got divorced - you know that was
 nothing to do with you, don't you
 Jess? You know it wasn't your
 fault?

It's Jess's turn to get uncomfortable. She rearranges the
 cutlery on the table.

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)
 You do know that, don't you Jess?

JESS

Of course I know that! I'm not stupid.

JESS'S FATHER

(embarrassed)

Yes well... I thought it was important that you know that.

(to himself)

Somebody told me I should tell to you that.

The waitress arrives.

WAITRESS

Excuse me, sir. Your Shiraz.

She puts the wine down on the table.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

And your ginger beer.

She puts the ginger beer down on the table and moves off.

JESS'S FATHER

(nodding)

Hey, look who's sitting over there!

Jess turns to look. The Sad Motel owner is sitting at a table by himself near the door.

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)

It's the hotel manager... What do you think of him?

JESS

I don't know. He seems a bit...

JESS'S FATHER

(mischievously)

He's a bit of a misery-guts, don't you think?

Jess bursts into surprised laughter.

They start talking quickly and laughing together.

JESS

Yes! He does need seems to need a bit of an attitude adjustment!

JESS'S FATHER

When I thought he'd lost the booking, I nearly had a fit!

JESS

But then it turned out he'd just overlooked it.

(MORE)

JESS (CONT'D)

And he tried to pin it on the receptionist...!

(twisting her head)

You don't think he can hear us, do you?

JESS'S FATHER

I wouldn't worry about it. A bloke like that naturally expects the worst from the world anyway. The way he plods about like Eeyore—he's very, I don't know, I can't think of the word—

JESS

He's very lugubrious.

JESS'S FATHER

Yes. That's it. Lugubrious. That's exactly the word... Can you imagine a motel owner who feels aggrieved because he has too much business?

Jess

When the TV in our room blew up, he blamed the Japanese!

JESS'S FATHER (CONT'D)

And his blessed record albums—

JESS

(putting on an even posher voice)

Oh no, my precious Leonard Cohen collection. However will I replace it!

JESS'S FATHER

Yes... You know, I can't understand people like that. When you look at the world...

He trails off. The restaurant starts to rattle. An aftershock.

The Motel owner looks about in resignation.

The waitress jumps under the door frame.

Jess and her father don't have a chance to react.

CLOSE UP of the glass of wine and cutlery, on the table shaking

CUT TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS